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Remixing Pedagogy: How Teachers Experience Remix as a Tool for Teaching English Language Arts

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This dissertation, REMIXING PEDAGOGY: HOW TEACHERS EXPERIENCE REMIX AS A TOOL FOR TEACHING ENGLISH LANGUAGE ARTS, by STEPHANIE J.

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It is accepted by the committee members in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree, Doctor of Philosophy, in the College of Education and Human Development, Georgia State University.

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REMIXING PEDAGOGY: HOW TEACHERS EXPERIENCE REMIX AS A TOOL FOR
TEACHING ENGLISH LANGUAGE ARTS

by

STEPHANIE J. LOOMIS

Under the Direction of Dr. Michelle Zoss

ABSTRACT

Remix, a type of digital multimedia composition created by combining existing media to create new texts offers high school teachers a non-traditional approach to teaching English Language Arts (ELA). As technology in the U.S. has become more accessible and affordable, literacy practices outside school classrooms have changed. While there is a growing body of research about remix and remix culture, most of it is set outside the ELA classroom by focusing on activities after school hours or specialty courses in creative writing or technology classes. Teachers' points of view are largely left out of studies that examine in-school experiences with remix. Additionally, existing studies are often set in either higher education or elementary schools. This case study sought to understand how two high school ELA teachers experienced using remix as a tool for teaching and how practicing remix informed their pedagogies. The study revealed insight into why teachers find it challenging to practice new pedagogies in their teaching. I grounded my theoretical framework in sociocultural theories and a remix of Peirce's (1898) semiotic theory with Rosenblatt's (1938/1995) transactionalism. Designed within a case study methodology, data sources included teacher remixes, recorded conversations in online meetings, emails, texts, telephone calls, and a detailed researcher journal. Data analysis included multiple iterations of open coding of transcripts, informed by grounded theory and tools of discourse analysis, as well as visual analyses of teacher-created remixes. Key findings showed that, while teachers desired to incorporate remix teaching tools for meeting student needs, constraints of professional learning obligations, state standards, and administrator expectations limited their use of non-traditional practices. Both teachers approached remix differently, encouraging their students to construct meaning through multimodal tools, while still finding paths to meeting administrative requirements through remix. Further, remix allowed teachers to

increase the student-centeredness of their pedagogy and at the same time support multiple student learning styles. This study also extends prior theoretical scholarship about remix by contributing a study of knowledge-in-action, focusing on teachers as their remix experiences unfolded.

INDEX WORDS: remix, transactional semiotics, secondary English Language Arts teaching, transactionalism, semiotics, Peirce, Rosenblatt, meaning making, qualitative research, multimedia, teacher research, pragmatism, participatory culture, online spaces, sociocultural theory

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DEDICATION

This work is dedicated to my ever-patient husband, Brian Loomis. Thank you for encouraging me to keep moving forward and for putting up with all the evenings I spent at the computer instead of with you. This whole “growing old together” has certainly taken some interesting turns, but I can’t imagine doing life with anyone else. No matter what happens, I am and will always be proud to be your wife.

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CHAPTER 1 INTRODUCTION

I began my teaching career in 1990, and I experienced the changes in education policies and expectations first hand. Between No Child Left Behind through the standardized testing that accompanied both Common Core State Standards and Race to the Top, many of my colleagues left the profession, dismayed at the curtailing of their classroom autonomy in favor of student achievement on high stakes tests (Hurst, Tan, Meek, & Sellers, 2003; Strauss, 2015). Others left for private schools where they still had the freedom to choose and organize their curriculum. Still, others decided to adapt to the new standards and hold out for retirement. My colleagues were not alone in their frustrations; testing stress is linked to increasing teacher attrition nationwide (Rentner, Kober, Frizzell, Ferguson, 2016; Rooney, 2015; Ryan et al., 2017). I opted to challenge myself to be creative enough to work within the parameters before me while still maintaining my voice as a teacher. I did move to private school, but my students were expected to meet the same testing requirements as their public-school counterparts. Since my contract was year-to-year, I was highly motivated for my students to excel on all measures, but I also wanted to make sure they enjoyed the composing process. To do that, I employed as many ideas, practices, and tools as I could access, including art and technology, sometimes blending them. At the time, remix, as a term had little meaning for me. The remixing I knew was happening in music, particularly in urban Black culture. In today's parlance, however, I was practicing remix in my classroom as far back as the 1990s.

Remix?

Remix is the art of combining unrelated elements into a new composition that can support a new meaning. It is a broad term that encompasses multiple forms including mashups, memes, parody, and deconstruction (Navas, Gallagher, & burrough, 2018). The process of remix

“involves taking cultural artifacts and combining and manipulating them into new kinds of creative blends and products” (Lankshear and Knobel, 2011, p. 95). Cultural artifacts can be anything, depending on the kind of final product the artist intends to make. Bringing those artifacts together is a transformation that results in a new composition. While the artifacts are brought together, they are also individually identifiable with a fresh meaning created from them. That is, the purpose of remix is to create something new out of bits and fragments of already existing materials, altering those pieces into an assemblage of disparate elements. Remix creators compose new meanings through that assemblage of multiple parts. The process of remix results in a new product, also broadly called a remix. Remix is thus a noun when it is the final product. By final product, I mean that formerly unrelated elements brought together have been given a new meaning by the artist, one that perhaps the creators of the original clips, fragments, and recovered bits never considered or intended. Remix is a verb when it is a process. The artist’s actions to bring together these pieces renders remix a verb in this sense. Navas (2018) wrote, “[Remix] describes the repurposing of something by being both action and object” (p.253). Furthermore, remix may also be used as an adjective. As an adjective, remix describes something that contains the properties of having been made up of formerly unrelated materials in such a way that new compositions and potential meanings emerge.

In this sense, a book may be a book, but once it is altered, it becomes a remixed book. In all of its grammatical variances, remixing various artifacts of image, text, and sound elements allows people to create compositions in ways other than words. Figure 1 illustrates how remix can be all three grammar types: The final double page spread seen in the image is a remix (noun). The process that I used to bring together the images, fabrics, beads, paper doll, tags, and



Figure 1 Altered book sample

other ephemera is a form of remix (verb). This image shows a book I altered and that book is now a remixed book (adjective). I used altered books like this one for several years in my English Language Arts (ELA) classes. Altered books are an art form wherein books destined for the trash are rescued and remixed into intricate works of art. For my high school students, I kept the projects simple: each class had a single book and each week one student could replace an essay assignment with a double page spread that addressed the weekly prompt. Students considered the essay prompt and then constructed a response using their choice of materials (paint, paper, fabric, and embellishments), layout, color, and design instead of words. They then shared their work with the class in a two to three-minute presentation where they explained their intention and thought process. I based assessment on the thoughtfulness and creativity of the

work, not the craftsmanship. At first, they thought it would be fun, and easier than writing an essay, but they quickly discovered that composition, whether in words or images, required thoughtful consideration of the appropriate elements to communicate a message. For students who thought visually or kinesthetically, however, the altered book process helped them make connections between their thoughts and how they could represent those thoughts. Once students recognized the thinking and processing skills behind composing with images, they were often able to make the leap from remix to essay to some degree. Those who still struggled with writing at least had the satisfaction of an avenue through which they could communicate their ideas. The altered books were a form of remix accessible to my students before the internet and smartphones were ubiquitous.

Remix is not new, nor is it limited to digital technology. The term remix came from the music industry where it originated. Original recordings were called mixes, so combining multiple recordings were remixed. When the term was adopted outside the music industry, the mix term was dropped, and only remix remained to describe the blending of elements (Navas, 2018). Remixers took the artifacts created by others and altered them in some way to create something new (Navas, 2006). In digital remix, composers use software, apps, and online resources to combine already existing still images, moving images, and sounds to generate a fresh composition. In remix, the original elements can be traced to their sources and, ethically, those sources should be credited (Sonvilla-Weiss, 2010).

The term multiliteracies (New London Group, 1996) was developed to capture the multiple ways people experience communication, literacy, and composition. Gee (2017b) added the note that students still needed to think about how both oral and written language function, but as society became more dependent on digital communication, they also needed "to know how to

redesign, transform conventions, and create new designs" (p. 29). The ability to craft a traditional five-paragraph essay, report, or "right" answer to a quiz question was no longer sufficient preparation for communicating in a multimodal society (Cope, Kalantzis, & Abrams, 2017; Dusenberry, Hutter, & Robinson, 2015; Gee, 2017a; Palmeri, 2012; Pirie, 1997). Or, as Gee and Hayes (2011) put it, "language itself is and always has been a mixture of sound, words, images created in the mind, and gestures used in contexts full of objects, sounds, actions, and interactions. Language has always been multimodal" (p. 1). Multimodal compositions include both original and remixed content: blends of image, sound, and video created by the composer using analog and digital tools for expression, reflection, interpretation, or new texts. Society may have once considered print the epitome of educated expression, but by the early 21st century, print became one mode of acceptable communication (Alvermann, 2015; Gee, 2017b; Hicks, 2013; Palmeri, 2012). Multimodal compositions represent meaning using concepts and methods already ingrained in both modern culture and media studies (Pirie, 1997). Remix, as one form of multimodal composition process, relies on combining the work of other composers to communicate a newly constructed meaning. The key to this kind of multimodal composition is the near universality of technology in the U.S.

Technology has infiltrated every level of society in recent years, and most students and teachers have access to tools including smartphones, tablets, computers and the software and apps that come with the hardware. At the same time, many of my teacher friends are frustrated by the limitations on how they use technology. The limitations include restricted access to the internet, a ban on cell phone use in class for any reason, and what many of my friends considered to be a hyper focus on student achievement on high stakes exams. I wondered whether there was a way to be creative in using technology and still make sure students had every opportunity to

prepare for the required exams. How might teachers demonstrate the educative potential of technology? Even my teacher friends in schools where technological tools like 1:1 tablets were provided by the districts have difficulties with accessing sites they wanted to use with their students. How did teachers balance their independent and imaginative teaching strategies with administrative expectations? Was there a place for the kind of alternative text assessment like the altered books I used? Could the affordances of new technologies be useful as teaching tools? Would teachers be interested in remixing tools and opportunities? Would it even be possible for teachers to use remix in their classrooms with the challenges of high stakes testing and teacher assessment tied to student achievement? These questions led to the purpose of my study: to understand teachers' experiences as they employed remix as a tool in their classes.

Purpose

As an English Language Arts (ELA) teacher for two decades, I lived through a series of cultural and educational changes. Culturally, the advent of technology, particularly the internet, changed the way people read, write, and learn (Gee, 2005; Jenkins & Billard, 2018; Pirie, 1997). Social media practices beginning early in the 21st century affected how people access and make meaning of information (Lankshear & Knobel, 2007; Gee, 2017). Outside my classroom, my own literacy habits also expanded to include reading and composing online texts, not only in words, but also in images, sound, and motion. My students grew increasingly technologically savvy, and I began to experiment with incorporating some of the available technological tools into my teaching practices, particularly as I taught writing.

The education system I worked within, however, was much slower to adapt to changing literacies. After several years working in and observing several high school programs, I noticed an increasing emphasis on quantifiable data to determine teacher efficacy, primarily in the form

of mandated testing and standards that seemed to curtail teacher freedom to incorporate some of the tools available outside the classroom. The literature regarding teacher frustration about perceived constraints to teaching ELA is well documented (Hamilton, 2017; Mangin, 2016; Thibodeaux et al., 2015; White & Lowenthal, 2009). The literature about how high school teachers experience breaking through those constraints and using technology and other tools as part of their pedagogy is not as thoroughly examined (Ajaua, 2015; Hackney, 2015).

I believe there are many out-of-school practices teachers can incorporate into their pedagogy while still meeting school expectations. Teachers know their content and their students; allowing teachers to exercise creative autonomy in their classrooms means trusting their professional expertise as they bring together school-based and out-of-school practices (Edwards & Willis, 2004). Remix may be one such practice. My goal with this study was to enlist ELA teachers to connect their students' worlds to classroom practices through remix, reflection, and evaluating personal responses to the project. The purpose of this study was to tell the story of teachers using remix in their classrooms and to answer the question, how do high school ELA teachers experience remix as a tool for teaching ELA?

Technology and Literacy

The reach of new technologies, particularly digital technologies and access to the internet changed the way people communicate with each other (Barone, 2015; Hicks & Turner, 2013; boyd, 2014; Ito, Lyman, Carter, & Thorne, 2013). The combination of the internet with affordable, portable, and powerful technology marked a paradigm shift in communication on par with the invention of Gutenberg's printing press (Coiro, Knobel, Lankshear, & Leu, 2008). Just as the printing press opened the possibility of literacy to the masses, so the internet, and access to it, opened the possibility of communication to and with the world. The internet and the computer

in its early iterations, from the first personal desktop to the newest smartphone, also required a new kind of literacy (Mills, 2016). Literacy, often considered static before the global reach of internet access, now requires adeptness and versatility to keep up with constant changes in technology (Rowse & Paul, 2011). Alternative forms of text in school, academia, business, and personal interactions made images, sound, and movement nearly as important to communication as the written word once was (Christel & Hayes, 2010; Coiro, et al., 2008; Kist, 2005; Mills, 2016; New London Group, 1996). Once technology became accessible to the general public, multimodal texts began to proliferate, especially online. Communication practices changed, becoming increasingly multidimensional and crossing former barriers between alphabetic writing, art, and design (Knobel & Lankshear, 2008; Palmeri, 2012).

Literacy is multifaceted, not limited to printed words on a page, but open to meanings based on visual, gestural, spatial, oral, musical, and constructive modes in both analog and digital realms (Michielse & Paarti, 2015; Perry, 2012; Zoss, 2009). As technology in the U.S. became more accessible and affordable, literacy practices outside school classrooms shifted, largely to a focus on creating digital texts in multiple modes. Vygotsky (1930/1978) wrote about the centrality of creating when he wrote, "the language of education is the language of culture creating, not of knowledge consuming or knowledge acquisition alone" (Vygotsky, p.133). Creating culture is not the ability to memorize facts or theories but involves a collaboration with others to make meaning of the world and function within it (Murray, 2015). In education, this creative culture happens during problem solving, critical thinking, multiple perspectives of looking at a text, and communicating in multiple ways. Remix incorporates many elements of culture creating while sustaining the voice and context of both a text and a reader. Remix, and its multimodal counterparts are examples of literacy in

participatory practice. In the next sections, I discuss how technology changed common literacy practices, the divide between the literacies outside school and those within school, and the need for a bridge between in-school and out-of-school literacy practices.

Literacy in Common Practice

Literacy in practice has always been multiple: there have always been different practices within cultures and societies and different semiotic systems across cultures, not all of them requiring print media (Gee, 2017b; Hull & Nelson, 2005; Myers & Beach, 2004; Ong, 1972; Smagorinsky & O'Donnell-Allen, 1998; Young & Bush, 2004). Out-of-school literacies informs what happens in the classroom. The kinds of reading, speaking, and writing people use at home or online or in social groups away from school may or may not have reinforce the kinds of reading, writing, and speaking that are rewarded at school (Behizadeh, 2017; Labov, 2012; Smagorinsky & Coppock, 1993). Storytellers, artists, and dancers all use forms of literacy as they communicate. Facial expressions and body language also tell tales without words. By the time the New London Group (1996) coined the term, New Literacies, popular culture had already begun to consider non-alphabetic forms of communication as texts.

Additionally, the way people gathered changed with technology. Non-print literacies of old meant people being in physical proximity to each other. With the widespread accessibility of the internet and computers, people from all over the world started connecting to each other without ever meeting in person. Gee and Hayes (2011) observed that for the first time in history, people could be both intimates and strangers at the same time. People met virtually on social media, multi-player games, and spaces set up for people with common interests to gather. Gee (2005) identified these sites as *affinity spaces*, where people connected around affinities for different things: gaming, hobbies, entertainment, philosophy, and any other of endless

possibilities. In affinity spaces, communication took multiple forms: some by alphabetic words, some in images, some through spoken words, and some via alternate identities. In affinity spaces, the need for print media was virtually eliminated.

Print media has historically been privileged in schools and remains so (Bezemer, Diamantopoulou, Jewitt, Kress, & Mavers, 2012). The cultural shifts of the last 50 years have not been matched in the US education systems, particularly in the English Language Arts (ELA) classrooms. Literacy contexts outside school have changed dramatically, while the expected outcomes in school-based literacies are largely unaffected (Bazalgette & Buckingham, 2013; Berkowitz, 2012; Jenkins & Purushotma, 2009; Palmeri, 2012). Classrooms at the turn of the 20th century looked very similar to most classrooms at the turn of the 21st century. One affordance of a technological culture is the ability to share social and political commentary to a large audience in multiple forms: memes, remixes, mashup, fan fiction, and parody (Heron-Hruby, Hagood, Alvermann, 2008; Michielse & Partti, 2015; Navas, Gallagher, & burrough, 2018). New media platforms allow experimentation that encourages users to find their voices and become contributors to online information culture (Hafner, 2015; Jenkins & Billard, 2018; Ketter & Hunter, 2002; O'Byrne, 2014). The out-of-school practices of multimodal and multimedia composing, however, are largely left outside the classroom. The opportunities for teachers to expand their teaching to include out-of-school practices are often curtailed by the need to focus on the skills required for testing rather than teaching to the knowledge, perspectives, and experiences of their students.

When readers approach a text of any kind, they come with perspectives and points of view constructed from life experiences (Dewey, 1938; Peirce, 1897; Rosenblatt, 1978). From childhood, people enter into living traditions and ways of knowing that began in their families

(Applebee, 1996; Heath, 1983). The ways families construct meanings from the events in the home become the foundation for an individual's future perspectives and constructions of meaning from events. Applebee (1996) called this foundational work "knowledge-in-action" (p. 5) which included family traditions regarding language, play, community, religion, and other cultural tools that influence meaning-making. Values ascribed to by individual families combine with the values of other families in the community to create a dynamic social culture that changes as new experiences continually shape how that social group functions. Social communities may be as vast as a large city or as narrow as a specific classroom in a neighborhood school. People are part of multiple social communities, playing different roles depending on the level and context of their participation. Life experiences derived from those communities, roles, and participation inform how people make meaning of all kinds of texts. When school-based instruction is largely limited to accumulation of facts or literacy practices common in early 20th century, students ultimately reside in a divided world of literacy: out of school literacies and in school literacy.

The Divide

The language and textual constraints in the context of 1959 or 1999 are not the same constraints of 2019. During much of the 20th century, in-school and out-of-school literacies were similar. Personal computers were unheard of in the 1950s; text production was largely limited to hand-written and typed words. Duplication required carbon paper or mimeograph and transmission was generally through the postal service or telegraph (Press, 2013). Image production required darkrooms, chemicals, and expertise in the physical development of film. By the 1990s computers had simplified production with word processing and distribution through the World Wide Web (Novell, 2019). Image manipulation and production became

accessible to early Macintosh computer users when Adobe Photoshop 1.0 was made available in 1990 (Brandrick & Burns, 2016). Creating content for mass distribution was expensive and limited to those with particular expertise.

The year 2007 was pivotal for technological communication advances with the launch of the iPhone and the emergence of Facebook, Twitter, Kindle, and Android (Friedman, 2016). Technology allowed multiple literacies to become more widespread and accessible to both print and non-print audiences. By 2019 digital devices for communication and content creation included handheld computers (smartphones and tablets), applications for word and image production and publication, and widespread ability to access the World Wide Web, a title often shortened to simply the Web (Toothman, 2008). Today, according to Singer & Alexander (2017), "Humans live in a society that is constantly plugged into the Internet whether by computer or by handheld device" (p. 1007). Both students and their teachers live their out-of-school lives in a connected culture, but very often are disconnected once they enter their schools.

The advent of the internet, smartphones, tablets, and personal computers not only changed the kinds of texts available to readers but also changed the way people responded to texts (Turner & Hicks, 2017). New kinds of texts in multiple modes required new kinds of interactions and responses. Texts still included words but added sound, video, and animation. Reading graphics-driven texts required a different kind of literacy than reading traditional alphabetic words texts. Additionally, text design might have added to or detracted from the meaning constructed by the receiver. Kress and Van Leeuwen (2001) argued that new technologies required a design element not necessary before computers or smartphones were part of the culture. When there was only one way to compose text, the idea of design was a less important issue. Language in words or static images were the options for presentation and distribution of thoughts and ideas, with

printed words dominating. As technology in the US became more accessible and affordable, literacy practices outside school classrooms changed, but in school literacy practice remained largely the same.

The Impact of the Divide Outside of School

Contemporary texts outside the classroom are often multimodal, inviting interaction, participation, and alteration by readers. Students use multiple modalities and multiple media to make and produce meaning in their personal lives, expanding the notion of literacy. Literacy is about communicating with other people in a particular culture through a variety of modes. Literacy is multimodal, not limited to printed words on a page, but open to interpretations based on visual, gestural, spatial, oral, musical, and constructive modes in both analog and digital realms (Michielse & Paarti, 2015; Perry, 2012; Zoss, 2009). Composers in the internet age need to consider design, color, font (or fonts), images, layout, and whitespace, the area of a publication intentionally left untouched. If creators include sounds or video modes, they must pay attention to image clarity, sound quality, audio levels, and transitions. These considerations are in addition to the message that in a written text may be presented in a straightforward manner.

Outside of school literacy practices are also often participatory and collaborative in nature. Alvermann (2011) found that more than half of U.S. teens spend their out-of-school hours creating content online in blogs, social media sites, and personal web pages. Students are, in the words of Ito (2010), “hanging out, messing around, and geeking out.” In other words, they are using the affordances of technology and connection to the broad audience of the internet to teach themselves how to be literate individuals in a 21st century world. Ito wrote,

Today's youth may be engaging in negotiations over developing knowledge and identity, coming of age, and struggling for autonomy as did their predecessors, but they are doing this while the contexts for communication, friendship, play, and self-expression are being reconfigured through their engagement with new media. (p. 1)

People still create meaning, culture, and identity in social places, but those places are just as likely to be virtual as they are to be physical in today's world. Teens negotiate their worlds differently than the generation that preceded them. Their friends may be people they never meet in real life (IRL). Play is part of learning online; videos can be taken down and re-edited; pictures can be easily modified by experimenting with filters until the creator is satisfied with the result. The content people create online may be written words on blogs, but it may also be vlogs on YouTube or stories on Instagram where they may have thousands of followers or readers. The literacies required to compose, create, and communicate in online spaces require imagination, technical savvy, and the ability to process multiple modes and media at 5G speed.

The Impact of the Divide in School

While multimodal communication in online spaces have become common outside schools, in school literacy practices remain largely unchanged. Schools as a whole continue to prioritize word-based texts written by solo authors in timed sessions (Hillocks, 2006). Some schools and districts reduced writing to practice writings for various tests (Gee & Hayes, 2011). Advanced Placement exams contain *free response questions (FRQ)* that require specific language, specific structure, and specific guidelines provided to the graders, but not always to the writer (Holmes, 2015). Other tests make use of *document-based questions (DBQ)* wherein the writer responds to a specified task using information from a supplied text (Jackson, 2019). Hillocks (2006) discussed the trend of reducing literacy to meet “the pressures experienced from

the school, community, and state for students to do well on the exam” (p. 62). He noted that, in spite of attention and teaching time dedicated to meeting standards, student writing continued to lag behind other English-speaking countries.

Additionally, if literacy is about meaning making within a social construct, then literacy must be more than the reading and writing of words and static images (Smagorinsky & O'Donnell-Allen, 1998). Limiting in-school literacy to reading and writing word-based texts in schools means student opportunities for expression are truncated and even their identities as literate people are challenged (Alvermann, 2011). What teachers see from their students in class is a fraction of the literacy practices students participate in regularly. When school systems value only measurable achievement and traditional genres of writing, they miss the opportunities for teaching students how to leverage their multimodal literacy skills for deeper and more individualized learning about literature, history, civics, and the sciences. With each new advance in accessible technology, the divide between in-school and out-of-school literacies grows deeper. Bringing the affordances of digital technology into the classroom requires both meeting students in their worlds on one side of the divide and creating a bridge so that those same technologies and associated literacies can be equally accessible in school.

Bridging the Divide

Remix as a form of response or expression functions as a bridge to school-based writing practice while still valuing the students' home cultures and lives outside the classroom (Alvermann, Young, & Colin, 1997; Beach, 2017; Behizadeh, 2015; Lessig, 2008; Shipka, 2011). The divide between students creating a catalog of knowledge and producing meaningful transactions with texts continues to grow as schools and governments began to focus on quantifiable data through standardized assessments via high stakes testing (Applebee, 1996;

Hillocks, 2002). Gee (2017b) explained that while learning and teaching went on all over the internet, schools were institutions that responded more to politics and business than to human learning. He added, "Teaching today...involves using multiple good technologies and good forms of social interaction and participation" (p. 157). Teachers need to be creative in their pedagogy so students can take advantage of available technology and social interactions while still ensuring they are prepared for the required assessments. Remix offers one possible way to bridge the divide.

Bridging community literacy practices and school-based literacy practices requires a holistic approach that considers the out-of-school lives of the students. Heath (1983) found that students learned to switch between home and school language systems, building a "two-way channel between communities and their classrooms" (p. 354). It began, according to Heath, by allowing children to talk about what they knew and then relating that knowledge to what the school or curriculum required. Dewey (1938/1978) called it "the organic connection between education and personal experience" (p. 25). Applebee (1996) said that inviting students to bring their out-of-school lives into classroom conversations promoted "genuine participation...that leads to knowledge-in-action rather than knowledge-out-of-context" (p. 107). Knowledge-out-of-context may be useful for accumulating facts, but participation and context add meaning to facts and allows students to make connections between knowledge from home and knowledge in school. Since Heath's study, reading and composition outside the classroom and within it diverged even further than she might have imagined in the early 1980s. Forty years later, people live in a society that is almost always plugged into the internet outside of the classroom (Singer & Alexander, 2017). Partly because students are connected to a broader world through the internet, what they know and what they bring to the classroom is also broader than the previous

generations' narrow worlds of home and school (Jacobson, 2017). What they know may be broader, but it isn't necessarily deeper, nor is it always considered with a critical eye. How students interpret and understand depends on the contexts of their lives.

Different students in different contexts respond to literature and other classroom texts in different ways based on their life experiences, and they need the freedom to compose responses in different ways (Dewey, 1938/1978; Freire & Macedo, 1987; Garcia & O'Donnell-Allen, 2015). Composition through reflection, remix, or written essays offers students transactional experiences that connect their real lives to literature and other classroom texts in ways that allow them to construct meaning through familiar modes. Technology did not replace writing skills; technology instead improved and expanded language into multimodal compositions (Gee & Hayes, 2011). Building a bridge between out-of-school literacies and in-school literacies does not create an either/or paradigm, but rather promotes both/and.

To fully participate in multimodal practices like remix, students must be adaptable and able to efficiently filter information to learn, shape rhetorical strategies in order to respond, and process challenges of communicating in multiple forms in order to be heard (Dusenberry, Hutter, & Robinson, 2015; Lankshear & Knobel, 2011; Turner & Hicks, 2017; Van Meter & Firetto, 2008). These skills are important for both traditional written and newer multimodal compositions. Gee and Hayes (2011) talk about the ways in which multimodal composition “powers up” language, while Kress (2003) notes the ways in which different modes can express meaning in different ways. Kress claims that written texts are better for writing about sequences in time, while images work more effectively to represent relations in space. In either case, the form of *text* is secondary to the purpose of communication. When school limit forms of text to one genre, student opportunities for communications are equally limited. Bringing multimodal

practices from out-of-school entertainment to in-school communicative experiences begins by meeting students in their worlds and building a bridge with ELA teachers leading the way.

Meeting Students in Their Worlds

As technology in the US became more accessible and affordable, literacy practices outside school classrooms changed. Many students already engage in remixes, mashups, meme generation and other forms of alternative texts outside the classroom. Remix and its counterparts in multimodal composition potentially adds an element of relevant participation in the ELA classroom because students have the opportunity to use familiar technology to express themselves. Multimodal compositions, including remix, do not replace formal writing (including academic style writing) but may provide an approach to instruction that interests students who think and learn in ways not necessarily conducive to the traditional school approach of assign and assess (Allington, 2002). Bringing new ways of expression into ELA may allow students to connect the outside of school literacies they know to content that is new to them. Many students play with remix outside of school; boyd (2014) and Ito (2010) discussed the habits of teens who used technology and social media to shape their identities, form relationships and make meaning of the world around them. Tapping those habits and skills and calling what teens do outside of school text construction could be a platform to illustrate that the same processes teens used to remix video, music, and images were often the same processes used for writing (Lankshear & Knobel, 2011; Palmeri, 2012; Shipka, 2011). Word choice and image choice are parallel activities. Mode and genre require similar consideration of the best approach to telling the story or communicating the message. At the same time, students who do not already engage in online creative play potentially benefit from a new way of thinking about the composition process. Technology offers an opportunity to explore multiple ways to communicate through

sign systems with a broader reach than hard copies of classroom essays of pen and paper (Kress, (2003). Digital forms of text, whether words, images, sounds, or video, almost invite remix because it is deceptively easy and fun to do.

Still, the critical thinking and the composition process is the important element for educative processes in remix (Hackney, 2015; Palmeri, 2012; Shipka, 2011). Remix requires more than simply merging random images with text; remixers consider the message in the original, the intended audience, the connection between the elements being remixed, and the message composers wanted to express (Hackney, 2015). Students who play with remix outside of school may begin to see that work as composition, and students new to remix may learn the importance of digital meaning-making through a blend of image and text. Remix, like writing, is compositional meaning making. "We should not simply have students find an image to insert into a slide deck; they should cite the source, remix the original image, and create their own images" (Hicks & Turner, 2013). Remix encourages students to consider the why and how of image selection in the same way word choice matters in composition. One element of remix is originality in how artifacts are combined, an originality that begins with personal experience living in a social world (Dewey, 1938/1978; Gee, 2017a). Just as no two people have the same set of knowledge and experiences, no two remixes are alike. Thoughtful remix connects history, beliefs, assumptions, and prior knowledge with new understandings from the learning experience. The expression of new connections through remix requires attention to both the known and the new.

Connecting the known and the new is a central element to all composition, digital and analog. How those connections are expressed and what ideal composition looks like has been a source of contention between teachers and school policy-makers for decades. Weeks (1931)

asked the question, "What masteries, however, shall we set as the goal of our English course?"(p. 10). Writing and writing pedagogy in the past 50 years seem to have rocked on a pendulum of two extremes: a focus on form, technique, and practice or a focus on creativity, expression, and play (Gere, 2010; Russell, 2006; Wood & Ostergaard, 2015). Technical or academic writing, with its attention to mechanics, grammar, and vocabulary, is readily measured for improvement. However, a focus on standardized writing skills does not consider social, cultural, or racial community differences and norms.

Heath (1983) wrote of the distinctive influences of three local communities – including their people, places, and cultural norms – on the school readiness and long-term academic success of their children. The differences in home language use led to a marked difference in school success, with the middle-class students who were familiar with a dialogic pattern of communication succeeding academically more readily than their working class or poor peers. Cultural context and community literacy practices affected both short- and long-term success in school (Heath, 1983; Lareau, 2011). What the focus on standardized writing even before the 21st century assessments missed was commitment to a shared knowledge between students, teachers, administrators, and the community (Applebee, 1996). Shared knowledge begins with teachers who learn to balance students' community literacy practices, classroom activities, and school-based expectations, a challenge that requires content area expertise, pedagogical flexibility, and creativity.

Teachers as Bridge Builders

Teachers are in a unique position to build the bridge between classroom and out-of-school texts. Because they live in the same digitally driven culture as their students, teachers understand the multiplicity of texts available in both the physical and the virtual worlds. At the

same time, teachers are aware of the mandate for adherence to standards that prioritize conformity and reduction in the teaching of writing (Gere, 2010). The tension between what "the real world" expects regarding efficient and effective writing (Filippi, 2008) and traditional school essays and high stakes test responses (Gere, 2010; Hillocks, 2006; Pirie, 1997) increases with every iteration of computing and digital creativity (Hall, 2017). Outside the classroom, professional and personal communication moves freely between digital and non-digital communication (Garcia, 2018). Handheld devices like smartphones and tablets made multimodal communication the standard rather than the exceptional in communication; a picture really became worth more than 1000 words. Kress (2003) calls the shift from writing-based communication to technology-based communication a social revolution, one that is changing the power structures of who creates and consumes information. Students now have the ability to create online content that reaches a wide audience, but often lack the training to wield that power with critical forethought. Teachers who can teach students to responsibly consume, curate, and create content online can bridge out-of-school compositions online with in-school compositions, especially in ELA classrooms (O'Byrne, 2018).

The ELA classroom is where writing and thinking can be taught together; rhetoric and composition are two sides of the same coin (Hopkins, 1912; Hillocks, 2002). Critical thinking requires clear communication, and sometimes written texts are not the ideal place for students to demonstrate mastery of a thought or idea (Hylar & Hicks, 2014). Students need to be adept at creating multiple kinds of texts, both analog and digital, with the agility to meet requirements for brevity or expansion depending on the purpose for the writing. Offering multiple ways of expressing responses and thoughts connected to in class texts provides an outlet for students of varying experience and ability to have a voice (Pingry, 1954). Remix, connecting multiple kinds

of texts to create a new experience, offers one way for students from a wide variety of backgrounds to communicate through a shared experience. Teachers can show students that the literacies they engage in outside the classroom are equally valuable inside the classroom. The challenge, however, comes with the education reforms of the last two decades. No Child Left Behind, Race to the Top, Common Core State Standards, and Every Student Succeeds Act all depend on high-stakes standardized tests to determine whether students are meeting expectations for learning. Au (2007) found that these tests resulted in narrowing subject content to tested elements and that teachers revert to teacher-centric ways of teaching content that is fragmented into bits and pieces related to the tests. The resulting curriculum became geared toward learning that could be measured in quantifiable data.

Significance of the Study

A reliance on quantifiable data to determine student success and teacher efficacy inevitably led to a focus on outcome-based teaching, rather than process-based learning (Hillocks, 2006; Zancanella, 1992). The tension between what research revealed to be effective teaching practices based on constructivist and pragmatic principles (Vygotsky, 1930/1978; Dewey, 1938/1978; Rosenblatt, 1995) and the rule of data-driven accountability (Biesta, 2004; Hackney, 2015; Vander Ark, 2017) put many teachers in an untenable position: teach according to their professional expertise or teach to the test (Ball, 2003; Thibodeaux, 2015). White and Lowenthal (2009) wrote, "Too often, educators react to changes in policy and educational reform rather than being at the forefront of change" (p.4). Teachers might want to lead the charge for change, but the current system of accountability discourages innovation that cannot be directly linked to achievement (Madaus & Russell, 2011).

Like many teacher educators, I believe current in-service teachers are an underutilized important resource for improving education (Ajaua, 2015; Kincheloe, 2003; White & Lowenthal, 2009). Garaway (1995) noted that the place between what people know and what they do is fertile ground for discovery through exploration. In this study, I sought to investigate teachers' experiences with using remix as a tool for making meaning of literary texts and writing about them. Since this study centered on teacher experiences as an educative function in considering remix as a teaching tool, it follows the Deweyan notion of quality experiences that "live fruitfully and creatively in subsequent experiences" (Dewey 1938/2015, p. 28). Experience promotes knowledge which then opens the way for new experiences. Every experience, according to Dewey, is built on the experiences of the past and modifies future experiences. The same may be said of knowledge. In classrooms, teachers create the environments wherein they and their students use a variety of methods to make connections between prior knowledge and personal experiences. Remix may be one such method.

Assumptions and Limitations

My experience using a form of remix in teaching was both gratifying and effective. While the requirement for formulaic academic writing never diminished, remix allowed students to shape their responses before "cramming ideas into a universal pattern" (Pirie, 1997, p. 77). The experience for students often had what Dewey (1938/1978) considered quality: the immediate gratification of creation and the influence on the students' future work. When my students understood that there were many tools they could use to construct composition, the mental block against writing was often lifted, at least during their time in my classroom. I taught for several years in a small school, so I had students with a variety of cultural and educational backgrounds in each class. Some students had been in that school since Kindergarten, but others

were there because of difficulties in public schools: not keeping up with work, ADHD/ADD, a few English language learners, chronic illness, and nationally ranked athletes who couldn't attend regular classes at a public school. Remix was a powerful tool for some of my students; they found a way to share their ideas and thoughts without writing traditional essays. Some students began to participate in class discussions more frequently, and others were willing to try writing again. Remix informed my pedagogy by expanding my notion of how to teach writing. My experience also affected my subjectivities in a study about the efficacy of remix as a tool. I began the study through the lens of my knowledge and experience and with a desire to understand how teachers navigate through the turbulent waters of student needs and standardized test demands.

Overview of the Study

For purposes of this study, I defined digital remix as the process and the product whereby people constructed and shared meaning through the following elements:

- Using digital artifacts or compositions created by other people as the primary elements in construction through copying, transforming, and combining (Ferguson, 2015; Sonvilla-Weiss, 2010);
- Creating original semiotic assignments through transactions with existing elements;
- Using multiple texts in more than one mode (image, text, sound, animation) to create a visual representation of the social construction of meaning (Lankshear & Knobel, 2011);
- Maintaining the integrity of each remixed element (Navas, 2006);
- A defined audience and/or a particular purpose (Edwards, 2016; Lankshear & Knobel, 2008, New London Group, 1996);

- A meaning other than the one(s) intended by the original composers whose work is being remixed (Hackney, 2015); and,
- Publication of the final product in online and/or face-to-face spaces, or across multiple spaces.

The study was an eight-week structured case study with follow up conversations during a second eight-week period. Methodology in this study lodged in the in-between spaces of teachers' professional knowledge and the realities of teaching in a data-driven system. What the teachers experienced in the classroom and how they were able to incorporate remix into their lessons was affected by other school-based activities: professional learning communities (PLCs), administrative expectations, high stakes testing, particularly 11th grade End of Course Milestones test (Milestones), and student needs. With this study, I endeavored to understand the teachers' negotiating a way to employ a pedagogical tool without the direct involvement of their PLCs. The teachers who chose to participate wanted to test a teaching practice they thought would be useful for their students and offer an alternative form of assessment that met the state goals and standards. Rather than argue for remix inclusion by the entire PLC, one teacher decided to reframe some of the activities in the PLC provided plans, and the other simply added it to what she was already doing. Their classroom realities could then become evidence for a broader use of remix if they chose to go that route. Bogdan and Biklen (2007) wrote,

Reality is constructed by people as they go about living their daily lives...Teachers and their students define the real world together within the limitations of school hierarchy, availability of resources, and commonsense cultural understandings. How teachers and students come to define each other and what educational environments are like becomes transactional. (p. 244)

By skipping a hypothetical, "what if" for making changes in their practices and diving head first into the learning, both teachers with their classrooms had the opportunity to define a new dynamic in their class communities. The resulting transactions became part of the teachers' perspectives about how they experienced remix in their classrooms. In that sense, this case study reflects a form of action research, wherein participants drove changes that altered the practices in their classrooms (Bogdan & Biklen, 2007).

Summary

Less than three decades ago, social communities were largely constrained by geography. The advent of portable web-connected tools has eliminated that constraint. People now can have friends across the globe, joined together in social communities that Gee (2005) called affinity spaces. Semiotic peculiarities that were once contained by a local culture (like Coke in the South, pop in the Northeast, or soda in the Midwest) expanded to a much larger audience. At the same time, the way people produced work also changed. The digital turn of culture, particularly in the West, opened channels of production, collaboration, and distribution to an international community. Culture was more complex than at any time in history (Gee & Hayes, 2011). It was in this complexity that the study of composition dwelt. Language has always been multimodal, it is true, but affordances of the 21st century allowed literacy to emerge as multi-cultural, multi-lingual, and multi-modal (Gee & Hayes, 2011). The world people inhabited and made meaning of required a new way of thinking about composition, transaction, and how experience informs practice.

Remix is a way people pick their way "through the media-saturated labyrinth" of an information-inundated culture (Murray, 2015, para. 20). It allows people to bring together a myriad of ideas and artifacts and create an expression of meaning that single modes may not

afford. In chapter one, I described how remix has become part of U.S. culture and how it may be useful as a tool in ELA classrooms. Chapter two is a review of the literature surrounding literacy, composition, and technology. In chapter three I explain how I remixed theories of Peirce's semiotics and Rosenblatt's transactionalism to create a remix framework for understanding remix as a process and a product both in culture and in teaching composition. I use the remix framework in a case study of teachers as they experienced and made meaning with remix in and with their classes. Chapter four describes the experiences of the teachers in the study, and in chapter five I consider some of the lessons that readers may learn through these experiences.

CHAPTER 2

LITERATURE REVIEW

In this literature review, I make an argument about what remix in secondary school might be. I make this argument in four parts: 1) remix is an appropriate text for secondary school literacy, 2) meaning making is an essential part of the viewing, reading, and development of the remix process, 3) remix requires creativity practices to compose texts, and 4) remix derives from and contributes to collaborative and participatory activity. I explain each of these components, then describe how I searched for studies that involved remix in some way. I then review the empirical studies in relation to the definition set up in the first part of this chapter.

Defining Remix

Remix, in a participatory culture sense, allows people to interact with work produced by others with few limitations of time and space. Access to the physical components of participation (e.g., internet access, a device that connects to the internet) opened doors, or portals as Gee (2005) enables people to construct new meanings, new expressions, and new content from what already exists. By examining and interacting with content as consumers, people become creators of new content (Cope et al., 2017; Lessig, 2008; O’Byrne, 2014).

New content may be completely original, but it is more likely to be a blend of existing elements, or cultural artifacts (Knobel & Lankshear, 2008). Cultural artifacts include print texts, but also include sound recording, animation, images, and even performance. Every time texts are combined something different emerges, producing a new perspective on the original materials, the initial context, and the message intended by the remixer (Murray, 2015). The idea of remixing copyrighted material has been the subject of debate and lawsuits, but the practice has become acceptable, even in museums. Notably, the Hirshhorn Museum and Sculpture Garden

embraced remix to both engage teens in learning about art and to offer them skills that helped prepare them for work in the real world (Ray & Itah, 2014). ARTLAB+, a free digital arts studio, invited students to respond to museum installations by remixing photography, virtual galleries, and current issues with the goal of helping students think critically about the world around them and how they interact with it (Ray & Itah). Contemplating their place in the world through remix may help students become more involved in their local communities and become more aware of how they may use their voices to facilitate cultural changes. In the next sections, I consider the history and role of remix in culture by considering remix as text, remix as a meaning-making process, remix as creative practice, and remix as participatory activity.

A Brief View of Text in Relation to Remix

For 500 years, literacy was generally defined as the ability to construct and make meaning of language using the technology of the written word, but the definition ultimately included understanding multiple forms of text. By the end of the 20th century, literacy was part of multiple social practices connected to internet access (Barone, 2015). If you ask teenagers in the second decade of the 21st century the meaning of text, most will likely say something about sending messages to others via cell phones. If you ask someone over 40 the same question, the answer is more likely to have something to do with a book. If you asked a weaver from the early 15th century, the definition had little to do with words and everything to do with weaving threads into cloth (“*teks-*” American Heritage Dictionary blog, n.d.). Despite these distinctions over time, there was one commonality: texts combine elements to make something greater than the sum of its parts.

Text in cultures. Throughout history, cultures used images as texts, e.g., stained-glass windows, murals, and illustrated books. As reading developed as a skill among more than the

elite classes, books filled with words dominated the world of text. The printing press made print text available to the masses, who ultimately learned to read for themselves. Once computers became widely available texts evolved into woven elements of words, images, animation, sound, and motion (Gee & Hayes, 2011). Not only are written texts available to more people than ever, but people now can easily contribute to available texts online.

In some ways, it is still a print-centric world, especially in education (Hull & Nelson, 2005; Kajder, Turner, & Hicks, 2015; Myers & Beach, 2004). Print text is still privileged in school settings, but digital literacies in general, and remix in particular have been part of academic discussion since The New London Group (1996) introduced the term multiliteracies. Remix was one of many modalities considered as the group considered "complementary pedagogical orientations that combined immersion in authentic practices, overt instruction, and critical understanding as a basis for acquiring new meanings and practices" (Cope et al., 2017, p. 35). Digital literacies were never intended to replace existing literacies, including the traditional school-based literacies of reading and writing (Alexander & Fox, 2004; Gee & Hayes, 2011; Mills, 2016). Digital literacies complement existing print-based literacies by offering an approach that appealed to a group of students who struggle with traditional forms (Garcia, 2017; Singer & Alexander, 2017). As a complementary practice, remix must be considered a text. If literate people are those who construct and make meaning of language using available technologies, remix is by definition a text.

Remix as text. "Everything is a remix" said Ferguson (2015). Utilizing remix as a form of text accessible to teens in and out of school allows them to be part of creating the culture they will inhabit as adults. Cultural expression and personal fulfillment are extensions of the freedom literacy affords. Instead of being limited to passive viewing, people can be active participants in

media production and distribution. Using the affordances of technology, including remix, expands the notion of what it means to be literate in a way that recognizes the human element of education. The alteration of texts in all forms is the basis for remix. Navas (2018) said that remix is “part of a reflexive moment in which material is being repurposed based on a growing awareness of recycling as a creative act” (p. 251). The U.S. is currently experiencing a creative recycling culture, made evident by the number of television shows, magazines, and books devoted to making treasure from trash. The altered book shared in the introduction of this paper is an example of creative recycling. Weaving disparate digital materials together was, and remains, a key component of remix. New media platforms grew out of accessible internet and the tools to create content to share online.

