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Using Pop Culture and Media Together with Effective Literacy Instruction: A Teacher's Tool Kit for Selah H.S. Read Write Class

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USING POP CULTURE AND MEDIA TOGETHER WITH EFFECTIVE LITERACY
INSTRUCTION: A TEACHER'S TOOL KIT FOR SELAH H.S. READ WRITE CLASS

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Stephanie Marie Sevigny

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ABSTRACT

USING POPULAR CULTURE AND MEDIA TOGETHER WITH EFFECTIVE LITERACY INSTRUCTION: A TEACHER'S TOOL KIT FOR SELAH HIGH SCHOOL READ WRITE CLASS

by

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A toolkit has been created to assist secondary teachers in using popular culture and the media in conjunction with explicit comprehension strategy instruction in the classroom in an effort to improve struggling students' comprehension. The toolkit consists of an introduction, examples and suggestions for using popular culture and media in the classroom, examples and guidelines for strategic comprehension instruction. Current literature and research regarding the use of popular culture and media in the classroom and effective comprehension strategy instruction were reviewed.

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CHAPTER ONE

INTRODUCTION

Overview

The *Report of the National Reading Panel* (2000) and The No Child Left Behind Act (2002) called a great deal of attention to reading instruction within America's classrooms. Believing early interventions would lead to greater success for students in school, policy makers focused on early elementary grades, predominately on word recognition skills and students' ability to read at grade level by third grade. Unfortunately, little attention was given to comprehension reading in content areas, as well as the literacy needs of students at the middle and secondary level. Biancaros and Snow (2004) remind us proficient third grade readers may still struggle academically if we neglect to teach reading at middle and secondary levels.

Fortunately, policy makers have recognized a need to focus on middle and secondary students' literacy needs. President Bush's Striving Readers Program, a follow up to the No Child Left Behind Act, focuses on middle and secondary levels. Alarming statistics, such as the 2002 National Assessment of Educational Progress (NAEP) report indicating only thirty-six percent of twelfth graders demonstrated an ability to competently read challenging subject matter and Biancaros and Snow's *Reading Next* (2004) report stating seventy percent of secondary students require some form of differentiated instruction have generated concern. Even more alarming, and close to home, The 2005 *Nation's Report Card* indicates only thirty-four percent of the eighth grade students in Washington state competently read challenging subject matter or at what is called a proficient level.

Statement of Problem

The aforementioned eight grade Washington state students will have to pass the Washington Assessment of Student Learning (WASL) to graduate from high school. According to Washington State Report Card only seventy-three-percent of tenth graders passed the reading portion of the WASL during in 2004-2005. Regardless, it has become obvious educators must determine how they are going to help middle and secondary level students read with purpose, monitor their own comprehension, apply “fix-up” strategies, ask questions about reading material, and connect new with old information. To put it simply, middle and secondary students must be taught how to comprehend! In a speech at the 2006 High School Summit, Dr. Terry Bergeson, Washington state’s Superintendent of Instruction, emphasized the need to refine instructional strategies based upon the needs and culture of students. Taking into account the above, this project will focus on using popular culture while teaching strategic comprehension strategies to middle and secondary students.

Purpose of the Project

In order to pass the WASL, graduate from high school and be successful once they are out of school, students must improve their comprehension skills. Specifically, students must apply comprehension strategies before, during, and after reading, helping them make predictions, generate and answer questions, infer, create mental images, determine what is important, summarize and synthesize to create new thinking. Therefore, the purpose of this project is to create a toolkit, specifically for teachers at Selah High School, that provides ideas and strategies using popular culture and media to help build comprehension skills in secondary students.

Limitations

The review of literature cites qualitative studies at the elementary level as well as studies conducted in special education classrooms. However, the ideas and strategies discussed in these studies can be adapted to fit the needs of struggling readers at the secondary level. Popular culture interests are always changing and evolving. Due to this changing nature students' interests listed in the project may change or web sites listed may become non existent. Moreover, the project was tailored for Selah High School classrooms using AutoSkills Academy of Reading as a supplemental program for students needing remediation in word attack and comprehension strategies.

Definition of Terms

For the purpose of this project the following terms are defined:

Academy of Reading. Research based software learning program designed to supplement a reading program, focusing on phonemic awareness, word attack skills, fluency, and comprehension (AutoSkill International Inc., 2002).

Comprehension. When readers construct meaning from the text. "readers think not only about what they are reading but what they are learning" (Harvey & Goudvis, 2000, p.9).

Strategic Comprehension Strategies. Comprehension tasks leading to deeper thinking such as; using prior knowledge, questioning, inferring, predicting, monitoring individual comprehension, and synthesizing information (Alverman, Swafford, & Montero, 2004; Routman, 2003; Tovani, 2000; Harvey & Goudvis, 2000; Pearson, Dole, & Duffy, 1992).