Technology allowed multiple literacies to become more widespread and accessible to both print and non-print audiences. Changes in technology also changed the literary environment, and in current modern culture the sharp lines between alphabetic writing and visual, aural, and other modalities are blurring (Palmeri, 2012). The blurring of modes is especially evident in the multimedia compositions that make up television advertising, where images, words, and sounds play roughly equal roles in making up the text. The cultural shifts of the last 50 years have not been matched in U.S. education systems, particularly in the English Language Arts (ELA) classrooms. Hafner (2015) contended that digital multimodal composition prepares students for their literate lives in a digital culture outside the classroom and that it empowers students to participate in language and literacy instruction by matching their out-of-school literacy practices.

The New London Group (1996) recognized the potential of the emerging technological advances for multiple communication channels and increased linguistic and cultural diversity,

and they applied their ideas to literacy education. They wrote that one purpose of education was to prepare students to become full and equitable participants in public life. They proposed pedagogy that would extend literacy education to all the new forms of text emerging from access to the internet. They discussed the changing sociocultural world outside the classroom, arguing against an unbending insistence in schools for continuing the focus on canonical literature of Western Europe and the U.S., grammar out-of-context, and meaning-making in only the mode of the written word. Their argument for multiliteracies included revisiting the modes of communication available to teachers and students in schools.

Remix is a way students use the affordances of digital technology (e.g., smartphones, tablets, the internet) to make meaning of the world around them and to construct content that allows them to speak to and about the things they find important and to express the meanings they make from them (Rowse & Pahl, 2011). It is a creative and imaginative process that students share with friends, family, and broader audiences, a sharing that is uncommon with school based writing. In composing remixes in any of its forms, people share their knowledge and experiences through new texts infused with personal meaning.

Remix as Meaning-Making Process

When people bring their histories and experiences to a text, they construct a personal meaning of the work that makes it relevant for them (Gee, 2001; Yandell, 2008). Each participant in the conversation brings a point of view based on a personal history and belief system that interprets the text differently. Rosenblatt (1978) asked the questions, "What in fact does the reader respond to? What does he interpret?" (p. 4). The interaction between reader and text is complex; the reader is more than a passive recipient of text, and the meaning of the text is constructed through a transaction of the reader, the author, and the text. In response to that

constructed meaning, words may be mixed to create poems (spoken or written), and a new text is created. In remix, that poem is taken apart, layered, changed, altered, and combined with other elements to construct a new composition, one that is multimodal. The new composition infuses a new or different meaning to the original text while maintaining some elements of the original. Using digital remix, the transaction has multiple layers of image, sound, and animation, using elements that are copied, transformed, and imbued with new meaning assigned by the remixer.

If literacy is limited to simply reading and writing—whether in the sense of encoding and decoding print, as a tool, a set of skills, or a technology, or as some kind of psychological process—it stifles the 21st century reader's ability to make sense of a literacy experience. The advent of the internet, smartphones, tablets, and personal computers not only changed the kinds of texts available to readers but also changed the way people responded to texts (Turner & Hicks, 2017). New kinds of texts in multiple modes required new kinds of interactions and responses. Additionally, the text design added to or detracted from the meaning constructed by the receiver. Kress and Van Leeuwen (2001) added that new technologies required a design element not required before computers or smartphones were part of the culture. When there was only one way to compose text, the idea of design was not as important an issue. Language in words or static image were the only design options for presentation and distribution of thoughts and ideas (Kress & Van Leeuwen). Students now need to consider design, color, font (or fonts), images, layout, and whitespace - the area of a publication intentionally left untouched. If students include sounds or video modes, they must pay attention to image clarity, sound quality, audio levels, and transitions. These considerations are in addition to the message that, in a written text, was presented in a linear manner (Kress, 2003). Paying attention to the visual, auditory, and spacial elements of text requires developing a practice of creativity. Remix is at its foundation a creative

endeavor, one in which people make meaning of texts by transacting with them to create new texts.

Remix as Creative Practice

Rosenblatt contended that transactions with texts incorporated both past knowledge and experiences with the reader's present condition: place, time, interest, and preoccupation. It required a level of inquiry for people to make connections between their experiences and the texts. She suggested that changes in any of the transactional elements could also change the interpretation of the linguistic symbols making up the physical text. The marks on a page were signs in symbol form. The way readers interpret those signs is what Rosenblatt labeled transactions, pulling memory of knowledge and experience from within and applying it to the work of an author, creating a new experience by which future transactions may be interpreted. Signs come from a multitude of systems, including alphabetic, image-based, computer coding, and musical.

Musical remix is the best-known kind of remix in American culture, but the term is not limited to music. The collages most kindergartners do by cutting up magazines and gluing the images to construction paper is a form of remix. Storytelling through dance is another form of remix, as was most of the epic poetry from antiquity. In each, a familiar tale is combined with movement, music, and/or spoken words. The details of the story may be modified for the audience, but the essence is the same. Popular movies are often remixes of other narratives. Shakespeare's plays become source material for interpretations in multiple venues. Disney's *The Lion King* was a remix of *Hamlet*, the story of a king murdered by his brother, leaving the apparent heir to wrestle with his place in the world. Shakespeare's *Hamlet* was itself a remix of a Scandinavian medieval legend. The original story may be even older, an epic Icelandic poem,

but there was no written copy. Hamlet as Hip-Hop merited its own research focus remixing rap and pop culture with a high school curriculum (Anglin & Smagorinsky, 2014).

What is it about remixing that propels imitation, adaptation, and multiple interpretations? Lankshear and Knobel (2011) argued that remix was “a necessary condition for culture” (p. 91). U.S. culture is largely made up of remixed cultures from around the world as different people groups immigrated to the country (Ferguson, Irvine, 2015; Weiss, 2017). Different geographic areas took on characteristics of the people moving there. Louisiana’s Cajun culture remixed Native American and French; the Midwest absorbed German and Irish Catholic immigrants; and both East Asian and Russian cultures influenced the culture of the Pacific Coast (History.com, 2018) It is in the context of a culture made up of remixes that remix culture thrives. For remix to be a successful tool in composition, it should be considered as part of the meaning-making process in relationship with multiple modes of communication as a response to the remix culture in which we live. Remix culture, defined next, requires a familiarity with creative composition and remix as design, both discussed below.

Remix culture. Campanelli (2015) described remix culture as “an irreversible process of hybridization of sources, materials, subjectivities, and media ongoing in contemporary society” (p. 68). He contended that society of the 21st century is more participatory than reflective, and information may be infinitely reproduced, synthesized, modified, and returned to the source as new information. He added that using fragments of previous works is what humans have done throughout history in arts, sciences, and intellectual pursuits. What makes contemporary society a remix culture is the “far-reaching spread of post-production tools...and the exponential multiplication...of sources that one can access at virtually anytime and from anywhere” (p. 73). In other words, affordable technology and internet accessibility allows more people to participate

in remixing than ever before. Hafner (2015) added that current culture is one that values the appropriation and reworking of existing cultural materials. He wrote that remix culture allows participants to combine existing artifacts in ways that allow them to represent themselves in ways words alone cannot. Hafner's work in situation in courses for English language learners in a Hong Kong science class. He found that remixing allowed his students to focus on their science projects while practicing their English language skills, instead of focusing on academic writing. Remix offered a balance. Remix culture made it possible.

Lessig (2005) defined remix culture as “a rich, diverse outpouring of creativity based on creativity” (n.p.). Lessig who developed and founded Creative Commons (creativecommons.org) observed in 2008 that remix processes are so entrenched as part of culture that to eliminate remix would irreparably damage the ability for amateurs to share their innovations and perhaps even create a hierarchy of creators controlled by an oppressive system of laws to regulate it. He wrote, “Why should it be that just when technology is most encouraging of creativity, the law should be most restrictive?” (p. 105). Lessig argued that access to digital tools democratizes writing by removing many historical barriers to creative self-expression.

Creative composition. One characteristic of new literacies is the expansion of creativity in composition. Wordsmithing may be a creative endeavor, but the incorporation of other communicative elements like image, sound, and motion, adds a level of aesthetic and artistic complexity that Peirce regarded as one of the three normative sciences (Anderson, 1987; Peirce, 1866). Pirie (1997) wrote, "Writing, at its core, is a matter of finding and making the shapes of ideas, not a matter of cramming ideas into a universal pattern" (p. 77). While learning a standard form of English composition may ultimately be important for long term academic success, there was a balance that allowed local circumstances and communities to shape writing instruction.

Remix affords a way to bridge home and school by encouraging students to connect their own lived experiences to literature, and in the process share their home cultures with their peers (Ladson-Billings, 2014; Palmeri, 2012). As Gere (2010) observed, "Writing instruction is not limited to what happens inside classrooms" (p. 94). The new literacies and the skills they required pushed readers and composers of texts to develop creative expressions in composition.

Composition through written reflection, remix, or multimedia compositions offers students transactional experiences that connected their real lives to literature and other classroom texts in ways that allowed them to construct meaning through familiar modes. Technology does not replace writing skills; technology instead improves and expands language (Gee & Hayes, 2011). The underlying question, "what constitutes quality in writing?" (Hillocks, 2006, p. 64) remains the same. Even the definition of writing evolved into multimodal forms that included multiple media. This evolution is why I chose the term composing instead of writing throughout this dissertation.

Literacy is the ability to interpret and compose texts in modes common to the culture. Literacy is about communicating with other people in a particular culture through a variety of modes using the languages of multiple media. As technology in the US became more accessible and affordable, literacy practices outside school classrooms changed. Contemporary texts are often multimodal and multimedia. Multimedia compositions are driven by design.

Components of design. The notion of design is a crucial component of remix (Kress, 2008). Stein (2008) observed, "The idea of design means that people choose how to represent meaning from a range of possible options" (p. 875). Written composition, particularly in a school setting, is limited to structures of paragraphs. Remix allows artists to create and share representations of their thoughts, ideas, and messages (Borsche, 2018). Digital remix culture

allows multiple variations on the same thing using a broad variety of modes and media accessible to people through computers, tablets, and smartphones. While music remixers started with dual turntables and vinyl records, modern digital remixers use software and apps. YouTube had about 41 million uploads tagged as mashups, a form of remix wherein multiple songs of similar themes or a selection of songs by a single artist were merged into one video. The creative explosion was made possible by technology that was relatively easy to access and use. Using technology to create required a series of design decisions.

Hassett and Wood (2017) observed a dichotomy of pedagogical designs in modern English Language Arts instruction: one was a vision of students who readily recited texts and facts and became adept at standardized essay forms, and the second was a vision focused on students as "collaborative, innovative problem solvers" (p. 176). If, however, attention to the writing process in multiple modes became part of classroom instruction, students may be able to succeed at both academic expectations and constructing meaningful connections to literature. Good teaching, according to Ladson-Billings (1995), came through making the learning relevant to students while freeing them to explore texts through the lenses of their own lived experiences. Remix offers a creative way to explore new knowledge, understand, and respond to it.

Digital remix adds elements of audio and video to layers of color, shape, image, and text. Digital remix refers to using online tools and apps to integrate the elements together. Not all digital remix includes audio or visual elements, but all digital remix is constructed using digital and online tools requiring design decisions. Remix, as one element of digital literacies, is important for learning because it draws directly from the prior knowledge and experience of the remixer. Remix is not limited to digital and online practices, but the internet provides a space for experimentation and sharing. Additionally, the internet increases access to cultural artifacts:

images, texts, sounds, and songs. These artifacts are the essential building blocks of digital remix (Gee, 2017; Harrison, & Navas, 2018; Lankshear & Knobel, 2011; Murray, 2015). Remix texts are avenues for meaning-making through creative blends of existing artifacts. It is inherently collaborative even when the remixer works alone.

Remix as Participatory Action

Remix is not a solitary endeavor; it requires interaction and collaboration, either passive or active, with other creators. The internet, a space not bound by place, allows anyone with a computer and satellite access to be part of the community. Jenkins (1992) coined the phrase *participatory culture* to describe the community of people who gathered online to remix, interact with, and create social networks around their fandom. He defined participatory culture as

a culture with relatively low barriers to artistic expression and civic engagement, strong support for creating and sharing one's creations, and some type of informal mentorship whereby what is known by the most experienced is passed along to novices. A participatory culture is also one in which members believe their contributions matter and feel some degree of social connection with one another (Jenkins & Purushotma, 2009. p. 3).

This definition of participatory culture addresses both the artistic and social aspects of remix. People connect to each other as they learn the artistic processes from each other. Additionally, as people share the meanings they make of the artifacts they choose to use, they begin to see the world outside their local communities as real places of real people with whom they can make real connections. Participatory culture in this sense is a place where equity and equality is valued and protected.

Participatory culture removes traditional barriers of age, geography, gender, education, and status. Anyone with access to the internet may contribute to conversations, collaborations, and compositions in a variety of sites and spaces. While it is theoretically appropriate to say that everyone has something to share with a physical community, the reality is that some voices are more privileged than others for a variety of reasons. The online community is different in many ways from the physical world, or *in real life* (IRL) (Gee, 2005). It is possible to create an identity in the virtual realm that is not like the one IRL. Physical appearance can be altered or replaced with icons and avatars chosen by the user. Expertise in online communities depends on experience and skill born of practice rather than education, age, or social standing. A teenager who appears to be marginally successful in school, socially awkward, and generally introverted (the stereotype of the computer nerd) may well be a respected expert in an online context (Jenkins et al., 2016; Palmeri, 2012). The virtual world minimizes the importance of physical appearance, which affords a certain amount of power to people who might not wield it otherwise. The internet and the affinity spaces therein offer what Gee and Hayes (2011) called "an opportunity for equality" by reducing the potency of traditional barriers (age, gender, geography, socioeconomic status, and education) to producing content. The beauty of participatory culture lies in knowing that everyone has something to offer, expertise that benefits the online community, or affinity space (Alvermann, 2010; Gee, 2005; Michielse & Paarti, 2015).

In this first section, I defined remix as having four essential qualities: it is a text that reflects the composers meaning making process through a creative practice and participatory action. In the next sections, I share the literature related to remix. I begin with how I gathered studies and a brief synopsis of two existing literature reviews. I then consider the studies more

directly related to my definition of remix and the purpose of my own study of how teachers experience remix as a teaching tool.

Methods for Gathering Studies Related to Remix

I started my research into remix by reviewing my collection of books by authors like Gee, Hicks, Knobel, Jenkins, Lankshear, and Navas, who represent scholars of multimodal composition and research and are well respected in the academic community. I also read conference proceedings, and journals like *College Composition and Communication* (CCCC), *Literacy Research Association* (LRA), and *National Council of Teachers of English* (NCTE) as the professional associations wrestled with how digital technology should be addressed in high school ELA classrooms.

Various edited handbooks also proved to be valuable places to find resources; I used the *Handbook of Research on New Literacies* (Coiro, et al., 2008), the *Handbook of Research on Teaching the English Language Arts* (Lapp & Fisher, 2011), *Theoretical Models and Processes of Reading* (Alvermann, Unrau, & Ruddell, 2013), and *Keywords in Remix Studies* (Navas, et al., 2018). However, most of these texts focused on multiliteracies in general, with no specific work about remix.

Google searches and the University library allowed me to search for articles that discussed remix in schools, remix in ELA classrooms, and studies about remix practices in the U.S. I used keyword combinations of remix, composition, ELA, teachers, and secondary schools. While multimodality, in general, is interrogated by many authors, there are few studies considering the role of remix in particular. Many of the studies are set in college classes, with others set in elementary schools (burrough & Erickson, 2015; Dalton, 2013; Davis & McGrail, 2017; Liu et al., 2017; O'Byrne, 2014; Rowsell & Burgess, 2017; Young Imm Kang, 2009). The

high school level studies utilizing remix I found were mostly done in creative writing courses or were English Language Learner courses from outside the US (Bigelow, Vanek, King, & Abdi, 2017; Dezuanni, 2015; Hafner, 2015; Huang & Archer, 2017). Other studies came from technical writing courses and online studies in fanfiction spaces (Berkowitz, 2012; Dusenberry et al., 2015; Stedman, 2012). Remix and other multimodal practices were situated as one-off projects rather than as regular practice in interpretation of literature or composition studies (Anglin & Smagorinsky, 2014; Burwell, 2013; Callahan & King, 2011; Consalco & David, 2016; Smith, 2019). Many studies focused on students, techniques, and assessment, or with teachers incorporating multimodal practices as part of core ELA practice, but teacher perspectives were absent (Dusenberry, Hutter, & Robinson, 2015; Hamilton, 2012; Kroksmark, 2015; Lisenbee, 2016; Sowerbrower, 2014).

Journals like *Journal of Technical Writing*, *Contemporary Issues in Technology and Teacher Education*, and *Computers & Education*. Journals for English language learners also provided studies of the potential of remix to keep students motivated as they learn the process of writing English (Bigelow, Vanek, King, & Abdi, 2017; Hafner, 2015). Other journals pointed to remix and other multimodal compositional practices as beneficial to preparing high school students for a business climate that is increasingly driven by the affordances of online technology (Cronin, 2011; Lessing, 2008; Rowsell, 2016). Additionally, the *Contemporary Issues in Technology and Teacher Education* (CITE) Journal has as its mission to explore English education as literacy practices change. As part of a larger study (manuscript in process, 2019), I surveyed every issue on the CITE journal page (volumes 1-18), looking for ways various technologies were used as literacy tools. As I read the articles for general technology use, I also made note of articles and studies directly related to remix.

Two of the professional associations in which I was a member produced position statements on technology and literacy in the last decade. The International Reading Association (ILA, 2009) noted that the nature of reading, writing, and communication have been redefined by the internet and communication technology. In that document, authors wrote that students need to have access to information and communication technologies (ICTs), a literacy curriculum that makes critical and culturally sensitive use of the technology, and advocacy for teachers to incorporate ICTs in their curricula. The primary idea behind the position statement was that in recognizing the ubiquitous nature of technology and the internet, literacy scholars and educators needed to become competent in the new literacies themselves so they could meet the needs of their students and prepare them for an increasingly virtual society.

Similarly, in 2018 the National Council for Teachers of English (NCTE) Commission on Digital Literacy in Teacher Education (D-LITE) released a position statement that included four core beliefs: literacy means *literacies*, consider literacies before technologies, technologies provide new ways to consume and produce texts, and technologies and their associated literacies are not neutral (NCTE D-LITE, 2018). In the statement, authors responded to changing communication practices by creating a framework to support teachers and teacher educators as they explored and taught through multimodal, multimedia, and multiliteracy paradigms.

Both ILA and NCTE recognized the changing social contexts of communication; core elements of writing, speaking, listening, and viewing as literacy expanded with ICTs. Educators and scholars who recognized the changes would be positioned to promote a broader definition of literacy and adjust their pedagogical theories to include all the ways 21st-century students communicate with each other and the world at large.

Each of these resources provided information and insight into how literacy, technology, and composition have evolved over the centuries. I begin the next section with two existing literature reviews about remix and multimodal writing before sharing my research of remix as text, as a process for meaning-making, a creative practice, and as participatory action. I conclude this chapter with a statement of current research into how teachers experience multimodal practices like remix.

Remix Reviews

Both recently published reviews of literature about school-related remix noted a lack of information about how remix is integrated into school classrooms from the teachers' points of view. Knobel (2017) included studies of outside the ELA classroom, while Nash (2018) focused his attention on secondary ELA classrooms. Neither found significant research into how teachers experience remix. In my own research, I found the same: what studies exist in secondary ELA classes consider largely the student perspective and changes in how students may display mastery of the subject.

Remix, Literacy, and Creativity

Knobel (2017) reviewed 36 studies about school-related remix, literacy, and creativity. She noted a discrepancy between studies set in schools and “a sizeable body of out-of-school research which shows how people are being creative and imaginative in their meaning-making practices, especially within remix practices” (31). That much of the research on remix is devoted to spaces outside the ELA classroom should not be surprising because the focus of education in the last two decades has been on quantifiable data, which largely relegated creative composition endeavors to out-of-school spaces (Alvermann, 2011; Alvermann, 2015; Alvermann & Harrison, 2016; Pirie, 1997; Shipka, 2011; Stanford, 2014).

Knobel's (2017) review also substantiated the role of imagination and creativity in learning, particularly in multimedia forms. She considered the ubiquity of digital electronic technologies, business practices moving toward collaborative problem solving, and the importance flexibility as people live in a culture of constant change. The studies she considered emphasized technology's role in an evolving knowledge economy and how creativity has become a distributable social survival skill. She wrote, "Contemporary creative discourses privilege distributed collaborative activity, instrumental value, and purpose, diverse forms of creativity, and a radical democratizing of who can reasonably be perceived as purposefully manifesting creativity" (p. 36). She found across the 36 studies that remix fostered everyday creative practices and that most of those creative practices were happening outside of school, especially in online fan fiction spaces, music remixes, video remixes, memes, and gaming communities. She concluded that the U.S. may benefit from teacher education programs that promote teacher creativity by having teacher candidates consider the layers of meaning making, creativity, and participatory collaboration required in digital remixes. She said that creative remix builds on the work of others and depends on understanding the technologies involved and attention to the feedback that occurs when the creative work is shared.

Exploring Multimodal Writing in Secondary English Classrooms

Nash (2018) found that, while there are ample studies about multimodality in general, there is little research published on multimodal practices in classrooms. In his review of 26 studies of multimodal composition in secondary ELA classrooms he learned that teachers mixed modalities within single student texts, allowing students to produce in a variety of media: comic book, video, visual poem, recordings, and a variety of digital media. Eight articles discussed the way some teachers used both written statements to support multimodal compositions. Nine

focused on the composition process itself. He noted the diversity across modes and media, adding that the teachers who seemed to focus on student interests, publication, and freedom of writing processes reported a change in how they thought about multimodal resources could be effective teaching practices. Most authors in the studies agreed that multimodal composition encouraged student interests and participation. One thing he found lacking in the studies was “the experiences of teachers as they work to incorporate multimodality in English classes” (p. 353). He also found limited work done to address issues of power, wherein corporations like Microsoft and Apple control the technologies used to create multimedia compositions. Nor were there studies on issues of equity or diversity. Based on Nash’s review, my interest in teacher experiences in their classrooms seems to be an area ripe for research.

Remix in Classrooms

Knobel (2017) made note that most of the students she encountered focused on a broader scope of multimodal texts, not just remix. Nash (2018) noted the lack of teacher experiences studied in the most current literature. In my own readings, I have found remix to be embedded into broader discussions of multimodality, and so I begin my discussion of remix studies with a set that focuses on multimodal texts broadly. I make this move because many of the studies of multimodality in composition include remix as one multimodal form. I then discuss the remix qualities that I defined in the first part of this chapter: remix as text, as a meaning-making process, as creative practice, and as participatory action.

Studies of Texts in Schools

Print media has historically been privileged in schools and remains so (Bezemer et al., 2012). In spite of the affordances of multimodal technology, most classrooms in the U.S. remained committed to traditional alphabetic word-based printed texts for both reading and

writing (Kajder, Turner, & Hicks, 2015; Logan, n.d.; Zoch, Myers, & Belcher, 2016). With the increase of 1:1 technology programs in schools, where every student was given access to a tablet or laptop (Doran & Herold, 2016; Warschauer), it seems classroom practice would begin to reflect multiple ways of reading and writing. However, in many schools the 1:1 initiatives either fell flat or were discontinued altogether (November, 2013). The technology failed to live up to its potential for several reasons: lack of tech support or bandwidth required (Logan, Schrader, 2016), lack of parental support (Ferlazzo, 2017), access management (Hu, 2007; Vascellaro, 2006; Watters, 2011), and the speed with which technology changed (Goodwin, 2011; Lemagie, 2010; Logan). Additionally, studies of student achievement results when using technology were largely mixed, at least in broad quantitative measures (Bebell & Kay, 2010; Doran & Herold, 2016; Goodwin, 2011; Schrader, 2016). Literacy contexts outside school have changed dramatically, while the expected outcomes in school-based literacies are largely unaffected with a focus on canonical texts and responses in formalized and structured written form

Educational settings still cling to the tradition of privileging alphabetic texts; Hull and Nelson (2005) described schools and universities as “staunchly logocentric, book centered, and essay driven, invested as are most educators in the versions of meaning making whose value they know best and committed as are many educators to sharing the languages and modes of power” (p. 225). The continued alphabetic-centric approach to writing in education all but ignores the kinds of texts prevalent in the world beyond the classroom. Beach, Hull, and O’Brien (2011) observed that “Students are not exploiting the full potential for uses of Web 2.0 because their schools’ ELA curriculums remain organized around prints-based paradigms that perceive digital tools as merely and add-on rather than as a transformation of ELA” (p 163). Current school texts are largely unchanged since early 1970s, illustrated by a list of Advanced Placement titles posted

by a Texas school district (www.crowleyisdtx.org). In this section, I explore some of these reasons for education's slow response to taking up remix.

Constraints of 1:1 technology in schools. Warschauer (2008) studied 10 elementary and secondary schools with students of various ethnicities and socioeconomic statuses over two years. The schools implemented a 1:1 technology policy, meaning there was one computer, laptop, or tablet for each student in the school. While teachers reported greater student interest in both reading and writing on the computers, student test scores did not improve. Warschauer speculated that part of the discrepancy between student participation in learning and test scores was based on the structure of the tests. Students could think critically and produce what Warschauer called “sophisticated artistic and educational skills” (p. 62) but demonstrating mastery in a multimodal composition did not transfer into demonstrating mastery on a single mode standardized test. Additionally, the expense of providing 1:1 technology to schools is a limiting factor. Warschauer's research also demonstrated that the 1:1 technology was less successful for students in more diverse communities of lower socioeconomic statuses because both students and teachers needed more training on the affordances of these technologies and how to fully utilize them. This training requires time and money; an investment many schools cannot afford.

November (2013) reiterated the challenge of time and money in applying 1:1 technologies. He called the practice of many districts handing out technology without adequate and ongoing training a “spray and pray” approach to technology integration wherein the district sprays on technology and prays it results in high student achievement scores. November's observation in his study of schools with failed 1:1 programs was that the focus was on the technology itself while ignoring the shift in pedagogy that must accompany it.

November called for a change in how administrative leadership teams introduce technology to schools. They must first embrace a school wide vision to connecting students to the world through the technology rather than focus on the novelty of the tool. He also said that school leaders need to support teachers who take risks and work on innovative ideas, something current school contexts often ignore. Ferlazzo (2017) noted that schools tend to stop professional learning about how to integrate technology once the initial training is complete. The lack of support and continuing education means teachers often return to the practices they know because they have neither the time nor expertise to explore ways to fully integrate technology into their classrooms. Ferlazzo also found parent involvement and support to be a key to a sustainable digital program. Getting parents involved so that they can express concerns as well as learn why the technology is beneficial makes them stakeholders in the investment of time and money that will ultimately benefit their students.

Outside the classroom. Ferlazzo also found that without a vision that includes a student-centered learning environment both in school and at home, students at the lower end of the socioeconomic scale could not take full advantage of the technology and they benefitted the least. Additionally, many students without home computers have powerful cell phones with more potential than students know how to use (Watters, 2011). Breaking down the inequities in access by encouraging students to use the devices they own may be one idea (Gainer & Lapp, 2010; Mirror and Garcia, 2017). Using the devices they use regularly also mitigates the learning curve that comes with unfamiliar technology, another reason technology use in classroom lags behind use outside school (Goodwin, 2011). Stedman (2012) observed that remix literacy skills, technological skills that allow people to create mashups, memes, and other kinds of remix, are already being learned by students and should be blended into existing text-based practices in a

way that validates the work students do on their own. With advances in technology on a nearly daily basis, schools need to support their teachers and students by providing both access to technology and the opportunities to develop the literacies that technology and the world outside of school require (Hicks & Turner, 2013). Students' consuming and creating digital texts is a step.

There are multiple avenues for incorporating technology into classrooms, even in schools where traditional adherence to print texts and the Western canon of literature prevails. Knobel and Lankshear (2008) list several purposes for remix: fun, humor, expressing solidarity, and making political statements. Even canonical literature can be remixed by students as they begin to make meaning of the books they are required to read. Jenkins (2013a) wrote about remixing *Moby Dick*; Anglin and Smagorinsky (2014) share the experience of a Hip Hop Hamlet. In recent years, students have become more multimodal in their composition of texts outside the classroom, and that multimodal practice feeds into their identification as literate people (Alvermann, 2011).

The Function of Literacy in Remix

The schools that showed some successes in technology integration provided the keys for opening the doors to integrating remix texts into schools. Studies by Doran and Herold (2016), Goodwin (2011), Schrader (2016), and Zheng and Henion (2016) among others found that schools with a vision for technology use, a plan for implementation, and ongoing professional development for teachers saw not only improved student participation in classroom activities, but also increased student research skills and better scores on standardized tests for most students across the curriculum. Because "language is a socially generated and socially generative phenomenon," the way in which people read, interpreted, and responded to texts links to their

experiences as members of a specific social culture. (Rosenblatt, p. 20). When social cultures transform, and when new technologies expand the definition of text, the ways in which people interact with texts also changes (Alvermann, 2011; Gee, 2017b; Hicks & Turner, 2013; Palmeri, 2012; Pirie, 1997). Remix, in any of its forms, shares four key traits: 1) it is a text, 2) it is a meaning-making process, 3) it is a creative practice, and 4) it is participatory action. In the next sections, I briefly explore what the literature has to say about each trait.

Studies Illustrating Remix as Text

Texts in the early 21st century are a multiliteracy practice, worked in multiple modes, and subject to further alterations by the initial composer or other composers who respond to what they see, hear, sense, and feel (Dalton & Proctor, 2008; Myers & Beach, 2004; Rosenblatt, 1995; Young & Bush, 2004). Technology allows multiple literacies to become more widespread and accessible to both print and non-print audiences (Kajder, Turner, & Hicks, 2015; Myers & Beach, 2004; Young & Bush, 2004). Digital platforms like blogs, social media, gaming and other affinity spaces, allows experimentation for users to find their voices and become contributors to online information (Hafner, 2015; Jenkins & Billard, 2018; Ketter & Hunter, 2002; O'Byrne, 2014).

Remix, as a transactional process and product, uses culturally available resources to make meaning of old and new kinds of text without diminishing the power of print. The definition of what made a text may be broader than decades ago, but the importance of transacting with text through knowledge, experience, and semiotics remains largely unchanged (Gee & Hayes, 2011; Lankshear & Knobel, 2011; Jenkins, 2013; Navas et al., 2018). In several studies, remix functioned as a type of text in secondary ELA contexts that was familiar to students who already

remixed music, images, and words outside the classroom (Alvermann, 2010; Beach, 2017; Burwell, 2013; Knobel & Lankshear, 2008).

Remix represents one way of knowing and writing; it is not intended to become another way of doing school (Hyer & Hicks, 2014; Pope, 2001; Shipka 2011). It positions learners as transacting with texts, using their knowledge and experiences to construct and communicate new understanding (Gainer & Lapp, 2010). It is a way to connect student worlds and practices to the classroom in a way that offers multiple angles to composition by considering different ways of interpreting literature in light of students' lived experiences and new digital tools (Knobel & Lankshear, 2008; Stedman, 2012). Literacy in all its forms, and the opportunity for lifelong learning that accompanies it is a key to personal, economic, and political freedom (Freire, 1970; The New London Group, 1996). Knobel (2017) concluded her study with the observation that creativity as a process in the classroom is undervalued and that people practicing remix outside the school environment engage in the kind of collaborative and participatory work that may afford advantages in adapting to rapid changes in a society increasingly reliant on technology.

Ray (2013) conceptualized multimodal compositions, including remix, as transactions between genres, not necessarily final products. This view may be one way to mitigate the fears of parents or administrators that technology is more toy than tool. Ray adds that remix itself “expands the possibilities of writing instruction” and strengthens “relevance to the myriad shifts occurring in cultures” (p. 194). Using real world literacies to consider texts means teaching students to think beyond the kind of institutional writing familiar in school and allows them to develop rhetorical and technological expertise for communicating after they have finished their formal education (Stedman, 2012). Literacy has always changed, and, while the current changes

seem to manifest with increasing rapidity, students need to be able to digest and create the new textual forms (Leu, Kinzer, Coiro, Castek, & Henry, 2004).

Once remix and its associated literacies is recognized as an appropriate text for schools, it can then be employed as a way for students to use it to make meaning of all texts, printed and multimodal. Additionally, they can exercise their creativity as they create multimodal and remixed texts of their own.

Hafner (2015) used remix as a strategy for his English language learners in a science class to display mastery of the concepts they learned without having the additional burden of perfecting their language skills. This practice allowed the students to work on their English in a natural context of speaking with minimal academic style writing required.

Studies Highlighting Remix as Meaning-making Process and Creative Practice

Part of the challenge of living in a technology and knowledge-driven culture is that people need to efficiently filter through an overwhelming quantity of information to separate fact from opinion. At the same time, to communicate well, people need to shape rhetorical strategies in multiple forms, taking advantage of technology and the affordances of the internet to reach their audiences (Dusenberry, Hutter, & Robinson, 2015; Lankshear & Knobel, 2011; Turner & Hicks, 2017; Van Meter & Firetto, 2008). Blogs, wikis, social media, and other types of affinity spaces all make production of information open to a wide audience, allowing more people to choose how and when they participate in a knowledge-based economy (Gee & Hayes, 2011; Mayer, 2008). Part of participating in a democratic society is access to avenues of expression and communication (Jenkins & Billard, 2018).

One affordance of a technological culture is the ability to share social and political commentary to a large audience in multiple forms: memes, remixes, mashup, fan fiction, and parody (Heron-Hruby, Hagood, Alvermann, 2008; Michielse & Partti, 2015; Navas et al., 2018). In ELA, remix is a way of creating and connecting texts. Remix instruction allows students to make connections between literature and life experience (Gauntlett, 2010). Literature and other texts within the ELA classroom become interactive when students and teachers question what they see and read (Rumelhart, 2013). Ajaua (2015) studied classrooms in the U.K. that allowed students to “draw upon their own agency, capacity, and social interests” (p. 71) as they remixed *Romeo and Juliet* and *Macbeth* into books, films, cartoons, and as a series of still images. It gave students the opportunity to transact with literature in a way that made the reading relevant to their lives but also afforded them a way to respond that is more in line with their out-of-school literacies than traditional instruction. Many students already create and publish their own texts online; ELA teachers could capitalize on those existing practices by incorporating them into classroom practice (Bomer, Patterson-Zoch, David, Ok, 2010; Davis & McGrail, 2017; Montrieux, Vanderlinde, Schellens, De Marez, 2015; Vita-Finzi, 2016). Digital remix requires access to online tools, often missing in school settings. However, even in schools with 1:1 digital devices, digital remix requires an understanding by both administrators and teachers of the potential empowering elements of remix and the way in which it represents a cultural shift (Cercone, 2017).

Remix as a form of response or expression may be useful to demonstrate techniques for school-based writing practice while still valuing students' out-of-school literacies (Alvermann, Young, & Colin, 1997; Beach, 2017; Behizadeh, 2015; Lessig, 2008; Shipka, 2011). Where and by what method (e.g., analog or digital) people transact with texts influences how they compose

responses (Dewey, 1938; Freire & Macedo, 1987; Garcia & O'Donnell-Allen, 2015; Mills, 2016). Smagorinsky and Coppock (1993) observed that “an artistic composing process includes many processes that parallel those found in a writing process” (p. 20).

The internet has also opened doors for digital remixers to reach audiences they could never have imagined as recently as the beginning of the 21st century. Technology changed the way people interacted with information, and as a result, the culture has changed (Lessig, 2004). Remix became increasingly enmeshed in daily life through modding, memes, and mashups (Harrison & Navas, 2018). Jenkins et al. (2016) discussed the increasing acceptance of gamers (people who play online single and multiplayer video game) who modified the original game code and created scenarios and shortcuts not intended by the original game developers. Memes are so popular that developers created free apps that merged popular images and texts for sharing on social media (Borsche, 2018; Lankshear & Knobel, 2011; Sonvilla-Weiss, 2015). It is immersive, requiring the use of multiple tools and often multiple modes at the same time (Bezemer & Kress, 2008; Garcia & O'Donnell-Allen, 2015; Kress, 2003; Mayer, 2008). It requires the attention of the whole mind because there is no right or wrong way, there is only the remixer's way (Cope et al., 2017; Gee, 2017; Gee & Hayes, 2011; Warschauer & Ware, 2008). It allows students to discover new meanings in texts and to learn multiple ways of expression through multimodal texts (Bruce, 2008; Jenkins et al., 2016; Romano, 2015; Wyatt-Smith & Elkins, 2008).

In each of the studies discussed, there is a contiguous theme of collaboration. Remix in school is often promoted as group work. Given the inherently participatory nature of remix, group work and remix seems to be a natural connection.

Studies Featuring Remix as Participatory Action

Remix is type of social transaction with a variety of texts (Michielse & Partti, 2015; Nguyen, 2016). Remix also teaches adaptation as students solve the problems of design, sift through a vast array of information sources, consider the viability of multiple modes for various audiences, and become fully engaged in the composing process (Dusenberry, et al., 2015; Kist, 2005; Knobel & Lankshear, 2008; O'Byrne, 2014; Palmeri, 2012; Shipka, 2014; Turner & Hicks, 2017). The possibilities of connection through the internet opens the doors of collaboration beyond the single classroom to connected learning, collaboration, and publishing opportunities with students from any place in the world (Jolls, 2015; Kist, 2005). Many students already collaborate online across geographic boundaries through social networks, social media, and social writing projects like fan fiction (Ito et al., 2013).

Kist (2004) described classrooms he encountered as family-like because of the bond formed between students as they collaborated on multimodal and remix projects. The students learn to work together, drawing on the strengths of the individuals to enhance the group. Kist wrote that most of the teachers in the classes he visited in a two-year period took the initiative to make their rooms multimodal, often at their own expense. Kist said, "They have simply perceived a need in their students and acted on it" (p. 29). Kist did not indicate where he observed the classes, but the learning processes he reported may transfer to any school, provided the technology is made available, and the teachers are committed to exploring collaborative learning through remix. The benefit to learning collaborative work habits in school translate well to the world beyond the classroom because collaboration in the current world economy is the most common way of doing business in the 21st-century (Church, 2015; Filippi, 2008; Piasecki, 2013; Singer & Alexander, 2017).

When Kist (2004) did his study, he noted that part of the reason the classes were successful was that the teachers were committed to multimodal classrooms and they had the support of the community behind them. That kind of support is necessary for teachers to fully embrace multimodal and multimedia texts, including remix. Too often technology in the classroom becomes test preparation and remediation support rather than an experience with new kinds of texts (Zoch, Myers, and Belcher, 2016). Teachers who want to broaden the scope of literacies in her classes often face challenges beyond access to the technology itself. In the next section, I share studies examining the experiences teachers have when implementing technologies into their pedagogy.

Teacher Experiences with Technology

Sykora (2014) wrote, “Technology is only effective as a learning tool when educators have the skills to use it in an instructionally sound and pedagogically effective way” (para. 9). When teachers received training, support, and encouragement to employ technological affordances into their teaching practices, they may be more likely to test and try new pedagogies that incorporated digital literacies, including remix. Teachers need to be willing to integrate technology into the classroom, not as an add-on, but as one of the many tools available for differentiation (Hicks, 2015; Hyler & Hicks, 2014; Shipka, 2011; Zoch, Myers, & Belcher, 2016). Montrieux et al. found two broad categories of UK teachers regarding their use of technology: innovative teachers who used technology to help them shift from teacher-centric to learner-centric practices and instrumental teachers who used devices as a “book behind glass” (para 23). There is a wealth of literature offering advice and suggestions for how to incorporate more innovative and student-centered digital practices into classrooms in both research articles and books (Belshaw, 2014; Gleason & von Gillern, 2018, Hicks, 2013; Jenkins, Ford, & Green,

2013; Rowsell & Decoste, 2012). Most agree that for remix to be a successful tool in composition, it should be considered as part of a broad process of composition in relationship with multiple modes of communication. While recommendations and ideas are plentiful, actual studies of teachers who considered remix and other multimodal forms of composition as part of their praxis are largely absent (Johnson, 2016; Knobel, 2017).

Few studies presented in any of the journals or handbooks were from the perspective of in-service teachers using technology in their classrooms; most studies were of preservice teacher experimentation, in-service teacher continuing education courses, and the ways technology was used by teachers to increase reading and writing competencies. Generally, the consensus was that technology should be part of teacher pedagogy (Karchner, 2008; Myers, 2003; Pace, 2001; Shoffner, 2007; Young, Long & Myers, 2010), but the realities of the classroom make it challenging to put pedagogy into practice (Shoffner, 2009).

High stakes testing plays a major role in why teachers feel restrained from incorporating technology and new literacies into their classes (Au, 2007; Zoch, Myers, & Belcher, 2016). Testing has always been a power struggle, from Hackett's (1964) excoriating essay questioning the validity of testing to Hillock's (2002) exposure of the traps within testing to Supovitz's (2017) contention that high-stakes testing motivates teachers to conform to a curriculum, often a curriculum chosen for political purposes.

In one notable example of a study dedicated to teacher perspectives, Brass and Mecoli (2011) attempted to create a teacher-generated wiki that could provide a place for conversation and collaboration, but it failed after only a month. The Winston Society, as the wiki was called, grew out of a master's level curriculum summer course assignment. Teachers in the class wanted to continue discussing the issues of the course: the standards movement and accompanying high-

stakes testing. The wiki initially included 20 users, mostly in-service teachers with up to a decade of teaching experience. It was designed as a collaborative space wherein members provided all the expertise. It was also intended to be an open space for discussing political and social concerns. Few participants added content, and the site closed after only a month.

The study took place a year after the failure of the wiki to produce content, with the researchers wanting to understand the factors contributing to its demise. Teachers cited a lack of time to devote to it, unfamiliarity with the technology, and discomfort at being an expert, preferring to be taught rather than develop ongoing learning opportunities. Additionally, teachers in the study hesitated to modify or revise the work of others, even though that was the purpose of the site. The site was also a public site, something that worried the teachers. One teacher admitted being afraid he might say something that could get him fired. The site creator said, “I have to confess that in the current economic climate anything that might seem subversive is probably too scary” (p. 159). The pressure on teachers to conform to an education culture that values achievement sometimes leads to a sense of trepidation for teachers wanting to explore ideas not built into existing curriculum.

The fear noted Brass and Mecoli’s (2011) study corroborates personal conversations with friends who are in-service teachers and studies by Thibodeaux, Labat, Lee, & Labat (2015), Mangin (2016), Ma and MacMillan (1999), and Malinen and Savolainen (2016), all of which found that teachers are increasingly risk-averse, burned out by the burden of standardized testing, and overwhelmed by mandates of policy makers for student achievement. Teacher anxiety may be one reason there are, as Nash (2018) noted, so few studies of teachers’ experiences in multimodal composition. Issues of pressure and time may also be a factor in some of the challenges I faced in this study, something I will discuss in the next chapter.

Summary

In general, authors were united in their view that digital literacies must not be ignored (Cope, Kalantzis, & Abrams, 2017; Gee, 2017; Hyler & Hicks, 2014; Turner & Hicks, 2017). Technology, especially the internet, opens the modal possibilities to an almost unlimited number of users, and limiting school-based composition to alphabetic texts means ignoring alternative ways of knowing and making meaning (Gee & Hayes, 2011; Jones & Hafner, 2012; Kanai, 2018; Palmeri, 2012). People need to develop a new way of thinking, one that values multimodal and multimedia texts alongside alphabetic texts (Gee & Hayes, 2011; Jones & Hafner, 2012; Kress, 2003). No one advocates abandoning traditional school composition, but rather using technology to mindfully and purposefully connect to texts and to composition (Kajder, 2018; Turner & Hicks, 2017). Still, schools remain print-centric, with teachers pressured to conform to a school culture that values student achievement above student expression.

My first chapter defined digital remix and examined its potential as a pedagogical tool for teachers in the high school ELA classroom, exploring how teachers may experience using remix in their composition instruction. This second chapter examined remix, focusing on the intersection of composition and technology. I focused on digital remix and teachers, noting the discrepancy between the advances in literacies outside school and the relative slowness of education to respond to those advances in school. In the following chapters, I explain how I conducted my study, along with what I found and the possible implications. To do so, I begin with the conceptual framework I developed that remixes theories of Peirce and Rosenblatt to better understand how knowledge, experience, and semiotic systems work in creative meaning-making in a digital culture.

CHAPTER 3 METHODOLOGY

As an English Language Arts (ELA) teacher for two decades, I lived through several cultural and educational changes. Culturally, the advent of technology, particularly the internet, changed the way people read, write, and learn (Gee, 2005; Jenkins & Billard, 2018; Pirie, 1997). Social media practices beginning early in the 21st century affected how people access and make meaning of information (Lankshear & Knobel, 2007; Gee, 2017). Outside my classroom, my own literacy habits also expanded to include reading and composing online texts, not only in words, but also in images, sound, and motion. My students grew increasingly technologically savvy, and I began to experiment with incorporating some of the available technological tools into my teaching practices, particularly as I taught writing.

The education system I worked within, however, was much slower to adapt to changing literacies. After several years working in and observing a number of high school programs, I noticed an increasing emphasis on quantifiable data to determine teacher efficacy, primarily in the form of mandated testing and standards that seemed to curtail teacher freedom to incorporate some of the tools available outside the classroom. The literature regarding teacher frustration about perceived constraints to teaching ELA is well documented (Hamilton, 2017; Mangin, 2016; Thibodeaux et al., 2015; White & Lowenthal, 2009). The literature about how high school teachers experience navigating those constraints while using technology and other tools as part of their pedagogy is not as thoroughly examined. There is a need for more studies wherein teachers as practitioners also serve as researchers (Kincheloe, 2003; Lieberman & Miller, 2005) so that the voice of the classroom, both teachers and their students, is not lost in the shuffle of the quantification of education (Anderson, 2017).

Anderson (2017) noted that education reforms change more than what teachers do; it alters their perceptions of themselves as educators. A reliance on quantifiable data to determine student success and teacher efficacy inevitably leads to a focus on outcome-based teaching, rather than process-based learning (Zancanella, 1992). The tension between what research reveals to be effective teaching practices based on constructivist and pragmatic principles (Vygotsky, 1930/1978; Dewey, 1938/1978; Rosenblatt, 1995), and the rule of data-driven accountability (Biesta, 2004; Hackney, 2015; Vander Ark, 2017), puts many teachers in an untenable position: teach according to their professional expertise or teach to the test (Ball, 2003). White and Lowenthal (2009) wrote, "Too often, educators react to changes in policy and educational reform rather than being at the forefront of change" (p.4). Teachers might want to lead the charge for change, but the current system of accountability discourages innovation that cannot be directly linked to achievement (Madaus & Russell, 2011).

Teachers are important resource for improving education, and their voices must be part of the conversation defining education, mastery, and equity of opportunity (Kincheloe, 2003; White & Lowenthal, 2009). Garaway (1995) noted that the place between what people know and what they do is fertile ground for discovery through exploration. In this study, I sought to investigate teachers' experiences with using remix as a tool for making meaning of and writing about literary texts. Since this study centered on teacher experiences as an educative function in considering remix as a teaching tool, it follows the Deweyan notion of quality experiences that "live fruitfully and creatively in subsequent experiences" (Dewey 1938/2015, p. 28). Experience promotes knowledge which then opens the way for new experiences. Educative experiences, according to Dewey, are built on the experiences of the past and modify and contribute to future experiences. In classrooms, teachers create the environments wherein they and their students use

a variety of methods to make connections between prior knowledge and personal experiences. Remix may be one such method.

Conceptual Framework

In this study, I conceptualized remix as “semiotics in action.” In other words, I argue that remix processes are already familiar to many students because of the ubiquity of remix examples and tools for engaging in remix across many digital spaces. Remix, as an active process of assigning signs to objects and ideas, draws from transactionalism and semiotics, and the product generated through remix is a semiotic transaction (Peirce, 1898/1955; Rosenblatt, 1978). Because “language is a socially generated and socially generative phenomenon,” the way in which people read, interpret, and respond to texts is linked to their experiences as members of a particular social culture, in this case, the culture of the classroom (Rosenblatt, 1978, p. 20). In this section, I describe a conceptual framework I developed based on the philosophies of Peirce and Rosenblatt. I discuss the human need to create and remix as a creative action before I explain the framework of transactional semiotics.

Sociocultural Theory and the Human Need to Create

When Dewey (1938) discussed the principle of continuity, he explained the importance of connecting past knowledge with current experiences, saying that the past informed the present and together, both past and present informed the impact of future experiences. Similarly, Peirce (1893) coined the term *synechism* as a descriptor for the theory that every element of experience, past, present, and future was governed by continuity, that physical and psychological experiences were the heart of meaning and were at the same time always changing and always staying the same. Peirce developed his semiotic system based on the idea of continuity: people used and developed signs based on the context of an experience. For Peirce, epistemic knowledge was

subject to constant change because contexts vary, even moment to moment as information and experiences affected people's understanding of an experience, an object, or a philosophy. Synechism, then, is the philosophy that no knowledge is ever fixed, but that past ideas are connected to present experiences through "a continuous flow of inferences" (Peirce, 1866-1913, p. 4, 132). Acknowledging the inferences of the past that influence the present was both a logical and creative act. Creative acts extend how and what people know; individual creative acts combine with the whole of human creative acts that expand culture.

Vygotsky (1967) compared anything that a person "imagines, combines, alters, and creates" as equally significant to the accomplishments of Tolstoy, Edison, and Darwin, observing that "all these drops of individual creativity that frequently are insignificant in themselves" are part of an enormous "collective creative work of unknown inventors" (p. 11). Each person who made something, whether it was a leap of scientific discovery or a child's drawing of a puppy, used creative imagination to make meaning of the world. While singular creations, like one child's drawing, might appear insignificant, the whole of multiple children's drawings of puppies added to a creative collective that illustrated a singularity; in the case of children and art, the drawings on the family refrigerator illustrated the developmental stages of how children see and represent the canines in their lives. Neuroscience backed up Vygotsky's claim, with studies showing a connection between the prefrontal cortex of the brain as the site where memory, attention, cognitive flexibility, and judgment occur (Brant & Eagleman, 2017; Dietrich, 2004; Dewey, 1910). Every creative act, then, was part of how humans constructed meaning in their worlds and the products of creative acts were how people communicated that meaning to others (Lankshear & Knobel, 2015; Robinson, 2017; Rosenblatt, 1938/1995; Vygotsky, 1930). In short, the human brain was wired for creativity, meaning making, and communication.

Remix, too, is a creative act, the process and resulting product of transforming various kinds of texts until they became new creations (Knobel & Lankshear, 2008). The constructivist nature of remix means that every time people remix artifacts something different emerges because the remixer's experiences changed with each iteration.

Remix culture as creative action. Culture itself is a dynamic, socially constructed remix of traditions and experiences of the past and current sociopolitical and sociocultural contexts (Kirby, 2015; Knobel & Lankshear, 2008; Lessig 2004). Consider the cell phone. Early attempts at wireless telephones succeeded as early as 1973 (Ruggiero, 2015), but it wasn't until 1996 that



Figure 2 Meme "I'll die without my cell phone"

Nokia produced a mobile phone the average consumer could afford (Chowdhury, 2014). Apple's iPhone in 2007 was the first with its own operating system with the ability to run apps (Chowdhury). Since the first iPhone, the way people in U.S. culture communicated underwent a tremendous shift. No one needed to carry a quarter for a pay phone in case of emergencies anymore. In fact, there were fewer than 100,000 payphones left in the US - down from a high of over 2 million (Hart, 2017). Cell phones had become ubiquitous, to the extent that they became the subject of memes (Figure 2). The culture of person to person communication shifted from landline to cell tower, from location-reliant technology (where a telephone was wired to a network) to mostly location independent technology. While cell coverage varied, especially in rural areas, 95% of Americans had some kind of cell phone by 2018 (Pew Research, 2018). Ways of communicating in the US thus underwent a massive shift between 2007 and 2019.

One shift in communication came through new and creative modes. Smartphones allowed almost instantaneous sharing of images, videos, and alphabetic texts in addition to the familiar telephone call of spoken conversation. The internet and cell phone apps allowed users to easily compose multimedia creations and share them to a wide audience through social media, blogs, and what Gee (2005) called affinity spaces, virtual sites where people of similar interests could meet from the comfort of their own living rooms. Words merged with images and sounds and animation in creative ways to make meaning of the world and to communicate that meaning to others who would understand.

The way in which Vygotsky (1967) connected creative thinking to meaning construction showed how humans consciously organize their social behavior by interacting with the world around them. Social construction of meaning requires the ability to recognize and develop ways of knowing and ways of communicating meaning in a way that is understood by other people.

Vygotsky focused on language as the dominant tool for mediating and communicating thoughts (Ma, 2014). Saussure, too, considered semiotics part of spoken language, rather than language as part of a larger semiotic system (Daylight, 2012; McDonald, 2012). Peirce (1894) included language as part of a system of understanding and communicating, but concluded that thinking and logic necessitated signs, or semiotics, of which language was only a part. Dewey (1938) argued for the necessity of experience to construct meaning from the world. Furthermore, Dewey contended that subject matter, or knowledge, is organized within experience; knowing and experiencing are therefore connected. When Rosenblatt (1938) applied Dewey's principles to reading, she connected the text to the reader's life experiences. Readers consider texts through the lenses of their histories, contexts, and beliefs, using those individualized experiences to make meaning from the text that is relevant to their lives (Rosenblatt, 2005). Rosenblatt called this meaning making a transaction between the reader and text. In turn, remix is one process that brings together language, semiotics, knowledge, and experience in a creative way that harkens back to Vygotsky's stance that creative acts are not necessarily original or new, but "rather as based on a more or less accurate repetition of something that already exists" (p. 7). Remix takes what already exists and changes it to make something different.

Remixing My Philosophy

At the foundation, I grounded my epistemological stance in pragmatism. Pragmatism, a philosophy born out of the ideas of James, Peirce, and Dewey, described one way people make meaning of the world and their role in it while working to improve the lives of others (Campbell, 2007). Pragmatism is a philosophy of human action within a community that begins with inquiry and ideas and extend through communicating those ideas in ways that lead to action and experience. Of the three philosophers, I focused on Peirce in this study, even though there were

intersections between all three regarding the nature of knowledge, inquiry, and experience. Dewey's work as a pragmatist in education is well known in the academic world. James, who died before he fully developed his philosophies, wrote that experience cannot be examined empirically (Goodman, 2017), and that discussions should lead to “some practical issue” (James, 1905, p. 3). James’s work underscored my need to situate a study in a lived experience of teachers, appealing to a “pragmatic method” and “principle of pure experience” (p. 3). In other words, a study of teachers’ experiences would be one that valued those experiences as vital to achieving solutions for a problem at hand—in this case, how to understand what remix might do for ELA teachers in high school.

Why Peirce. Unlike Dewey and even James, Peirce is underrepresented in education research, possibly because his focus was on logic and not education per se. I found Peirce's (1866-1913) theory of semiotics both fascinating and practical in a 21st century world. For generations, sign systems in written English language were relatively stable: letters represented sounds, letters combined became words, and words put together became sentences that represented thoughts and ideas (Goguen, 1996). Semiotic sign systems were broader in scope than alphabetic signs, recognizing multimodality in signs. Images as signs were often static until the age of film and then television by the 1950s (Rose, 2001). In recent decades, multimodal communication became a widespread practice although its study was a relatively new phenomenon (Kress, 2010). Furthermore, contemporary texts often considered design as a key principle of composition, recognizing how various sign systems may be worked together to communicate messages (Bezemer & Kress, 2008). Coming full circle, fundamental to the concept of design was the sign itself. Peircean semiotics explained how and why meaning was assigned between objects and the signs that represented them. For educators, understanding how

sign systems worked could inform their pedagogy of composition for both analog and digital texts. For me, the charge of both pragmatism and semiotics helped move the philosophical discussions from pure theory to useful activity.

Peirce plus Rosenblatt. I found that Rosenblatt's (1938/1978) transactional theory for making meaning of texts worked in parallel to Peircean semiotics. Where Peirce's work functioned as a broad theory of sign systems in a triadic arrangement, Rosenblatt's focus remained connected to education, particularly in reading and writing. Together, Peirce and Rosenblatt offered a way of approaching how digital technologies and the literacies associated with them provided an approach of connecting digital remix practices to composition instruction. In the next section, I explored Peirce's semiotic triad and Rosenblatt's transactionalism through a pragmatic lens to examine the elements in both concepts.

Rosenblatt regularly referred to both Peirce and Dewey in her work, even to the point of using Dewey's term transaction for her description of how readers interact with texts (Dewey, 1938; Rosenblatt, 1978). I recognized the parallels between Rosenblatt's transactionalism and Peirce's semiotics and put them together to create a conceptual framework that allowed me to study how teachers might experience remix in their classrooms.

Peircean Semiotics

Peirce (1955) developed his ideas about semiotics around a triad that illustrated how meaning was connected to objects and ideas (Figure 3). Meaning required three equal and

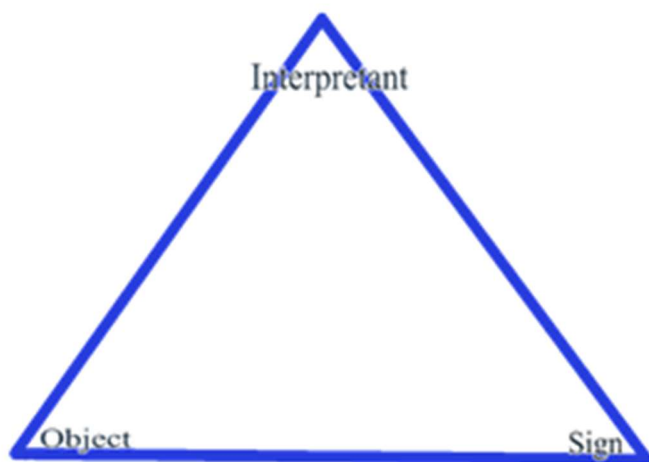




Figure 3 Peircean triad

distinct parts: an object, a sign, and an interpretant. Objects existed independently, but they had no meaning until someone ascribed meaning to them. Meaning was expressed through a sign.

Objects may be closer than they appear. In Peirce's philosophy, the object was the thing being considered. The sign was a symbol or group of symbols. The interpretant connected the object and the sign. In Figure 3, the

geometric shape may be the object. The sign might be the symbols called letters grouped together: T-R-I-A-N-G-L-E. Those letters have no meaning in and of themselves; they are "marks on a page" (Rosenblatt, 1978, chapter 5, para 11). When a person (or the interpretant) sees the object and names it T-R-I-A-N-G-L-E, the group of letters (or symbols) become the word, triangle, which connects the shape (or object) to the symbols in the minds of the individual who made the connection. The shape (object), now known to the person (interpretant) as a triangle, is meaningful once it is connected to the sign. The symbols T-R-I-A-N-G-L-E, once connected to the geometric shape (object) , became a sign: triangle. When the interpretant, or people who followed the interpretant, see "triangle," the image in their minds is likely . The

sign (triangle) and the object (\triangle) become connected by a person's (interpretant's) construction of meaning. This explanation is simplified and does not account for the nuances of Peirce's full explications, but it is sufficient for this example.

How signs are made. There were three parts to Peirce's (1897) consideration of how an interpretant connected an object to a sign: knowledge, experience, and semiotic systems (Figure 4). Knowledge, according to Peirce (1902) was "the ability to define a thing in such a manner that all its properties shall be corollaries from its definition" (p. 129). Knowledge included the ability to classify related information into systems. Peirce discussed knowledge in terms of comprehension, being able to both define a thing and to see how it both came to be and how it

might reasonably be considered to change over time.

Experience was part of the process by which knowledge was created (Peirce, 1931). He wrote, "Direct experience is neither certain nor uncertain, because it affirms nothing—it just *is*" (p. 57). In order for experience to have meaning, it must be viewed in light of prior knowledge. If, for example, Jane is about to go on a



Figure 4 Cycle of knowledge, experience, and semiotics

roller coaster for the first time, she will recall what she knows about heights and speed from knowledge based on prior experiences, whether they are in theory (e.g., the study of physics) or in reality (e.g., having been in a fast-moving vehicle on a mountain). The experience of riding

the roller coaster is a new experience, understood by comparing and contrasting it to what she knew before. The experience of the roller coaster ride then becomes part of her knowledge, whether she delights in the exhilaration or feels dismayed at the nausea accompanying the combination of height, speed, and high velocity turns. In either case, Jane can then draw upon that experience, in addition to her knowledge, to make meaning of future experiences and information.

Finally, in order to assign any kind of sign to an object, the interpretant must understand at least one system of signs (semiotics). Sign systems have multiple expressions: letters, scientific shortcuts like the periodic table of elements, numbers, pictures, shapes, dimensions, and sounds. The process of semiotics, in its simplest form, may be represented by an astronomer who discovers a celestial object making its own energy through a series of nuclear reactions (Rieke & Rieke, 2009).

Because images are sometimes better signs than words. In this illustration (Figure 5) the object is the luminous mass in space. The astronomer acts as the interpretant, using her prior knowledge of similar objects, her experiences of previous discoveries, and her understanding of naming protocols (semiotics) to label the object a star, give it a designation according to

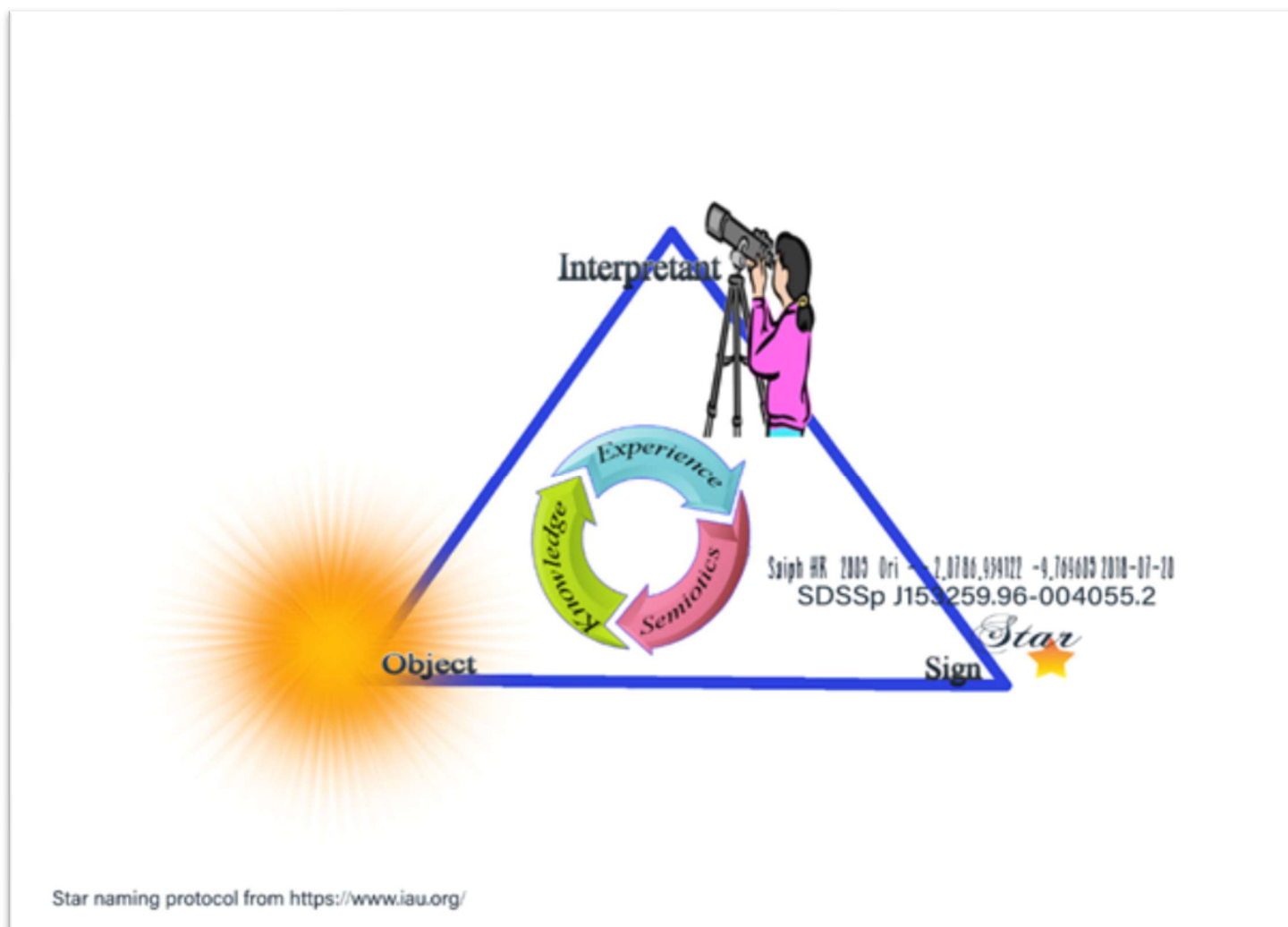


Figure 5 Peirce's semiotic triad illustrated with astronomy

protocol, as well as a name like Alnitak, Alnilam, or Mintaka, the three stars that make up Orion's belt. Alternatively, she puts four letters (symbols) together that form the English word, star. Additionally, she may choose to describe it by assigning a shape symbol to it. The sign she chooses depends on the audience: her knowledge of that audience, her prior experiences with it,

and her understanding of semiotic systems a specific audience understands. For example, fellow astronomers recognize the star naming protocol designations, English speakers read the alphabetic sign, and children understand the shape.

The illustration in Figure 5 was simplified and does not account for types of signs or the boundless possible iterations of sign assignation. Connecting a sign to an object was not the end of the interpretation or the semiotic cycle. Peirce (1866-1913) wrote,

The object of representation can be nothing but a representation of which the first representation is the interpretant. But an endless series of representation, each representing the one behind it, may be conceived to have an absolute object at its limit. (CP 1.339)

For Peirce, a sign represented an object, a thought, or an idea developed through knowledge and experience. If any elements changed, the meaning of the thing also changed. Peirce's conviction that inquiry must always be open to reinterpretation meant that the semiotic cycle could continue changing based on new information, a different interpretant, or improved sign systems. Eco (1979) coined the term "unlimited semiosis" (p. 39) to describe how language as signs could be changed by "an infinite chain of interpretants" (p. 74). Eco added that the aesthetic function of language created connections of previously unknown forms. Signs in general and language, in particular, were subject to a cycle of interpretations. Unlimited semiosis allowed flexibility in language that allowed people to interpret objects based on prior knowledge, or previously assigned semiotic representations, with experiences, thus creating unique points of view. This merging of knowledge, experience, and signs was at the heart of transactionalism, Rosenblatt's theory that made up the second part of my framework.

Rosenblatt's Transactionalism

Transactionalism was another semiotic approach to understanding meaning constructed through knowledge and experience using signs, objects, and social interactions. Rosenblatt (1978) brought experience and semiotics into the ELA classroom when she connected texts to objects and meaning making to the experience of the reader creating signs to interpret a piece of literature.

Transactions as negotiations. Transaction was a mid-15th century word that referred to a negotiated agreement to a dispute (www.etymologyonline.com). When Dewey (1938/1978) wrote about transactions in learning, he described how individuals negotiated their environmental conditions in experiences. Dewey faulted traditional education for a singular focus on the adult role in providing a learning environment without considering the equal role of the learner, what he called "the power and purposes of those taught" (p. 45). Rosenblatt (1978) used Dewey's word, *transactional*, as both descriptor and foundation for applying her theory to reading. The descriptor expanded the notion of what it meant to read beyond decoding words. Rosenblatt wrote,

The transactional phrasing of the reading process underlines the essential importance of both elements, reader, and text, in any reading event. A person becomes a reader by virtue of his activity in relationship to a text, which he organizes as a set of verbal symbols. A physical text, a set of marks on a page, become the text of a poem or of a scientific formula by virtue of its relationship with a reader who can thus interpret it and reach through it to the world of the work (p.18).

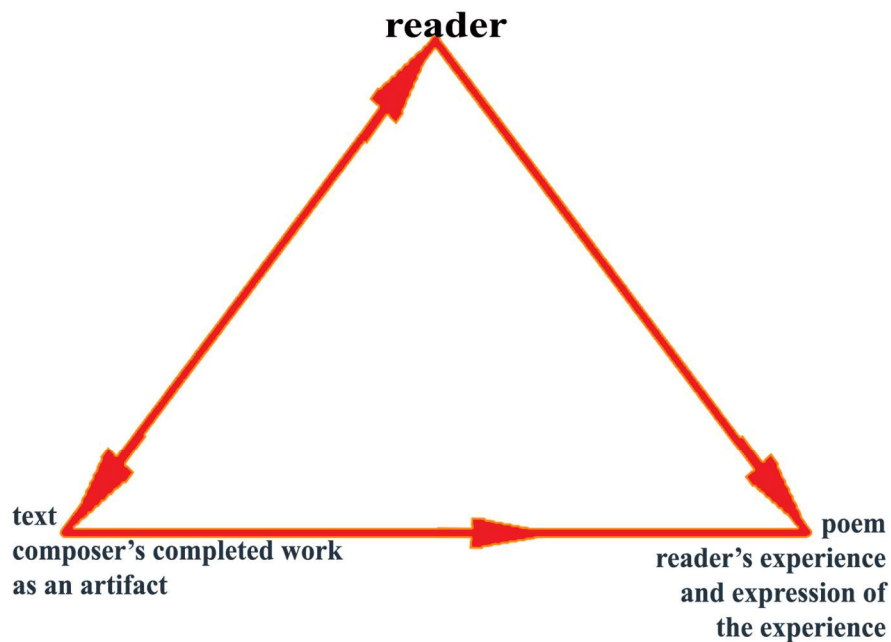
A reader made meaning of a text by considering that text through the lens of personal history, life experience, and belief systems. Text, no matter what its form, became meaningful in relation

to the mind, experiences, and previous knowledge of the reader. Meaning-making was not passive; it required active application of prior knowledge and experiences to new texts (Rosenblatt, 1978). The result of transactional meaning making, whether in defining experience or newly constructed text of some kind was what Rosenblatt called the poem.

Selective experience makes sense. Rosenblatt (1988) recognized the impossibility of people to fully experience every event in life. Leaning on James (1890), Rosenblatt (1988) reiterated the need for people to select activities for attention. She referred to the "cocktail party phenomenon" (p. 3) as the way in which people filter conversations to focus on the one of immediate interest. Multiple simultaneous conversations are difficult to process, so most people learn to tune out all but the one most relevant to them through a series of audio processing functions in the brain (Morell et al., 2007). The same filtering happens with experiences. The filtering process may be analogous to driving a familiar road deep in thought. When people focus attention on a problem or music or anything but the known route, it is sometimes a surprise to arrive at the destination. In that moment, the drivers are selecting to focus on the experience of the thought or music rather than the simultaneous experience of driving from point A to point B. Rosenblatt extended the concept to reading, saying that opening a book opened up possibilities of "diction, syntax, linguistic, literary conventions, ideas, themes" alongside the social background every reader brought to a text (p. 5). Selective attention allowed a reader to synthesize and organize the text into meaning. Rosenblatt reported that the process was complex and non-linear; I would add that it is largely unconscious as well for fluent readers.

Text as artifact. According to Rosenblatt (1978), once an author called the work complete (put down the pen, prints, publishes—whatever the method), the text stood alone. I called it an artifact at that point because it was in a permanent state. The author may revise it, but

the initial published piece of text (artifact) remained. Rosenblatt wrote, "We must remember that once the creative activity of the author has ended, what remains for others—for even the author himself—is a text" (p. 15). Rosenblatt proposed that readers make meaning from texts by connecting the symbols (letters, images, etc.) to lived experience and prior knowledge. She called it a "live circuit" of meaning making (Rosenblatt, 1938, chapter 2, para. 1 Kindle Edition). Because the reader's lived experiences change, the interpretation of the text was also variable. When a reader's lived experience changed—even moment to moment—the reader's interpretation



of the text was also subject to change. So, while the object remained stable, the meaning and the signs shifted for the reader. The transaction occurred when readers used their experiences and prior knowledge as a point of intersection with the text (Figure 6). The intersection was that moment when readers constructed relevance for the text in their current contexts.

Engaging with text. Rosenblatt (1978) also recognized multiple ways to engage with a text. She identified two dominant stances: efferent and aesthetic. Efferent reading was the kind of reading intended for gaining information, direction, conclusions, or leading to some action. Cramming for an exam with the sole intent of passing counted as efferent reading. Reading legal briefs, textbooks, and news sources all fall toward the efferent stance as primarily informational. Readers choose an efferent stance for knowledge. Conversely, the aesthetic stance drove a reader to experience the reading event through signs and also "sensations, images, feelings, and ideas that are the residue of past psychological events involving those words and their referents" (p. 5). In the aesthetic stance, readers focused on the experience of the text and how it related to their ideas, beliefs, attitudes, and previous experiences. Part of the aesthetic experience was how the readers assigned beauty or emotional connection to a text. Rosenblatt (2005) argued that readers must choose a predominant stance for each reading event. She considered efferent and aesthetic stances as "end points of a continuum" (p. 92). According to Rosenblatt, readers needed to maintain a clear sense of purpose when they read (Figure 7).

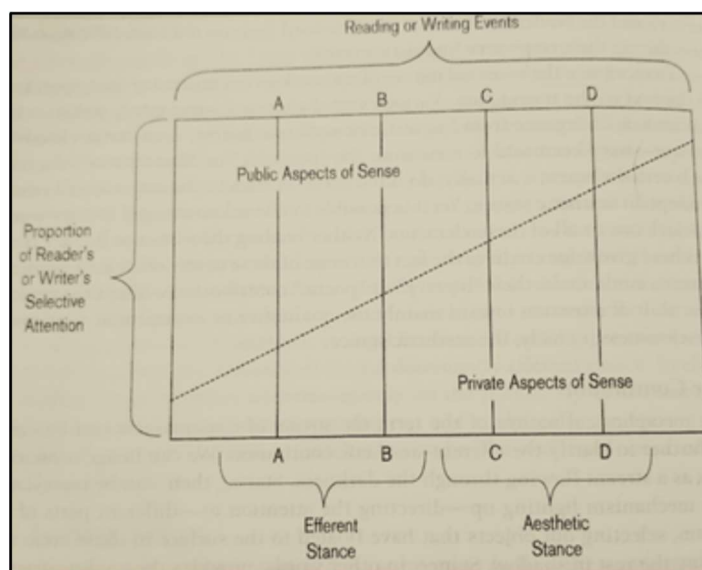


Figure 7 Rosenblatt's drawing of the efferent/aesthetic continuum (Rosenblatt, 1991/2005, p.92)

To describe the distinction between the two reading purposes, Rosenblatt (1988) put efferent and aesthetic stances at ends of a continuum (Figure 7). Readers approached a text with a particular purpose that determined whether they're reading for knowledge (efferent) or experience (aesthetic) or somewhere in between. While Rosenblatt (1991/2005) acknowledged most readers come to a text with a mix of efferent and aesthetic purposes, she wrote,

But the most important choice of all must be made early in the reading event-- the overarching choice of what I term the reader's stance, his "mental set" so to speak...Whether the product of the reading will be a poem, a literary work of art, depends, then, not simply on the text, but also on the stance of the reader. (p. 73).

The scope of reader attention, then, fell somewhere along the efferent and aesthetic line. Rosenblatt considered reading for public purposes, like an exam, deeper along the efferent stance, while private reading, like a beach read, fell toward the aesthetic stance. In this theory the text was stable, but readers determined the purpose for transacting with it somewhere along the continuum of efferent and aesthetic stances. The same text may fall anywhere along the continuum depending on the circumstances in which readers found themselves, which partially accounted for how readers could reread a text and transact with it differently depending on factors of time, place, context, knowledge, and experience.

Interpreting the stances in ELA settings. There was almost a parallel continuum in language arts education: the efferent stance of grammar, mechanics, and form on one end and the aesthetic stance of making literature and the writing about literature meaningful to students. Just as a text may be considered from both efferent and aesthetic stances, so language arts may be taught from both efferent and aesthetic points of view. There was a need for both, even when one stance was weighted more heavily. A swing toward mechanics like grammar and structure

would be analogous to a more efferent stance, focused on what was known and often easily quantifiable. On the other side would be an aesthetic focus on content, interpretation, and style. Both were important to clear communication and meaning-making but could not be fully appreciated in a final product alone. With society becoming more multimodal in literacy practices and more committed to digital spaces for composition, there was a need to focus anew on the processes of reading, writing, and meaning-making (Gee & Hayes, 2011).

Efferent or aesthetic by any other name. Rosenblatt's theory has been evaluated, analyzed, criticized, and praised since she first published it in 1938. Lewis (2000) argued for a broad interpretation of aesthetic reading that incorporates criticality to the lived experience of reading. Rosenblatt (1982) was clear about in putting efferent and aesthetic stances as oppositional ends on a continuum, but Lewis (2000) contended that the context within which reading occurred was a better interpretation of what Rosenblatt meant when she wrote about a continuum. Lewis added that critical reading through a lens of feminist theory, critical race theory, and cultural criticism suggest a kind of aesthetic approach that included an awareness of texts as constructed worlds.

Smagorinsky (2001) considered culture as the basis for meaning making, saying that codified cultural experience is a key element to interpreting a text. By connecting cultural practice to meaning making, the efferent (knowing) and aesthetic (feeling) stances merged, depending on the context of the reader's position in that culture and the context in which the reader approached the text. He wrote, "Context is viewed as a relationship among people or artifacts and their environments" (p. 135). Brooks and Browne (2012) also challenged the notion of binary purposes for reading, finding that culture influenced interpretation whether or not the purpose of reading was efferent or aesthetic. Most critics of Rosenblatt's theory focus on the

either/or of efferent and aesthetic approach to reading, challenging the notion of a single focus for reading a text. However, when Rosenblatt's pragmatic foundation is considered, the binary seems to break down. Even though Rosenblatt (1938/1995; 1956) seemed to insist on a focus on choosing one stance or the other on a continuum, pragmatism is at its core grounded in a "permanent frame of reference to the organic nature of experience" (Connell, 2008, p. 104). Rosenblatt (1956) herself recognized the value of experience each reader brought to a text, and those experiences always influenced interpretation regardless of whether the purpose of reading was efferent or aesthetic.

Every reader brought a multiplicity of experiences to texts, which informed how each person responded to the texts at hand; facts were part of the process. Rosenblatt (1978) used the word *transaction* to indicate how a reader considered a text through the lens of lived experience and prior knowledge and constructed new meaning at the intersection of the two. Rosenblatt's (1978) transactionalism was rooted in the way language embodied "our funded assumptions, attitudes, and expectations about the world" (p. 5). In that sense, transactionalism was situated in experience and knowledge. The understanding of a semiotic system was required to make sense of the transaction. Written language was only one kind of sign system; different cultures incorporated a variety of semiotic systems based on intersections of meaning constructed by the sign-makers and sign-interpreters and the culturally available resources (Kress, 2010).

Transactional Semiotics

The concepts of readers responding to texts through the lenses of knowledge and experience was as true as ever, but the transactions of a multimodal culture required expanded semiotics and a larger set of culturally available resources. A continuum of stances like Rosenblatt's (1991) seemed to limit the way people transacted with text, especially as text

evolved to include multiple modes and digital representations. Additionally, the way people responded to text changed in the last 40 years (Lessig, 2008; Mayer, 2008). When the notion of text referred primarily to print media, a singular focus on one stance may have been a sufficient representation, but the definition of text has expanded in the last decades to include still images, video, sound, and blends of each. "Reading" texts now required attention to intersections of modes: image, written words, and sounds simultaneously. Consumers of new texts often responded in efferent and aesthetic ways at the same time (Mazzali-Lurati & Pollaroli, 2014). The continuum of stances began to break down a decade ago when both the first iPhone and Facebook initiated a change in how U.S. society frames the world (Friedman, 2017; Gurdus, 2016; Phillips, 2007). Technology changed the way people communicate, read, and transact with texts (Gee, 2017). In the next section, I discuss remix as a process by which transactions and meaning making may occur.

Remixed Framework

I developed a framework that blended the essential parts of Rosenblatt's transactional theory with foundational concepts from Peirce. Multimodal transactional semiosis connected Peirce's semiotics with Rosenblatt's transactionalism in both form and function. While I believe it can take any number of forms, my focus for this study was on remix. The framework was an extension of a new literacies framework, but the emphasis was on how technology influences available sign systems for ELA teachers.

Peirce, whose semiotic theory was based in studies of logic, offered a broad base for building on. Rosenblatt, best known as the initiator of reader-response theory (Allen, 1991), drew heavily on both Peirce's and Dewey's philosophies. In the following sections, I explore the relationship between Peirce's semiotics and Rosenblatt's transactionalism.

Foundation of the Framework

I began with Peircean semiotics as a foundation. As the American father of semiotic theory (Rosenblatt, 1988), it made sense to build on his ideas of how meaning was attached to objects through symbols. Peirce (1897/1955) contended that meaning was made up of three distinct and equally important parts: an object (the thing itself, like an apple), a sign (something that may represent a thing, like the letters A P P L E or an image of a seasonal fruit with specific characteristics of seeds, core, flesh, and peel), and an interpretant (the human who connects the sign to the thing). Language was defined as a system of dynamic signs that were culturally constructed for meaning so that people could communicate with each other (Vygotsky, 1962). The sign itself had no meaning until it was connected to an object by a person or people.

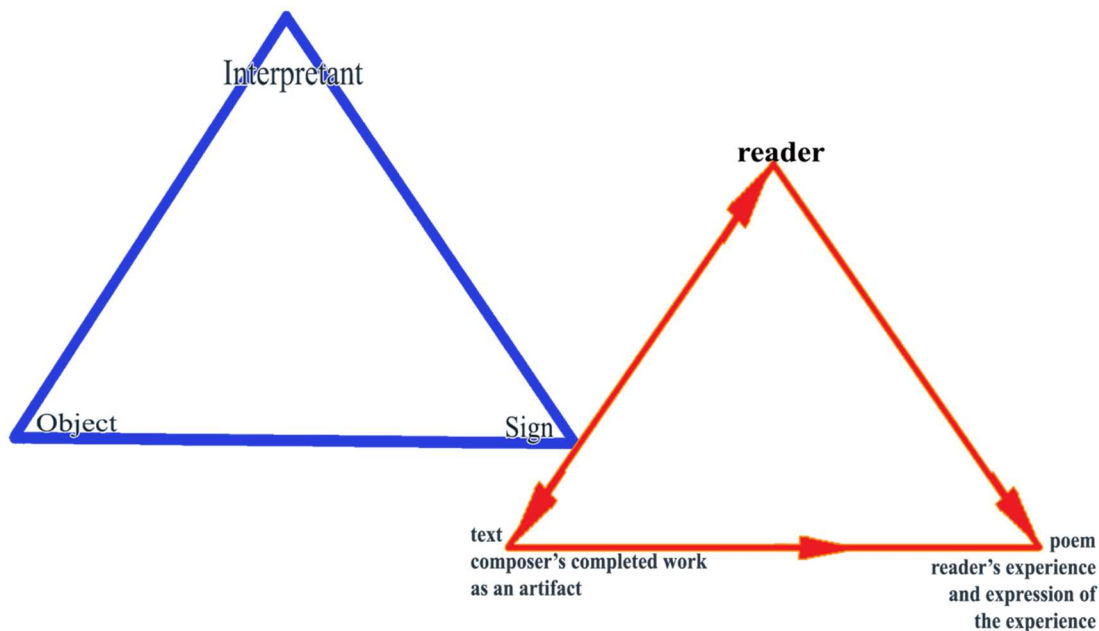


Figure 8 Peirce's and Rosenblatt's triads side-by-side

The blue triangle (Figure 8) represented the basics of Peircean semiotics or sign systems. The red triangle (Figure 8) represented Rosenblatt's triad of transactionalism which paralleled Peirce's

semiotic triad. Peirce's interpretant was paired with Rosenblatt's reader. This person initiated the meaning making. The reader-interpretant recognized the object (text) and connected it to a sign (poem). The result of that connection is constructed meaning, a remix of the artifact, the sign, and the reader's knowledge, experience, and understanding of the semiotic systems at work. The result of the meaning-making became a new text, a remix that now functioned as a product. In Figure 8, the arrows in the red triangle were important because they indicated how readers, texts, and signs intersected. A text, as a completed artifact, informed the reader. The text was also the source material for identifying an appropriate sign. The reader used the text and available sign systems to create a poem or other kind of new text (Rosenblatt, 1978). The experience of the text also changed the knowledge of the reader, which in turn altered how that same reader approached text the next time.

The merge. Merging Peirce's semiotic triad with Rosenblatt's transactional triad illustrated their connection (Figure 9). The interpretant-reader was at the top because the

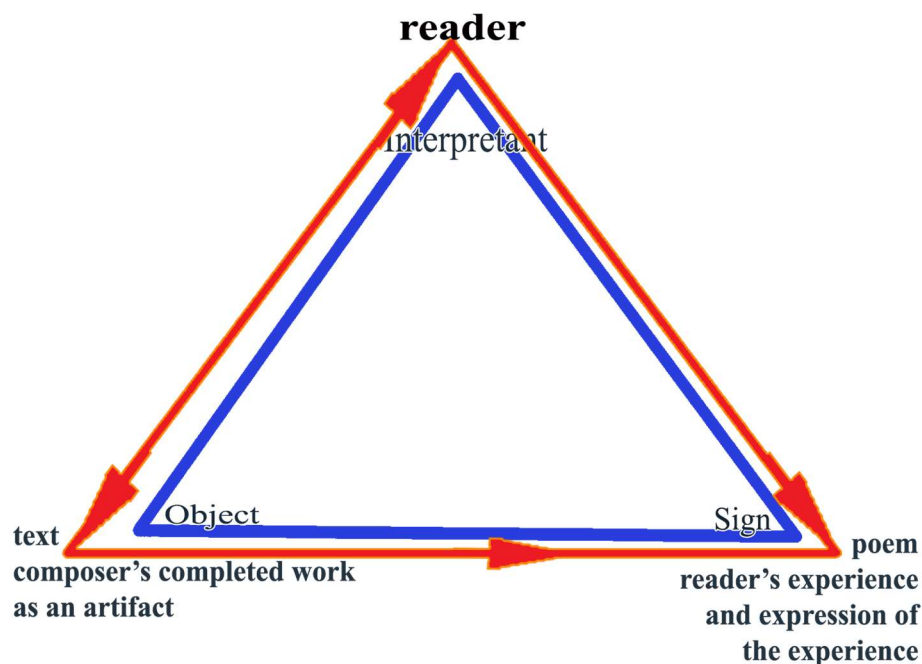




Figure 9 Rosenblatt's triad overlaid on Peirce's semiotic triad

interpretant was the human element that attached signs to objects as a way of meaning making. The object and sign made up the base of the triangle. Without an object, there was no reason for the sign to be addressed by the interpretant. Without a sign, there was no way for the interpretant to construct meaning attached to the object. Without the interpretant, signs and objects remained unattached to any socially constructed meaning. Illustrated without arrows, Peirce's triad was not static, however. It was fluid, with the interpretant connecting and reconnecting objects to various signs. A  may always be a triangle, but if the object appeared as , the interpretant would need to differentiate the two objects by assigning different signs to the triangles: blue triangle and red triangle. Additionally, Peirce (1896) was adamant that interpretants allow for reconsideration of terms in light of new information. He wrote, "When a man desires ardently to know the truth, his first effort will be to imagine what that truth can be" (p. 43). He added, "There are three things to which we can never hope to attain by reasoning, namely, absolute certainty, absolute exactitude, absolute universality" (p. 56). The cycle of sign-object-interpretant was one of constant change, not change for the sake of change, but rather change attributed to new information, fresh evidence, or a more complete understanding of the experiences used to connect object and sign.

Efferent and aesthetic as a spiral. Whereas Peirce argued that knowledge was always subject to change based on new information, Rosenblatt (1978) described two kinds of knowing: efferent and aesthetic. Efferent knowing was based on what information may be gleaned from the text. Efferent reading was more precise and able to be defined: facts, mechanics, techniques, and particular elements. Aesthetic reading focused on the experience of the text, how the reader became immersed in the story and the characters. Efferent took information away from the text; aesthetic connected the reader to the text. Rosenblatt put efferent and aesthetic stances on a

continuum and recommended readers find a place on the continuum as a focal point for their reasons for reading a particular text.