Literacy Practices. Speaking, thinking, reading, understanding and writing about visual text, auditory text, oral text, interactive media, and traditional text with the acknowledgement that speaking, thinking, reading, understanding, and writing are acts situated in social practices, purposes, and contexts. (Kucer, 2001; Moje, 2000; Lankshear & Knobel, 2003).

Mass Culture. The culture that is widely disseminated by mass media (Storey, 1998).

Popular Culture. Everyday culture, the way we interact with others and the media to make sense of what is being said or done recognizing that producers convey the meaning, and consumers critically analyze making their own meaning (Alvermann, Moon, & Hagood, 1999; Gee, 2003; Buckingham, 1998; Xu, 2005).

CHAPTER TWO

REVIEW OF LITERATURE

Introduction

According to Thornburgh (2006) researchers currently believe one out of three public high school students will not graduate: even more alarming is that the statistic reaches nearly fifty percent for Latinos and African Americans. Although some students drop out because they are struggling academically, Thornburgh discovered many were dropping out because they were bored. Thornburgh's article reasserts the importance of using literature relevant to students' lives and respecting students' interests.

The purpose of this project is twofold. First, the necessity for teachers to include curricula in the classroom students can relate to and are interested in, specifically popular culture and media. However, Xu (2005) states many teachers are reluctant or uncomfortable including popular culture in their curriculum. Secondly, the author would be remiss in excluding effective research based comprehension strategies educators can use when integrating popular culture in the classroom. The literature reviewed incorporates books and articles addressing: popular culture and media in the classroom, and effective comprehension instruction strategies. The following reviews the definitions of popular culture, the use of popular culture in the classroom, characteristics of effective literacy practices, and strategic comprehension strategies.

Defining Popular Culture

Considering the large amount of diversity in our society, it is not surprising researchers give several definitions of popular culture. Perhaps, Alvermann & Xu (2005) describe it best, "defining popular culture is like nailing gelatin to a wall" (p. 148).

Morrel (2004) asserts the term popular culture is often used, but the ambiguity of the term causes confusion among researchers and educators when using related terms. He contends educators must be cognizant of the difference between the popular definition of popular culture, television, movies, and music, versus the theoretical definitions of popular culture.

In an attempt to define popular culture, theorists commonly use the terms: mass culture, folk culture, and dominant culture. Storey (1998) describes popular culture as:

1. Culture that is well liked by many people (dominant).
2. What remains after we have decided what is high culture (the belief that popular is an inferior culture). Traditionally, high culture has been thought of as experiences leading to a deep understanding of life providing pride and purpose. Examples of traditional high culture include: fine arts, philosophy, religion, and theatre.
3. Mass culture (culture widely disseminated by mass media).
4. Originates from the people (general public or folk culture).

Fiske (1989) and Williams (1995) assert popular culture is commonly an oppositional cultural form created against the mass culture or capitalists (mass media) that attempts to create it. Fiske (1989) argues capitalistic society attempts to dictate society's thinking, whereas popular culture is the inferior culture that attempts to elude and undermine those attempts. McCarthy (1998) and Storey (1998) assert consumers, not producers (mass media), develop their own interpretations of popular culture. Furthermore, popular culture has also been defined as everyday culture, recognizing that producers convey the meaning, and consumers are able to critically analyze or make their own meaning (Alvermann, Moon, & Hagood, 1999; Buckingham, 1998; Xu, 2005).

More definitively, Gee (2003) describes everyday culture as the way we interact with others and the media to make sense of what they are doing and saying. Several

researchers agree everyday culture is one educators can focus on, helping develop critical literacy skills in the classroom, allowing students to analyze popular culture (Alvermann et al., 1999; Kist, 2005; Lankshear & Knobel, 2003; Morrel, 2004; Xu, 2005).

Alvermann et al. (1999), Gee (2003), Morrel (2004), and Xu (2005) contend focusing on popular culture in the classroom motivates student interest because it is relevant to their lives, specifically those whose literacy practices outside of school do not match traditional in school literacy practices. Gee (2003), Kist (2005) and Lankshear & Knobel (2003) contend traditional school type literacy practices are at odds with complex new literacies (interpretation and analyzing symbol systems in media, video games, music, and the internet) students are using outside of school. Moje, Dillon, & O'Brien (2000) assert today's students possess different knowledge and skills than past students. Learners in classrooms draw on different kinds of texts for information as it is more readily available due to new information technologies. Lankshear & Knobel (2003) are careful to note using new literacy practices within school include more than just using the internet, a word processing program, or Power Point for a presentation.

In his study of the use of new literacy practices in classrooms, Kist (2005) clarifies teachers and students used non print media breaking away from the traditional lecture and paper-pencil assessment methods. Students spent their time working on art, music, and computer graphic projects, videos, and web pages. One teacher in the study asked students to "read" rather than "watch" clips of a movie to compare and contrast features such as color, music, point of view, and characters. Lankshear & Knobel (2003) argue these are the types of literacy practices the real world demands of us, and they should be included in the types of practices focused upon in school. Xu (2005) argues

students are a thriving source of popular culture and already bring a variety of complex literacy practices to school. She contends these literacy practices may not become evident if students are not allowed to engage in popular culture text in the classroom.