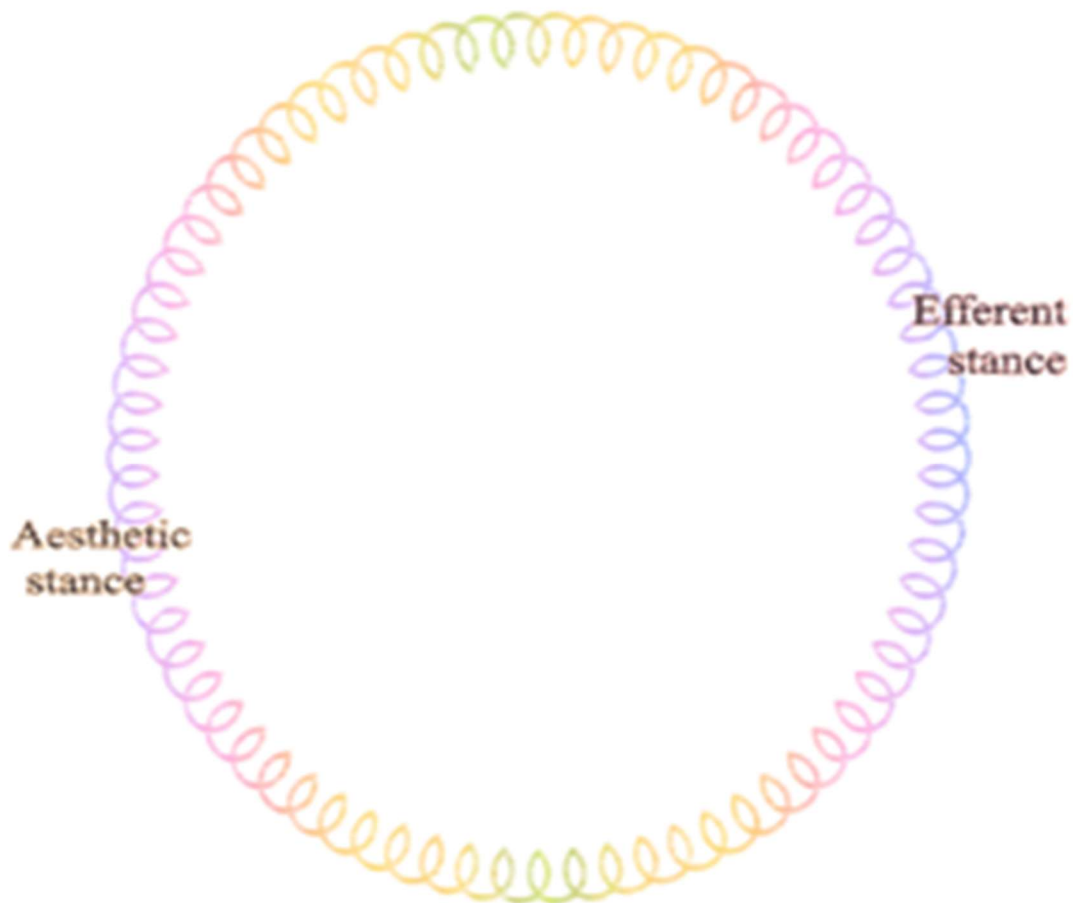


Figure 10 Spiral representation of Rosenblatt's efferent/aesthetic continuum

I suggested with this spiral circle (Figure 10) that for many readers, efferent and aesthetics stances were in perpetual motion, particularly with multimodal communication (Brant & Eagleman; Dietrich, 2004; Durante & Dunson, 2018). Rather than a linear continuum wherein readers selected a stance, readers moved around the continuum, changing directions at will, and

re-approaching material from more than one position at a single encounter. The spiral looked a little like a coiled telephone cord that could be manipulated and twisted without losing the connection between parties, or between reader and text. Experience, knowledge, and semiotics suggested a more recursive nature of transacting with and remixing texts. It was here that the complexities of digital ways of reading and multimodal texts required something non-linear to illustrate them. Knowledge and experience changed how people read and responded to texts over

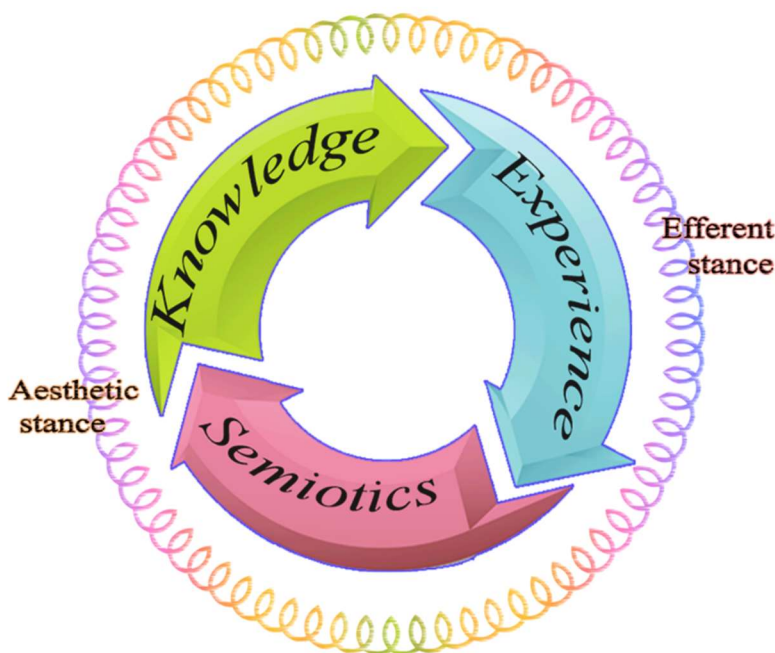


Figure 11 Cycle of knowledge, experience, and semiotics with the efferent/aesthetic spiral

time. Semiotics was how people expressed themselves as readers and responders to texts. Together, an interpretant used knowledge, experience, and semiotics connecting an object to meaning as defined by the interpretant using culturally available resources (Kress, 2010). In a society linked tightly to technology, those resources may take multiple forms across multiple media. The spiral indicated how knowledge, experience, and semiotic systems constantly spun through the mind of readers as they applied what they knew and experienced to the text,

considering efferent and aesthetic stances to select the right signs for their response to a given text (Figure 11).

Because texts were increasingly multimodal, the available signs for making meaning of objects were multiplied. Not only could signs be printed words or images, but they might also be animated, include sounds, and be interactive. Knowledge and experience often grew and changed much more quickly in a digital space than in an analog environment (Baron, 2000; Belshaw, 2014). The ease, access, and speed with which information traveled in 2018 were light years from what Rosenblatt and Peirce could have ever imagined.

The Remix Product

To this point, I have devoted the discussion to remix as a process of transacting with a text. There is one final element: the remix product. Rosenblatt (1978) talked about the poem as representing the experience of the text. In a print centric culture, that metaphor worked. However, the U.S. has become a remix culture, using the affordances of technology and the internet to make sense of the world (boyd, 2014; Garcia, 2016; Jones & Hafner, 2012; Hassapopoulou, 2013; Ito, et al. 2013; Jenkins, 2006; Jenkins, et al., 2016; Lankshear & Knobel, 2011; Murray, 2015). The ultimate product (or sign) was a remix of text, knowledge, experience, and stances that represented the multiple ways of understanding and making meaning of an ever-evolving culture. As a metaphor, the remix may stand in for Rosenblatt's poem; as new text, it became an artifact, ready to be remixed by the next reader. When all the pieces were put together into a single graphic the complexity of how people make meaning becomes evident (Figure 12).

Transactional Semiosis

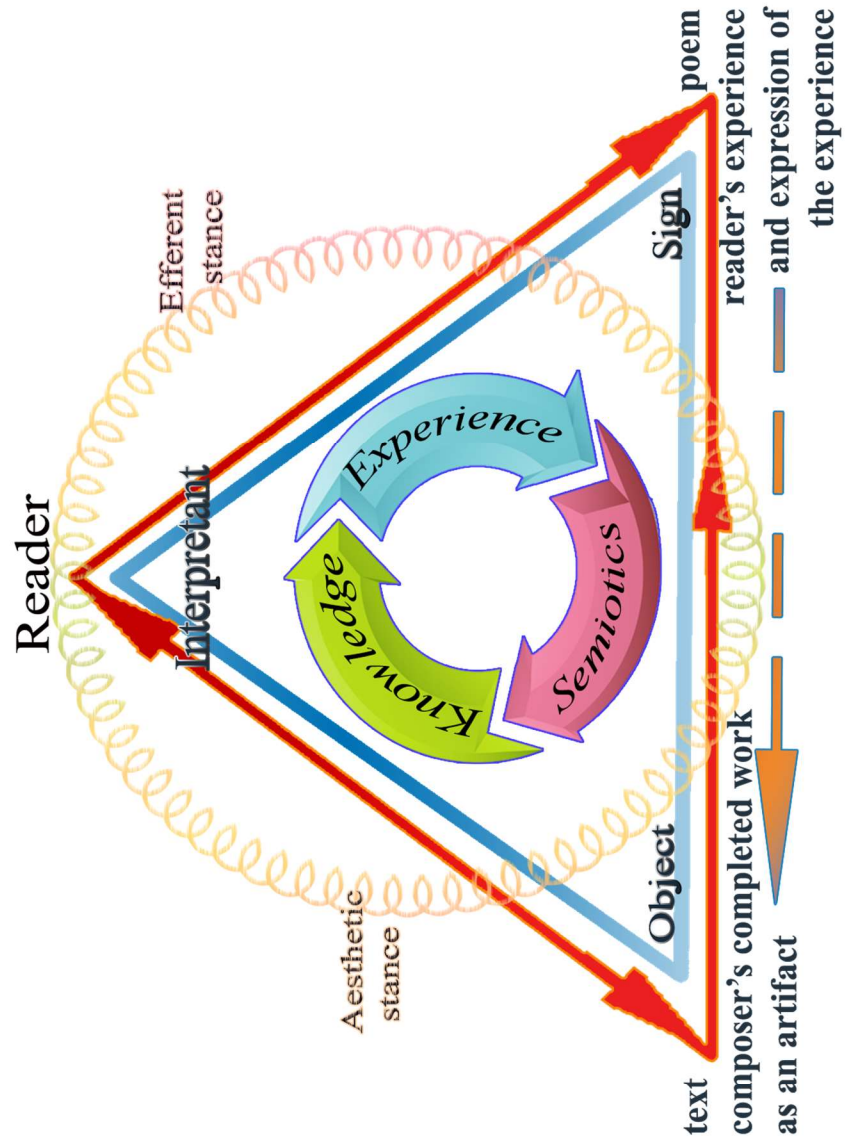


Figure 12 Transactional semiotics

Every element in Figure 12 intersects with the others in some way, shape, or form. Everything is in motion during the process of transacting with text. The fundamentals of meaning making, knowledge, experience, and semiotics to construct meaning and compose responses remained largely the same as when Peirce discussed them at the turn of the 20th century. What changed dramatically were the tools available to both read and compose texts. Peirce's cycle of knowledge, experience, and semiotics remained intact; no matter what the mode of transactional expression. Peirce's process was the same because it took place in the mind of the reader and was not bound by time, space, or medium. Because knowledge and experience change continuously, meaning may be mixed and remixed indefinitely.

Transactional semiotics is the name I gave to a way of thinking about how people make meaning of texts. It also represents the lens I use as an artist when I consider texts of all sorts, particularly in words and images as I construct new meaning from existing elements through the practice of remix. These transactions were also part of my identity as a teacher, helping my students make meaning of the required texts they read and the world around them. In this study, I hoped to see through the lenses of other teachers as they used remix in their own classes.

Study Design: Case Study

In accordance with my desire to work with current, in-service teachers, I wanted to create a study that would put them as central players to the study design, research elements, and final representation. I wanted their voices to prevail as the ones experiencing the semiotic transactions of remix. I did aspire to create a study that would be immediately useful to the teachers while giving them the opportunity to reflect on their experiences. In this section, I share how I came to case study, how I bound it, and how it evolved over time.

I sought to understand and to share in how using remix in an ELA classroom may work. What the teachers experienced in the classroom and how they were able to incorporate remix into their lessons was affected by other school-based activities: professional learning communities (PLCs), administrative expectations, high stakes testing, in particular, the 11th grade Milestones, and student needs. With this study, I endeavored to understand the teachers' negotiating a way to employ a pedagogical tool without the direct involvement of state mandated PLCs. The teachers who chose to participate wanted to incorporate a teaching practice they thought would be useful for their students and offer an alternative form of assessment that still met the state goals and standards. Rather than argue for remix inclusion by the entire PLC, one teacher decided to reframe some of the activities in the PLC provided plans, and the other simply added it to what she was already doing. Their classroom realities could then become evidence for a broader use of remix if they chose to go that route. Bogdan and Biklen (2007) wrote,

Reality is constructed by people as they go about living their daily lives...Teachers and their students define the real world together within the limitations of school hierarchy, availability of resources, and commonsense cultural understandings. How teachers and students come to define each other and what educational environments are like becomes transactional" (p. 244).

By skipping a hypothetical, "what if" for making changes in their practices and diving head first into the learning, both teachers with their classrooms had the opportunity to define a new dynamic in their class communities. The resulting transactions became part of the teachers' perspectives about how they experienced remix in their classrooms. (Bogdan & Biklen).

Case study methodology, with its attention to detail of the human experience, would let me illuminate the *why* of this research study. Dyson and Genishi (2005) explained, "Cases are

constructed, not found, as researchers make decisions about how to angle their visions on places overflowing with potential stories of human experience” (p. 2). Case study is the research equivalent to the journalist’s human-interest story. It draws readers in, by showing, not telling, as English teachers advise their students to do. Case studies bring research to life. As a methodology, case studies can “reveal an issue, make a case for change, or draw attention to complexities that may go unnoticed in other methodologies” (Stake, 1995, p. xi). It is descriptive, detailed, and driven by discovering meaning (Bogdan & Biklen, 2007). Because it is in-depth, it is beneficial for examining an event, issue, or phenomena in its natural context without the control of an experimental design (Crowe, Creswell, Robertson, Nuby, Avery, & Sheikh, 2011). Case study tells the human story embedded in qualitative research. This case study was designed to tell the human story of high school English Language Arts (ELA) teachers as they incorporated remix into their 10th grade classes.

Bounding the Study

The case was bounded three ways: Participants were high school ELA teachers, the teachers incorporated a remix process and activity into an already existing unit of study during the fall semester, and the teachers were willing to personally reflect on how remix affected their teaching practices. I focused on high school teachers because there were existing studies in both elementary and middle schools. I was also a high school ELA teacher for more than 20 years, so teachers who work with high schoolers hold a special place in my heart. I understand their work and the ways they must adapt to each group of students. Remix in the ELA classroom was my focus, but I didn’t want to create a new unit of study, not did I want to dictate to the teachers how they had to incorporate remix. Each respondent wanted to learn some remix techniques and modify them to use in existing teaching units to explore how their students would respond.

Reflection on teaching was an important element in my own career, and indeed is an important practice for self-improvement (He, Cooper, & Tangredi, 2015; Luttenberg, Meijer, & Oolbekkink-Marchand, 2017). I looked for teachers who would share the impact remix had on both their students and their own practice as they reflected on how they experienced the remix process throughout the unit. During the study, I made a series of changes that led to the final case study of two tenth grade ELA teachers. The study began as action research, but a series of complications and constraints meant using an alternative approach: case study.

Study Evolution

I initially designed the study with Participatory Action Research (PAR) principles in mind, but a number of unexpected complications led me to shift directions to case study. PAR allows participants to work in collaboration with each other in a blending of research and action (Anderson, 2017). It is a research method that empowers its participants to identify problems, develop ideas, and implement resolution strategies in a democratic community (Glassman & Erdem, 2014). Lewin (1948) asserted that action, research, and training should be a community initiated triangle, rather than three separate pieces of social management. PAR includes reflection-on-action and community-in-action, which was what I was hoping to replicate (Morales, 2016). I did maintain the teacher-centered nature of PAR, with an emphasis on their choices as to how and when they used remix, opportunities for collaboration, brainstorming possible ideas for remixing, and personal reflection.

I envisioned the study taking place in late summer and early fall. My hope was that teachers could play with remix tools and remix concepts before school began and then implement a remix project in the introductory weeks of school to perhaps ease into the school year. The teachers were not required to use remix as part of their pedagogy as a prerequisite for

participating in the study. I planned for an eight-week study during August and September. Ideally, the timing would have allowed teachers to enjoy their summer plans and still be able to explore the process and potential of remix before school responsibilities filled their calendars. However, school started earlier in 2018 than I expected, meaning that teachers were already committed to school-related tasks by the first of August. Not adapting to the school calendar was short-sighted, and had I made myself aware of the changes, I might have structured the study differently. I would have held fast to not starting in July, but I might have found a way to ease into the study.

The goal of completing the study in eight weeks was to minimize the stress on the teachers and their time constraints. As a long-time teacher myself, I understood that teachers volunteering their time to do anything extra was a gift. My idea was to spend the first part of the study exploring the affordances of remix so that teachers could create and implement a remix project as a possible introduction in the first weeks of school, before the crush of mid-term grades, football games, and other activities. Schools began early, and by mid-August, schools were in full gear, with teachers already overwhelmed by beginning-of-the-year activities, challenges, and adjustments. As a result, the teachers in the study never had what I originally intended for the opening weeks of the study: the experimentation, play, and learning about remix that could have preceded the first day of school.

A Change in Direction

My realization that the experimentation and play with remix before school began meant a shift in the study to quick adaptation of current materials. Instead of planning an introductory project, the teachers brainstormed ways to introduce remix with the second teaching unit instead of the already underway first unit. Because they were juggling students, lessons, PLCs and

administrative expectations, they had less time to devote to the study. The time factor led to an unexpected finding: one reason studies like this one are hard to find is simply that the constraints on teacher time makes them hard to do.

I learned quickly that PAR was not the best approach to the study. In my researcher journal I wrote that the study as PAR was flat and I needed to look at what was happening differently. My status as an outsider was the first reason. Even though I was a long-time teacher, I was not employed as a high school teacher, so I was not subject to the same pressures the teachers in my study faced on a daily basis. Additionally, the teachers were already part of multiple PLCs in their respective schools; they neither needed nor wanted to create yet another gathering of minds. Most importantly, however, was the issue of time. I wrote, “Teachers have so little time that pursuing any action outside their classrooms is nearly impossible.”

Constraints on teacher time was a factor leading to further changes throughout the study, including the number of teachers participating, the direction of the remix projects, and the way I collected and analyzed the data. As I considered the data I had, the research I had already done, and the question of how teachers experienced remix, I found case study to have the potential to describe what I was reading and seeing and hearing. At the end of September, I wrote, “Here are two teachers who strive for balance between their passion for student learning and the requirements of the state. They fight against the tide of time and testing by becoming increasingly creative.” Changing the focus from action research to case study illustration about how teachers experienced remix made sense. Case study gave me an opportunity to work with the teachers within the boundaries of a methodology that matched the way the study was unfolding. The unfolding began early, with the first participants.

Participants

In the spring of 2018, I invited 100 current ELA teachers who were graduates from the university currently working in the nine counties that made up the Metro Atlanta area. I limited my initial recruitment to teachers with Master of Arts in Teaching degrees from my university. I reasoned that teachers who graduated from the same program would come to the study with similar pedagogical and theoretical views. Students from this university had a strong student-centered pedagogical foundation that built on Deweyan ideals of learning through educational experiences. Ideally, this foundation meant teachers would approach remix with an open mind. Having a common background was beneficial because I could then build on their collective knowledge, particularly their familiarity with Deweyan principles of learning through experience (Dewey, 1938).

I embarked on a two-wave process of recruiting: one through a list-serve from the university and a second direct email using addresses from school databases. I wanted to cast a wide net, offering the opportunity to as many graduates as possible. The first wave garnered one teacher interested in participating. The second wave, targeted to more recent graduates who might still feel connected to the university, added five more. Two others indicated interest but never responded to follow up emails. All six respondents were from suburban and rural schools north of the Metro area, although emails were sent to all nine metro area counties. Table 1 is a breakdown of the school demographic populations of teachers who committed to the study. The teachers who completed the study were from the first two schools on the table, with a description of the other teachers who began the project, but withdrew, to follow in the section below.

Table 1 Demographics of schools where original participants taught

School	Gender distribution	Ethnicity	Free/reduced lunch	Total enrollment
#1 Adam's School	51% female, 49% male	54% Black 14% Hispanic 26% White	47%	1,630
#2 Bea's School	49% female 51% male	19% Black 10% Hispanic 49% White	11%	2,033
#3	51% female 49% male	44% Black 33% Hispanic 16% White	57%	2,669
#4	49% female 51% male	8% Asian 7% Black 6% Hispanic 77% White	7%	1,982
#5	48% female 52% male	7% Black 10% Hispanic 78% White	23%	1,828
#6	49% female 51% male	34% Black 15% Hispanic 41% White	39%	2,854

Of the 100 invited teachers, six committed to the study by the end of May 2018. Those who responded indicated an interest in doing something new and most commented on how worthwhile the project could be for their teaching. Each indicated enthusiasm for the idea of remix, even though they admitted to not knowing exactly what remix was. The teacher from school 6 withdrew in mid-July before the study was scheduled to begin, saying he had decided to pursue a Specialist degree and anticipated his studies would take up the time he had initially

planned for the study. Five teachers came to the first online meeting, each one admitting feeling stressed by the opening weeks of the school year. By the end of the second week, the teacher from school 4 withdrew citing time constraints and feeling behind in grading student work. He wrote in his email, "I am stressed and exhausted...I think the work you are doing is entirely worthwhile and will be beneficial to students. I am just tapped out." He did not respond to emails after withdrawing via email. The teacher from school 5 withdrew the same day, saying she was juggling more than she could handle, including some unexpected health issues. In a phone interview, she said that her teaching load had increased and she was required to attend more professional learning community (PLC) meetings during her limited prep periods, which meant more of her workload fell to her non-contracted hours. She apologized profusely and said she would try to continue if not having her would mean the end of the study. Not wanting to add to her feelings of being overwhelmed, I told her to attend to her health and not worry about the study.

The teacher from school 3 came to the first three Hangouts but did not participate further. She contributed ideas during those meetings, and I was surprised that she stopped participating without notice. She did not respond to texts or emails. She had seemed enthusiastic about the ideas the four of us were generating, so I was concerned that something had happened. However, after three emails and an equal number of text messages, I stopped trying to contact her; I was disappointed because her ideas were interesting, and I hoped to see how she experienced remix in the way she planned to use it. Her withdrawal left two teachers and me to complete the study together.

It may have been ultimately beneficial to have only two teachers for this case study. I could connect to them individually and on their schedules, even if that meant a series of text

messages or phone conversations while they commuted. By meeting the teachers according to their schedules, they were willing to complete the study as well as communicate with me when the study was complete. By developing relationships with them, I was better able to understand their positions and represent their experiences. In the next section, I introduce the two teachers whose stories are represented in the study.

Introducing Bea

Bea self-identified as a white Hispanic woman in her third year of teaching on-level tenth grade ELA, AP Language and Composition, and Journalism. She did her student teaching in the same school where she was employed during the study, so she felt like a fourth-year teacher. Bea's school was rated by U.S. News and World Report as one of the top 20 of schools in the state. It was also among the wealthier schools in the state, with only 11% of the 2,033 students considered economically disadvantaged. The school population was half white, with the other half almost equally divided among Black, Asian, and Hispanic. Bea joined the study to learn new ways to keep her students interested in learning and to free them from step-by-step instruction while giving them the opportunity to be creative without restrictions. She wanted to become more reflective on her practice and hoped the study would give her an opportunity for focused reflection on her own teaching practices.

Bea had a background in graphic and performance arts, and her journalism practice had introduced her to editing software and apps, so she was familiar with some of the tools used for remix. She had also used some remix practices in her classes, but not naming them as remix experiences; she opened her school year with student creating personal logos as self-introductions. Students considered how they wanted to present themselves and found images and symbols that they felt represented their feelings. The logos were a way for students to get to

know each other without the uncomfortable ice-breaker activities many other classes incorporated into the first week of classes. In previous years she had her AP students create book marketing projects as an activity. In that project, students created book covers wrote reviews and created advertising for a self-selected non-fiction text. Each of the AP projects could be considered forms of remix, but for this study, Bea's experience with multimodal projects gave her confidence to try a remix project that laid the foundation for the learning process.

Bea used part of the early weeks of the study to explore different tools for creating remixes and then shared the ones she thought most appropriate with her students for their feedback. Her students particularly enjoyed Pixaloop, a smartphone app that creates short video loops. Students liked having the option to add motion to their creations. Her tech savvy students used professional tools like Lightroom to create multi-layered remixes.

Bea was energetic throughout the study, even in her frustrations with events at school not related to the study. She could be utterly spent, but as soon as she began talking about her students, she lit up. She loved developing relationships with her students and was energized by the activity when students were enthusiastically participating in the remix process.

Introducing Adam

Adam was a white male second-year teacher who taught on-level and honors tenth grade ELA and 11th grade ELA. Adam's school was in the same district as Bea's, but was smaller, at 1,630 students, 47% of whom were considered economically disadvantaged according to US News and World Report. The school population was more than half Black, with white and Hispanic students making up most of the rest. Adam joined the study because he wanted to connect with his students, particularly through their interest in social media. He had tried creating memes as a class project but wasn't satisfied with how it went; students had fun with

memes, but Adam didn't feel like it had an impact on their connection to what they were reading. He hoped that focusing on the remix would help students really connect to what they were reading and make the literature personal. Adam was passionate about the craft of teaching, saying that one of his favorite parts of teaching was planning the lessons. He liked thinking about how people learn and how he could use his training as an educator to help his students reach the potential he saw in them.

Adam's creative background was in music. A jazz guitarist who started his undergraduate degree in music production and recording, Adam was attentive to the details of everything he did. He was by nature thoughtful and reserved. Soft-spoken, he appeared to spend much of the Hangout time listening, nodding when others spoke and often waiting to be addressed directly before speaking. He was always willing to answer questions about himself but preferred to work behind the scenes, thinking and orchestrating the best approach to any project, whether it was classroom remix or music production. Before responding to comments during Hangouts, he would stroke his beard and look away, carefully putting words together. For Adam, brevity was the soul of wit, and he never wasted a word.

Adam worked through several apps during the first weeks of the study, including Pixlr, Pic Monkey, and PhotoScape. Additionally, every student at the school had a district provided Microsoft Surface Tablet with Office products, including Windows Movie Maker. The 10th grade Profession Learning Community (PLC) at his school had decided that one of the assignments across 10th grade would be small group book clubs that would create movie trailers based on texts, which Adam defined as a remix. Roessing and Warner (2018) discussed projects that began with book clubs and ended with book trailers based on reader-response theory. They considered the writing process included in summarizing, scripting, and storyboarding the video

trailers to be an “authentic and contextualized activity (p. 27). The PLC leader who wrote the lesson plans did not use the term *remix*, but Adam recognized it as such and decided that it would be prudent to use the plans laid out and use the term *remix* as a lens for his reflections on the teaching unit. He kept his notes about the apps for future reference.

Adam also used the study to connect with his students, letting them be the technological experts while he came alongside to guide them in their connections to the books they were reading. Beach, Hull, and O’Brien (2011) wrote about the ways in which teens in the U.S. use digital tools outside of school to help them construct their identities. When Adam acknowledged their expertise with digital tools, he also demonstrated that he valued those constructed identities, which allowed student to see him as a fellow learner.

The plans for the unit were structured through a set of worksheets and storyboards so that all 10th grade students had the same materials. Adam used some of the students’ conversations during the study to guide them to look beyond the texts and to how the texts might connect to their lives. He commented that he saw student interest in reading improve as students began to see how their life experiences in some ways mirrored the stories of the characters. He found the students responding differently to the texts than they had with previous assignments, and he thought that the trailer had the potential to “show more evidence that they are thinking more visually.” His observation is backed up by research: collaborative and multimodal writing practices do appear to increase comprehension and learning (Beach, Hull & O’Brien, 2011; Leu, Kinzer, Coiro, Castek, & Henry, 2004; Stein, 2008).

Data Collection and Analysis

Beginning in August 2018, teachers committed to eight weeks of regular meetings. Weekly synchronous online meetings of 60 minutes served as the primary space for conversation about what remix is, how it may be used as a tool for teaching, exchanging experiences, and evaluating the potential of multimedia tools as part of ELA instruction. We used Google Hangouts on Air with YouTube Live as our online meeting space, a technology that afforded real-time meetings that could be recorded and automatically transcribed. The benefit to the teachers in meeting in this space was being able to see each other and talk without traveling. These meetings were loosely structured but driven by the teachers' experiences and needs. Teachers could also share redacted versions of student work as examples of how they used remix in their classrooms. Typically, as few as two people and as many as five attended the Hangouts. Scheduling conflicts combined with the chaos of a new school year meant getting every teacher initially participating in the study in the Hangout at the same time was virtually impossible. At their request, I began sending out email and text message reminders, which they said was helpful. As the numbers of teachers participating dwindled, it was easier to get everyone together. Fewer teachers also meant shorter meetings, usually under an hour; timing the meetings for less than 60 minutes was also more manageable for the teachers. With every meeting, conversations reflected the emergent desires teachers expressed for their students and the limitations and affordances they encountered in their schools.

Working out the Kinks

The first half of the study was spent getting familiar with the idea of remix and using Hangouts as a meeting place. It was a bumpy beginning, as the study began about the same time as the first days of classes. The first six weeks of any school year were the most chaotic and

adding new things to that time period was less than ideal. The second part of the study once schedules settled out and the two teachers who stayed with the study began using remix in their classrooms, focused on the highs and lows of balancing student needs, administrative requirements, and the new idea of remix. Lieberman and Miller (2005) wrote that much of professional development assumes that “there are best practices out there.” I sought to challenge that notion, focusing instead on the understanding that “the best practices are *in here*” (p. 22, italics in original). Teachers in the middle of the classroom knew the risks and rewards of any methodology or paradigm for their classes; I was curious to see how they might integrate remix and how it affected their specific practices. Garaway (1995) added, “There is a tremendous untapped wealth of knowledge contained within teachers” (p. 97). Thus, the best way to understand how teachers use remix and reflect on its use is to consider the practice with teachers actively grappling with it. Although this study focused on two teachers, their experiences differed as they grappled with how and when to incorporate remix into their existing plans, and their stories may be educative.

Working Out the Timing

Table 2 Timeframe of study elements

2018-2019	May-July 2018	Aug- Sep	Oct-Nov	Dec 18-Jan 2019	Feb- Mar 2019
Study set up	x				
Remix implementation		x	x		
Data collection		x	x	x	
Coding/Analysis			x	x	
Writing, revising, editing			x	x	x
Defense					x

Regular meetings and weekly prompts took place in August and September, with individual interviews and a final group Hangout in mid-October (Table 2). I had follow-up emails, text messages, and phone calls with each into February 2019.

Data Collection

I collected data for this study virtually using the Hangouts, remixes, emails, and texts (Figure 13). This strategy allowed me to overcome issues of time and geography. The schools represented by the original teachers in the study covered multiple counties north of the Atlanta Metropolitan area. To find both a time and a place conducive to group meetings of teachers was not feasible. By utilizing the affordances of the internet, teachers were able to connect from home or school and avoid the time required to navigate city and suburban traffic.

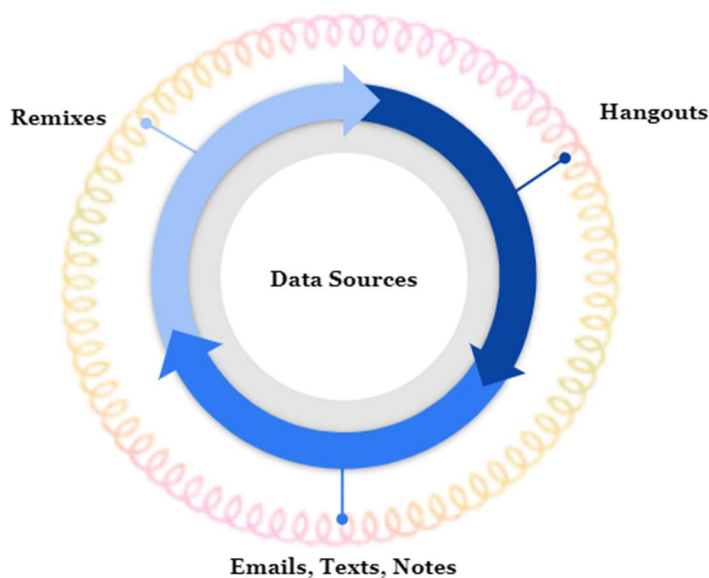


Figure 13 Data sources and analysis

Synchronous and Asynchronous Participation. Data included recorded synchronous meetings in Google Hangouts, semi-structured interviews with each teacher throughout the study via text, phone, and email, plus work added to Google drive that represented both teacher experiences and redacted student work. That work included remixes made by the teachers. Initial interviews and exit interviews of teachers who withdrew from the study were done via telephone and not recorded. I tested several recording apps (at least six), including ones I had successfully used before. I could record my own voice, but the voice on the other end of the call was not

recorded in any of the apps I tested. I searched for reasons, hacks, and workarounds, but none worked. The restrictions were frustrating. It made me think back to my childhood when we recorded songs from the radio using a tape recorder held close to the speakers; I did consider trying that as well, but my phone doubles as my recorder. As a journalist, I am skilled at notetaking, and recent practice in another study honed that skill, so I was confident that I captured both the essence of the call and important or meaningful quotes. Other interviews were done via Hangouts and recorded in the same way as the group meetings.

Google Hangouts On Air with YouTube Live. The primary group meetings were hosted by Google Hangouts/YouTube *Live* (Figure 14). Google Hangouts on Air with YouTube Live had an automatic closed-captioning option that also generated time-stamped transcripts. I

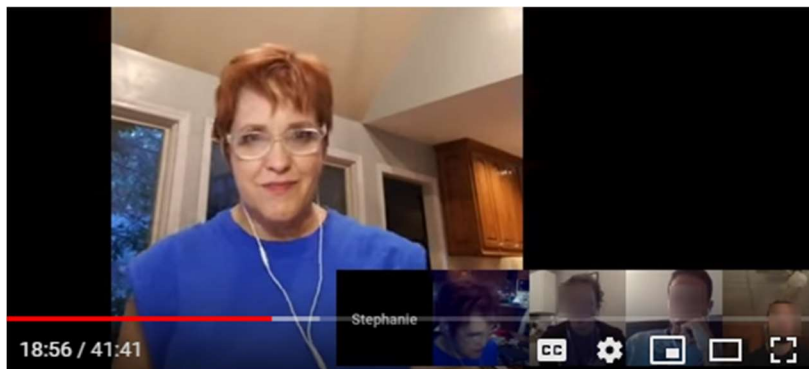


Figure 14 Screenshot of a Google Hangout

downloaded the auto-generated transcripts and watched the recordings, making corrections in the transcript and color coding by speaker. I could also make notations of voice, tone,

and speech that an auto-generated transcript could not capture. I used Hangouts as part of the hybrid courses I taught as well as in online courses during my time earning a Master of Education degree. On-air hangouts were recorded and shared to all participants but hidden from other public users. Google Hangouts allowed up to ten people to interact, share screens, and maintain a sidebar chat (backchannel discourse). Recording the synchronous meetings allowed teachers to access the conversations as well as check the transcriptions. During the study, teachers met via Hangouts once a week for the first month, bi-weekly the second, and once

during the third. The schedule, days and times as well as frequency, was determined by the teachers. I set up three different polls for determining times, and the best time to meet together was first Thursday evenings at 7:00, then shifted to Wednesdays. In the end, there were six Hangouts, ranging from 40 minutes to 90 minutes. My original plan was for eight, but teacher schedules precluded any additional group meetings. A typical Hangout often began as a semi-structured interview but turned into a natural conversation with a back-and-forth flow.

Sometimes they shared what they were doing that worked for them and other times they talked about things they had learned at conferences. They shared what they were doing in their classes as part of the study and the kinds of responses their students had. They also discussed some of their frustrations with components of high stakes testing, as in this sample (Figure 15).

S: How is what you're doing now especially with the remix part how is that helping you prepare them for the stuff that has to be done like the end of course tests and SATs and all that other prep but also with their own high level critical thinking independent thinking creative thinking skills what are you seeing?

A: I teach 11th grade - and I know last year we did so much kind of you know milestone specific prep just practice things straight out of the milestones guide and things like that and you know kids kind of just get totally sick of it after a while or you know they can't get through that first level at times just even understanding what it's asking them to do so things like this a really good way to kind of get them to start using those higher-level thinking skills they're going to need kind of even begin to approach a lot of this end of course test stuff I mean I think a lot of those questions kind of you know are a bit absurd to ask high schoolers to do it but I was like you have to use ways other than just giving them practice questions to you know get them to that level

B: Yeah, I think there are you know only so many practice passages and questions and practice said and do with them because you know the day and all the questions start the same you know we start category categorizing question types and all sorts of things like that and it does get dull and dry and boring and it does end up kind of eliminating that critical thinking that we want them to do so I definitely think that one of the things that I've started to kind of focus my efforts towards is building their stamina like they're thinking stamina just like having their brain active for a longer period of time so I think that this especially doing something that they actually feel like they have a voice stirring instead of just like what does the test want me to answer has their brains moving for longer periods of time in especially in class we had two days where we just did a work period and they were engaged most of them the entire time and we're thinking about how they want their image to look and you know how they're gonna write about it and I think to me that was more meaningful and more test prep than or more authentic test prep than what we do where you know the department is making me do of passage a week for EOTC guess I'll do it we'll check it check it off but you know there's so much more into testing and into thinking which is what we're trying to teach so I think that the remixing and you know thinking in different ways and that higher order thinking is so much more effective as a test prep tool than just teaching to the test.

A: Yeah definitely. oh yeah I agree with all that are you starting to see it with your students even though you're just getting started with this yeah I mean last year I had five eleventh grade classes so really got a lot of EOCT experience last year and I guess kind of thing that I really kind of felt at the end of the year was the students that did pretty well on that they just you know kind of had general or good general reading skills it seemed like you know they probably had been reading well since they were young you know maybe their little things like that and students that didn't do as well you know they didn't quite have as good of kind of basic reading skills so I think this year kind of main thing that I keep kind of thinking about is just a lot of the students you know can I get them to you know read a book this year because they're doing that if you're reading regularly you're going to be fine on the EOC in the two 11th grade classes that I have or both team taught classes so you know my head is really kind of more at trying to just help all those kids get better reading and writing skills

Figure 15 Sample of a typical Hangout conversation

Google Drive. Google Drive was the repository for teacher generated remixes, reflections, and redacted student work. Each week had its own folder containing some general ideas and suggested prompts for each week. Teachers had the opportunity to put their remixes and any documents they wanted to share in folders and kept recordings, transcripts, emails, and my memos there. There were five teacher remixes, and Bea shared 15 redacted student remixes.

Email. I saved every email between me and all the teachers on Google Drive. I kept the emails of those who left, along with my attempt to schedule an exit interview. Two did respond to exit interview requests and notes from those calls were kept with the emails. There were times when remaining teachers could not attend the Hangouts, and they didn't have time to add to the folders there. However, both teachers who completed the study were responsive to emailed questions, so the exchanges became valuable data sources.

Phone conversations and texts. With teacher time constraints a major factor in regular long meetings, I was grateful for their willingness to talk during their commute times by phone. While these conversations did not produce significant direct quotes, they did help me clarify contexts, teacher thought processes, and answer questions that came up as I analyzed the other data. I also kept the text messages we sent back and forth during and after the study. The text messages were informal, but often contained information that didn't come through any other source. It was through a text message that I learned Adam was a jazz guitarist who owned four guitars and started his college career as a music technician. That bit of insight helped me understand his quiet demeanor during Hangouts and his affinity for organization. His original degree plan would have kept him in the background of the music industry, planning production and attending to the details of recording. As a teacher, he preferred tending to the details of planning over engaging in larger group conversations with colleagues.

Researcher Responsibilities

Collecting, coding, analyzing, and maintaining the data was primarily my responsibility as the researcher, but all data and information were available to all participating teachers, and I encouraged them to edit and challenge my work. I used access to the data as an invitation for member checking, and I followed up with texts and emails. I encouraged both Bea and Adam to

review my work throughout the study, analysis, and writing. I sent regular emails with links to the documents and permission for full editorial authority. At any time, they were welcome to change or challenge any part that did not represent their experiences with remix. I intended to honor their experience and insight by giving them space to discuss and evaluate all the different ways data were evaluated and represented. In line with the remixed framework, I blended or remixed, several kinds of analyses. I was working with multiple modes: visual, auditory, and movement, and multiple media: images, alphabetic texts, and video. It made sense that I needed to employ a variety of analytical methods to adequately examine and represent the data. I used a form of discourse analysis to make meaning of the many conversations during the study as well as visual analysis of teacher remixes.

Data Analysis Tools

My conceptual framework of Transactional Semiotics gave me a direction for how to integrate the different kinds of data I had in my Google Drive folders. Still, it was as overwhelming task, and I found I needed other tools to help me organize and make meaning across the data (Figure 16).



Figure 16 Knitting needles representing tools for working with data

Grounded theory. Grounded theory kept me organized and helped me consider a larger perspective as I considered the data through a holistic, inductive lens. I used a holistic lens to consider all data as important to the whole of the study, with the inductive lens serving as a means for considering connections and themes during and after data collection (Charmaz, 2011; Saldaña, 2016). I looked across the data broadly first, using open coding to identify common words and ideas. I followed Saldaña's (2016) advice to be attuned for words that called for annotation. I did this with both the Hangout transcripts and the videos and found the videos, with the capture of tone, inflection, pitch, and speed to be a rich source. Watching and listening allowed me to analyze data concurrently with the study and still create a space for seeing the whole as well as the parts.

Cycles. Using a holistic lens meant considering data as a whole and in parts. I read the transcripts, texts, and emails multiple times, often revisiting elements as new data were added. As I reflected, I began to see patterns that shaped into ideas, or concepts. Concepts became more defined the more data I reviewed, and I was able to form broad categories. Adding the visual analyses as the teachers shared their remixes added another layer of depth to how I understood the rest of the data.

Codes and Coding

After the official part of the study was complete, I embarked on a journey of concept coding (Saldaña, 2016), extracting and blending codes into what Saldaña called “big picture ideas” (p. 97). I distilled a long list of Atlas.ti generated codes into 12 concept codes and put them into a spreadsheet and began to revisit each transcription, email, and interview, organizing each by concept (Table 3). I eventually worked my way through concept codes and structural codes through multiple iterations through the data.

Table 3 Concept codes in order of frequency

Students [108 mentions]	Time-chrono [78]	Time-pressure [74]	Remix [68]
Philosophy/Identity [47]	Connections [47]	PLC [44]	Create [40]
Administration requirements [30]	Testing [29]	Meaning-making [28]	Value [21]

Concept codes. I organized the concept codes by frequency, thinking that if a code or idea was repeated, it was meaningful. Not surprisingly, both teachers talked about their *students* more than anything else. The university program from which they both graduated has a strong student-centered focus in teacher education. Both teachers talked about the goals they had for their students as well as the importance they place on connecting with their students. Both teachers used *students* and *kids* interchangeably. *Time* as a word was mentioned more than students, but the context of use was different, so I made it two different codes: *time-chrono* for chronological time, and *time-pressure* for references to how the teachers managed their days. Chronology was often linked to schedules, class length, and daily routines like meetings. Pressure was an emotional response to expectations for things that needed to be done, usually things made urgent by administrators and things that interfered with teachers' goals. *Remix*, being the activity of the study was also a common code. Sometimes teachers referred to remix as the project they were doing with their students and other times they used the work as the process they were teaching. Teachers also talked about their *philosophy and identity* as teachers. They talked about how they viewed their roles as teachers and how they worked to inspire and motivate all of their students. Bea said, "My philosophy is that teaching is an art... I was called to this profession, this craft." Adam noted, "I strongly believe that public education is one of the

top three most important elements to a successful democracy...and I do feel that I am making an impression.”

Connections is another code with more than one meaning: connections to texts, connections to students, and connections between students. The concept of people bringing themselves to the texts or to relationships with each other was the same, so I maintained connections as a single code. *PLC*, or professional learning community was a code that came up at least once in every conversation, often in conjunction with *administrative requirements*. Administrative requirements included discussions of meetings, contract, and non-contract work, as well as school decisions about how PLCs would operate. *Testing* was a related code but usually related to the high-stakes Milestones tests that played a role in both student and teacher evaluations. Testing was sometimes related to AP exams as well.

The final three codes: *create*, *meaning-making*, and *value* were nearly always used in discussions about what students were doing and how the teachers felt about the activities in their classrooms. If testing and administrative requirements were often linked to negative emotions, create, meaning-making, and value were generally linked to positive feelings.

Structural codes. As I began considering quotes as concepts, I began to see places where the 12 concept codes could be further merged through structural coding into broad categories (Saldaña, p. 100). Saldaña described structural coding as identifying sections of text on broad topics that form the foundation for deeper analysis. Since I was working on a case study that required rich description, I decided to create a limited number of six categories using the places where the words of the teachers crossed over multiple concepts: Administrative requirements (I merged testing into this code), Students, Teaching experiences, Composition for meaning-making, Time, and Connection. Ultimately, time prevailed as a key structural code because it

included elements all the other structural codes. Teachers viewed their experiences through the lens of time, talking about how time influenced how they thought about their work as teachers. In some ways, time also affected their identities as teachers.

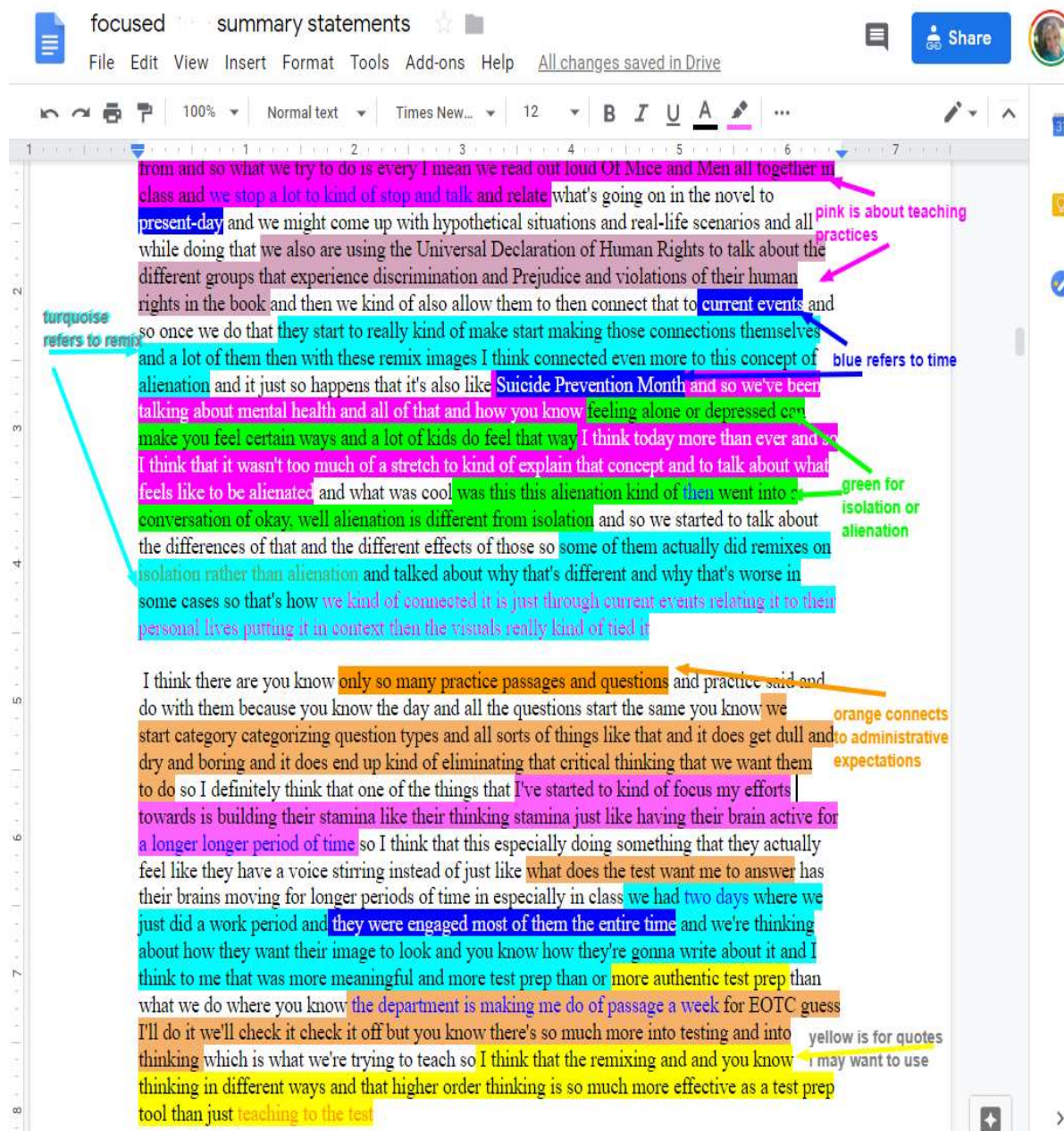


Figure 17 Color coded summary

I coded the documents in phrases, then line by line (Charmaz, 2011). I looked at the data by teacher next, creating summary documents for each that compiled their words across all the different transcripts and emails. That way I could see at a glance what each teacher said without

having to search through multiple transcripts. I organized the quotes into the structural codes by Hangouts 1-3 and 4-6, emails, and interviews. I also color coded the focused summary compilations for both Bea and Adam (Figure 17) to make elements stand out so I could see them at a glance.

Bea's quote below, an excerpt from Figure 17, illustrates how all six codes worked in context as well as how time played a major role in how she viewed her role as a teacher.

I've started to kind of focus my efforts towards building their stamina, like their thinking stamina, just like having their brain active for a longer period of time. So I think that this especially doing something that they actually feel like they have a voice stirring instead of just like "what does the test want me to answer" has their brains moving for longer periods of time, in especially in class. We had two days where we just did a work period, and they were engaged most of them the entire time and were thinking about how they want their image to look, and you know how they're gonna write about it. And I think, to me, that was more meaningful and more test prep than or more authentic test prep than what we do.

In this brief excerpt, all six codes intersect. When Bea talked about focusing her effort, she was discussing her *teaching experience*. She referred to her *students* throughout: increasing their thinking stamina, finding their voices, and being engaged in the projects. Students intersected with *meaning-making* when Bea mentioned them thinking about how they wanted their images to look and how they would write about them. The meaning-making also allowed students to make *connections* with the literature beyond what the test answers were. *Administrative requirements* for test preparation were met in ways that Bea called "authentic." Throughout the entire excerpt, the structural code of *time* prevails: increasing student thinking stamina for an

increasing amount of time, a two-day work period, and the inevitability of testing time approaching.

Iterations. The recursive nature of grounded theory allowed me to see new things each time I went through the data (Charmaz, 2011). In a sense, I was practicing transactional semiotics every time I used my knowledge and experience from prior iterations through the data to inform either the new data or revisited existing data. For example, Adam mentioned being "thrown in" as the 11th grade curriculum leader for the PLC during the second Hangout. I marked it as an interesting choice of words to describe the school environment. He discussed the 11th grade PLC again during the fifth Hangout, saying that he and his colleague were trying to keep their "heads above water" as they tried to write a new curriculum while composing daily plans at the same time. I noted this as teacher stress in my notes of *teacher experiences*. The idea that it was stressful added a level of understanding to the previous statement of being "thrown in." Additionally, even though the Hangouts were weeks apart, there was a subtle metaphor about the feeling of drowning, a word that Bea used several times in another Hangout and in her second remix expressing her feelings of being overwhelmed.

With each new piece of data, whether a Hangout, email, text, or image, I revisited the work from the previous weeks, considering the efferent/aesthetic spiral and how each piece fit with the others. I used multiple memos, some of Gee's (2014) tools for discourse analysis, and visual analyses to make meaning of the data.

Journaling

As I was coding, analyzing images, and creating spreadsheets, I also kept a dedicated dissertation journal where I could keep ideas, thoughts, quotes from my readings, and images I created to help me make meaning of the data. I also glued in notes from my committee chair and

reviews from a rejected grant application, so I would remember to address those issues (Figure 18).

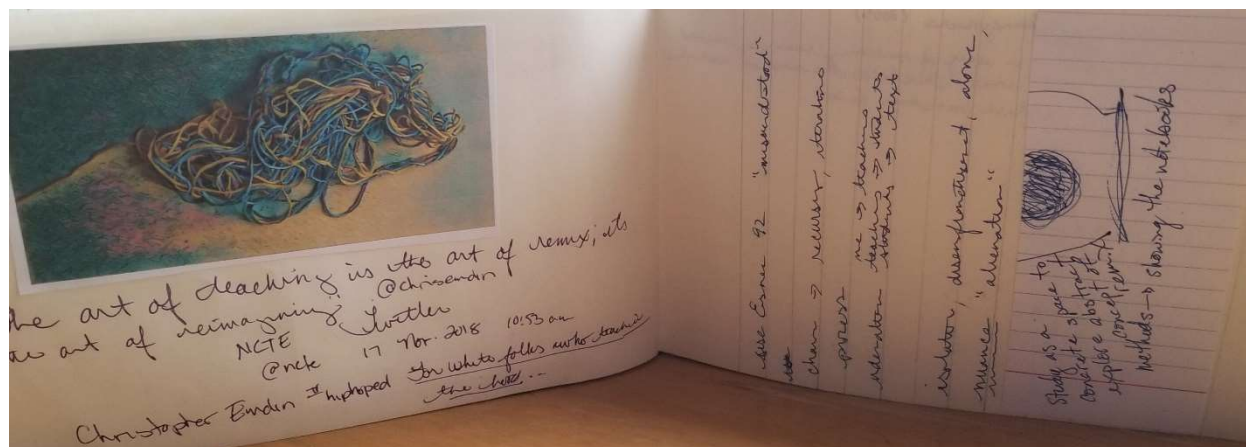


Figure 18 Sample from my dissertation journal

Part of my journaling was also image driven. I created a series of images one evening as I untangled yarn for a project and reflected that untangling the yarn was like untangling the data (Figure 19). As I followed a thread in the yarn to disengage it from the knot, so I followed threads of conversation, remixes, and videos to make sense of what the teachers were living through as they experienced remix. Following the threads took me through multiple readings of transcripts and emails, a recursive journey that added to the trustworthiness of what I learned.



Figure 19 Tangled yarn representing data

Memos

I created four thematic memos across all the participants based on notes drawn from the first round of analysis: administrative expectations, time, why new ideas are hard to implement, and approaching remix. Charmaz (2011) described memos as a "pivotal intermediate stage of analysis between coding and writing the first draft" (p. 166). I found the memos to be useful tools to help refine codes as well. Writing through the transcripts and my annotations in the memos gave me a space to start seeing how each Hangout, email, and phone conversation connected to each other. I created another memo for a visual analysis of the remixes shared by the teachers. I also created multiple memos for each teacher who completed the study. I started by putting everything each teacher said into a document chronologically. I then parsed out what was recurrent into summary statements. Finally, I put the summary statements into a contextual document that I called *focus memos*.

Discourse Analysis Concepts

From Gee (2014) I borrowed the practice of applying concepts of discourse analysis across all the written data: transcriptions, emails, texts, and notes I used two of Gee's seven building tasks: significance and practices. Significance addressed the questions of how people use language to make messages stand out from the daily undercurrent of information. I considered the language of kinds of texts as I considered his question, "How is this piece of language being used to make certain things significant or not and in what ways?" (p. 32). When teachers began to withdraw from the study, their emails contained similar phrases: "I wish I had time" or "I thought I would have time" or "I am juggling a lot." The language about *time* led me to investigate why teachers seemed to feel overwhelmed. Even the teachers who stayed talked about time: "Your time is so precious" and "If they want us to improve our craft, they have to

give us time.” The discourse of teacher time became an important conversation as the teachers worked to incorporate remix into their existing unit plans.

In considering practices, I looked to Gee’s (2014) question, "What practice (activity)...is this piece of language being used to enact (i.e., get others to recognize as going on)?" (p. 33) as a point of reference for looking at some of the comments, both in words and images, particularly as related to the pressures teachers felt for their students to perform and for the constraints on their teaching practices because of that pressure. Bea’s repeated word, “drowning” with Adam’s feeling that he and his colleague were trying to keep their “heads above water” connected to the demands of both administrators and PLCs at odds with their desires to be innovative teachers.

I used the discourse tools to put categories and quotes together in a spreadsheet for reference (Figure 20). The spreadsheet gave me a different visual perspective of the data and helped me organize the commonalities between the teachers with the added bonus of making quotes easier to find when I wanted them. Identifying each section by type (Hangout, email, or text) allowed me to return to the source material easily to ensure I kept quotes in context and with accuracy.

Visual Analysis

The teachers in the study contributed remixes of their own, and I spent some time analyzing their remix images. At the beginning of the study I asked teachers to practice remix by creating an unconventional introduction of themselves, an *untroduction* wherein they created an image that represented how they saw themselves and how they wanted others in the study to see them. The project gave them an opportunity to experiment with some of the apps we had reviewed, and their remixes gave me insight into their personalities and perceptions of self. As the study progressed, both Adam and Bea added more remixes, partly for practice so they could

model for their students, but partly to express their feelings and experiences during the study. These remixes became a valuable source of data in understanding how these teachers experienced remix in their classroom, and even more so, how they were experiencing teaching in general during the study.

I used techniques from Rose (2001) and Kress and Van Leeuwen (2001), along with my own background in layout and design from my undergraduate work in Journalism and years as a practicing artist to make meaning of their images. The first set of remixes gave me insight into teacher personalities, a sense of their teaching philosophies, and an example of what they understood about using remix themselves. The other images were produced at different times during the study and for different reasons. Adam shared a remix during the third week of the study based on one of my photographs. Bea created a remix as a way of expressing her frustration with a situation at her school. She shared that one on social media sites as well. Her third piece came shortly after the study concluded as a response to how she felt about remix and her intention to continue using it.

Stanczyk (2007) wrote, "Images are not merely appendages to the research, but rather inseparable components to learning about our social worlds" (p. 3). The social worlds of in-service teachers were revealed in their remixes. The remixes were not the whole picture, but they served to inform how I interpreted the spoken and written words, while the spoken and written words informed how I read the images. Borrowing from Rosenblatt (1978), I considered both efferent and aesthetic stances as I transacted with the remixes. I employed visual analysis to derive data from the remixes, using references from Goldstein (2007), Rose (2001), and Kress and Van Leeuwen (2001), along with my own background in layout and design from my

undergraduate work in journalism and years as a practicing artist to make meaning of their images.

Compositional interpretation. The first step I took in analyzing the remixed images was a simple compositional interpretation (Rose, 2001). Rose called this the "good eye" (p. 33) which allowed me to take notice of what the images were before launching into what they might mean. Each teacher had a distinct style and approach, so looking simply at content and form before considering the techniques was informative. Adding notes about technological applications, arrangement of images, focal points, and light also offered insight into both the personalities of the teachers and their approaches to teaching. This process represented a more efferent than aesthetic stance; I was reading the images for information.

Semiotics. Both Rose (2001) and Kress and van Leeuwen (2001) discussed the role of sign systems as ways of making meaning. Peirce (1897/1955), as discussed in Chapter 1, is largely credited with developing the formal doctrine of signs called semiotics. He wrote, "a sign is a representamen with a mental interpretant" (p. 100), linking the human experience with objects to meaning making, a key element in visual analysis. Peirce also wrote that the sign is something that stands for something to someone, something that Kress and Van Leeuwen also discuss in their work, saying "interpretation leads to signs which are evident (to the interpreter) 'internally'" (p. 41). Rose also alluded to Peircean semiotics when she discussed the analytical precision of semiotics, saying that semiology is a "scientific approach to the analysis of meaning" (p. 70), something reflective of Peirce's statement that meaning is a logical comprehension. Interestingly, in spite of Peirce's prominence as a semiotic scholar, Rose gave Peirce only a paragraph in her chapter on semiology, while Kress and Van Leeuwen did not mention him at all.

Semiotic choices. Rose (2001) directly referenced Peirce (1897/1955) in her descriptions of icons, indices, and symbols (p. 78). Icons were direct representations, that is, the sign resembled the object it named. A picture of a guitar is an icon of guitars. The picture is not a guitar; it cannot be picked up and played. An index had a connection to the object that was culturally relevant. Rose used the idea of a posted picture of a pacifier to suggest a public place had baby changing facilities (p. 78). Similarly, the outline of a wheelchair painted on a parking space indicated that the space was reserved for people with specific medical or physical needs. Symbols were connected to the object by association, not necessarily by physical resemblance, but by societal agreement of meaning. Colors were common symbols. Red in Western culture, represented ideas like passion, excitement, anger, or danger (Gross, 2019). Other common symbols like skull and crossbones for poison or flags representing nations were connected to abstract ideas by cultural association (Gross; "History of Skull and Crossbone," 2019). I used these three elements, icon, index, and symbol as I analyzed the remixes.

Kress and Van Leeuwen (2001) offered insight on the semiotics of design. Design contextualized the images and the choices both teachers made as they created their remixes added "layers of meaning" (p. 118). Color or framing choices added to the message the teachers wanted to communicate. The layers of meaning were more pronounced the more layers of text (in the form of images) were added. Choices of colors, shapes, images, frames, and text fonts offered the teachers multiple anchors for communication. Kress and Van Leeuwen noted, "meaning also resides in production" (p. 68), and the way the teachers chose to create their remixes (in layout, design, and image order) added meaning to the icons, indices, and symbols they used.

Semiotic processes. Goldstein (2007) discussed the properties of temporal and spatial editing that photographers use to frame their subjects. The questions Goldstein raised were useful as I considered how teachers cropped and placed the pieces of their remixes. Why did they choose the images they used (temporal editing)? How did they determine which parts of the chosen images they used (spatial editing)? I used the transcripts from Hangouts plus text messages and emails to inform how I interpreted layout and editing. Meaning making came from the way in which the teachers manipulated the images they chose, what Kress and Van Leeuwen (2001) called a "particular kind of semiotic/cognitive/affective work" (p.68). The editing process necessary in remix required the teachers to think about where, how, and why they put images together and how that integration of elements told the stories the teachers wanted to communicate.

Additionally, Kress (2010) noted that actions, in this case, remixes, were the result of a prompt and how that prompt was interpreted. Prompts, according to Kress, were messages that sparked interest in someone who then created a response. In this study, I offered one specific prompt (an unconventional introduction) and encouraged the teachers to create others based on topics of conversation from the Hangouts, specifically Bea's reference to drowning and Adam's desire to experiment with some the apps available for creating remixes. How each interpreted the prompts drove their semiotic choices in creating their remixes.

Trustworthiness and Relevance

Trustworthiness and credibility in qualitative research often require greater explication than that of quantitative methods. Qualitative inquiry is based on observation and experience in alignment with theory; qualitative researchers seek evidence of how and why certain social phenomena exist in particular contexts (Kamberelis & Dimitriadis, 2005; Shenton, 2004).

Qualitative researchers look for information, not answers, and a good qualitative study may offer clues to a better and deeper understanding of the phenomenon being considered (Bogdan & Biklen, 2007). In this study, I focused on how two teachers experienced using remix as a teaching tool, and the case was bounded by their experiences in their classrooms.

The link to the final report of findings, discussions, and conclusions was emailed to teachers before final submission. I communicated with both teachers regularly via email, text, and video chats to clarify or fill in missing data. All the transcripts were open to the teachers, and they had editorial access to everything I wrote throughout the study and beyond, up to final publication. Both teachers reviewed their focused summary statements and neither made changes.

Rigor

Reflective research begins with awareness of practice and a desire to improve, modify, or enhance it. Sharing ways of thinking through dialogue with fellow practitioners led to reciprocal reflection of action that may lead to transformation of practice in the future (Schön, 1983; Smagorinsky, Sheldon, & Moore, 2015). Further, the multiple forms of data, open data analysis process, and participant reviews of findings all added layers to the rigor within the research and the ability for the teachers to continue to act on the findings in practical ways (Anderson, 2017; Lennie, 2009). The layers of data, including group dialog, individual conversations, written words, and shared remixes by the participants added an additional level of trustworthiness.

This study aimed to tell the story of how two high school teachers experienced using remix as a tool for teaching ELA and how those experiences informed their broader teaching practices. To achieve the "complexity, texture, and nuance involved" in how these teachers experienced remix, all the data was always available to them throughout the study (Kamberelis

& Dimitriadis, 2005, p. 17). Because their expressed experiences, whether written, spoken, or remixed were the data sources for this study, and because each teacher had access to all the data, the representation of the data is authentic to the participants. The story became something in which they could see themselves and their experiences.

Attention to Detail

Attention to detail aids trustworthiness (Dyson & Genishi, 2005; Stake, 1995). Eisner (1998) furthered this point in discussing details by explaining a need for structural corroboration wherein multiple sources or recurrence of experiences add to trustworthiness. Details served as means for corroborating the connections among the data. Connections were found among teachers' experiences implementing remix, their conversations, and in their reflections during interviews. Trustworthiness in this study partly comes from the sources (teachers) interacting with each other and with the data (Tobin & Begley, 2004). Rigor was enhanced by ensuring members of the study had unrestricted editing access to the data and analysis (Lennie, 2006). When all members of a study value the contributions of each other, the knowledge that comes from the study may lead to actionable ideas in individual classrooms or larger groups of teachers in professional learning communities (PLCs) in their schools and content areas.

Timeliness

Bogdan and Biklen (2007) recommended choosing something of interest to the researcher as a place to start, but for a topic to be worthy, it should be meaningful to people beyond the parameters of the study. Tracy (2010) added that research should be relevant, timely, significant, and interesting. This study of teachers and how they experience remix as a teaching tool came from my interest and experience using remix to illustrate the writing process. The teachers who participated shared an interest in remix, literacy, and/or methods for differentiation. The

worthiness, timeliness, and significance of the topic come from living in remix culture wherein multimodal tools offered teachers the opportunity to creatively reframe cultural narratives and generate dialog (Hafner, 2015; Lessig, 2008; Murray, 2015; Navas, 2010). Vermeulen (2018) observed that we live in a digital world “that is characterized by fast-paced, technology-driven social change” (para. 8). Outside the classroom, both teachers and students interact with new technologies on a regular basis. It is only within the classroom that technology was largely limited to remediation or reference (Darling-Hammond, Zieleski, & Goldman, 2014; Ottenbreit-Leftwich, Glazewski, Newby, & Ertmer, 2010). This study sought to chronicle the experiences of teachers who challenged that limitation within the confines of their schools' administrative requirements and the constraints on teacher time.

Limitations

This study is limited by the small number of participants, the limitations of school expectations (PLCs), and time. I was also limited by not observing the work in action by visiting the classrooms of the teachers using remix. However, the findings show the potential promise of remix as a pedagogical tool in high school ELA classes and open the door to further research.

Role of the Researcher

My goal in this study was to learn with the other teachers who participated (Garaway, 2017). My expertise and experience in remix generated the study, but the teachers drove the direction of the experience. Chouinard and Cousins (2012) noted a "paradox of empowerment" (p. 139) in their studies wherein participants may be ill-equipped to do the work expected of them. The paradox was not at issue in this study. Both teachers held advanced degrees, were interested in practicing remix, and enjoyed the creative process of lesson planning. The teachers were the experts once the study began. My role was facilitator, administrator, and listener. I

facilitated data analysis and reporting, but both teachers had the opportunity to review the results before publication. Additionally, we discussed ways to continue collaborating on articles and at conferences after the study is complete as part of our contributions to the ELA teaching field.

Ethical Considerations

Tisdale (2004) wrote of three essential elements needed to maintain an ethical research study: “respect for persons, beneficence, and justice” (p. 19). The goal of this study was to explore how teachers experience using remix as a tool for teaching. Each participant reflection, whether spoken, written, or otherwise communicated during the course of this study represented that teacher's experience (Aluwihare-Samaranayake, 2012). Because I valued their insights, both teachers in the study had access to all the data, and I offered the opportunity to review the written narrative of the findings before publication. Maintaining accessibility to the work in progress to the participants afforded a level of beneficence by minimizing misunderstanding of the data and ensuring every voice was accurately represented. I invited study teachers to attend the final dissertation defense as recognition of their role in the study and as an additional way to corroborate the findings (Herr & Anderson, 2005).

My hope was that the teachers who participated in this study would form professional relationships with me and with each other to encourage and inspire them to continue to incorporate new tools and ideas in their classes. To that end, I was mindful of inequities of power or influence (Cousins & Chouinard, 2012). I also endeavored to maintain forward momentum through what Cousins and Chouinard call a “powering with” mentality (p. 139). Powering with became essential in the chaos of the first weeks of the school and demands on teacher time. Both teachers expressed an interest in collaborating on future articles and conference presentations, which was exciting to me. Possibly the most important thing I did was to listen to the teachers

who participated (Crishna, 2006; McClelland, 2017). Listening allowed both teachers to talk through the challenges or frustrations on the journey. My goal with this study was to provide an environment of mutual respect, collaboration, creativity, and hopefully some fun along the way. I think we accomplished all four objectives.

Reflection

Stake (1995) wrote, “The function of research is not necessarily to map and conquer the world, but to sophisticate the beholding of it” (p. 43). The shift in direction during the course of this study forced me to constantly challenge my expectations and my biases and to change my actions and thinking regularly based on what the teachers were experiencing in their classrooms. In so doing, I left any ideas of mapping and conquering remix as a teaching tool, but I watched as two teachers implemented remix in two different ways with different texts. In beholding their experiences, I was able to consider a breadth and depth of remix in real classroom application through the eyes of the teachers.

To this point, I have introduced remix as a process and as a product. I have discussed some of the stressors and constraints on teachers in the U.S. in a data-driven economy. I have reviewed the literature surrounding remix and teachers’ feelings about their chosen profession. Chapter 3 explored my conceptual framework of transactional semiotics and laid out the design and evolution of this case study. In the next chapters, I share the findings and consider the implications of how two ELA teachers experienced remix as a teaching tool.

CHAPTER 4

FINDINGS

In 2018 the Digital Literacies in Teacher Education (D-LITE) commission of NCTE published a belief statement about integrating technology into the ELA classroom (NCTE, D-LITE, 2018). The statements defined literacy as literacies, "social practices that transcend individual modes of communication" (para. 1). Behind the statements are a foundational philosophy that literacy practices change over time and that technologies can mediate literacy activities. In this study, remix became a transactional tool for shaping meaning-making by the teachers who participated and for their students. For both Adam and Bea, remix allowed teachers to put the literature ahead of the technology; technology was a means to an end, not an end to itself. Following multiple threads of data allowed me to see how remix worked as an experience that deepened student learning while still allowing teachers to meet the expectations of administrators and Milestones testing (Figure 20).

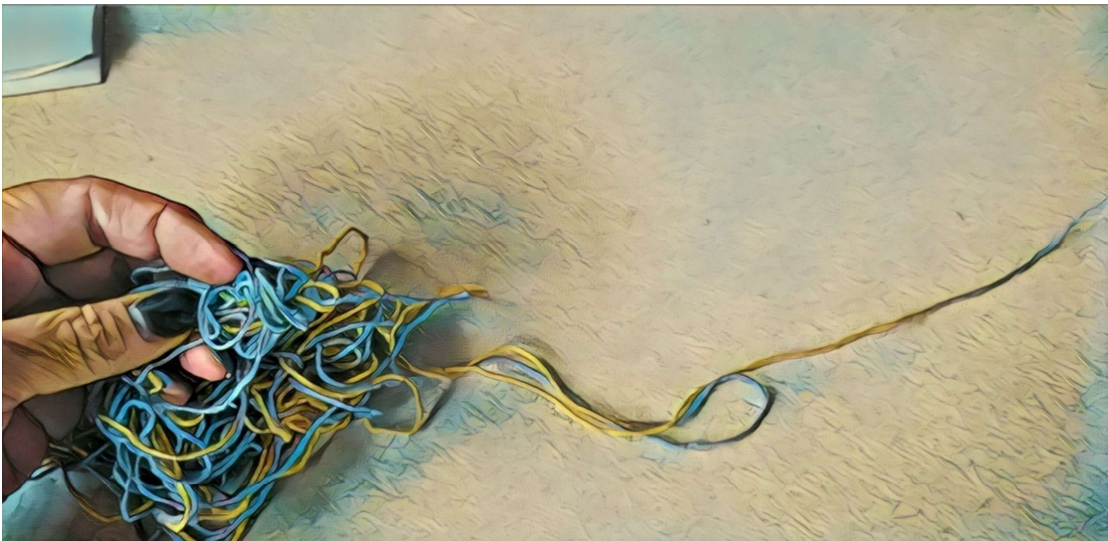


Figure 20 Following data threads to findings

In this section I share the findings of the study. I begin with the context of the study, including challenges of state-required professional learning communities (PLCs), teacher assessments, and administrative expectations. Four of the original participants in the study withdrew citing some or all of these challenges, making Adam and Bea's successful navigation through them a testament to their creativity and determination.

The Context of the Study

During the 2014-2015 school year, the Georgia Department of Education (DOE) implemented a new standardized test to reflect a change in content standards for core subjects: Language Arts, Mathematics, Science, and Social Studies. The Georgia Milestones Assessment System or simply Milestones was supposed to replace a previous series of tests and was intended to simplify testing while measuring how well students met Common Core-inspired standards, and how well they compared to their national peers (Iannone, 2015; Tagami, 2016). By 2018 the Milestones had absorbed the EOC, but not replaced it. Teachers sometimes still referred to the assessment as EOC, and the exam stretched over ten specific subjects instead of the original four core content areas. The subjects were subsets of the content areas: the ELA test was split into distinct exams for Ninth Grade Literature and Composition and 11th grade American Literature and Composition. The Milestones for high school ELA included five categories: reading literary texts, reading informational texts, writing, speaking and listening, and language. Students were expected to know common themes of literature from the 18th to 20th centuries, analyze historical documents from the U.S. and around the world, evaluate a speaker's point of view, reasoning and rhetoric, understand how language functioned in different contexts, and write both informative and argumentative texts (GaDOE, 2019.)

As the assessments expanded, the results became more demanding and counted as 30% of teacher effectiveness assessment in addition to making up 20% of students' grades (GaDOE, 2016; Hill, 2015). While most of the questions were multiple choice, just as the previous exams were, the new assessments also included open-ended questions that required both an answer to the question and an explanation.

The new Language Arts (ELA) assessment also included a writing component that required an elaborate answer and explanation in a variety of possible genres: argumentative, informative, or narrative. The assessment was divided into two broad domains: reading and vocabulary (53% of the exam) and writing and language (47% of the exam) (Georgia Milestones American Literature and Composition EOC Assessment Guide, 2018, p. 10). The writing portion of the assessment was scored by a strict rubric, which meant teachers were required not only to teach composition but also how to compose for this specific exam, which may or may not be a format all students could achieve. When only one genre or style was acceptable for demonstrating mastery, there were bound to be students who scored poorly not based on their ability to reason, but on whether they met an expectation that may not be clear (Hackett, 1964; Hillocks, 2002). For example, one part of the "writer's checklist" said, "use appropriate and varied transitions to connect your ideas and to clarify the relationships among claims, counterclaims, reasons, and evidence" (Milestone Guide, p. 37). The expectation was that all students were able to follow a string of instructions, know precisely what "appropriate and varied transitions" were, and to interpret what the test scorers might think clear relationships might be.

The impact of the assessments for teachers was pressure to spend instructional time ensuring students understood how to take the test as well as have mastery of the test's content. The resulting tension required teachers to demonstrate how students could perform well on the

assessments and still maintain some semblance of agency in their classrooms. In the next subsections, I explore some of the factors that cause the tension, including certificate renewal guidelines, PLCs, and teacher stress and burnout. I also consider the apparent contradiction between a desire for technology integration and the reality of preparing for the high stakes exams.

The Tension

Teachers throughout the state, while perhaps not wanting to teach to the test, still had to teach the test. Using multiple kinds of text in classroom assessment took time, and if 30% of the measure of teacher effectiveness was measured by how students performed on this particular exam, it followed that many teachers would steer away from multimodal, image driven, and alternative texts as classroom practice. Research may have shown that producing alternative forms of text were valuable skills for the marketplace and for life beyond the classroom, but a high stakes test representing only one form of text meant non-alphabetic forms of text often took a back seat during instruction (Filippi, 2008; Garcia, 2018). Vander Ark (2017) noted that, while pushing for equitable outcomes through standards-based instruction and assessment may have been a well-intentioned goal, one unintended consequence was a "narrow focus on testing in compliance-oriented systems" (para. 3) that did more to quench teacher creativity than to encourage it. He added, "The world is moving towards a 'show-what-you-know' economy with demonstrated competency signaled through a variety of strategies (e.g., microcredentials and portfolios)" (para. 13). Students may have been able to demonstrate mastery over time through a portfolio that included multiple forms of text, but the focus on the structured writing style required for high stakes testing meant teachers had to ensure students could produce that one

uniform style of writing. If students did not adequately conform to the required style, teachers were held accountable, and their certificate renewal could be jeopardized.

Certificate renewal guidelines. Teachers maintained certification through the Georgia Professional Services Commission (GaPSC). Certificate renewal for teachers was partly based on "educator performance," which was linked to how well students performed on the Milestones. All professional learning for teachers was to be "standards-based and designed around national professional learning standards as outlined by Learning Forward" (Georgia Professional Learning Guidelines, 2017, p. 7). *Learning Forward*, a company within the MetLife financial planning and insurance conglomerate was hired to direct professional development for all teachers (GaPLG).

The 2015 Guidelines for certificate renewal included the statement, "our mindset will have to change to one of improving practice to address the needs of the students" (p. 7), yet the requirement for professional learning was one universal plan, not one designed to address the needs of individual students taught by professional educators. Professional learning communities (PLCs) were mandated for every school and were supposed to help teachers by giving them a space for collaboration along with looking across data so they could better meet the needs of students. Schools, however, took differing approaches to how they structured their PLCs. Some schools, particularly those whose administrators had a background in PLCs, worked to make the PLCs engaging and functional. Other schools, however, turned the PLCs into training sessions to ensure that each classroom was exactly as the others in each grade. Working in lockstep meant teachers had little input on the work done in their classrooms.

The apparent disconnect between standards for student learning and professional development for teachers partly fueled the tension between teachers who wanted to engage in

research-based, student-centered practices and the state focus on producing students who performed well on a criterion-based assessment. Interestingly, the 2015 slideshow explaining the professional learning changes for teachers was named, "Brave New World of Professional Learning" by the state professional standards commission (Hill, 2015). The reference to Huxley's dystopian novel may have been intended to be tongue in cheek, but many teachers, including those who participated in this study, felt the pressure of a requirement to conform, but without the benefit of Soma.

PLCs. The state required schools to form Professional Learning Communities (PLCs) as the primary, and in some cases only, professional learning vehicle for teachers in the state. PLCs were not a new idea; DuFour (2004) and Newmann (1996) outlined core principles for PLCs that included a focus on student learning, reflective dialogue, collaboration, and a democratic concept of shared professional learning. However, in 2017, the state professional standards commission began to require teacher participation in school PLCs as part of teaching certificate renewal (GaPSC rule 505-2-26, p. 4). How schools chose to set them up was flexible, but in most cases, teachers were required to be in a PLC for every subject and grade level they taught. PLCs were intended to function as a form of action research wherein teachers were researchers who considered data from test scores, student work in their classes, and findings in published scholarly research (DuFour, DuFour, Eaker, & Many, 2018). They analyzed the data as part of their collective assessment of their own work, collaborating on solutions and actions that would improve their teaching practices for improving student learning opportunities.

Mangin (2016) wrote, "Instead of interpreting the high-stakes evaluation as an impetus to embrace available learning opportunities, teachers focused on complying with top-down policy mandates at the expense of learning" (p. 964). Studies by Au (2007) and Rooney (2015) found

that an emphasis on instructional mandates and high-stakes testing both narrowed curriculum content and reduced teachers' input into their own classroom practices. Hull and Nelson (2005) found that test-based mandates ultimately led to reduction of knowledge itself; content was driven by the contexts of the high-stakes tests. The resulting effect was that teachers were pressured to meet conflicting obligations: a responsibility to meet the needs of students and a requirement for students to achieve based on test-based norms (Hull & Nelson; Rooney, 2015; Thibodeaux et al. 2015). Even Professional Learning Communities (PLCs) often morphed from opportunities to reflect on lessons and texts to data analysis of how students fared on the most recent assessments (Hackney, 2015). Russell (2006) observed, "Tests are good at predicting academic success, but not promoting it" (p. 250). The tension for teachers to promote student academic achievement as measured by the high-stakes testing created new forms of teacher stress and teacher burnout.

Teacher stress and burnout. Assessments were a necessary means for checking student mastery, but tests were usually limited to measurement and quantifiable information missing the "many social, cultural, and individual factors that also influence how a student performs on a test (Madaus & Russell, 2010, p. 22). Additionally, teachers felt they could not "keep up with the demands of the profession, disrespect from the students, an abundance of paperwork, and the lack of support from administrators" (Thibodeaux et al. 2015, p. 228). Reliance on student performance on high-stakes tests as accountability measures for teachers led to a shift in motivation for many teachers. Instead of reflecting on practice from an internal motivation to learn and improve, teachers became driven by an external fear of failure, or, as Mangin (2016) observed, "Teachers' desire to comply with reform meant that, rather than engage in reflection, collaboration, and inquiry. teachers wanted to make sure their instructional practices conformed

to the rules” (p. 964). Romano and Wahlstrom (2000) found that the stressors of student needs and parental and administrative demands led to high and moderate stress levels that negatively affected teacher well-being. Mangin added the threat of disciplinary measures and sanctions against teachers whose students did not perform added to the stress level teachers felt.

Job satisfaction was a key component to teacher retention. In recent years, teachers have reported increased stress and reduced job satisfaction, and many were leaving the field because of the increased pressure on teachers to produce students who met testing criteria (Malinen & Savolainen, 2016; Rooney, 2015; Thibodeaux et al., 2015). Ma and MacMillan (1999) suggested that “administrivia,” or non-teaching activities and paperwork resulted in teachers feeling controlled by the administration and school culture rather than being treated as competent professionals (p. 40). A teacher in Mangin’s study said, “It’s become increasingly more confining because people are less trusting that teachers are doing what they’re supposed to be doing. So all of this data stuff is a way of trying to prove that teachers either know or don’t know what they’re doing” (p. 960). Vander Ark (2017) went so far as to suggest teachers suffered from a form of PTSD because of being forced into a data-compliance system that devalued teachers as professionals. Hamilton (personal conversation, October 2018) said of the burnout she saw in her own 25-year teaching career, “I have no doubt I’m part of the last 30-year generation of teachers...in public schools.” She is not alone in her discouragement; in one study 61% of teachers said their jobs were always or often stressful, and other studies show nearly half of new teachers leave the profession within five years, largely because of burnout. (Diaz, 2018; Rankin, 2016). A special report by *USA Today* noted a decline in teacher job satisfaction to less than 40%. Teachers in the report shared the stress levels brought on in part by low salaries, inadequate resources, and long hours that left them burned out and sometimes ready to give up

teaching altogether. The report noted that public school teachers pay an average \$479 out of pocket for classrooms supplies every year and work an average of 53.3 hours per week, despite an average contract of 38.2 hours (Hampson, 2018). Hampson ended his report noting that more than anything else, teachers feel disrespected.

Hackney (2015) suggested teachers begin to work within the constraints of regulated educational frameworks by helping students discover how they learn and by giving them opportunities to make intentional choices about their writing. At the same time, teachers could begin to exercise agency in their pedagogy while still addressing the expected frameworks. Hillocks (2002) promoted an inquiry-based teaching strategy that taught students how to question information and find or create answers. Eisner (2002) recognized the role of art and imagination in learning, while Rosenblatt (1938/1995) called for teachers to guide their students through transactions with texts. Inquiry, art, and transactions all represent ways teachers can work within current data-driven systems and maintain a sense of professional efficacy (Malinen & Savolainen, 2016). Remix is one strategy that incorporates all three: inquiry, art, and transactionalism. At the same time, teachers can demonstrate adherence to the standards.

Standards and Expectations as Barriers to Remix

Part of the challenge for teachers to incorporate remix and other digital media was addressing the standards associated with high stakes testing (Zoch, Myers, & Belcher, 2016). Pirie (1997) observed, "There is a life of the imagination, and that makes a difference to human beings, even if it is a difference not easily measured by standardized tests" (p. 3). Hackney (2015) wrote, "A reality of K-12 education is that teachers are bound by state standards"(p. 2). The Common Core State Standards (CCSS) for writing included goals for technology integration, so it was possible for teachers to make a case for incorporating remix into writing

instruction (Common Core State Standards Initiative, 2016). Even though some states are moving away from CCSS, there are other standards, from the 2015 Every Student Succeeds Act (ESSA) nationally to state based standards. Remix represents one way of knowing and writing; it is not intended to become another way of doing school (Hylar & Hicks, 2014; Pope, 2001; Shipka 2011). It is a way to connect student worlds, and practices to the classroom in a way that offers multiple angles to composition by considering different ways of interpreting literature in light of students lived experiences and new digital tools (Knobel & Lankshear, 2008; Stedman, 2012).

However, adding any new element to the classroom sometimes requires risk for teachers. Mangin (2016) observed that teacher evaluations are often attached to student performance, creating a risk-averse environment. Pressure on teachers to produce high scoring students means many teachers focus their attention on test-taking strategies, tested content, and supplemental test preparation materials provided by their schools (Hackney, 2015; Madaus & Russell, 2010; White & Lowenthal, 2009). Teachers are sometimes discouraged from incorporating new teaching strategies by administrative paperwork and non-contracted assignments (Malinen & Savolainen, 2016; Xin & MacMillan, 1999). Navigating the tension between what teachers are trained to do, what they want to do, and what the schools expect from them is part of most teachers' experiences.

The Specific Contexts for Adam and Bea

Adam and Bea had to navigate the same tensions within their own schools. Additionally, the state added its own requirements for professional development and evaluation, requirements that both Adam and Bea had to meet to maintain their teacher certification (Georgia Professional Standards Commission). The mandated requirements included participating in professional

learning communities (PLCs) and the Teacher Keys Effectiveness System (TKES). PLCs and TKES were tied to the state Milestones testing to some degree. Additionally, Adam and Bea also balanced student advocacy in the forms of IEP and 504 meetings with non-PLC related faculty meetings and administrative work, including preparing for their classes. In this section, I describe the specific contexts for the schools in this study, including PLCs, TKES, contracted non-teaching duties, and non-contracted expectations of teachers at their schools.

Adam and Bea's Professional Learning Communities

Although PLCs were a state mandate, schools had discretion over how they were used. Ideally, the PLCs were to be learning communities where teachers could review data from previous Milestones tests and other school-specific assessments, collaborate on ways to improve student learning and participation, and devise new ideas to promote student achievement and learning (DuFour, 2004; Joyce & Showers, 1995; state DoE, 2016). However, PLCs in action did not always meet the goals, particularly regarding collaborating on innovative pedagogies to promote student learning (Provini, 2014). The PLCs in Adam and Bea's schools, by being state mandated for the particular outcome of improving student achievement, were implemented and managed by forces outside teacher classrooms, namely, state standards and school administrators. One of the teachers who withdrew from the study said that the PLCs she was part of spent their meetings "collecting data and filling out forms, but not actually collaborating." She said that innovation was so far down the list of priorities for her school that collaborating on lessons and ideas with fellow teachers rarely happened. Bea noted that many of her friends who taught in other schools told her the meetings were "miserable." Adam and Bea's PLC experiences were more positive than what some teachers expressed at other schools; although the time commitment interfered with their personal planning, each felt their PLCs offered benefits.

PLCs at Adam's school. Adam's school employed a pattern of weekly meetings for each subject and grade level, with two meetings a week for 9th and 11th grades because those were the grades for the state Milestone exams. Tenth grade on-level and honors courses were part of the same PLC; all classes taught the same texts, but the honors students were expected to produce a more in depth or detailed product in each unit. PLCs were set up by the principal and department heads, with one teacher being the lead for each PLCs. The lead teacher's role was to maintain communication between the other teachers and the administration. The 10th grade PLC leader was a dynamic teacher whom Adam respected. He liked her approach to class activities and her willingness to try new things that might help students make connections to the literature they were reading and improve their writing and communication skills. Most of the time, according to Adam, the 10th grade teachers were happy to follow the plans and suggestions from the PLC lead, even though there was little actual collaboration. He said, "I don't feel creatively stifled or anything because I think what we're doing is really good and it's pretty close to how I'd want to do it anyway." Still, Adam was reluctant to mention dabbling in remix to his tenth grade PLC, saying that some of his colleagues might be resistant to carve out the time to prepare from their already limited allocation. He said, if "everybody had more time they would probably be a lot more open to things like that." Because so many teacher prep hours were allocated to PLC meetings, many teachers chose to adopt the lessons prepared for them. Adam determined to use the terminology of remix as he taught the prescribed lessons, which allowed him to integrate his personality and point of view without deviating from the PLCs plans.

Adam's 11th grade PLC was a work in progress. The previous year three teachers followed a strict approach through a textbook and prescribed Milestones practice paragraphs provided by the state Department of Education. At the end of the year, the school administration

approved a curriculum overhaul to replace the textbook. The PLC would design the new curriculum to include a variety of texts, assessments, and classroom activities. During the summer, the lead teacher for the 11th grade PLC left the school, and another began a move to the media center. This change of staff left Adam as the de facto lead of the 11th grade ELA PLC in his second year of teaching. He and a colleague who moved to 11th grade to help fill the gap were designing the curriculum as they taught it. This PLC met twice a week, once for ELA content and once for Milestones preparation with other 11th grade content areas. The Milestones meetings were led by a teacher from the math department who had been trained as an instructional coach. Adam sometimes felt micromanaged during PLC meetings with the instructional coach, whose job it was to ensure every content area was actively preparing for the exams. He said, “It’s a little awkward kind of getting direction from someone who doesn’t really know as much as we do about our content area.” Adam was sometimes frustrated by the lack of collaboration during those meetings, especially when it took place during his planning period. He said, “Your time is precious, so you’re meeting with the PLC all the time, and that becomes a bit of a drag.” Even during the content centered meetings with the 11th grade PLC, he had to produce pacing calendars to ensure all the classes were doing the same thing at the same time, document data for the administration, and devise weekly lesson plans. The work there was collaborative, but he was responsible for making sure all the work was annotated and submitted to the administrators.

Adam said that if he could organize his school’s PLCs, he would plan fewer meetings and required less paperwork so that teachers could spend more time collaborating. Even though he had taken on a leadership role in the 11th grade PLC, they were still required to meet twice a week; one day a week for ELA work, and another day they spent the hour with the instructional

coach for addressing Milestones. As part of multiple PLCs, Adam didn't have a personal planning period until Thursdays, something he wished could be different. He said, "That kind of thing's an unnecessary stressor. It probably doesn't have to be that way, but that's how it is right now." Adam's school administrators maintained a structured approach to PLCs especially in regard to how often they met. Bea's school, on the other hand, took a different approach.

PLCs at Bea's school. Bea's school took a more relaxed approach to PLCs. Although she was in separate PLCs for each subject (10th grade ELA, 11th grade ELA, and AP Language), only the AP PLC met face to face regularly. Two administrators, the vice-principal, and the principal set up her school PLCs with a focus on choice and collaboration. The vice-principal did not want teachers to be in lockstep but rather wanted teachers to share a skills-based assessment practice with individual choices for how teachers taught and reinforced the skills. There may have been a common rubric for assessment, but teachers had liberty to select texts and projects that suited their individual teaching philosophies. The principal at Bea's school earned a doctorate and wrote her dissertation on creating effective PLCs. While data analysis was a required element of all PLCs, the principal's vision was that PLCs primarily be a place for collaboration, reflection, and early problem solving. For example, the scores on the AP summer reading assignment essay were lower than expectations. In past years, administrators would have made a note to have teachers make modifications in the spring. With the PLC, teachers themselves saw the results as they assessed the data together. Rather than wait until spring to act, teachers collaborated on a revised approach to the summer reading assignments and put together a plan before anyone could forget there had been a problem. Bea felt that the administrators trusted the teachers as professional educators who could map out their own courses.

Like Adam, Bea's PLC meetings took up many of her contracted planning periods. Because Bea taught two grades at three levels, she was committed to PLCs for 10th grade on-level and honors, 11th grade AP Language, and Journalism. She also taught the newspaper class, so her days were stretched to the limit. However, unlike Adam's PLCs, Bea did not have weekly meetings with each PLC. The 11th grade PLC met weekly for Milestones preparation, but the others met alternate weeks or even less frequently. Teachers regularly communicated through emails or through Microsoft OneNote where Bea said they could digitally collaborate, add notes, pages, folders, documents, and track data across classes, using the affordances of cloud-based platforms to communicate asynchronously. The work in OneNote was open access and shared throughout the department and with the administration, keeping lines of communication open and allowing teachers to share what they were doing. Administrators could ask questions about how milestone standards were being met without having to have full faculty meetings or interrupting a PLC face-to-face session. The PLC meetings, whether physical or virtual were one part of teacher evaluations. The second part involved state performance standards for certificate renewal.

TKES

The Teacher Keys Effectiveness System (TKES) was the state standards for certification and certificate renewal. Teachers were required to submit data to demonstrate they met ten standards including professional knowledge, assessment strategies, creating a positive and academically challenging learning environment, and professionalism. Three major components, assessment on performance standards (TAPS), professional growth, and student growth, were required to be addressed in annual growth plans, and teachers must demonstrate they have met or exceeded their goals through evaluator observations and teacher documentation. When Bea and I

talked about presenting about this study at the 2019 NCTE conference, she laughed and said she could add it to her growth plan goals and check off that box. She said coming up with professional growth goals was sometimes a challenge because the things she liked to explore were not always the kinds of measurable goals the administration wanted. Adam noted that he wanted to focus on reading in his classes because he had observed that students who were readers did much better across all the Milestones than students who did not have good fundamental reading skills. Improving student reading meant his own evaluation would be stronger. PLCs and TKES made up most of the formal expectations for Bea and Adam. There were also responsibilities, both contractual and non-contractual that Bea and Adam had to fulfill.

Contracted Non-teaching Duties

Every teacher's contract contains expectations for meeting student needs outside class-time. Some of these meetings Individualized Education Plans (IEPs) and 504 Accommodations were measures for students identified with varying levels of disabilities under the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA). This act was created to provide educational or physical interventions to improve access for students who need them. Adam and Bea provided student work samples and data about student class performance and participated in meetings to determine necessary interventions. For Bea, these meetings were usually held before classes began, although she said she had meetings as late as 6 p.m. Adam scheduled some meetings for before 7:45 and others after 3:35. In both cases, the meetings were always outside of school contracted hours. They were also sometimes expected to attend meetings with student advocates or attorneys.

In addition to PLC meetings, Bea and Adam still attended regular faculty meetings, planning meetings, and department meetings. Teacher workdays were often loosely scheduled

Adam talked about having a “nice little break” with an upcoming teacher workday and then realized “there’s just an hour for professional develop meeting type things...and there’s supposed to be some PLC stuff too, so we’ll see how it goes.” Adam also talked about unexpected schedule interruptions like picture day, observing that since English is the only class all students have to take “we’re the ones who have to take them down there to get their picture taken.” Bea talked about schedule interruptions at her school too, saying that there were times teachers were expected to adjust their daily plans with only a few hours’ notice, saying “it’s just throwing us for a loop every which way, putting stuff on us at the last minute.” Bea also noted that contracted hours and expected service were not the same. Her contract required a 7:50 a.m. start, but she was expected to be in her classroom by 7:30 for student meetings, remediation, and availability to parents. For both teachers, there were other non-contracted responsibilities.

Non-contracted Responsibilities

Bea noted that her daily duties included keeping up with emails from administrators, colleagues, and parents, as well as posting her lesson plans two weeks in advance. Other tasks, like writing recommendation letters for students, were not necessarily supported by Bea’s administration. Bea had an administrator once suggest to her that she write a form letter for recommendations and send the same one for all students. She was appalled at the idea, saying, “Each kid is unique and I’m not going to copy/paste a letter of recommendation when that’s not genuine...it doesn’t speak to, you know, what an amazing kid that is.” Administrative expectations against teachers’ desires for creating student connections created a tension that contributed to an overall feeling of frustration at Bea’s school, a tension that was common across the country (Fisher, 2011; Larrivee, 2012; Ryan, Von der Embse, Saeki, et al., 2017).

As with most teachers, Adam and Bea were expected to be connected to extracurricular student activities. Adam enjoyed attending school plays and musicals, and Bea coached cheerleading, choreographed school musicals, and developed enrichment courses with other teachers. During the fall semester, she and a colleague designed a Harry Potter enrichment elective that she enjoyed. Adam was strongly encouraged to attend sporting events after a series of snow days during his first year at the school, events that were not required per his contract and that he was not paid for. Detention duty, bus duty, and remediation hours were other tasks that Bea and Adam were expected to share.

One of Bea's colleagues asked teachers to compile a list of both contracted meetings and non-contracted requirements. Most of the items were related to administrative and data tasks unrelated to direct classroom activities. I drew a picture of Atlas holding up word cloud using only the words from that list. Word cloud generators use the number of times a word is repeated to determine the size of a word (Figure 21).



Figure 211 Atlas holding a wor(l)d cloud

The largest word in this word cloud is data, meaning this one word was repeated more than any other. Other words that stand out are time, number, and students. When this algorithm generated a word cloud where the most common words were not related to in classroom instructional activities, it illustrates the frustration Bea and Adam felt sometimes. I chose Atlas to represent the idea of how teachers in general, and Bea in particular sometimes feel like they carry the world on their shoulders. Bea estimated that the paperwork associated with all the meetings and data requirements accounted for as much as 80% of her time, leaving only 20% for students. While the list referenced in this image came from one school, the data and paperwork demands are common experiences across many schools (Cavanagh, 2018). The image of Atlas holding up teacher responsibilities included both contracted and non-contracted items. Data collection and analysis, conferences with parents and mandatory TKES paperwork competed for time with instruction, feedback, and preparation. Bea said, “It’s worth it because of the kids, but it’s more and more difficult to reconcile.” Bea’s comments reflect what many teachers feel: their students deserve their full energy and attention, but the requirements on the administrative side are daunting.

How Adam and Bea Began Remixing

Between the requirements of PLCs, administrative demands, non-contract time requirements, and a pervasive focus on end results in student achievement, I was grateful that two teachers committed to the study of remix in the ELA classroom and made it work in their classrooms. Bea and Adam taught multiple grade levels, but both chose to incorporate remix into their 10th grade classes. For both, 10th grade had more space to consider remix because the state testing dominated the 11th grade priorities. Both shared positive experiences with incorporating

remix into their classes although they took different journeys through the process. Part of the process included learning how to do remix themselves.

At the beginning of the study, I asked all the teachers to create an unconventional introduction using remix. This *untdroduction* allowed the teachers to experiment with some of the apps and software for creating digital remixes and at the same time allowed me to get to know them. Their remixes became part of the data because they helped tell the story of each teacher's experience. As discussed in Chapter 3, I used several kinds of visual analysis to unpack the remixes beginning with Peirce's semiotic notations: icon, the direct representation of a thing; index, a culturally relevant connection to a thing; and symbol, an associative connection to a thing. I began with the beginning of their journeys.

Adam's Untroduction

For Adam, the compositional interpretation referred to his layout of four equal squares and the elements within them: two logos, a guitar, and a black and white photo of an African-American man in a library (Figure 22). The entire image was framed with a grunge layer, which indicated the four elements were designed to represent a single entity, in this case, Adam's introductory statement. The two logos were in full color. The guitar was desaturated color; the photo was black and white.



Figure 222 Adam's Untroduction

The clean layout wherein all the images were separate and clear seemed to indicate Adam's self-perception as someone who appreciated order and structure. The fact that he left the images unaltered made me think he respected the work of others and was hesitant to change it. Adam alluded to this interpretation when he talked about feeling comfortable following the lesson plans given to him by the 10th grade PLC leader at his school.

Icon. Adam chose two icons as part of his untroduction: the guitar and the photo of Ralph Ellison. The electric guitar, of indeterminable brand, likely signified an interest in music, possibly as a guitarist. The choice of an electric rather than acoustic guitar may have indicated the type of music Adam preferred; electric guitars connect to rock music, modern country music,

and jazz. Choosing an acoustic guitar may have indicated a preference for folk, indie, or classical music. The picture of the guitar appeared to be a stock image rather than one taken by Adam. It was also not plugged in, so it was not ready to play. It was potential music rather than actual music. However, the guitar was out of its case, a reference that it could be picked up, plugged in, and played at a moment's notice. As an icon, the guitar in its placement in a quadrant of the remix illustrated Adam's connection to music and his openness to engaging in and with music when the time was appropriate. When the study was complete, Adam verified that he was indeed a jazz guitarist with four guitars in his personal collection.

The photo of Ralph Ellison was an intriguing choice. Adam taught ELA, so a reference to a literary figure made sense. Why did he choose Ellison of all the authors he knew? Adam didn't teach *The Invisible Man*, so the connection was not directly related to his curriculum. Adam's school, with a student demographic of 74% minorities (54% Black) and 47% considered economically disadvantaged may be more telling. Economically disadvantaged represented the number of students who qualified for free or reduced lunch; nearly half the student population at Adam's school fell into that category. Additionally, Adam's urban university experience included a strong mission of social justice and equity, principles that Adam had the opportunity to uphold every day as he taught as a white man in a mostly minority school. It could be that Adam felt he had the opportunity as a teacher to help his students be seen and heard.

Choosing a picture of Ellison in a library may have indicated the importance of ELA in making student voices heard. As an icon, Ellison illustrated the value of education, particularly in the humanities. Ellison was a musician as well as a writer with a strong political voice. Adam said that part of the reason he chose teaching because he believed public education was important to sustaining democracy. Adam's connection with Ellison on two levels, music and

literature, may have influenced his choice. Adam saw his role as teacher to go beyond instruction. In the Freirean sense, Adam hoped to encourage his students to liberate themselves and in so doing, mitigate the role of education as part of systemic oppression (Freire, 1970).

Of all the images in Adam's collage, only the photo of Ellison includes context, setting, and mood. Ellison was seated at a desk surrounded by books. The camera angle allowed Ellison to gaze down to the viewer, indicating a position of power. His posture suggested he was interrupted at work, and the single raised eyebrow indicated the interrupted was tolerated, but not welcomed. Adam's choice of this image may suggest he was aware that the practice of freedom was still a work in progress (Freire, 1970).

Well after the formal conclusion of the study I asked Adam to tell me about Ellison. He told me that *The Invisible Man* was his favorite book. He had read it in high school and connected to the symbolism it contained. He said it showed him the power of words, not only directly, but also symbolically. The lesson in the analysis for me? Sometimes the most obvious answer is the simplest and correct one. In this case, Adam represented his favorite book as part of his introduction. Still, after spending time with him during the study, the analysis I made was a good reflection of Adam's character, even if he didn't intend to tell that particular story in his initial remix.

Index. None of the four images in Adam's collage were strictly indices, but the collective group and the equal weight of the four boxes may serve to connect Adam to what he selected as self-representation. No image stands out as more important than any other, and there is no overlap between them.

Symbols. Two of the four images Adam chose were symbols. The first symbol was the logo for his school, in school colors. Since Adam was participating in the study as a teacher in

the school, the selection and placement in the top left box made sense. People read images the same way they read Western text: top left to bottom right. Placing the school logo in the top left gave it a place of significance.

The second logo is that of German soccer club, commonly called BVB. The club colors of black and yellow were chosen to reflect the team goals of intensity, authenticity, binding power, and ambition (www.bvb.de). Binding power, or *Bindekraft* in German, referred to cohesion and the strength that comes from a bond (<https://www.linguee.com/german-english/translation/Bindekraft.html>). BVB is the most popular club in Germany, and one of the top teams in Europe. The team slogan, *Echte Liebe*, means true love (www.dortmund.de/). The team goals may have resonated with Adam, particularly the idea of binding power, which is also reflected in the school logo and the photo of Ellison. The concept of people coming together to make the world better resonated with Adam. He said, "I feel teaching makes you less cynical because you really get a first-hand look at the potential young people have to make the world a better place." Adam's attitude toward teaching as a career that can influence students for life was reflected in his choices of how he represented himself in his introduction.

Design choices. Adam's layout told a story of a life organized into neat sections: school, sport, music, and literature. It also indicated a desire for balance and order. The prompt for this remix, an unconventional introduction, was interpreted by Adam to be a straightforward visual autobiography. He began with his school, making his identity as a teacher foremost. His personal life, represented by the guitar and soccer logo were balanced in their placement in the two least important quadrants, demonstrating that his hobbies were secondary to his career (Bradley, 2011). The final image of Ralph Ellison, in the fourth quadrant, referenced Adam's favorite book and at the same time conveyed the importance of literature in his work as an ELA teacher.

Adam used visual elements to illustrate things important to him and things that he felt represented him as both a person and as a teacher. The image choices in his introduction were associations with the pleasant part of his life: music, soccer, and the power of literature. Adam left out any idea of negativity, even though his life as a teacher included stressful elements.

Bea's Introduction

Bea's introduction revealed a sense of artistic composition skill and a willingness to play with layers, textures, and colors as she remixed images (Figure 23). At first look, my eye was drawn to the magnifying glass. The size brought the image to the forefront, even though it was technically in the least important quadrant of the frame. In art, size does matter. The other image that stood out was the stack of books. It did not have the preeminent place of composition, but its comparatively large size and clarity drew my attention. It was beside the most prominent simple image, so my eye followed in a counterclockwise circle.



Figure 23 Bea's Untrouction

The top half of the image held the only bright color in the piece. The shape was not simple but was a map of the world masked over a texture of what appeared to be blue painted metal with a layer of rust. In the upper left quadrant, usually the place of significance a photo of a hand was placed behind North America, adding another visual element to an already busy part of the

remix. Behind Europe and Asia was a photo of a lined piece of paper and what appears to be a fountain pen. There is writing on the paper, but it is illegible.

The image was cut in half by a photo of tree roots, possibly the above ground root system of a mangrove tree. The transparency of the layers in the bottom half of the image made it difficult to determine the order in which layers were added, so the roots of the tree, the books, and the magnifying glass all share a similar tonal value.

The remix included a lined texture that extended to every edge. The texture appeared to be the second layer from the top. The map, even though it was not necessarily the first image I noticed, was probably the top layer, because the lines of the texture do not intersect it. All the other parts of the remix were broken by the textural lines.

Icon. Each of Bea's images were icons in that they accurately represented what they were. She included no logos or text apart, from a small part of one image. Moving from top left to bottom right, Bea included six distinct images: an open left hand, a map of the world, a fountain pen and writing paper, a magnifying glass, roots of a tree, and a stack of books with reading glasses perched on top. The overlay of what might be lined paper adds a seventh image.

Index. The story I drew from the remix was that Bea considered herself an explorer who used reading and writing the world as her travel companion. The images were chosen specifically and arranged so that all the elements composed a complete whole in relation to each other. The placement and size of the map and the tree roots provided a balanced perspective of human and nature: the map of the world representing humanity, and the roots representing the persistence of nature. Bea was by nature an extrovert who found delight in doing things with other people. Her work as cheer and dance coach, school choreographer, and Harry Potter club

sponsorship had her in constant motion, exploring ideas and concepts, but never alone. Her energetic personality was reflected in the motion of her remix.

Symbol. Part of what made the remix cohesive was the symbolism within each of the pictures. An open hand may have symbolized openness to new ideas or willingness to try new things. The world map connected to a global worldview. The colors of blue paint and orange rust, opposite on the color wheel could symbolize a kind of balance in the world of peace (often associated with blue) and violence (often associated with red/orange). The pen and paper represented Bea's love of chronicling her life and experiences in words. The stacked books reflected the importance of literature to Bea, and the magnifying glass illustrated a desire to look closely at everything. Every image in the piece spoke to some kind of action, even in the way Bea placed them, with a different element in each corner that led the viewer's eye around the remix, revealing different combinations of color, image, and layer with each look. Bea's introduction spoke of her activity in life, but it also reflected her activity filled days at school.

Planning the Work, Working the Plan

Both Adam and Bea negotiated activity filled days during school hours. Activities were often planned in advance or regularly scheduled, but sometimes came up unexpectedly. The chaos of the opening weeks of school included parent night, picture day, a specific set of requirements for graded work to be completed, and the usual round of meetings. Adam and Bea had to take into account these activities as they planned the work they would do during the study, and they needed to be flexible to account for the unexpected as they worked the plan. In this section, I discuss how each planned their remix activities, how their plans worked out, and what each learned from the experience.

How Adam Planned the Work

Adam noted that English class was also the one class that every student took every year, so it became the default class for school wide responsibilities like yearbook pictures. The week after Labor Day included Parent Night on Tuesday and picture day on Thursday, on top of already being a short week. With Adam's PLC's meeting three times per week, it was stressful for Adam to make the time to engage with each of his students as much as he would have preferred. He said, "I think the biggest issue is just you know when you have one planning period a day it's like your time is precious so you're meeting with the PLC all the time that kind of comes a bit of a drag in that regard...but it's good this year." Adam was quick to see the benefits of every situation, even the ones that were sometimes frustrating. For Adam, as for most teachers, there were competing demands for his time, which created a sense of chaos, especially at the beginning of the year. He expressed his feelings about the opening weeks of school in a remix (Figure 24).



Figure 24 Adam's remix about time

I provided images from my personal collection to all the teachers for practicing remix between the first and second Hangouts. School had been in session for about four weeks at that point, and Adam chose this image. He kept his text simple, but also reflective of the short summer teachers in his district had. The juxtaposition of the peaceful scene with the chaos of the first weeks of school made Adam look at the quick passage of time, wondering how the summer break evaporated. The sole figure in the picture also stood in contrast to the 160 students Adam saw in a day.

The colors of the picture, blues and purples, reflected a quiet time of day as well. In those quiet moments, it became possible for Adam to think without interruption. The rower was moving away from the camera, going toward someplace or something. July, in the life of most teachers, is the time when they can get away from work related tasks and refresh their minds in preparation for a new school year. Wondering what happened to July indicated that perhaps Adam was not quite ready to let go of quiet moments.

Adam revealed his sense of humor in the second line of text "Deep thoughts." It harkened back to a Saturday Night Live bit by writer Jack Handy where soft music and a pastoral photograph accompanied a narration of a short, inane commentary on the mundane (<https://www.deepthoughtsbyjackhandey.com>). Referring to Handy's work illustrated that Adam was taking the remix lightly, with a self-deprecating attitude. Adam said later he hoped it would be funny, and that he mostly wanted to learn the process of remix during the exercise. He made choices, whether conscious or unconscious, that revealed his preference for peace over chaos and a solo trip over a crowd.

Choosing the image of a solitary rower provided a glimpse into Adam's personality. He described himself as an introvert, who preferred to refresh his mind by being alone. This trait was evident during the Hangouts when multiple people were present. Adam listened but didn't often volunteer information unless directly asked a question. During the Hangouts with just the two of us, Adam told stories of his days and experiences without much prompting. Adam's reference to "Deep Thoughts with Jack Handy" might also have hinted at the way Adam processed information. He took his time to ponder ideas and thought through the possible outcomes. He used Hangouts as a place to absorb what the more outspoken teachers said. He rowed his own course carefully and purposefully as much as he could. When directives were given to him, he took them and applied his knowledge and experiences to the directives and quietly made them something he felt comfortable doing in his classrooms.

Adam and his colleagues also had to consider the news that the students had not performed as well as school administrators would have liked on the written section of the Milestones, especially in the narrative genre. That meant a push for concentrated work on narrative analysis and writing at all levels. Tenth grade classes focused on narrative writing

in several genres throughout the year, while 11th grade doubled down on narrative in prose form. Adding to the chaos of the opening weeks of school was the revising of the 11th grade curriculum, moving away from a textbook to a looser collection of texts and activities that were student-centered and focused on narrative writing structures. Adam said that he and his colleague worked out general lessons, just to have something recorded, but admitted they were really trying to keep their heads above water until the school hired additional teachers to share the load. He worried that his students were not getting the writing practice they needed for the upcoming Milestones but was emphatic that repeating the prompts from the previous year would not be useful to his current 11th graders.

Tenth grade PLC. Teaching both 10th and 11th grade meant multiple PLC meetings each week, pushing his independent planning period to Thursdays. While Adam was largely satisfied with the direction of the 10th grade PLCs, he didn't have much influence over the content in his classes. His school wanted each classroom to be like the others in that grade, so teachers taught the same texts and shared assessments. He understood the desire for ensuring equity across the classes but added that there were times he felt micromanaged by his school's demand for a synchronized department wherein every class did the same thing all the time. While he enjoyed working with other people in his department and found the feedback from his peers to be valuable, he missed the spontaneity of last-minute inspiration for class activities or directions. In general, he felt satisfied by a "good bit" of independence in his classroom, meaning as long as he used the plans of the PLC, he could infuse his own teaching style into his lessons.

The 10th grade PLC leader designed a unit of graphic novel book clubs with a book trailer video as the summative assignment, offering a selection of four books to the

students: *Maus* (Spiegelman, 1991), *American-Born Chinese* (Yang, 2006), *March* (Lewis, Aydin, & Powell, 2013), and *Persepolis* (Satrapi, 2004). Thematically the PLC approached the texts as coming-of age books, with characters roughly the same ages as the students in the 10th grade classes. The texts were selected with the idea that if students see themselves in the literature, they may respond positively to it. Students read the books together in class in groups of five or six and generated study questions for discussion in a book club format. Each student in the group was expected to add something to the conversation. Because the tenth grade was expected to be uniform across all the classes, Adam hesitated to talk about remix, preferring to wait to introduce the topic until later in the year. He hoped that by defining the final project as remix during class time, he could illustrate how the projects were remixes and using the terminology helped student connect what they did outside the classroom to what they were doing in class. He said,

I did some similar stuff last year but framing it in that way makes it more clear...it automatically, once they hear the work remix, it's a little more exciting and they kind of know what that is right off the bat, you know, comparing it to music.

Once the concepts behind remix were shown to be useful in 10th grade, he felt he could argue for opportunities to identify some of the multimedia projects as remix in other classes, particularly in the 11th grade, where he suspected remix could help student meet expectations on the required tests more effectively than more practice questions from the Milestones guide.

Before embarking on graphic novels, Adam introduced the concept of remix using the short stories the students had just completed. Students used their journals to explore what might happen if a protagonist in one of the short stories was replaced with a superhero or with the protagonist of another story. Students considered how the story might change and how the

relationships between characters might develop differently if only one character was replaced. Students found the journal assignments fun, but students also began to think about characterization outside the lines of a particular story. Changing the context of a story or the characters within it allowed Adam to show his students how to think on abstract levels, an ability expected in the writing section of the Milestones (Assessment Guide, p 12). To further explore the possibilities of remix, students wrote their own short stories and then altered each other's. They added elements, changed settings, and rearranged characters, creating new stories in the process. Even though the stories were word based, the practice allowed Adam to frame the upcoming graphic novels as non-traditional literature as opposed to non-educative comic books, telling students that texts come in many forms.

Working with existing plans. Rather than figure out how to add new remix activities into the PLC plans, Adam recognized that the projects already in the plans were, in fact, remixes. Reframing allowed him to show the students that what they were doing was creating texts in multimodal forms. Without changing the PLC plans, Adam found a way to introduce remix thinking to his students. Remix thinking involved looking at a text through the author's words, images, experiences, and familiar references. Students used their own stories, their knowledge, and experience to interpret the texts. The graphic novels provided an expanded definition of text by adding design elements and images, which gave students a place to begin to expand their own definitions of text. He found that thinking in terms of what they could create from texts helped students in more than simple memory tasks, like story sequencing, although the thought processes did work for that as well. Story sequencing turned to storyboarding when students began to work on their videos.

Each student in Adam's district was assigned a Microsoft Surface Tablet along with a Microsoft Office account. They had access to the tools and apps on the Microsoft Platform, including Movie Maker, so the movie trailers served to demonstrate the usefulness of that 1:1 program as well as give students the opportunity to work with digital and online resources as composition tools. Adam learned from the students about the technology as they created their summative movie trailer projects.

How Adam Worked the Plan

Students submitted their preferences for both book and group members. Adam took their preferences and worked to form reading groups that gave students at least part of what they said they wanted. Students may have their first choice in text, but not be in a group with first choice partners or be in a group of their choosing with a text they didn't select. In the end, groups of five or six students were balanced in gender, ability, and enthusiasm. Students worked together to discover the texts, asking questions, comparing personal stories, and engaging in commentary about the characters and the characters' decisions. Adam enjoyed hearing the conversations that developed as students talked about the texts. He intentionally left the texts open to interpretation by the students, so each group had ownership of the questions and insights they developed. He said, "This is a really good way to kind of get them to start using those higher-level critical thinking skills they're going to need...to approach a lot of the end of course stuff". Adam stepped in to guide discussion with questions only when students seemed to need help. He said he wanted the students to discover the texts on their own and to participate in "organic conversations" that came up within each group. Adam's goal was to encourage students to read a complete text while practicing their creative writing and critical thinking skills. The

more the students saw themselves reflected in the texts, the more they enjoyed the reading. That enjoyment manifested itself through the multimedia movie trailer project.

The movie-trailer project itself had strict guidelines. The students' goal was to create interest for the books they read through the videos they created. Each trailer required a minimum of 10 frames with narration and music, using two quotes from the text and a cliffhanger. Creativity and originality as students prepared storyboards and chose elements was rewarded. Students were given a graphic organizer and template to help them organize their trailers along with a detailed rubric, so they knew exactly what the final product should look like. Within the guidelines, however, they had creative freedom. Students were required to consider pacing, mood, a highlight of the story, and one element that might grab a viewer's attention, like a motto or significant sentence near the beginning of the book. Most students chose to do their own acting, which required them to evaluate the characters in order to portray them adequately.

Adam hoped the combination of graphic novels and remix would encourage student participation and interest and at the very least inspire students to read an entire book. He noted in the previous year that, regardless of the number of practice tests, students who scored well on the Milestones were students who began the year with good reading skills. Students who weren't regular readers, for whatever reason, didn't perform well. He decided that his first priority was to get every student to read a book, adding, "If you're reading regularly, you're going to be fine on the [Milestones]." He believed that by engaging students in thinking of literature as more than a series of words they would become better readers, and ultimately, better writers. Part of approaching literature as something more than an author's words required students to see themselves in the texts and draw comparisons to their own experiences. Looking at different kinds of texts, like graphic novels, was an attempt to break through the wall of words that

stymied students in prior years, one of the goals of Adam's PLC. Adam noted that the combination of remix, a non-traditional text format, and a multimedia summative assessment seemed to bridge the chasm between fluid readers and those whose reading skills needed more support. Adam made note of the inventive skills students displayed as they contrived ways to make their projects unique, and he was pleased with the way their creative writing and their reading skills improved.

Composing texts. Adam was encouraged by the variety of compositions students worked on throughout the unit. Being hands-off during much of the creative process allowed him to observe his students in action. Thinking with remixing in mind allowed students to consider things they already knew or had already experienced both in school and out of school, which helped them to connect to the texts quickly. This unit was the first time his department used graphic novels as texts, and he found the series of visual and interactive activities benefitted almost every student regardless of whether the students were on-level or honors.

The movie trailer accomplished two things: it demonstrated to Adam that the students read and understood the texts while demonstrating to the administration that the district-provided tablets could be useful tools for more than remediation or a replacement for pencil and paper, a common use of technology in classrooms, especially when the technology is new (Bauer & Kenton, 2005, Buckley, 2014, Lisenbee, 2016, Zoch, Myers, & Belcher, 2016). He noted the movie trailer helped show evidence that the students, even the reluctant or resistant readers, could approach a text visually. Students who were comfortable using traditional word-based texts learned the power and depth of stories told through images and remixes. All the students had to access critical thinking skills as they analyzed the graphic novels, deconstructed the literary elements of characterization, sequencing, and theme, identified literary devices like

tone and mood, and then remixed the stories, elements, and devices into new texts. Additionally, Adam said he had fun with the project along with his students. He said, "I don't know that many kinds of image and video editing apps, so that's been fun with this project, just kind of getting to check all those out...about how students can work with them." Student-centered pedagogy was a substantial part of Adam's university experience, and he used digital remix as an opportunity to step back and let students be the experts.

Adam also said the remix turned into a good reading tool: most students read the whole book and were able to find themselves in the readings. Adam said many of his students entered his classroom without ever have read a book through from beginning to end. One of his goals for those students was for them to successfully complete a book. The graphic novels, Adam felt, were a good entry into reading a book from beginning to end. Students who read reluctantly, if at all, were willing to read the images with the words. As they read and discussed the books, they began to relate to the characters and the situations in which the characters found themselves. Discussing the texts in their book clubs let all the students share their stories as they decided how they could use their experiences to inform their approach to the movie trailer assignment. Remixing the books into movie trailers helped students represent their interpretations of the novels, using language students understood from outside school to demonstrate mastery of in-school texts.

Gee and Hayes (2011) said that digital media "power up" existing language abilities (p. 9). Students who were adept with smartphone movie making apps or software design programs could use their expertise to show mastery of the literary elements Adam was also teaching: characterization, story sequencing, setting, tone, mood, and theme. In many ways, the multimodal compositions could communicate how students understood both the literature and

the literary devices. They could make design choices that reflected their interpretation of tone, mood, and theme. They would need to understand sequencing to put together a movie. By using remix, Adam used the affordances of popular technology to bridge adolescent experiences to literary texts. When students transacted with the texts to create new texts using digital tools, the experience made the texts relevant to their own lives. At the same time, Adam noted, the activities could be applied to many of the Milestone standards, particularly the writing standards. Remix also helped students recognize character development as they read, a skill also part of the Milestones.

Making connections. During one of the group Hangouts Adam observed that the feeling of alienation, or being an outcast was also a common theme in the texts, adding that feeling alone, isolated, or left out was a common experience among teens. In some ways, the school's drive for meeting performance standards on the Milestones added a feeling of isolation to some of the students whose strengths were outside the written word. Adam hoped that incorporating alternative forms of composition, including remixes of texts, would reach those students and encourage them to persevere, knowing that images, design, sound, and movement were also valid forms of text. Digital tools, like the ones Adam utilized for the remixes in this study, gave students alternative forms of composition for expressing their ideas and connections to the literature (Garcia, 2017).

Adam saw the mix of students who communicated well through visual media flourish and the students who fared well in traditional composition activities realized that graphic novels took time to read and had as much to say as a traditional print novel. The book club format allowed all the 10th grade classrooms to look the same, a goal of the PLC, and at the same time, create environments that reflected the individual teachers and students. Students practiced the same

skills across the department, and assessment was consistent across teachers, but Adam felt like he had independence and agency to be himself and to work within the PLC- directed plans to meet the needs of his students in creative ways.

Each of the remix activities added to the depth of connection to the texts and Adam was pleased with the products the students composed. Adam said, "I think that really makes it connect more to what they're reading about. You're asking them to think about it more personally...make more personal connections." Personal connections to literature made texts relevant, and remix helped drive both personal connections and student understanding of literary devices that would be important to know for the Milestones. Remix helped students recognize elements of characterization when they substituted characters in short stories. Creating movies required understanding sequence of events and chronology. Changing the genre of a story gave students opportunities to conceptualize abstract devices like tone and mood by conveying them through images or music.

Creating community. Adam watched friendships start to form within the book club groups, and he felt that more students were able to contribute to class conversations and students, particularly in the on-level classes, were generally excited about the texts and the remix projects throughout the unit. Students who often did not feel successful in traditional school activities like writing essays or character analysis were able to employ skills in design, technology, and art as they discussed the elements in the alternative texts. Adam noticed students seemed more involved with the texts than when they were tasked to simply sit and read or come to class having read the material. The book club approach put the onus of reading on the groups, and the open discussion allowed students to explore the text in whatever directions drove them. The visual nature of graphic novels along with the coming-of-age stories captured the attention of

the readers. Adam postulated that the human connections revealed in group discussions opened the door to a level of interest in the text that allowed students to find themselves in the texts and to be personally invested in the readings. Thinking about the text as it related to their knowledge and experiences and then sharing their revelations created a space for developing friendships in the class. Some students expressed being excited about reading a graphic novel and others read an entire text for the first time. Adam said he felt people were being heard during the unit and that they took ownership of their learning because of the freedom to engage in visual composition rather than following a predictable, linear, alphabetic pattern.

He also saw potential for remix activities to be gateways to conversations about social systems and social interactions about race, gender, and class, saying "Getting to know each other a little better...you may discuss things you wouldn't feel comfortable talking about in everyday normal conversation." Difficult conversations about the uncertainties of life as a teenager became easier through friendship and trust developed while working together.

Adam's Reflection

Adam recognized a connection between what students were learning about literary devices and what they already knew about digital composition through social media sites like Instagram, and he wanted to have his students discover the connections for themselves. In that way, Adam demonstrated the Deweyan notion that teachers can create an environment where students discover that things they learn in school may reflect elements of their out-of-school lives and therefore be relevant (Dewey, 1938/1978). Adam saw remix as a way to support the inventive thinking required for all creative acts that bridge the theoretical and the practical. Students not only read the texts, but transacted with them, bringing together their experiences, prior knowledge, and understanding of digital tools to create a new text. Adam found the process

satisfying and said the activity brought about the highest level of student engagement he had seen. He observed that students liked hearing him say, “Think about what you can do with this now. You don’t just have to read and answer questions, but you can actually...create something of your own with that.” Creating relationships with students was important to Adam, and this project helped him make those connections.

What Adam experienced through the students validated some of his perspectives on teaching, particularly regarding how students could use their out-of-school literacies in the classroom as they made meaning of the texts. He reiterated the importance of personal connections he made with his students as they walked through the remixing process, an aesthetic experience in a school that seemed to value what students and teachers knew over how they experienced learning. Adam’s experience working within the existing plans of the PLC reflected one way to incorporate remix into the ELA classroom. Bea’s experience illustrated another way.

How Bea Planned the Work

Bea juggled a full load of classes: 10th grade literature in the mornings, journalism classes midday and AP Language to close out the day. Initially, Bea had high hopes of using remix in all of her classes, but limitations on her time led her to decide to focus on her tenth-grade class. The AP Language curriculum was tied to the AP exam along with the 11th grade EOC test, so Bea decided that a better place to introduce remix while she was learning would be with her 10th grade classes. She had the freedom to design the coursework as long as she met the assessment goals put together with the 10th grade PLC.

The 10th grade was reading *Of Mice and Men* (Steinbeck, 1937), a required text for most high school students. She had taught the text before and was looking for ways to change how she used the text along with the *Universal Declaration of Human Rights* (2015) as discussion points

for talking about discrimination and marginalization of people with her sophomore classes. She liked pairing canonical texts with culturally relevant texts and having conversations with her students about the ways different groups were discriminated against. As a young, white Hispanic teacher in a predominantly wealthy white school, Bea felt it was important for her students to think through the realities of prejudice and human rights violations. Bea was glad she had the freedom to follow the ideas she thought were important.

Complications in planning. Bea felt lucky that her school interpreted the purpose of PLCs as giving teachers freedom to choose what they and how students display mastery. Collaboration was not a matter of keeping in lockstep, but rather a matter of determining a common assessment and rubric with teachers still able to maintain a personal teaching style. Some meetings were virtual or asynchronous, with teachers adding comments to documents or exchanging emails. Some of the meetings were strictly protocol for data analysis and critique, while others were for reflection and early problem solving.

While her school PLC experience was largely beneficial, there were other administration demands that made her question whether she would stay on at that school. She said all of the teachers were pressured from multiple administrators to accomplish tasks that were outside their contract or difficult to produce. She cited PSAT scores, other test scores, and data generation as requirements that seemed to change at the last minute. She gave the example of an AP timed exam that was scheduled for a Wednesday but was interrupted by a scheduled fire drill. The test was postponed to Thursday, a day with shortened class hours to accommodate what the school called "anchor time," a mid-day enrichment or study hall period. Teachers were notified via email Wednesday evening that the Thursday class would be truncated further, leaving only 48 minutes of class time for a 55-minute timed AP assessment.

Bea suspected the administrators were not communicating with each other; the extra burden from just one administrator may have been manageable, but when two or three start adding to the teacher workload, it became impossible to complete. One of Bea's colleagues started a list for teachers to enter all the work they did that was outside their contracted time and job descriptions. He hoped to take the data to the administrative team as evidence that the teachers were worn down. Bea said several times that she felt like she was drowning. She said, "If they want us to be reflective teachers, if they want us to improve our craft, they have to give us the time to plan. They have to give us the time to reflect." Bea often felt overwhelmed by the time requirements of the administrators and how their expectations affected her view of herself as a teacher.

Three times during a Hangout in the middle of the conflict at school Bea made a reference to drowning. I suggested she create a remix to visually communicate her frustration. Within an hour or so, Bea posted this image on social media, commenting, "This is what happened. Drowning while everything is on fire and I'm expected to be in multiple places, doing multiple things all at once. Everything is just bleeding together." Bea felt internally fragmented, and at the same time, all of the external demands ran together, pulling her down until she felt like she couldn't breathe (Figure 25).

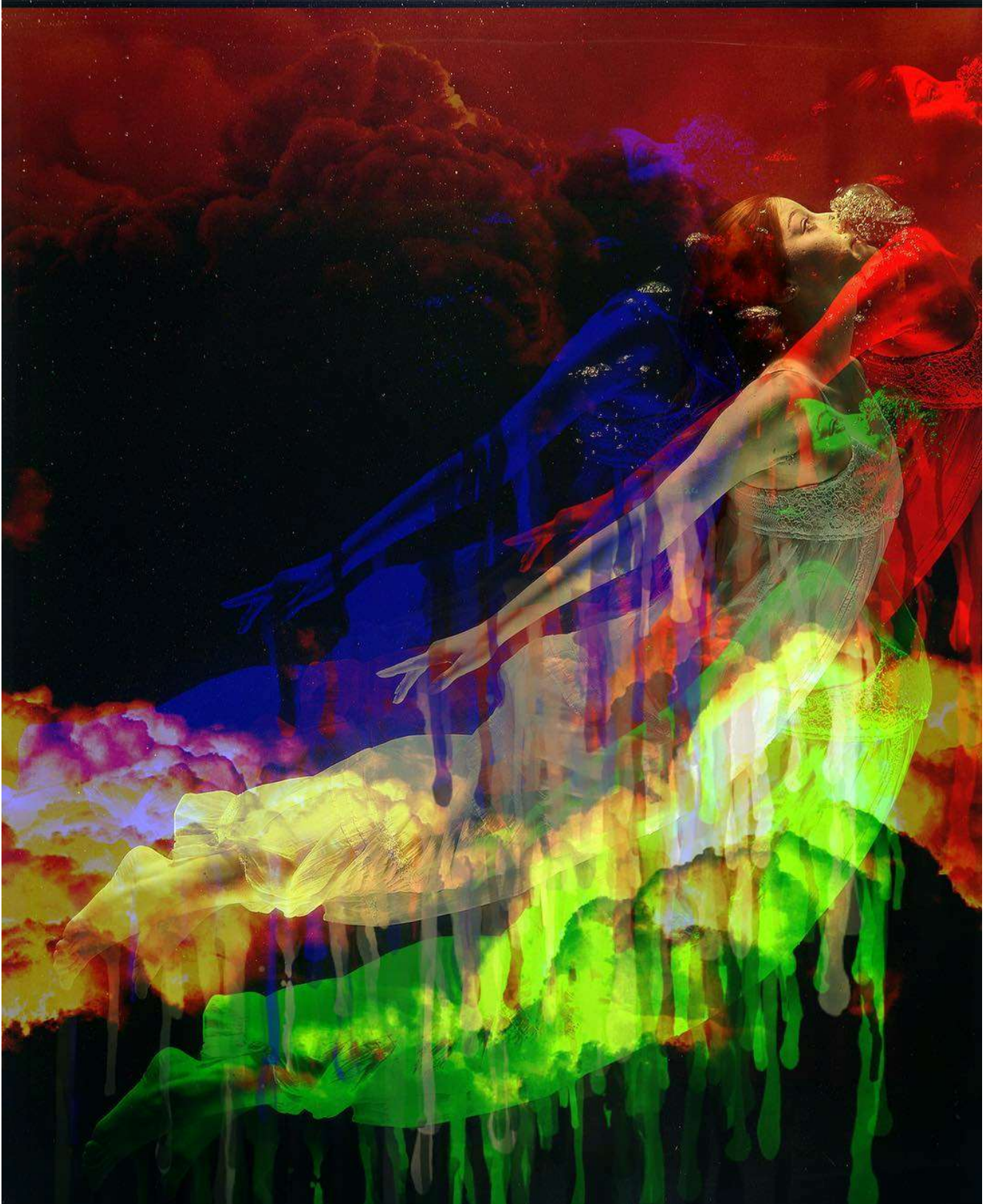


Figure 25 Bea's drowning remix

The dominant figure in the picture is a woman underwater but looking up to the surface. She fills the right side of the image. The light from above illuminates her face. She is full color, but the image is repeated in translucent red, blue, and yellow. These repetitions drop toward darkness at the bottom of the image. The divisions in primary colors surround the full color version as she swims toward the unseen surface, signifying the way her work no longer felt cohesive, but rather disjointed as her goals for her students and the demands from different administrators collided. The remainder of the remix is made up of clouds: color of fire on the bottom; the color of smoke reflected in the top. The central woman's back is to the clouds, and only her face is fully clear of them. Her face is also in full color, not broken into color fragments. It reflects the light from above, indicating that the surface of the water is near.

The woman in the remix is also expelling air, illustrated by the bubbles at her mouth. Physically the expulsion of air is immediately followed by an intake of air, something impossible while underwater. The placement of the bubbles is another indicator of rising to the surface. In spite of the dark and stormy setting, the overall tone of the remix is one of survival.

Knowing the context of the image meant I could interpret it according to what motivated its creation, but much of the image could be understood even without knowing the history of its creation. Hodge and Kress (1988) called the space between elements the most fundamental semiotic dimension. Deleuze and Guattari (1987) wrote about the importance of middles in understanding complex connections or assemblages, saying, "It is not easy to see things in the middle, rather than looking down on them from above or up at them from below, or from left to right: try it, you'll see that everything changes" (p. 23). Remixes, like the one composed by Bea, offer an opportunity to consider multiple middles. Deleuze and Guattari called them plateaus, an apt term for taking time to investigate meanings. Plateaus are flat places, often with views of

above and below, resting places for weary travelers, literally and figuratively. Looking at this remix involved diving into the middle of the assemblage and considering the spaces between the elements. In a sense, reading this image involved reading between the lines. Understanding what facilitated its creation made it easier.

This image was inspired by the feeling of drowning in expectations and responsibilities. Those expectations included student performance on high stakes tests, being available for student remediation, parent communication, attending to PLC requirements for data and analysis, and actively participating in faculty meetings within changing time frames. Expectations may be represented by the fiery clouds of the lower left part of the image, but also in the drips of blue connected to the blue copy of the dominant image of the woman in the middle of the assembled image.

The figure of the woman was another plateau for examination. She was fragmented into red, blue, and green, the three colors foundational to creating all the colors on a computer screen. The fully blended color of the figure appeared indistinct, still visible, but hidden behind the color layered versions. The color fragments may have represented the demands of her work, demands that she felt inadequately prepared to address. Bea felt torn apart from her identity as a teacher by the demands that she did not anticipate in her dreams. She said,

One part of me that gets bogged down by the workload and the mental, physical and emotional tolls that this job takes on me is convinced that I would go back and warn myself to choose something else. But then I think, “if not this, then what?” I feel like I was called to this profession, this craft. I’m good at it, and the positive aspects of the job far outweigh the negatives. Being a part of thousands of kids’ academic journeys is something I wouldn’t give up. My teaching creates ripples that become waves. Teachers

truly are responsible for every other profession, so being able to say that I'm a part of the mission to make society better by educating the future is the most rewarding thing I could ask for.

Creating this remix gave Bea a moment to reflect on why she chose her specific career path. In spite of the challenges that seem to pull her down, she is heading ever upward, toward the surface and the sun. Bea's optimism and commitment to persevering was conveyed by the light on the woman's full color face looking upward. The bright light that illuminated the face in this image brings all the RGB (red, green, blue) colors together to reunify the central figure, a nod to the hopefulness of future personal reintegration.

Reading between the lines, or in this case, reading between the layers, allowed me to recognize how Bea organized the remix. The primary woman was near the bottom of the layers, with the clouds and fragments on top in varying opacities. The green and blue fragments were layered on top of the original figure, but also slightly behind, as if they represented things Bea had already overcome. The only shape between the woman's face and the unseen surface was the red fragment. Red, as a symbol of violence, fear, and danger may have represented the scope of the perceived obstacles to Bea's dreams of teaching. Red also symbolized love and passion, perhaps also indicating Bea's determination to persevere through the obstacles in pursuit of her passion. The pressures that inspired the remix often frustrated Bea's plans for class and her ability to try new creative ideas as she taught.

Commitment to creative work. Bea knew her creative spirit would embrace the idea of remix even though she wasn't sure exactly what remix meant in connection with ELA teaching. Her philosophy was that teaching is an art, a craft that needs to be honed regularly and improved continuously. Bea worked to develop community in her classes and found art to be a pathway

beyond right or wrong answers into relationships between students and between herself and her students. She used several remix-type activities before the study, including a personal logo project that had students design logos for themselves and then share with the class in a community circle. She said, “[It] sounds very hippy dippy, and it is a little bit. It’s like talking about our feelings and stuff, but it’s like really community building.” The students created an image to represent themselves and then wrote a narrative about the logo, rather than writing something traditionally autobiographical. For Bea and her students, this activity opened the door to other kinds of expressive projects, including an intentional remix.

Bea felt that the early experience allowed students to be comfortable in sharing their lives. Building a community was essential to the level of sharing that Bea invited her students to do. In working with a canonical text like *Of Mice and Men*, students needed to know the context of the original text, but they also needed a way to connect to it. By creating an open community within her classes, Bea encouraged students to use their personal experiences and feelings to interpret the literature. Early on, during one of the Hangouts Bea observed that the texts used by all the teachers involved in the study could be unified by the theme of alienation. At the time there were still three teachers involved, all working on different projects: a book club study of graphic novels, a film study of *Edward Scissorhands* (1990), and her own classes reading *Of Mice and Men*. Bea decided that remix would suit an assignment wherein students defined alienation:

It might be something interesting to kind of just give them that word, alienation. And then whatever images come to mind whatever ideas come up, just kind of creating a new text based on that. And maybe as a preview of what's to come and then maybe adjusting

it based on after reading these texts or examinations of these texts, remixing their original alienation image.

At that point, Bea began to transform her Steinbeck unit into one that centered on remix as composition. She initially wondered how to address the students who wanted every project broken down into a checklist but decided that it would be good for those students to experience unbridled creativity. She knew she had artists in her classes who would revel in the freedom to create without words, and she thought each group might be able to learn something about the creative and writing processes required for remix. The remix images allowed students to make personal connections to the literature, particularly related to the theme of alienation.

Bea decided that she would stay close to the idea of alienation as she launched into *Of Mice and Men*. She asked students to create remixed images that they thought represented what it meant to be alienated and then to write their own definitions and explain how their images illustrated the concept and the effects of alienation. She gave her students two days of class time to work, and students used several different apps to create their images. Bea could hardly wait to share her students' work. She said, "The kids loved doing it...they really have enjoyed...the opportunity to create and to kind of make an argument of their own, which was super cool." Not only did the students enjoy the process, but the images they created showed a depth that excited Bea even before she read the written portions. Remix styles varied, but nearly all the images contained solitary figures separated from other elements of the composition. Many of the students chose shapes with closed lines to illustrate the hopeless feeling of being alienated from others. Some students chose to represent an idea of isolation, making a distinction between what is meant to be alienated by others and choosing to withdraw into isolation for a time. Each

was unique, and students were able to share the meanings and underlying motivations for their choices of image, layout, color, and other design elements.

How Bea Worked the Plan

Bea opened *Of Mice and Men* by reading aloud the first chapter, stopping often to answer questions or engage in conversation about Steinbeck's writing, the setting, and the context of the book. She offered students the opportunity to discuss elements in the novel that paralleled student lives and current events as well as creating hypothetical scenarios incorporating the *Universal Declaration of Human Rights* into the conversations and the texts they composed.

Composing texts. Bea's students took up the remix challenge. She charged them with creating images that reflected what alienation means and how alienation affects people. She gave them two days in class to create it and then added a written paragraph connecting their work to *Of Mice and Men*. On the day the projects were due, Bea joined the Hangout bursting with excitement over the work the students submitted. Her students loved playing with the different apps and tools, but even more, appreciated the opportunity to create something that made a statement without words. Her pride in her students was evident, and she got permission to share their works with the study.

After the students completed their images, Bea posted them in the classroom and conducted a gallery walk where students could respond to each piece. She heard them talking to each other saying, "I didn't even think of it that way" or "I didn't know you could use that image to explain it." The students were talking to each other and thinking about how many different ways there were to express an idea. Bea said that they felt like they were being heard and that they were doing something right. Students were able to see multiple ways to represent the same idea, which expanded their understanding of what it meant to be alienated. Bea touched on

multiple ways of expression: create, write, explain, and share. Students created their pieces and wrote about them. During the gallery walks, each student had an opportunity to share the work and explain their thought processes as well as their design choices. The remixes functioned as parallel texts for the book and students used them for generating discussion and analysis. The gallery walks and discussions about the artwork became part of the conversation during the reading, so students could make connections between the class alienation remixes and characters in the book.

Bea said, "the remix thing brought an abstract idea into the concrete, tangible thing that they could wrap their minds around." She observed that the students enjoyed playing with ideas and thinking. The process she used: create, write explain, and share gave students multiple opportunities to consider the meaning of alienation in both Steinbeck's book, but also in their own lives. Students had freedom to explore their feelings and, in the process, developed empathy for others. For Bea, the project was a powerful experience that made the idea of alienation real to students across the board. Students with a fifth-grade reading level were able to contribute as well as the students who should have been in honors or AP classes. She noted remix "was kind of something that leveled the playing field in that way of just thinking about a word and the ideas that come from that."

As a form of assessment, Bea found that she could find the strengths of each student in a way that a traditional writing assignment did not allow. She commented that sometimes she thinks students aren't listening because they sketch or doodle during class. Those students said Bea, "went wild for this." She had other students who were involved in the school audiovisual program and who produced the school morning show who loved the editing process and the ability to use tools like Adobe Photoshop and Lightroom for an ELA assignment. Bea said they

shone through the whole creative process. The writers of the class still composed excellent written work and demonstrated a mastery of the writing standards, while the students who need to move and talk were able to have a constructive place by walking around the gallery and evaluating the artwork. Bea had the opportunity to assess every different learning style and different academic levels of students and also have "real" conversations with them about their thinking and how they analyzed the text. She also listened in to student conversations as they built a community through discussion the remixes.

Creating community. Building relationships with student was Bea's favorite part of teaching. She often remarked that listening to her students was "interesting" and "powerful." Part of what she appreciated about remix was the "opportunity to see every single kid has a strength." She emphasized that conversations during the unit were more authentic and more "real" because the students weren't trying to figure out the right answer but were internalizing the literature and connecting to it to their own lives. Students in the sophomore year age range (13-15) began the year self-conscious, focused on "not looking stupid" and worried about how people perceive them. Very often this age group experiences alienation on a vast scale. Talking about alienation and creating new texts through remix was personal because they were in the middle of a major paradigm shift in intellectual and emotional development. Bea said that they dove into the project as a way to analyze themselves and to share their feelings about alienation as isolation in the safe space of her classroom. They could hide behind the assigned text, but still express their feelings through the art they created. She found the students willing to share their own experiences through their artwork, something often difficult for self-conscious teenagers who were worried about what people thought of them. Conversations centered on how students sometimes felt alienated by others, but some also chose to isolate themselves to find peace in the

middle of chaotic lives where school, activities, and family sometimes collide. Students analyzed themselves and identified their own feelings about how they respond to uncomfortable situations. Understanding themselves a little better also helped them connect to each other with compassion.

Bea said,

My favorite part of this is just the building of relationships with these kids. You have to be a little vulnerable to do it, and I think that breaking down that wall for a lot of these kids has made them be open to being vulnerable in an English class. I think that you have to be sometimes in order to really discuss things that are important.

The vulnerability and connections built during the remix project brought a depth of understanding about alienation that made student responses to both *Of Mice and Men* and the *Declaration of Human Rights* more thoughtful and nuanced than in Bea's previous classes. Students were more comfortable sharing their opinions because they had developed relationships with each other.

Bea believed the combination of the developing relationships and the students recognizing that everyone had a strength that contributed to the class allowed the conversations about the *Universal Declaration of Human Rights* to take on a depth and breadth that hadn't been possible before the remix project. She was impressed by the willingness of her students to participate in discussions about the world for entire class periods rather than just a few minutes. She watched as her students played with ideas and with thinking in new ways and found it a powerful experience. Students who seemed apathetic or disengaged from class activities found their voices and learned that their opinions and thoughts added value to the conversations around them. Participating in the remix activity opened a door for students to merge the literature, current events, and their personal experiences.

Making connections. Some students redefined alienation as a potentially positive experience. Some people need to be alone, and these students named that feeling a part of alienation, but self-determined alienation or isolation. Bea observed that the students who started diverging from the traditional understanding of alienation may not have done so without the level of vulnerability that remix afforded them. She watched her students transform from "pretending like everything was so dumb and stupid" to engaging in "big discussions about the world." The change in her students inspired Bea to consider ways to use remix in her other classes. She said, "Getting kids to write is connecting visual...tangible elements to words and then vice-versa...they change the way they look at a text and find different new ways to think about things." Bea knew from her own artistic experiences that visual expressions sometimes lead to deeper understanding of texts, whether students created the visual texts themselves or viewed someone else's,

When the students finished reading *Of Mice and Men*, Bea showed the movie version directed by Gary Sinise. Comparing the two allowed students to recognize different ways to interpret the characters and story, while their exploration of alienation helped them see possible reasons characters acted the way they did. Bea was especially struck by how the students changed in their opinion of Curley's wife. In the text, Curley's wife came across as self-centered, overtly sexual, and sharp tongued. Her character wasn't given a name, and her obsession with her looks combined with her sexual teasing ultimately led to her end. She had dreams larger than ranch life, but she only talked about them without acting on them. When students read about Curley's wife, they hated her for her meanness and the way she used people, especially those who were weaker than she. During the movie viewing, however, students observed that her character was alienated, and her behavior stemmed from that alienation. She felt trapped by her circumstances and didn't have the social skills to navigate her disappointments in life, so she

became flirtatious and mean in turn. Using what they had learned about alienation through their remixes, students talked about how it felt to be alienated, and which characters might feel like victims of alienation. Bea was particularly proud of the student who, while watching the film version of the text, decided that Curley's wife wasn't an awful person, but she was alienated without the tools she needed to be part of society. The idea of alienation made them more sympathetic to the character Bea was pleased that most of the students grasped the idea of alienation as a way to explain someone's unpleasant behavior.

Bea did the same alienation remix and text in both her on-level and honors classes. The on-level classes included students with 5th grade reading levels and others who “should have been in honors or AP classes,” but remix allowed them to operate in a uniquely equitable way while they thought about the word and how they interpreted it. Images generated conversations when written words did not. She wrote,

Remix means new ways of thinking. It means reinventing the wheel. You take something that may work or look fine, smash it into a million little pieces, and put it together in some new way that has new meaning (or maybe even the same meaning) but still has some message or purpose. It means student engagement, rigor, progress, evolution.

Bea noticed her students challenging themselves to visualize, analyze, and interact with texts in ways they hadn't done before. She was proud of her on-level students who learned to see past surface-level meaning. The students who struggled to connect with literature may have benefitted the most, and they began to enjoy reading because they could add to the dialogue in class.

Bea's Reflection

Bea was happy with the way the project helped her students express themselves in ways that were natural for them. She said, "Each kind of learning style had an opportunity to participate and to demonstrate understanding and to feel like they were being heard and that they were doing something right." She added that students who appeared to be doodling when they should be listening in class responded enthusiastically to the chance to use their artistic inclinations for English class. Other students who were more technology oriented thrived in the process of using software and sharing their expertise in a class where they didn't often feel like they were demonstrating their strengths. The strong writers in the class showed their skills through the written portion, and Bea could see that they understood the writing standards. Their paragraphs served as models to the other students. Bea's students who needed to move and talk shone during the gallery walks, using their energy to evaluate the artwork and drive discussions about the different ways their peers illustrated the theme.

Bea said the project gave her the opportunity to assess every learning style at every level represented by the students in her classes, a common goal of her PLC and something administrators looked for in their shared communications through OneNote. She said that the gallery walks created a space for spontaneous and natural conversations about each student's writing, thinking, and analysis of the text. She added, "It was really an opportunity to see every single kid had a strength in this." The insight into each student's strengths inspired Bea to reconsider how she created lessons for the future,

Bea said that playing with remix reshaped her interpretation of student production and meaning making. She said, "I feel that remix can truly connect students to texts and to each other, helping all students see things in new ways...now I approach every text with the

assumption that some students need remix to understand the text more deeply." Bea used her experience to change how she approached lesson planning.

A Plan to Continue the Journey

Both Adam and Bea planned to continue practicing and planning remix activities after the study concluded. Adam planned to use similar remix activities immediately in both 10th and 11th grades, while Bea wanted to explore other ways to infuse remix consistently in her planning. In this section, I share their plans for next steps both immediately and in the future.

Adam's Next Step: Immediate Inclusion of Remix

Once the graphic novels were completed, Adam extended the remix practices into the next unit for the 10th grade classes, a PLC planned poetry unit that included activities requiring creative products based on the poetry students read. Students chose three poems of different styles but similar themes and tones. Once they annotated them and identified literary devices in them they chose one of three remixing alternatives for each poem: create a greeting card with the same emotional impact as a poem, write a paragraph connecting a fictional character to a poem, or create a graphic organizer that compares a song to the poem. A fourth option, connecting the poet's life to the poem, fell neatly into one of the state standards for students conducting research, while a fifth, a dramatic reading, met the standard for speaking. The remix elements of composing new blends of existing materials were essential to the creative products in Adam's poetry unit (Lankshear & Knobel, 2011). Adam was able to tap into what students were already doing (making connections and remixing images, text, and music for social media) and show them how their out-of-school practices were valuable forms of literacy (Zoch, Myers, & Belcher, 2016). Naming remix as a form of text and using it as part of the curriculum supported student knowledge and led to what Adam called the highest engagement of students with the literature he

had seen. In this case, engagement included completing both written and artistic assignments and participating in class discussions about poetry.

Adam's experience with his 10th grade students also inspired him to expand remix activities into his 11th grade classes. Adam was the lead for the 11th grade ELA PLC, but there were only two teachers in it; the school was actively searching for another teacher when the study began. The previous year the 11th grade PLC planned around a single textbook with regular practice Milestones exams from the milestone guide. He was frustrated by what he saw as a wasted opportunity to explore literature and write in depth beyond what the Milestones required, and the students were either bored or stuck at a level where they couldn't understand what the test was asking them to do. At the end of the previous year, Adam noted that students who came into 11th grade with good general reading skills did well on the exams and students who were less adept with reading comprehension and interpretation did less well. He added, "Reading time is important and not done enough." He wanted to incorporate time to read during all his classes to promote the reading skills he felt were essential and to hopefully help students learn to enjoy reading for the sake of reading, not just because it was an assignment. Part of the process was including more student selected texts, or at least student selected from a list of options.

Adam and his colleague worked to overhaul the 11th grade throughout the study and beyond. At the start of the study, Adam hesitated to add anything unfamiliar to the new curriculum, but remix in his 10th grade classes proved to be valuable. He said that opening things up in a creative way helped his 10th graders, especially with writing narratives because they had to consider the individual elements that make up the stories in order to remix them. Moving characters from one story to another required understanding characterization.

Manipulating the genre without disturbing the theme, tone, or mood meant students had to make calculated choices about design. Narrative writing played a role in the Milestones, so adding remix to the 11th grade classes would make test preparation more interesting, and possibly more effective, for everyone.

Bea's Next Step: Looking Toward the Future

Bea extended the alienation remixes into the next semester for her 10th grade classes as she planned a focus on global voices and perspectives. The school was preparing shift World Literature from 12th to 10th grade. Bea wanted to begin the transition with her current class because she believed it was important for her students to have a perspective on the United States as part of a larger global community. Adam talked about his coming-of-age themes during one of the Hangouts while led Bea to brainstorm through an idea about looking at coming-of-age in different parts of the world and finding texts that told those stories. She envisioned a "mosaic of colors and voices from different cultures." Bea created a remix to help her work out her vision (Figure 26).



Figure 26 Bea's mosaic remix

The central image was an eye and hand overlaid on a mosaic art piece. The remix was colorful and the words "a brief history of the future" stood out clearly. The eye and hand were boxed by an opaque layer of turquoise scratches. The top and bottom sections of the image were uncovered, so the mosaic was unaltered. The effect drew the viewer into the words above the eye and to the eye itself. The spatial editing that focused on the eye may have been designed as a window to Bea's soul, or her desires (Goldstein, 2007). The mosaic was visible through the eye,

allowing the viewer to see into her thoughts. Those thoughts focused on a future made up of pieces of past artifacts, shattered, shaped, and remixed themselves into a work of mosaic art.

Bea's final remix looked to the future. Her school had traditionally offered seniors not in honors or AP classes several options for on level study. Over time, fewer and fewer students chose World Literature. Some opted for dual-enrollment in local colleges while others chose classes in Multicultural literature, British literature or advanced composition. Bea was glad that her school decided to move World literature to 10th grade because most other high schools in the district and around the country already had World literature as the 10th grade curriculum and she felt like her students would benefit from a multicultural perspective.

With her school's decision to transform 10th grade ELA to World Literature, Bea decided to begin working toward a more multicultural lens for her current classes. She said that she wanted to introduce the idea of people being part of a global community. She wanted to create a "mosaic of colors and voices from different cultures" as she moved forward with her current group of students. At the end of the study, she was still searching for ideas to use for creating her specific plans and activities that she could integrate into the school requirements for writing assignments. She was considering multiple angles: marginalized voices, coming of age in different cultures, and vague ideas of books she could use. She had a vision of multiple pieces that she hadn't yet arranged into a cohesive whole yet, but she was narrowing down her ideas.

Along with the new reading texts, Bea thought about how her students could take their alienation remixes and remix them again to express how inclusivity helps combat alienation. Students learned that remix was not static but was recursive and could be changed as they learned and experienced more both in and out of school. Using images and texts to both make and express meaning as events, situations, and texts change was an important lesson for both Bea

and her students. Printed texts may be viewed as static, but digital remixes were easily manipulated over and over again (Shipka, 2011). Additionally, remix takes on multiple forms, not all of them graphics based.

Bea used what she learned about remix to modify her existing plans for 11th grade. Her students were reading texts from the American Revolution and watching TED Talks from different perspectives. They analyzed the TED Talks for rhetorical strategies and presentation devices more than for content. She then planned to have her students research a revolution they thought was necessary in the 21st century and then prepare a TED Talk-like presentation of their own with graphics. Instead of presenting in the classroom, Bea planned to have them present in the school's recently renovated media center stage. Bea said, "Students sometime forget that they can be activists and have a voice." Students remixing multiple texts and then presenting a fresh argument in a professional setting offered them a chance to practice their own activism. Remix helped Bea teach her students to think differently about texts and gave her a fresh way to make difficult texts accessible to all her students. At the same time, she was able to meet State Standards of Excellence in all five of the major categories: reading for literature, reading for information, writing, speaking and listening, and language. She said, "I feel that remix can truly connect students to texts and to each other, helping all students see things in new ways." Bea's experience with her students and in her own reflections added to her knowledge of what her students' potential even as she lived through the remixing and conversations that emerged. The efferent and aesthetic stances were evident through her words and through her work.

The Stances in the Findings

Working through the data also required attention to the spiral of efferent and aesthetic stances from my conceptual framework, for both me as researcher and for the teachers involved

as they considered their experiences. Bea and Adam both talked about the things they would carry away from the study, or the efferent stance, and the things they experienced while immersed in the study, the aesthetic stance. For both, their experiences were wrapped up in their students' experiences. When they talked about what they knew, it was always connected to what they saw in their students and how their students responded to the remix process. In the following short section, I consider how efferent and aesthetic stances were experienced through both teachers' contexts.

Their experiences reflected two different aspects of their teaching contexts: how they experienced the pressures of their PLCs, which was not directly connected to remix, and how they immersed themselves in their students' work and thought process through remixing. What they knew and what they experienced, or their efferent and aesthetic responses fluctuated with the particular challenges of each day. Some days the expectations from administrators and PLCs dominated their conversations as they processed the pressures inherent in teaching. Other days they reveled in the ways they saw their students responding to the literature through the learning the remix process encouraged. When Bea's students connected their definition remix projects to one of the characters in the Steinbeck novel, Bea knew the practice of remix could be a powerful tool for teaching. When Adam recognized the enthusiasm his students showed for discussing the texts they read through the lenses of their own experiences and prior knowledge, he recognized the potential for creative projects, including remixing, to help students "start using those high-level thinking skills they're going to need to begin to approach a lot of this end-of-course test stuff." Adam knew that rote practices were not enough; students needed to be able to think creatively to excel on the exams.

Both Bea and Adam talked about the frustrations of preparing students for the required Milestones testing. During the sixth Hangout in mid-September, they discussed the inadequacy of practicing for the tests. Adam said, “I think a lot of those questions are a bit absurd to ask high schoolers... you have to use ways other than just giving them practice questions.” Bea replied, “There are only so many practice passages and questions...and it does get dull and dry and boring and it does end up kind of eliminating that critical thinking that we want them to do.” Bea talked about her department’s requirement for a weekly practice passage for test preparation. While she complied in order to “check it off,” she said, “I think that the remixing and...thinking in different ways and that higher order thinking is so much more effective as a test prep tool than just teaching to the test.” Adam agreed and thought back to the previous year’s testing experience saying, “The students that did pretty well on that [test] had good general reading skills. It seemed like they had probably been reading since they were young and maybe their parents read to them. The students that didn’t do as well didn’t have [those] kind of basic reading skills.” Their knowledge of how their students fared on the Milestones changed the way Bea and Adam approached their teaching: Bea wanted to add more student choice in both reading and composition activities and Adam was determined to help all of his students completely read a book, some for the first time in their lives.

Efferent stance. Adam said his principle take-away from the study was an understanding of remix and how the process of taking something that already existed and creating something new with it can help students make connections to texts and facilitate reading analysis. He noted, “My head is really kind of more at trying to just help all those kids get better reading and writing skills.” Remix was one way he hoped would help him meet that goal. Personally, he said he learned how to use several different apps for creating remixes, something we did during one of

the early Hangouts. He said, “That’s been fun from this project, just kind of getting to check all those out and think about how students can work with them.” Bea reflected on how her students used remix to help them visualize the literature and interact with the texts, saying, “They are analyzing texts in different ways and seeing past surface-level, which is HUGE for my on-level students who don’t normally do this on their own.” Bea added that her new knowledge of remix processes as educative was changing the way she prepared her lessons. She noted that many of her students needed to remix in order to fully understand what they read and that she intended to be mindful of that need in future teaching units.

Aesthetic stance. Being immersed in the daily work of teaching, including the required meetings and duties outside the classroom, left little time for Bea and Adam to reflect on their experiences. The Hangouts became places where they could compare notes and talk through some of the challenges and the successes they felt during the study. It was in a Hangout where Bea talked about the pressures of her administrators adding so many tasks to her list that she felt like she was drowning. It was in another Hangout where Adam confessed he felt like he and his colleague had been thrown in to the deep end and were struggling to keep their heads above water. It was during these moments that weren’t necessarily connected to remix that I observed the level of stress put on teachers in a data-driven age. Bea found her voice in creating remixes, particularly the one of the woman underwater. Adam’s frustration with some of the elements in his PLC was tempered by the connections he felt as he listened to the conversations of his students working to bring their personal histories to the texts and ultimately to their collaborations. He said he felt more creative when he put the principles of bringing student experience and knowledge to a project at the front of his planning, saying that the ideas of what remix is and how it functions made his teaching more student-centered and less test-focused. His

aesthetic stance was revealed in how he felt he knew the students and their stories better during the course of the study.

Adam and Bea and Connections to Texts

Rosenblatt (1995) wrote, "a novel or poem remains merely ink spots on paper until a reader transforms them into a set of meaningful symbols" (p.24). As ELA teachers, both Adam and Bea could create the symbols they needed to make meaning of texts, but not all their students saw beyond the ink spots. Remix provided an opportunity for Adam's and Bea's students to create a symbol set made up of elements they found online and put together with digital tools. Adam and Bea saw that in doing so, students connected personally to the texts they were reading. Student choices for their remixes showed Adam and Bea how the students made meaning of the texts and approached literature from a personal point of view. Adam's graphic novel texts and Bea's novel from the canon offered similar opportunities for humanizing ELA by developing an empathetic community mindset while still paying attention to traditional elements of language arts like literary devices.

Graphic Novels

Adam's texts, graphic novels, paved the way for creating remixes because they were already non-traditional forms of literature. Students were accustomed to reading full length books or selections of larger works within an anthology, but graphic novels merged image and words into a unified representation of a story. Adam said that one goal of the PLC with a graphic novel unit was that students would more readily find themselves in the assigned texts. Graphics, Adam agreed, might be a window into student selves where they could respond to a character whom they looked like, not merely one they imagined looking like. Adam personally hoped the graphic novels, student selected from a PLC derived list, would inspire students to

complete reading the whole book. He had set a goal for all his students to complete reading at least one book during their sophomore year after noting a connection between reading skills and test scores in his 11th grade classes the previous year. The idea of remixing an assigned text into a movie trailer meant students had to know all the parts of the book from inciting incident to resolution. Graphic novels made that kind of reading approachable for most students.

Additionally, students may have been able to connect to the characters they could see as well as read. Personal connections to characters help students transact with literature on intellectual, emotional, and experiential levels (Rosenblatt, 1995). Adam's goal was to show students how satisfying it could be to read with a personal point of view.

Making it personal. Looking at literature from personal points of view was one of Adam's goals for his students during the study. He wanted his students to see that they could connect with texts personally, not just analyze a text for an exam. Literature became meaningful when readers constructed knowledge and discovered themselves in it (Eisner, 1998). The affordances of digital tools opened the doors for Adam's 21st century students to explore literature in contexts they used regularly. Adam called this exploration, discovery, and creation "inventive thinking." He likened it to the way teens watched and imitated things on YouTube, creating their own versions of what they saw. For Adam, remix allowed students to take that same practice to school. He said that remix engaged more students than other practices had and that more students actively participated in conversations and in producing new texts than he had seen from them before.

Making meaning through experiences. The conversations centered on some of the experiences that come with being a teenager: feeling alone, being uncertain about the future, and changing relationships with friends and family. The characters in the stories became places to

begin talking about similar things that happened to Adam's students. Most of the students hadn't dealt with the same level of trauma as the characters in *Maus* or *Persepolis*, but they all had experienced being misunderstood or feeling distant from a parent. As they talked about their experiences, they began to connect to the texts, which, in turn, motivated them to keep reading. Knowing they would create a movie trailer about the book gave them incentive to read to the end, but the connection to the stories kept them interested. Looking at literature in new ways gave students opportunities to understand why reading matters.

A Text from the Canon

Bea also hoped her students would learn to look at literature in new ways. She said, "To write is connecting visual, you know, tangible elements and then vice versa" (10/5). She had tried teaching her students to think differently about texts and new ways to think about things, which made her excited to try remix. Like Adam, Bea's students were familiar with the processes involved in remixing, which made the crossover to classroom use easier to introduce. While Adam chose to incorporate remix into a form of literary analysis through a movie trailer, Bea opted to use remix for her students to explore one of the themes in the text. She began with a challenge for students to define alienation using only images. Remixing images for social media was something with which her students were familiar, so the expansion into definition work felt natural to her. As her students created, they also discussed the meaning of the word and compared it to similar concepts like isolation. They considered whether choosing solitude could be a form of self-alienation while they composed multi-layered images without text. Most of the images included solitary figures shrouded in dark colors, illustrating negative associations with alienation even while they talked about the potential for alienation to be a peaceful or restful moment in time.

Bea's favorite moment came when students were watching the movie interpretation of the text, and they recognized how alienated one of the characters was. It changed their perception of the character and made them more empathetic. Beyond creating empathy for one character, the remix practice helped students visualize literature in a real way, much the same way that Adam's students did. Moving beyond the surface of the words of a text was one of Bea's goals with her students. She reflected, "They are actually interacting with the texts rather than just letting the texts pass by them...which is HUGE for my on-level students who don't normally do this on their own." Adam also commented that his students experienced the texts as they planned and recorded their movie trailers.

Humanizing ELA

Both Adam and Bea found remix to be a way of making human connections to their students. Using unorthodox tools that included smartphones and tablets for composing alternative texts provided a portal into student lives outside the classroom and opened a door to making connections beyond what Adam called "this robot adult" who is only interested in test scores and writing essays. The technology itself played a role. Adam admitted that he didn't know as much about memes, gifs, apps, and video production as his students did. Letting them lead the way on the technical side of remix gave students a sense of ownership of their work and validated their expertise. Bea said that watching her students create something valuable was rewarding to her because she saw that they began to explore the literature because they wanted to, not because it was assigned.

Being empathetic. One of Bea's motivation in becoming a teacher was to be an adult who offered empathy and compassion to students. Adam wanted to be an ally to students, one who would push them to excellence while giving them a space to bring their out of school

experiences to new learning. Both Bea and Adam watched students connecting to each other and creating a community within the classroom. Adam's students began to form friendships through their collaborative book clubs and movie trailer production. Sharing each other's stories in connection with the texts they were reading allowed students to recognize that they may come out of different circumstances, but they all understood feelings of alienation, frustration, and accomplishment. Bea's students also created a community as they walked through the gallery of their alienation remixes. They talked about the different ways people interpreted the word, and in the process opened up to each other about their challenges and their successes. Bea said that the interactions of students with each other validated all the work and was especially meaningful to the students who often felt like they weren't heard in most classes. She said these students finally felt "that they were doing something right." Bea noted that students began to create remixes on their own as they worked through parts of the texts, even without it being an assignment.

Being a learner. Adam also felt like he was better able to connect with his students through the remix project. Students worked through the texts on their own, but Adam joined their conversations and was able to show his interest in their lives as they compared their experiences to those of the characters. He said being able to relate to them improved their view of him; he was not just their teacher, but he remembered what it was like to be their age and understood their feelings. Adam felt like students got to see a bit more of who he was, and they began to know that he was genuinely interested in their lives.

Being community minded. Both Bea and Adam talked about the communities formed in their classes during the remix project. Bea said that the focus on creating an art piece gave students a place to be comfortable about what was going on in students' lives. It seemed easier for them to open up to each other when they had their remixes in front of them. When students

stood side by side looking at the gallery wall, they seemed to be more willing to share their feelings than if they were sitting in the classroom without a focal point. Adam also noticed that friendships began to form as students talked about the stereotypes in the books they read and shared their own experiences in similar circumstances. Sharing common experiences forged relationships that deepened as students worked together to create their final projects.

Learning literary devices. Remix also helped Adam teach literary elements like chronology and character as well as literary devices like tone and mood. Students had to identify the story elements, determine which ones should be amplified in their remixes, create storyboards for sequencing, decide which of them would do the acting or how they would choose the images they wanted to use, and then compose a series of images or a video with color, lighting, and music that would reflect the mood and tone of the text while at the same time making the case for reading the book. The tasks involved with the production were all creative, but still met the criteria for the milestone standards for narrative writing in particular, and for all five of the larger assessment goals: reading for literature, reading for information, writing, speaking and listening, and language. For Adam, the experience was a positive one for everyone. He was able to be creative in his teaching, and his students experienced literature in ways they hadn't considered before.

Remix Timing

Adam's students finished with remix; Bea's students started with remix. Both approaches helped students connect to the texts they were reading. Adam was able to emphasize student choice, a component of his PLC, and at the same time encourage student imagination and creativity with a remix product as both assessment and reward. His students actively participated in both the analytical and creative processes. Bea tied *Of Mice and Men* to the *Universal*

Declaration of Human Rights and to Suicide Prevention Month. Students recognized the common themes across fiction, non-fiction, and real life. Bea used remix to access her students' experiences with feelings of alienation or isolation and use those feelings to help students become more empathetic to fictional characters, real people in difficult situations, and to each other. Bea found the remix project powerful, a way to take an abstract idea like alienation and watch students make meaning of it in a concrete composition.

Connections to Teacher Feelings

Both Bea and Adam were pleased with the impact of remix in their classes, and both planned to use some form of remix in future classes. Both teachers faced challenges and some frustrations at their schools, particularly related to expectations put on them by standards, administrators, and PLCs. Adding remix required taking some risks: Adam in reframing how he taught the lessons handed down by the PLC and Bea in rearranging how she taught a familiar text in a new way. Remix gave them freedom to explore and expand how they and their students transacted with texts. They were both proud of their students' processes and that pride translated into feeling good about their teaching. This concluding section considers how the experience of using remix as a teaching tool influenced Bea and Adam's ways of thinking about teaching, ways they could enjoy the creative process in class, and ways they learned to amp up their lesson planning.

Ways of Thinking about Teaching

In the final reflection, both said remix had added to their teaching rather than distracting from it. Bea said watching her students compose through remix was enlightening and that it reshaped her thinking about student meaning making. She came to believe that every student could benefit from the practice of remix and that some students *needed* to remix to understand a

text more deeply. Adam said remix helped him to plan assignments that were both creative and relevant. He added that thinking in terms of how he might remix a text helped him talk about texts with his students, even when they weren't actively composing remixes. He said, "It helped my teaching be more student centered," recognizing that students doing remix were operating in a world familiar to them. Rather than centering on what he, as the teacher, decided the students needed to know, remix allowed students to discover meaning for themselves through inquiry. At a time when research demonstrated the benefits of student-centered teaching practices, but the realities of high stakes testing and conformity in teaching prevails in many schools, finding a tool that balanced student needs and administrative expectations helped these two teachers do both. Bea noted that her school wanted evidence of student engagement, and remix illustrated a high level of student participation at a glance. Administrators were able to walk the gallery of student remixes and see that, not only were students participating in classroom activities but that they could demonstrate high levels of critical thinking that may not be easily recognized in a standard essay response.

Ways to Enjoy the Creative Process in Class

Both Adam and Bea were enthusiastic about the remix experience. Adam enjoyed the excitement of the students who reveled in the opportunity to do something new, and the students' responses encouraged him to consider more creative assignments. He saw his students practicing creative writing skills, invention, collaboration, and working in out-of-the-box ways that might prove useful for more than high school ELA. He said teaching with a remix mindset and an openness to non-traditional composition could still prepare students for the Milestones tests. Additionally, he reported that remix was a good reading tool because it allowed students to dig deep into comprehension to create something new from the texts they read. He found that his

relationships with some students changed because they saw him as an ally who was interested in what they had to say. Bea was particularly pleased with the way remix allowed students of every level and learning style to contribute equally to class conversations. She watched her students transform from "pretending like everything was so dumb and stupid" to engaging in "big discussions about the world" and the events that shape their realities. Students began to see themselves as potential activists when they realized that they had unique perspectives that could be powerfully expressed in remix when words were insufficient.

Ways to Amp up Lesson Planning

Bea and Adam also found remix to be useful in planning lessons. Adam said that opening his planning up from a creative standpoint that allowed students to work with what they already know helped his planning the new unit. Even though he had used remix-type activities before, the framing of activities as remix helped him to be purposeful in how and why he used any art-based assignment. Bea said that playing with remix reshaped her interpretation of student production and meaning making. She said, "I feel that remix can truly connect students to texts and to each other, helping all students see things in new ways...now I approach every text with the assumption that some students need remix to understand the text more deeply." The way remix played out in Bea's classroom inspired her to consider approaching a future world literature class through a remixing lens from the very beginning of the year. She pictured a mosaic of stories from around the world, each one connected to the others by the idea that, despite a wide variety of circumstances and cultures, people around the world need to feel connected and need to know that their voices matter.

CHAPTER 5

DISCUSSION

This study began as an investigation into how teachers experienced remix as a teaching tool in their high school ELA classrooms. It morphed into an observation of how two teachers negotiated implementing a new-to-them tool amidst the expectations and pressures of the current data-driven system of education, with its dependence on high-stakes standardized tests and Professional Learning Communities (PLCs) to determine teacher how well teachers performed. Competing factors of what these teachers wanted for their students and what administrators expected of them made using remix more complicated than I anticipated when I first considered the question of teacher experience. By the end of the study, however, each teacher found a path to use remix with their 10th grade ELA classes, and both found the experience to have a positive influence on their teaching. Beyond the consideration of remix, however, the study was a window into the teaching lives of two people who are passionate about their roles as educators even as the profession seems to be facing a wave of teacher burnout and teacher dropout (Hackney, 2015; Mangin, 2016; Owens, 2015; Thibodeaux, et al., 2015).

A case study like this one might appear to be limited in its importance because of its scope: two teachers, two months, one primary project. However, Eisner (1997) wrote “A good qualitative study can help us understand a situation that would otherwise be enigmatic or confusing. One reads a narrative, reflects on its contents, and puts the pieces together” (p. 58). In this case, I read the living narrative of Bea and Andrew as they navigated teaching in a data-driven era. Each teacher found ways to work within the constraints of PLCs, high -stakes testing, and administrative demands. At the same time, both worked out their teaching philosophies of promoting student success through critical thinking and multimodal compositions. Bea’s

philosophy was of teaching as a craft that needed to be continuously honed, saying, “As a teacher, remixing was enlightening. I enjoyed being a part of the creative process, and I enjoyed watching my students create even more. It has reshaped my interpretation of student production and meaning making.” Adam’s story included making sure his students were well prepared for the state exams, and he found remix to be helpful. He said, “Teaching [remix]...goes hand-in-hand with the standards, especially any of the writing standards.” At the same time, Adam also found that the remix project helped him to connect personally to his students; that personal connection to young people was one of his motivations for becoming a teacher in the first place.

When a majority of Americans say they do not want their children to be educators and teachers themselves feel “misunderstood, unheard, and... disrespected (Hampson, 2018, para. 9). When teachers are often blamed for everything wrong with U.S. education, it becomes easy to wonder why some teachers persevere (Ujifusa, 2018). The story of Bea and Adam during this study illuminates how they used remix as one way to work through challenges and still feel like their work mattered to the students in their classrooms. In this final chapter, I discuss what the study revealed about remix as a pedagogical tool. I consider its usefulness, its flexibility, and its potential role as part of a repertoire that merges new technologies and traditional teaching modes with imagination.

What the Study Revealed About Remix

Each teacher had a different experience in approaching remix, from timing to kinds of remixes used. They navigated different challenges with administrative expectations and PLCs. They came to remix with different histories with technology and different skills. Even with these differences, both felt successful in how they worked with remix in their classes, and both came away from the study with fresh ideas about their teaching. Seeing how these two teachers took

different journeys as they employed remix in their classrooms may also offer insight into the frustrations other teachers express about the challenges of teaching in the age of big data. They both found value in the experience and in the different ways they learned to think about remix.

Remix as a Useful Tool

Like any good tool, remix is versatile. The two teachers in this study took completely different paths but had similar feelings about using remix in the future. Adam said that remix forced him to think creatively about how he approached the literature he taught. Adam's nature was to be straightforward in his approach to learning and teaching. Thinking creatively required him to consider multiple avenues for communicating, especially as he taught students whose natural learning styles were different than his own. Adam said at the beginning of the study that he hoped to learn how to use more artistic elements as he taught.

Adam also discovered that remix as a reading tool for students who needed to improve their basic reading and comprehension skills. Adam had students across the spectrum in literacy; some were fluid readers who quickly interpreted texts, some read the words without connecting meaning to them, and still, others struggled to read the words on the page. Adam noted the combination of graphic novels and a group remix project improved the practice of reading for most of his students.

Bea said remix helped her approach teaching literature from multiple perspectives: visually, auditorily, and through the alphabetic sign systems of words. Bea was able to assess students according to their individual strengths while still be confident that they mastered the material. For Bea, remix was a comprehension tool, helping her reluctant readers understand the texts they read. With understanding the context and the content came connections. Improved comprehension led to identification with characters and situations, making the literature more

interesting and more relevant to more students whether the students' strengths lay in art, technology, or words.

Both Adam and Bea said remix had a positive impact on their technology-minded students. Adam said that each group in his movie trailer project included at least one student who was proficient in the apps and software needed to make the trailers, and Adam enjoyed learning from his tech-savvy students. Bea also noted that she had students who were involved in the school audio-visual productions who felt like they were in their element doing remix. Bea said they enjoyed using their skills in an English class and relished the opportunities to be the experts.

Bea and Adam used two different approaches to incorporating remix into existing lesson plans, and both said they saw improvement in student reading and comprehension during class. Bea's students individually created remixes of images to define a word, while Adam's worked collaboratively to create a video that incorporated student lived experiences with the graphic novels they read. Both noted that class discussions and the artistic elements of remix allowed them to see, and in Bea's case, assess, multiple ways of demonstrating mastery. Both kinds of projects led to positive experiences for Bea and Adam even though they also employed different timing strategies.

Remix Timing is Flexible

There are teaching tools best employed at specific times during a unit or a school year. The personal logo project that Bea used at the beginning of the year made the most sense as an ice-breaker/introductory activity. The short stories Adam's students wrote just before the graphic novel unit followed a unit of short stories. Remix, however, was useful regardless of when during the unit it was implemented. Bea and Adam timed their remix projects differently. Bea chose to open her unit with a remix project in which students created a remix to define a word

that would have implications for the duration of the unit. Adam opted to keep to his PLCs plan, with remix as a summative assessment, using intermediary assignments to build student skills in comprehension, interpretation, literary and dramatic devices, and technology before they tackled their final project.

From the beginning. Bea started her unit for *Of Mice and Men* with student definitions of alienation, one of the themes she planned to explore in the text. Students began by remixing images that matched their ideas of what they thought alienation might mean. Most students chose to create digital remixes using the school computers and even their own smartphones. Most of the remixes contained solitary individuals, and most used somber colors: deep purple, blue, and gray (Figures 27, 28, 29).

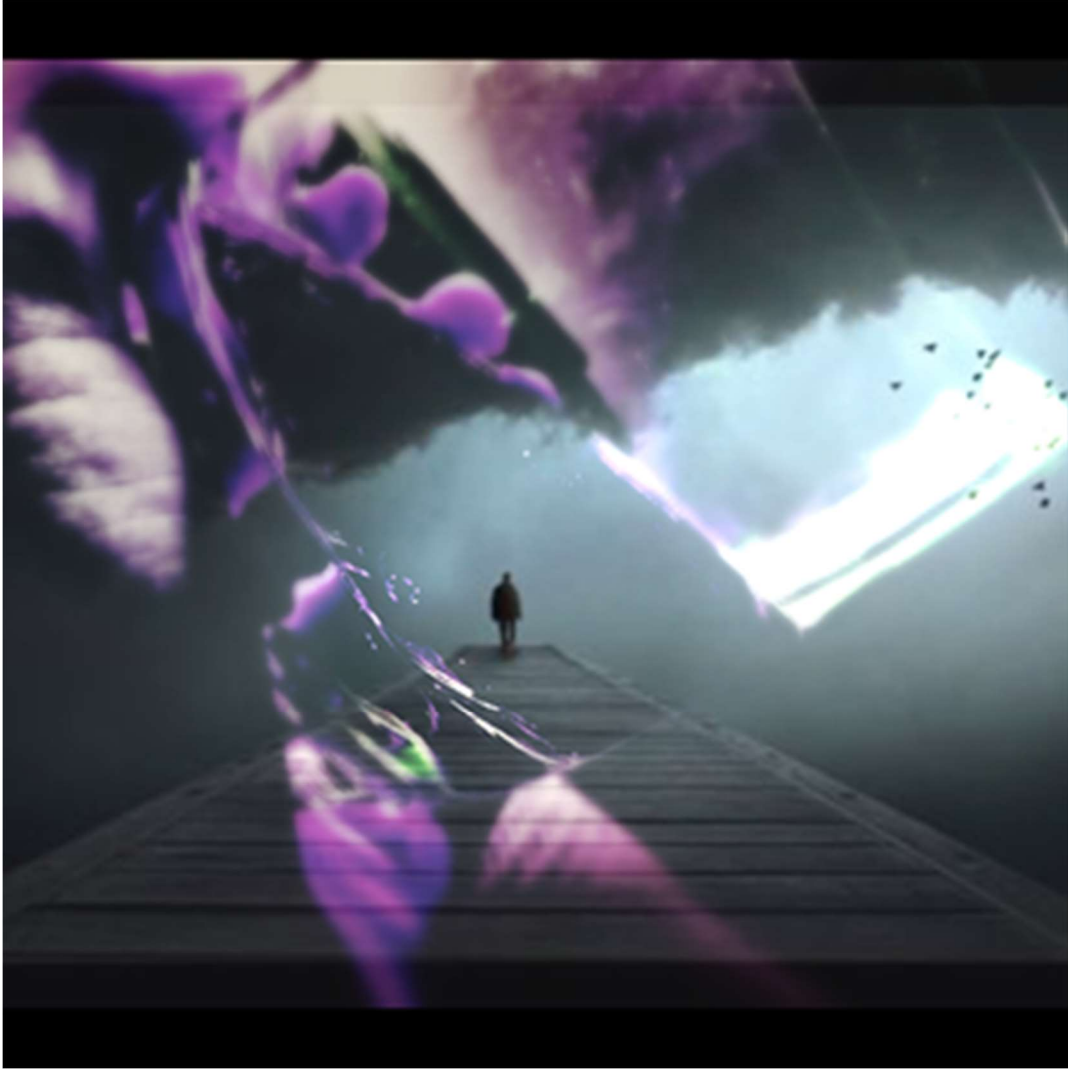


Figure 27 Student Alienation remix 1

Bea then asked students to write a short definition based on their remixed images. Bea then printed the images and posted them with the descriptions in the hallway outside her room, creating a museum-like gallery. Bea took each class on a gallery walk, where students discussed their work with each other and learned the different ways their peers both defined alienation and how each person chose to represent it. Bea said that students talked about how differently each person chose to represent the same word, saying things like, “I didn’t even think of it that way” and “I didn’t realize that you could use that image to explain that.” Bree merged multiple modes of literacy as she walked her students through remix by creating, writing, explaining, and

sharing. Not only was she able to experience the remixes with her students, but she also observed that students who participated felt like they were being heard, some of them for the first time. Students who excelled in art or production or talking had an opportunity to feel like they did something right in English class.



Figure 28 Student Alienation remix 2

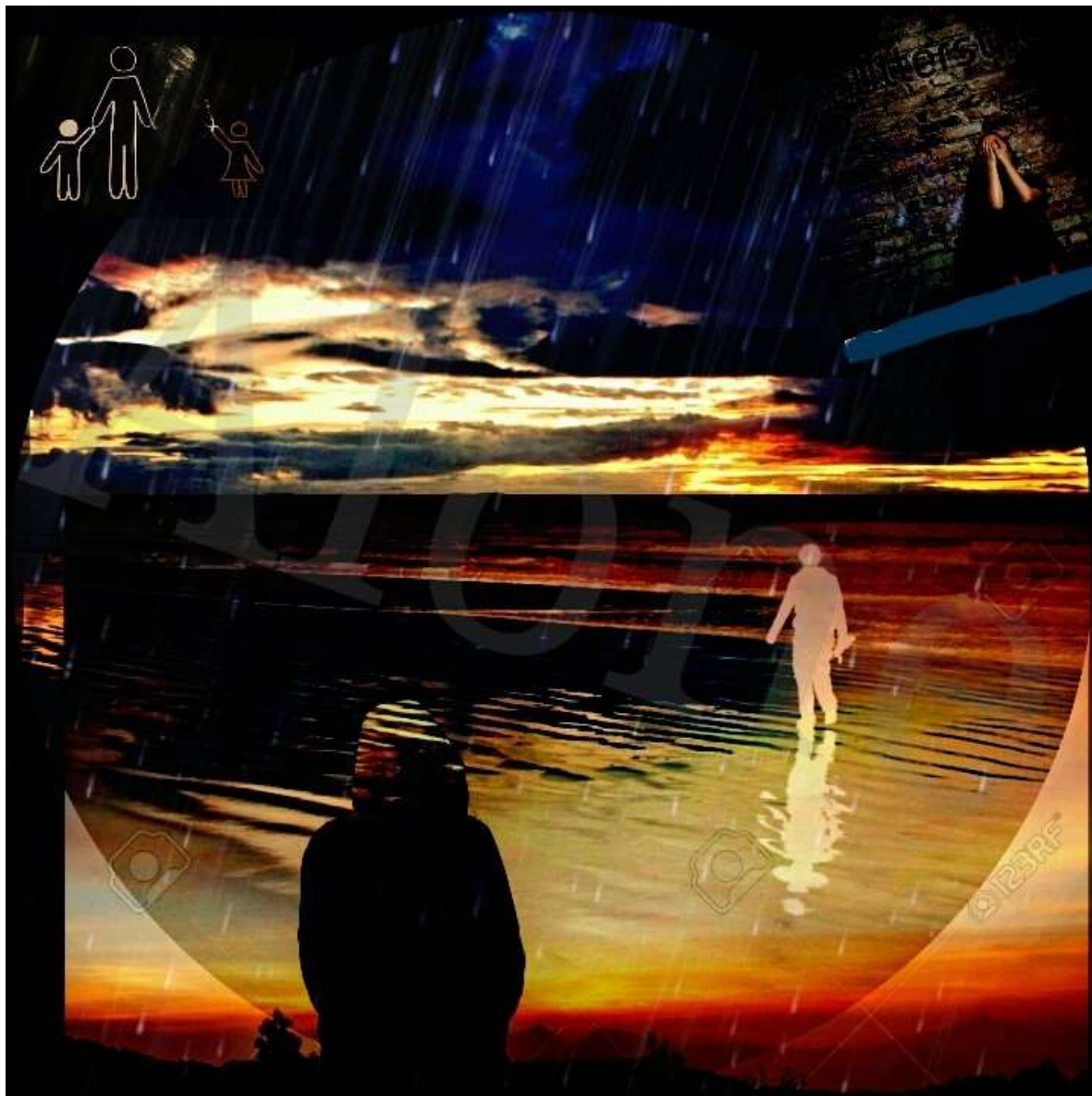


Figure 29 Student Alienation remix 3

The gallery walk and the analysis of images that accompanied it allowed students to practice reading both images and words, skills that are not new but have taken on increasing importance in the 21st century (Bomer, Patterson-Zoch, David, & Ok, 2010; Shipka, 2011; Zoss, 2009). Images, from cave paintings to stained glass to video, have always been part of human communication; new literacies like remix are another iteration of what it means to be literate. The current climate of test-driven assessments cannot adequately reflect a multimodal and

multimedia form of literacy (Hackney, 2015; Hillocks, 2002; Lankshear & Knobel, 2011).

However, both Bea and Adam learned that new literacies can help teachers prepare their students for reading, composing, and arguing in the “real world” while still checking off the administrative boxes of test preparation (Turner & Hicks, 2017).

Bea used remix as an entry into her unit on the themes in Steinbeck’s (1937) book.

Adam used remix as the summative assessment for his unit of graphic novels, *Maus* (Spiegelman, 1991), *March* (Lewis, Aydin, & Powell, 2013), *American Born Chinese* (Yang, 2006), and *Persepolis* (Satrapi, 2003). Putting the remix at the end of the unit allowed Adam’s students to read, discuss, and analyze their texts before remixing them.

To the end. Adam didn’t choose to put the remix project at the end; the assignment came from the 10th grade PLC leader. Adam recognized the plan as a remix, and so he framed his instruction as graphic novel remixes. As described earlier, Adam’s students worked in book club groups to read and discuss the texts and then worked collaboratively to create a movie trailer designed to generate interest in the book for their peers. Adam directed the students in choosing images to create a storyboard for sequencing their video shots. Students then added dramatic elements they had learned about mood, tone, and characterization to make their videos compelling. The project required understanding literary elements that would be on the milestones test and encouraged personal connections to the literature. The personal connections, where students saw themselves in the characters or the contexts of the books helped motivate some students to continue reading. Applebee (1996) explained how personal connections make learning relevant by recognizing that students can participate with “knowledge-in-action rather than knowledge out-of-context” (p. 107). Knowledge-in-action is at the heart of the transactional

work students do when they remix, using their life experiences to connect to texts, making the texts personally meaningful. What they know informs what they do.

Additionally, Adam's students demonstrated skills required for creating video texts: pacing, sound, sequencing, lighting, and scoring. Part of what distinguished Adam's assignment as a remix, an imaginative transmediation in Suhor's (1984) terms, was the resequencing students had to do. A movie trailer was a new text, not a summary because it took the linear work of the graphic novel and required students to select particular images or quotes and rearrange them in order to create an eye-catching couple of minutes that might motivate their classmates to read the book. Like Bea's students, Adam's students were able to demonstrate knowledge in multiple modes: discussion, writing, and videography.

Multiliteracies. Students in both Bea's and Adam's classes practiced multiple literacies by remixing. Bea's students began with an alphabetic text, the word "alienation" and then used layers of images to illustrate the meaning of the word. During their gallery walks, they also used spoken words, the original literacy, to tell the stories of their remixes (Ong, 1982/2002). Adam's students began with a print media made up of illustrations and words, and they remixed by animating through video and music. Students in both classes shared their work, involving another type of literacy: performance. The nature of remix through composition, sharing, and, in Bea's case, analysis, led the teachers to believe their students had meaningful transactions with the texts and justified in their minds that using remix as a tool was valuable for their teaching practices.

Standards. For both teachers, remix gave students opportunities to demonstrate their strengths while giving Adam and Bea a variety of modes for assessment. They were able to address specific elements of the Milestones tests like narrative writing and check student

progress in four of the five state standards: reading literary texts, writing, speaking and listening, and language. Bea's students also met the remaining standard, reading informational texts, when she included the *Universal Declaration of Human Rights*. Adam knew he would include the informational text standard in another unit during the year. His focus during this study was for students to become competent and adept composers of narrative, a genre that his school prioritized. From the standards to the teachers' personal goals, remix allowed the teachers to consider literacies and priorities before the technology, using remix in ways that worked for them.

Customizable. The versatility of remix allowed both teachers to customize how and when they employed it to best meet the needs of their students and the expectations for curriculum at their respective schools. They were able to use their professional expertise and their knowledge of their students to make sure the remix products were educative experiences. Dewey (1938/2015) wrote about educative experiences as those that “live fruitfully and creatively in subsequent experiences” (p. 28). Educative experiences build on prior knowledge and experiences and affect future knowledge and experience; remixing uses prior knowledge and experience with sign systems in transactional semiotics, the products of which are available for continual remixing as knowledge changes. Bea's students built on their definition remixes as the unit progressed, while Adam's students use the experience to demonstrate mastery of the texts they read.

Both teachers were satisfied that their students were able to think critically about the literature and demonstrate that thinking in multiple modes: visual compositions, discussions, and writing. The visual compositions took different forms: Adam's students created videos that remixed music, spoken words, and moving images, while Bea's students remixed multiple still

images. Both final products allowed Adam and Bea to assess students across multiple modes, something the state standards required.

Bea, as the school newspaper advisor, had a working knowledge of many of the available software and apps. She also had experience with layout and design principles that she taught to her students who then used their new knowledge to create their remixed images. Adam brought musical knowledge to his class which allowed him to infuse a sort of quid pro quo into the remix project. He shared his knowledge and experience with music as students selected the right background tracks for their movie trailers, and the students shared their knowledge about how to manipulate the software and apps required for movie production. Adam felt like he was able to connect to his students as he learned and modeled his learning process with his students. Bea was excited that she could share her passion for creating art with her students and their creations surprised her with their depth.

Eisner (2002) noted that the arts demonstrate multiple ways to approach inquiry and problem-solving. Bea and Adam learned with and through their students while creating remixes. Bea's students created remixes that were unique to each of them, while Adam watched and listened to his students use their experiences to make meaning of a text before creating a remixed video text. Neither teacher spent the unit dispensing facts; students discovered for themselves the messages of the texts and then made meaning based on their own transactions with them. Both teachers felt remix made a difference in how they understood the ways students constructed knowledge.

Remix as Part of a Repertoire

Remix was not a program or a curriculum; it was an alternative form of composition that could work at any point of any unit Adam and Bea happened to be teaching. This study, and the

remix projects Adam and Bea did was in the middle of the fall semester. It lasted the length of a teaching unit and could have fit at any time of year. Remix afforded teachers the chance to organize their teaching unit so that students could connect their school lives to their out-of-school lives, something Eisner (2002) said would help develop students' abilities to both extend the learning and apply it to other contexts. Both Adam and Bea expressed their desire to be the kinds of teachers who had lasting impacts on their students, and remix became part of their pedagogical repertoire that would make learning memorable. That remix was not bound by specific times of the school year made it more appealing to use. In fact, both had plans to use remix activities in other classes during the 2018-2019 school year.

Adam planned to extend remix into his 11th grade classes during a poetry unit after the study concluded. He described his plan for a remix project during a poetry unit just before the winter break. The poetry unit was adapted from one used the previous year, but Adam added a creative project partly inspired by the success of remix in the 10th grade classes. Remix expanded Adam's out-of-the-box thinking as he prepared the poetry unit, creating a project for students to remix poetry through images and then remixing again by using the images and words from the poems to create greeting cards.

Bea planned to use remix with her 11th grade classes as well, taking them through a study of American historical documents and argumentation. Her plan was to have students create TED talk-like presentations about revolutions they thought needed to happen in modern society. Students would be required to include a multimedia companion to their presentations, again communicating through multiple modes: visual, written, and aural.

Both Adam and Bea used remix as a tool for helping students to look beyond the physical words they read to the underlying meaning of the words, or, as Bradbury's (1953) character

Faber mused, "I don't talk things, sir...I talk the meaning of things. I sit here and know I'm alive" (p. 75). Whether through images or videos, Adam's and Bea's students could and did talk the meanings of things. A standardized test may reflect some of the things students know, but Adam and Bea also wanted their students to think more deeply than the tests required (Figure 30). High-stakes tests measured the first four levels of the revised Bloom's Taxonomy: remember, understand, apply, and analyze (Anderson, Krathwohl, & Bloom, 2001). Testing served as a

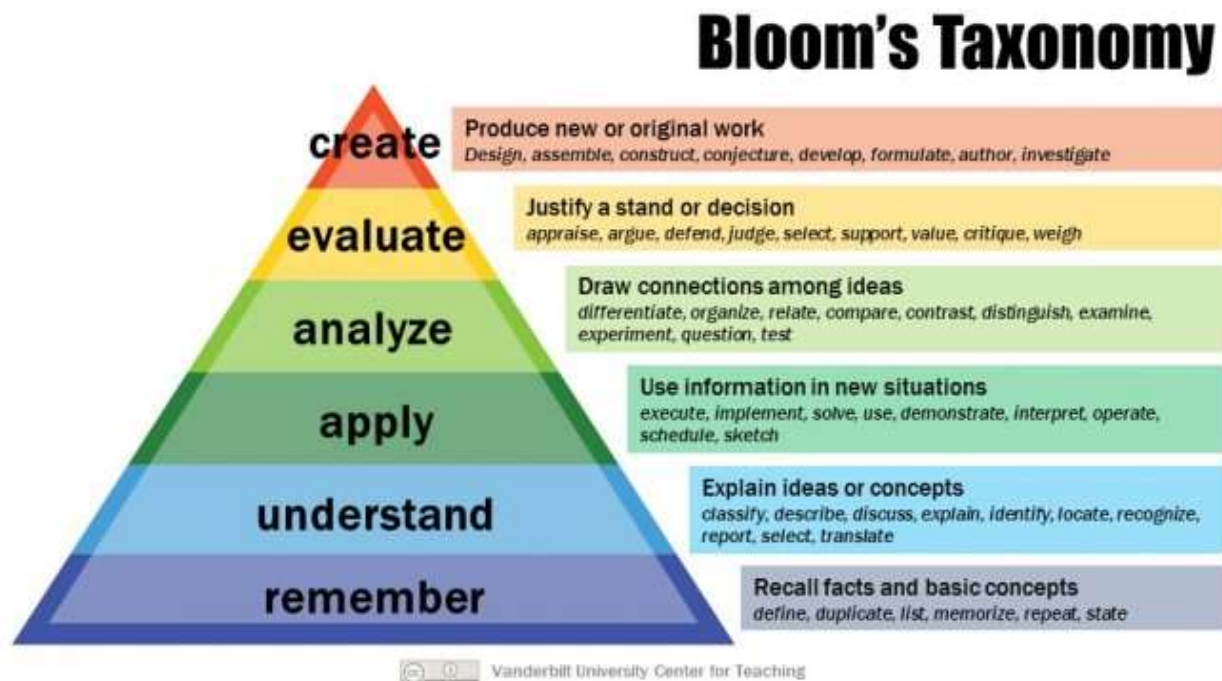


Figure 30 Bloom's Taxonomy

measurable baseline, but Adam and Bea wanted their students to have the power to express the meaning of things, a more complex order of thinking than what tests measured.

Part of the higher order of thinking included creating new things from seemingly disconnected elements, evaluating what elements to use, and then composing with them. The problem-solving skills needed to blend layered images or create a video required students (and their teachers) to participate in a cycle of reading, thinking, creating, and sharing. Through each iteration, creators interrogated their work to ensure that their messages were clear.

Problem solving. Disney Imagineer, Chris Carradine, differentiated between traditional problem solving, where analysis precedes action, and complex problem solving, where action comes first, saying, "complex problems are best solved through experiment and iteration" (Salter, 2003 p. 165). Adam and Bea experienced remix as a tool for meaning-making, with each iteration requiring their students to respond to the complex issues arising from making personal connections to literature. Because students were creating new things that connected their experiences to texts, both Adam and Bea saw that the students were also understanding the texts to be relevant to their lives and to their communities.

The process of digital remixing, whether the end products were created through computer software or apps on smartphones and tablets, was a tool Bea and Adam could implement in their classrooms, so students could wrestle with some of the essential elements of humanity discussed in the literature and lived out in their lives. Students remixed existing images, music, and written texts, working with the layers of their new compositions as they thought through the challenges of feeling alienated or isolated, alone or insecure. Reading the literature offered an insight to the struggles of others; relating literature to themselves made it personal and relevant. Remixes did not follow a template of sentences and paragraphs using key words but rather required students to think beyond what they read into what it meant for them. Both Bea and Adam felt their students worked beyond reading the texts and began to experience the power of literature, something both teachers wanted their students to feel.

Multiple iterations. Remix was an iterative process, requiring students to return to the texts and make different kinds of connections each time they did. The first connection was sequencing the story. The second was connecting to the characters. The third included considering how character interacted and how those characters might act in different stories or

contexts. The fourth iteration -and beyond- involved students seeing their lives in the stories or characters' feelings. Students had to consider why they chose and layered images that reflected their thoughts and ideas, much the same way their textbook authors chose words, and in the case of graphic novels, images, layout, and design. Remixes were compositions that did more than answer questions about the stories; remixing allowed Bea and Adam to watch the processes of their students transacting with literature.

The Unrelenting Expectations on Teachers in a Data-Driven Age

Part of what I hoped to do with this study was shine a light on a part of teacher life that is sometimes under-represented in education news. Policy makers read about "failing schools" and teacher shortages and how students perform on high stakes tests. They tried to address what they saw as failings by adding more accountability and data reporting from teachers or schools or districts. They changed curriculum or manufactured "better" tests that will prove student (and thereby, teacher) success. What often went missing, however, was the human element of education. Students cannot be measured by data points alone. Teachers cannot be assessed on students' outcomes alone. Most programs, even No Child Left Behind, were designed to help students. Good intentions, however, got lost when quantitative data is the sole measure of success. And it was in that data-driven economy where the humanity of both teachers and students get left behind. Even the relatively new implementation of PLCs, while motivated by good research that says professional development is most effective when it is "job- embedded and done in the context of the school learning community," (www.gapsc.com/rules) may have been corrupted by administrations or districts who took a view of PLCs as a place for teachers to analyze data or take direction from a leader, making sure all classes of a particular subject and grade are in lockstep (Crift, Coggshall, Dolan, & Powers, 2010). When schools kept teachers

from attending national conferences that may benefit the whole department because the conference is not technically job-embedded, (B. Hamilton, personal conversation, 2018) or when they feel threatened by administrators who prioritize data over educative experiences (Mangin, 2016; Thibodeaux, Labat, M., Lee, & Labat, C., 2015), the initial purpose and ultimate value of a learning community was thwarted.

Two Approaches

The two teachers in this study represented two schools' approaches to PLCs as well as two teachers' integration of remix. The stories of how these two teachers implemented a new project into their classes was illustrative of what teachers can do. Also enlightening were the words of teachers who withdrew from the study citing pressures from their schools to keep their plans not just aligned to the plans of other teachers, but exactly the same. Mangin (2016) noted, "Teachers' desire to comply with the reform mandates had the unintended effect of focusing teachers' attention on technical and procedural aspects of their practice rather than engaging in deep learning that could facilitate sustained instructional improvement" (p. 961). When teacher evaluations were tied to student performance, it should have not been a surprise that many teachers did not respond to an invitation to try remix in their ELA classrooms; if students did not respond to collaborative plans developed by a PLC, it would be harder to make the case that a single teacher was responsible for student performance on exams. However, teachers who took risks, even the risk of adding to existing plans, could have been called out for nonconformity.

Adam's experience. Adam's PLC was structured so that all students received the same instruction no matter who taught the classes. The goal was to ensure that all the students had the same opportunities and assessments so that when testing time came, all students would have the same preparation. Lessons and activities were provided by the PLC lead, the teacher who ran the

meetings and organized the work. Although Adam was comfortable with the lessons and direction of the PLC, he was not free to deviate from the universal planning. Although his PLC was intent on providing all tenth-grade students with exactly the same lessons and same assessments, Adam managed to make remix work for him by reframing activities rather than fundamentally changing them. By explaining to students how the projects assigned by the PLC were remixes, he was able to tap into a vocabulary that students understood and provide a space for them to create transactional products with literature using their life experiences and prior knowledge of digital tools. By changing how he approached the activities, Adam was able to create a path to a type of literacy that included students whose strengths were in non-word-based literacies (Zoss, 2009). He felt like naming remix for his students added motivation for students who usually preferred not to read because it validated other forms of communication, forms that they knew from outside the classroom. Adam kept his remix terminology under the PLC radar, which made it work for him. He didn't alter the texts or activities other than to show his students how what they were doing was remix and how their remixing was a form of literacy.

Is it remix? Adam's experience brought up an interesting point. Teachers often use remix activities without considering them remixing. One of the teachers who had to leave the study early described an assignment she had done in the past wherein students created speeches using only the texts of historical speeches; she didn't consider it remixing until we talked about the project. Adam's colleagues used remix throughout the study without naming it. In my own teaching career, I remixed with my students as well. If remixing is "the art and craft of endless hybridization," then teachers have practiced a form of remix any time they have blended lessons, texts, and activities from sources other than their own imaginations (Knobel & Lankshear, 2008). The difference in this study was the intentionality of remix. Remix was deliberately named as it

was practiced because remix has developed into a cultural phenomenon, largely because of the affordances of smartphones and the internet. New technologies have allowed anyone with access to a computer, table, or smartphone to create remixes of images, sounds, animations, and words. Lankshear and Knobel (2011) wrote, "Young people are picking this up on a massive scale and it is becoming increasingly central to their practices of meaning making and expressing ideas" (p. 100). Because remix has become a common practice among teenagers, it has also become a way in which teachers can allow students to demonstrate how they interpret literature and how they approach composition. By valuing a practice that many students use in their out of school lives, teachers also show respect for student expertise, something Adam experienced. He said each of his groups had at least one student who used movie-making and other applications regularly, and he made a point of learning from those students. Becoming a learner in his classroom, Adam felt like he was no longer seen as a "robot adult," but as a teacher who demonstrated that he valued the students in his classroom for their individual histories, experiences, and the remix practices in which they were already expert.

Bea's experience. Bea's PLC experience allowed her to freely try new ideas. Her lesson plans, including her remix activities, were part of a shared experience with her PLC through the asynchronous OneNote, a Dropbox-type application used by the school. Bea was part of several PLCs for subject and grade level, but only the 11th grade, a milestone testing year, met regularly. The other PLCs met infrequently but communicated through email and OneNote. Digital communication allowed teachers to be in sync with each other without being in lockstep. Students benefited by more individualized instruction and teachers benefited by having the freedom to make curriculum choices for their students. They shared common assessment goals but could use a variety of assessment tools at their own discretion. Because the PLCs were set up

this way, Bea was able to be more forward in her remix projects. Her students' remixes were displayed as a gallery of remixes that other students, teachers, and administrators could see. She celebrated her students' work and was eager to share, not just in the study, but also with her colleagues. The shared experience added to Bea's feelings about remix being a useful, and even important tool in her practice. Other teachers in her school may or may not have adopted Bea's remix approach; that information is outside the bounds of this study, but they had the opportunity to see how Bea incorporated it into her teaching and how her students responded to it.

Common expectations. Although their PLC experiences were different, both teachers shared the common expectations that often contributed to teacher stress and burnout, as represented by the Atlas figure in Chapter 4: focus on data, restrictions on preparation time, multiple meetings during the school hours, contracted responsibilities like 504 and IEP meetings, and non-contracted expectations like attending student activities or being on campus before school and after school just in case students need something. Part of this study illustrated the tensions these two teachers felt between student needs and administrative requirements that most teachers balance.

Constraints, Conformity, and Compromise

School PLCs played an unexpected role in this study. The state required every school to have professional development through learning communities that were embedded within teacher jobs. Bea and Adam's schools had different interpretations of how PLCs looked, which meant Bea and Adam negotiated how they used remix differently. Adam learned to be creative within the constraints of his school PLC, while Bea pushed against conformity.

Working within Constraints

Adam's school had an expectation of conformity across the curriculum. All 10th grade ELA classes were required to read the same texts and the same time doing the same activities under the same assessments. Honors classes required students to do longer compositions, but for the most part, on-level and honors classes in 10th grade did the same work. The goal of the PLC was to ensure that every student learned the same things and that teachers wouldn't be characterized as "easy" or "hard." The data compiled from assessments and student work could be considered more reflective of the whole of 10th grade if everyone was on the same program.

The expectation of uniform study stood in contrast to Adam's university training which centered on a student-centered, learn by experience pedagogy. The university program built on a foundation of Deweyan principles of a democratic education wherein learning was a social function that engaged student imaginations (Dewey, 1916/2018; Dewey, 1938/1978). Adam was frustrated by his school's commitment to direct instruction as the primary means of teaching, particularly in his first year of teaching. The 10th grade PLC took on more experiential activities for Adam's second year, and Adam, like many other early career teachers, acquiesced to the leadership of more experienced teachers. (Smagorinsky, Lakly, & Johnson, 2002). He said, "While there are some unfortunate realities to the daily grind of teaching, it is still a very fulfilling career, and I do feel that I am making an impression on at least some of the students I work with" (email 10/4). Adam also noted that his school was beginning to move away from the teacher-centered curriculum to one in which students had some choices. He hoped that the school would continue to move toward a more student-centered design that he could influence based on his own university experience.

Adam quietly pushed against the constraints of the PLC, but not in a way that might jeopardize his students' preparation for tests or his own position at the school. His nature was one that preferred to not rock the boat, so to speak, and he found he could talk about remix in his classes while still staying committed to the activities in the PLC directed curriculum. He strove to balance the expectation of conformity and his own interest in promoting personal connections to literature through creative experiences. He said that his students did seem more interested and active during the remix assignment, particularly in his on-level classes where more students needed extra scaffolding. He said he felt good about the way his students worked together in creative writing and inventive thinking as they put together their movie-trailers. At the same time, he was confident his students were well-prepared for the narrative portion of the Milestones exam.

Pushing Past Constraints

Bea's PLC also had test preparation requirements that she was obligated to fulfill, including teaching students how to categorize question types and practice writing responses to a weekly passage in a format that mimicked the test. Practice passages and questions get boring, said Bea, for both students and teachers. Additionally, she said that kind of repetition teaches students only to think as far as "what does the test want me to answer." What Bea wanted for her students was for them to "actually feel like they have a voice stirring" (9/19). In spite of the expectations for passage a week and practice questions, Bea's PLC was focused on collaboration and sharing ideas. Some meetings focused on protocol and data analysis, but even those meetings were educative in Bea's opinion, and she came away from them feeling like her input was valued by her colleagues. The focus of her PLCs was on "choice and voice" in the classroom, which meant the meetings were devoted to talking about learning objectives instead of specific lesson

plans. As long as students demonstrated that they were meeting goals, teachers had freedom to structure their classes according to their teaching philosophies and styles, something Bea appreciated.

Bea's school administration, not the PLCs, was often her greatest source of frustration. She said that administrators appeared not to communicate with each other and so would hand down new requirements for non-contracted tasks or send late notice about schedule changes. The paperwork requirements alone took up so much time that she felt like she spent 80% of her days doing administrative work. Several times she said she felt like she was drowning in administrative tasks. She said, "One part of me gets bogged down by the workload and the mental, physical, and emotional tolls this job take on me" (9/22). Despite the frustrations, she felt part of the successes of her students, not only in her classroom but in the years after they graduated.

Although the school administration required testing practice, Bea had a measure of freedom in her teaching to choose how and what she taught. The freedom made adding a remix angle to her unit through *Of Mice and Men* something she could run with. The project was unconventional and pushed against the confines of how some of the teachers chose to teach, but Bea felt that remix benefitted both her and her students. She said she felt like she learned to think beyond her own visual learning style and begin to understand that students who doodled or fidgeted in class weren't ignoring her or trying to be a distraction, but that they needed a more well-rounded approach to whatever the unit of instruction might be. Remix allowed a multi-sided approach to learning that Bea's students were enthusiastic about.

Teaching Students, Not Subjects

Possibly the most significant element of this study was the way relationships developed in both teachers' classes. Adam and Bea talked about friendships forming within their classes as students shared personal experiences that related to the texts they were reading. The subjects of the texts became vehicles for reaching the students. While classroom communities usually developed over time for both teachers, both teachers said the remix project seemed to facilitate the process so that students were able to connect to each other earlier than in previous semesters.

Adam felt that giving students the responsibility to discover the texts in their book club groups led to natural conversations rather than discussions about what may or may not be on a test. He said the students showed the kinds of higher-level thinking skills that students would need for life beyond the milestones. Adam said they learned to listen to each other and to question the texts as they compared life experiences. Students began to relate to each other through the texts, and Adam watched as friendships formed. Collaborating on a final project meant practicing give-and-take, along with making a case for what to include and what to leave out. Remixing in collaboration required skills both in negotiation and in creative expression.

Partly because Bea was able to put remix in the forefront of her teaching unit and partly because of the nature of the texts she used, Bea noticed a change in how her students responded to each other. She said creating the alienation remixes helped students look at the ways they themselves felt alone or misunderstood or isolated. Putting the created images in a gallery gave students the chance to look at other pieces and talk to the creators of them. Bea said the conversations sometimes touched on difficult subjects, but students seemed to feel comfortable letting their guards down and being a little bit vulnerable when they looked together at the artwork rather than speaking face to face.

Bea knew the potential for difficult conversations during the study. Not only did she focus on alienation as a theme, but the study fell during Suicide Prevention Month. Talking about mental health was a natural extension of the alienation remixes that led students to discussing the difference between being alienated by others or choosing to be isolated. Students talked about the differences between alienation and isolation and the causes for each. Some students chose to do remixes of isolation, and the gallery walk gave students the opportunity to talk to each other in small groups as they shared their work. Bea felt like the conversations that happened in the smaller groups helped build community within the larger group as well.

Bea was especially pleased with the way her students began to connect current world events with the texts, their life experiences, and the remixes about alienation. She said that at the beginning of the year students claimed that class discussions were "dumb" because they worried about what people thought about them. The remix project helped students build relationships with each other through a vulnerability that usually takes much longer to develop. Bea said one of her favorite experiences was the day one of her classes conversed about human rights for the entire class period with little direction. They connected the *Universal Declaration for Human Rights* with *Of Mice and Men* and their personal experiences of feeling alienated in a class discussion that included references to world affairs, discrimination, human rights violations, and uncertainty about the future. Bea felt like the gallery walk through the remixes served as a catalyst for connections between students as well as a way for students to interact with texts and seeing beyond the surface of the words.

Although beyond the scope of this study, Bea's observation that students were able to talk about difficult subjects more easily when looking at something together rather than looking at each other is intriguing. Eye contact during important conversations is a learned skill, one that

adolescents may have not fully developed, particularly around peers (Schulz, 2012). A study in Japan indicated that eye-contact used the same cognitive resources as speech (Kajimura & Nomura, 2016). Additionally, reluctance to interact with peers beyond superficial contact has been shown to be normal for most teens (Pickhardt, 2011). The distinction between adolescent conversations on complex issues using eye-contact or when looking at the same thing side by side may be interesting for a future study in conjunction with a cognitive psychology specialist. Understanding how adolescents use or avoid eye contact while discussing difficult topics may be useful for teachers as they broach subjects like isolation, uncertainty, bullying, or mental illness.

Bea said the process from first remix to final discussions was powerful to watch and helped reinforce her conviction that teaching as an art that needed continual honing and refining. She felt the project allowed her to assess students in multiple areas and according to their strengths. Students who were normally reticent to contribute felt they were being heard and that they could do something right. Others who preferred art or performance to writing were allowed to shine in their creative elements. Strong writers began to see the value of thinking visually. Bea was pleased that "every learning style and different levels of kids...had real conversations...about their writing, about their thinking, and about their analysis of the text." She recognized the success of the remix project stemmed partly from being a good fit for her teaching philosophy and something she wanted to explore further, not just in her teaching, but also in her own reflective practice.

Both Bea and Adam said their students responded enthusiastically to remixing projects and both talked about how the remix seemed to made reading and discussing the reading more accessible to their students who did not identify themselves as readers. Bea talked about her "reluctant readers," and Adam referenced his students who lacked "reading fluency." There were

students in both schools who underperformed both in testing and in classroom activities, although the schools were different in many ways.

Two Different Demographics

Adam and Bea taught at schools with different demographic bases, but both found remix beneficial for improving student participation and comprehension. As a white male adult in a school with a large Black student population, Adam discovered remix to be a vehicle for forming relationships with his students. Because he allowed them to be the experts in technology, Adam felt they began to see him as a person, rather than a teacher who was willing to learn from him. Adam's experience was in keeping with his training in Dewey's progressive model of education, one in which the teacher is "intelligently aware of the capacities, needs, and past experiences of those under instruction" (Dewey, 1938/2015, p. 71.) His students participated in remix with enthusiasm, in part, Adam thought, because they had freedom to create.

Bea's also said her students participated with enthusiasm. She said that watching her students feel like they could create something of value was personally rewarding. She added that her reluctant readers made connections to the text because they learned to see beyond the surface of the words. According to Bea, these students were actually reading more than they had before because, as Bea said, "They have something to add to the conversation." As a teacher myself, I understood Bea's satisfaction of seeing students become readers, learners, and contributors.

Final Words from Adam and Bea

Bea and Adam both came from the same university training, and both were committed to student-centered, experience-driven education. Their remix experiences during this study worked out in different ways, but both found remix to be one way to allow students to choose how they represented their responses to the texts they read. Students had the opportunity to connect their

out of school experiences to the in-school texts and conversations, something both Adam and Bea hoped would happen as part of the study. Both teachers talked about getting their students to think differently than they had in the past and both felt that remix allowed students to connect literature to their lives.

Both Adam and Bea took lessons away from the study for their future teaching. Both planned to incorporate remix into their other classes, even the 11th grade classes where milestone testing occurred and where preparation for the test was a priority for the school. They felt remix took students deeper into interpreting texts than prescribed test practice. Adam's school made narrative writing a priority, and Adam saw the work his students did through remix as good preparation for the narrative portion of the test. Bea saw remix as a way to build student stamina for thinking critically about texts. They agreed with each other that remixing and demonstrating how to think in different ways was more effective preparation for the milestones test than teaching to the test or teaching test taking strategies. Their university training, largely based in the sociocultural philosophies of Vygotsky (1930/1990) and Dewey (1916, 1938/1978), was reflected in how each introduced and practice remix with their students during the study. Following Dewey's lead, they created classroom environments where students could experience knowledge in context, an idea also present in transactional semiotics. Adam and Bea observed and assessed as their students used their life experiences to help them interpret new knowledge in their texts. When students were able to connect experience to knowledge and demonstrate what they learned through a remix of sign systems (video or image), both teachers felt some students were able to break through barriers to reading, and other students were able to dig into the texts to make meaning that was personal and relevant.

Both Bea and Adam felt students not only discovered personal connections to texts through remix but also made meaning from them by seeing themselves in the literature. Adam's students literally immersed themselves in the texts by putting themselves in the movie trailers they composed. Bea saw her students take an abstract concept (alienation) and turn it into a concrete reality through remix. Their mastery of the word became evident when they began to recognize alienation in other people and contexts from their own lives and the world around them. Both teachers said student engagement was higher during the project and some students took on challenging themselves to think longer and harder about how texts connected to their lives, something both Bea and Adam hoped for. What students learned and how they demonstrated their knowledge through their multimodal creations expanded what the teachers considered educative experiences (Augustine & Zoss, 2006). As a result, Bea and Adam began to rethink how they approached their planning and their practice, looking for more ways to put student strengths, including those whose strengths were not necessarily literary, at the front of their teaching. Teaching became an intentionally creative practice.

Adam

Adam said remix helped his teaching to be more student-centered by making connections to students' lives through the literature. He felt his teaching was more creative and relevant because students used their experiences to help them interpret the graphic novels and then take those interpretations and create new texts in the form of movie trailers. Adam especially enjoyed watching his students think about characters outside the context of the story. He said both he and his students had fun talking about how characters would respond if dropped into a different story. He said playing around with how characters might respond to a sudden change in context helped spur class discussions about how real people are affected by their environments.

For Adam, remix was a practical application of some of the theories he had learned from his university experience. Although Adam did not mention Dewey by name, his response to the effect remix had on his students was in line with Dewey's notion of two aspects of quality experience: pleasure at the moment and influence on the future (Dewey, 1938/1978, p. 27). He said students enjoyed the creative process and Adam was satisfied that by reading and discussing the texts, students would be better prepared for the narrative portion of the milestones test. For Adam, that was an important outcome because that preparation was a priority for his school and in his PLC.

Additionally, Adam was pleased that the tablets, software, and applications provided by his school district were put to use in creative ways. He was able to assess how students used the technology and how they taught each other through the creative process. Because he was initially unfamiliar with movie making programs, he was able to relate to his students as a learner, something that was important to him. He said he planned to continue using remix to help build reading analysis skills and boost his students' creative writing.

Bea

Bea found remix to be enlightening, not just for her students, but for her own reflective practices. For Bea, remix was a new way of thinking and a new way of assessing student performance. She said that watching students create was rewarding and that some of her students continued using remix to help them make meaning of other texts. For Bea, seeing her students begin to take ownership of their own learning was a profound accomplishment. She reflected that remix is part of how she planned to approach every text. She didn't intend to incorporate a remix art project with every lesson, but she said she has begun to approach every text with the assumption that some students *need* to remix parts of what they read in order to fully understand

it. She intended to consider more multimedia kinds of assignments, and she had already begun to use her own remixes as journal prompts by the end of the study. Using her work as a model, students could freely write an interpretation or response and then discuss how their knowledge and experiences guided their thinking.

Bea said that many of her students were learning to visualize literature and transacting with texts, rather than "letting the text pass them by." She added that remix was an invaluable tool that both motivated students and allowed her to check off elements for the state standards. But more than that, Bea composed a definition of remix for herself that underscored how important it became to her during the study. She wrote,

Remix means new ways of thinking. It means reinventing the wheel. You take something that may work or look fine, smash it into a million little pieces, and put it together in some new way that has new meaning (or maybe even the same meaning) but still has some message or purpose. It means student engagement, rigor, progress, evolution.

During the course of the study, Bea said her students were listening to each other better and from a point of empathy. Students began to apply their thinking to their writing, not trying to make their work fit a question, but rather answering a prompt from their own knowledge and experiences. Bea was proud of their accomplishments and of the community her 10th grade classes created during the study.

Considerations for the Future

This study was limited to the experiences of two teachers in one metro region of the U.S., but the resulting picture illustrates the potential for remix to be a useful tool. Advanced students learned from the artistry of others; students who were behind found ways to contribute to the conversation. The reason the study was limited to two teachers was partly due to constraints put

upon teachers for not only their time but also their curricula. When data becomes a driving force in education, it is inevitable that teachers will change their teaching to meet the materials of high stakes tests, either by choice or by compulsion. The limitations on teachers' professional decision making in their classrooms may explain why so many studies about remix are set outside the ELA classroom. This study extends the work of scholars researching multimodal composition by following the knowledge-in-action as remix unfolded in Bea's and Adam's classrooms (Applebee, 1996). In spite of the limitations, there are a number of implications that can be derived from this study and may be considered as subjects for future research. In this section, I briefly explore four ideas worth further investigation: multimodal works may play a role in how teachers perceive their work, remix is useful in the right contexts and situations, teachers need freedom to transform their ELA pedagogy, and transforming ELA starts during teacher preparation. I conclude with a final thought about remix as constructive exploration.

Multimodal Texts May Play a Role in How Teachers Perceive their Work

Tschannen-Moran and MacFarlane (2011) defined teacher efficacy as the way they perceive their capabilities to accomplish their goals. When teachers are constrained to teaching in preparation for a high-stakes test, it affects how they view themselves as professional educators (Au, 2007; Mangin, 2016; Rooney, 2015; Thibodeaux et al., 2015). Both Adam and Bea shared frustrations that affected their perceptions of themselves as something other than exceptional professional educators. Adam's concerns were the time constraints on teachers and the restriction on spontaneous discussion directions during class, while Bea felt the pressure of performance requirements, both for her and for her students. There is an imbalance of state standards and teachers' autonomy that feeds a general sense of discomfort in taking the kinds of risks in

classroom activities that many teachers want to pursue so that their students can be literate in both in-school and out-of-school spaces.

Students need to know how to navigate the multiple kinds of texts they encounter outside the classroom: images, movement, and words in contexts that are not part of the official education system (Aguilera, 2017; Jacobson, 2017; Perry, 2012). Teachers may be willing to integrate technology into the classroom, not as an add-on, but as one of the many tools available for differentiation (Hicks, 2015; Hyler & Hicks, 2014; Shipka, 2011; Zoch, Myers, & Belcher, 2016). Teachers also need to be encouraged to include digital tools in their planning, but current research focuses on preservice teachers and has not considered in any depth how in-service teachers use, understand, and experience digital elements both for themselves and in their classrooms (Doering, Beach, & O'Brien, 2007; Johnson, 2016).

Remix is Useful in the Right Contexts and Situations

Remix, as both process and product, in a teacher's pedagogical toolbox can be useful in the right contexts and situations. Like every tool, it will not solve every problem, nor will it reach every student. It may, however, be exactly the right project for some students who are learning to read the world. It may be a suitable design for teachers who want to incorporate more student-directed projects into their classrooms. It is not one-size-fits-all but can be molded and manipulated to be appropriate in many contexts. Adam and Bea's journeys and their visions for remix were different, but both found the experience to be beneficial, not just for their students, but also for their teaching practices. In these two schools, 10th grade students formed communities as they practiced remix early in the school year. Although the timing of the study was not ideal for these teachers, it may have hastened the community building in the classes as

students learned early that each of them had strengths and each one could add something relevant to discussions about literature.

As a tool, remix may be used to meet standards that include reading in multiple contexts, speaking, listening, writing, and using technology. Remix is part of US culture, and many students are digital experts. When teachers utilize digital play as part of their teaching strategies, critical thinking, communication, and creativity may be developed in students (Alvermann, Beach, & Loomis, 2016). A new literacies perspective that includes remix helped these two teachers recognize that technology can be used to get student attention but may also be part of the work done in the classroom (Zoch, Myers, & Belcher, 2016). Multimodality, being able to communicate in multiple ways, is not strictly a function of digital creativity, but in these classes, digital expressions of meaning resulted in what the teachers viewed as deeper and more relevant classroom discussions, sometimes about difficult subjects. Remix allowed some students to evoke non-linguistic products that could ultimately be transitioned to the written words required for high stakes test. Ultimately, teachers found ways to assess student thinking, even when writing skills were underdeveloped. By validating student thinking, teachers then had a key to help students unlock the barriers to successfully master required writing assessments. Knobel and Lankshear (2008) noted that processes of remix tapped the thoughtful responses of students to literature. When images, video, and sound are as valuable to teachers as writing, students may respond by being willing to remix their narratives into words, a skill required for testing. The thinking behind the images, video, sound, and words can be applied to real life situations and contexts both now and in the future. Teachers who see their roles as influencers of the future, as Bea and Adam did, may find the academic, intellectual, and social possibilities of remix a path through the maze of state and administrative expectations. Furthermore, they may find that

experiences of one remix may influence future experiences of composition and of ELA instruction. Before any multimodal experience can be shown to be a suitable design for meetings required standards however, teachers need to be afforded the freedom to begin transforming their practices.

Teachers Need Freedom to Transform their ELA Pedagogy

When students' out-of-school literacies advance beyond the print-centric priorities of most schools, school becomes a place of test preparation instead of transformative communication (Siegel & Rowe, 2011). The technological tools students know and use allow them to create content and develop social capital, important functions of living in a digital world that are often ignored in schools. Vasudevan & Wissman (2011) add that these outside-of-school literacies give students agency in multiple contexts. Teachers who live in the same out-of-school digital worlds need to know the principles that allow them to bridge the two worlds and then be given opportunities and support as they adjust their pedagogy to reflect the changing literacies of the 21st century. PLCs, already instituted may be a place to begin exploring how to consider multiple literacies and how technology may be useful in exploring those literacies. At the same time, PLCs may also be a place for teachers to examine new ways of producing and consuming texts while finding ways to empower their students to navigate some of the risks of a technology that is not neutral (NCTE/ELATE, 2018). While PLCs may be a place for in-service teachers to transform their pedagogy, the real transformation of ELA in U.S. schools begins during teacher preparation programs (Karchmer, 2008).

Transforming ELA Starts in Teacher Preparation

Teacher preparation programs are a good place to begin practicing how to integrate technology into ELA pedagogy. Adam shared that he knew about multimodal practices, but

didn't know how to work them into his teaching. Bea, with her experience in graphic design and art, also hadn't considered the role of multimodal compositions as an integral part of her core ELA classes. Beach, Hull, and O'Brien (2011) reported,

Redefining ELA and rethinking schooling and notions of childhood development also require transforming ELA teacher preparation so that preservice and in-service teachers acquire technological pedagogical content knowledge (TPACK), the integration of ELA content, ELA pedagogical content knowledge, and Web 2.0 tools, not simply to change instruction, but also to focus on changes in student learning. (p. 166)

Many teacher preparation programs, including the one from which Adam and Bea graduated, offer exceptional pedagogical content knowledge, including the theories of sociocultural construction of meaning that are fundamental to technological content creation. However, most do not offer substantial opportunities or theoretical frameworks for fully integrating multimodal compositions into ELA classrooms. As electronic texts continue to dominate literacies outside school classrooms, it becomes increasingly important for teachers to be fluent in multiple forms of texts and how those texts are composed to create meaning (Snyder & Bulfin, 2008). New literacies have changed what it means to be literate in modern society; it is virtually embedded in a world where information is consumed and produced in multiple ways (Snyder & Bulfin, 2008; Young, 2008). ELA instruction, beginning with teacher preparation programs, must adapt to the changing ways people learn. There is space for work to be done on how teacher preparation can address the multiple modes through which learning occurs.

A Final Thought

Eisner (2002) wrote, "The arts provide a kind of permission to pursue qualitative experience in a particularly focused way and to engage in the constructive exploration of what

the imaginative process may engender” (p. 4). This study may be a place to begin further research into how teachers experience new teaching practices made possible by technology (Figure 31). What Bea and Adam experienced during their remix projects with their students was a focused exploration of ideas through remixing texts. The possibilities of remix as part of a repertoire or as a tool in a pedagogical toolbox offered a way to integrate multiple literacies into traditional ELA classrooms without compromising the core principles of interrogating literature and communicating through composition. Remix became an opportunity to explore new ways to construct meaning and compose new kinds of texts, texts that reflected the way digital technologies can meet imagination.



Figure 31 The process of untangling yarn- or data - in a series of photos

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