Researchers agree the types of popular culture texts used in the classroom should be texts students use in their every day lives. Morrel (2004) lists the following as popular culture texts: music, film and television, mass media (advertising, news reporting), popular sports. Xu (2005) defines popular culture texts but does not limit them to the following:

- Televisual and film texts, such as television shows, films, videos, and DVDs
- Hypermedia texts, internet
- Musical texts, CDs and music television channels
- Comic book texts, comic books, comic strips, and mangas (Japanese comic books)
- Trading card texts, Pokemon, Yugioh, Baseball.
- Game texts, games on PC's, Playstation, Nintendo, GameCube, Xbox, Game Boy
- Zine texts, commercially or self-published, or e-zines(found on the internet)

Lankshear and Knobel (2003) define zines as the “grunge frontier of publishing” (p. 27).

Commercially or self published zines are hand made, containing photocopied images, photographs, or stickers and produced in small quantities. These zines are usually distributed by word of mouth and can be found on the internet. Lankshear and Knobel (2003) indicate zines permit youth to share their opinions and creativity, allowing teens to produce rather than just consume popular culture.

Popular Culture In The Classroom

Interest in using popular culture in the classroom has increased as educators are focusing on the needs of struggling readers (Alvermann, Moon, & Hagood, 1999). While the number of studies focusing specifically on using popular culture text is limited, there are several studies emphasizing the need to focus on student interest when teaching critical literacy skills.

As Atwell (1998) states, “Surviving adolescence is no small matter; neither is surviving adolescents. It’s a hard age to be and to teach”(p.53). At the secondary level, students are experiencing an abundance of physical changes and extreme social pressures. Teenagers are very emotional. They definitely like something, or they definitely hate it (Hynds, 1997). Atwell (1998) recommends if we want to get the best out of secondary students, we must stop blaming adolescents for their adolescent behavior. It is essential to accept the reality of secondary students’ “confusion, bravado, restlessness, and preoccupation with peer-questioning of authority, which are not a manifestation of poor attitude, but of adolescents’ volatile and social nature” (p.54). Fiersen (1997) reiterates educators must respond to developmental, academic, and social demands of teenagers.

Santa (2006) emphasizes the essential need for a classroom where secondary students are comfortable interacting with each other and the teacher, developing a sense of community. In this type of environment mutual respect is established. Students feel respected as they are given a choice, thus they are sharing power with the teacher. Santa (2006) reiterates humans “have a basic need to control the direction of our lives, but within structure” (p.468). She affirms effective classroom communities have a balance of structure and freedom.

At the secondary level the door for literacy opens when thoughtful literacy practices are centered around adolescent's enthusiasm, interests, their concerns of personal and group identity, and their morals and values while encouraging students to use critical thinking skills (Feirsen, 1997). Thus, students are hooked on literacy practices because these practices are relevant to their own life (Atwell, 1998; Morrel 2004; Xu, 2005). Langer (2001) reaffirms the need to incorporate students out of school lives within the classroom stating that students' learning is influenced by their own values, experiences, and actions encountered at home, with their friends, at school, and within their community. Langer refers to Vygotsky's (1987) sociocultural framework and implies students "voices" or ways of interpreting new concepts come from out of school literacy practices as well as other classes within school to understand the topic at hand.

In their qualitative-interpretative study analyzing the role of learner, text, and context in secondary literacy, Moje, Dillon & O'Brien (2000) observed and recorded teen interaction and literacy practices in the classroom. The researchers also interviewed students allowing them to learn about the students lives outside of school. All three researchers observed students bringing literacy practices from home or other out of school contexts while interacting in groups within the classroom completing literacy tasks. The researchers' observations reassert the notion text, context, and learner are not independent of each other. Furthermore, students' identities are built in relation to the many interactions shaping and reflecting the meaning they make from text. The researchers emphasize the importance of educators recognizing the students' interactions are shaped by social and cultural practices that students bring to their literate interaction in different contexts. Today information moves quickly from place to place and they feel

educators must question their assumptions about what learners know, understand, and are interested in. Moje et al. (2000) assert by questioning ourselves “educators may realize that adolescent ways of knowing, believing, thinking, and acting shape the ways they engage in literacy practices. Just as our own ways of knowing, believing, thinking, and acting shape the ways we conduct our research on secondary and adolescent literacy” (p. 177).

Alvermann (2000), Hinchman, Payne-Bourcy, Thomas, & Olcott (2002) found teenagers are literate in specific times and places. Researchers have discovered a literate under-life, in which peer groups have pre-conceived notions about other peers literate worlds, make up their own forms of communications, and read and write for their own specific purposes (Hynds, 1997; & Moje, 2000). Hinchman, Payne-Bourcy, Thomas, and Olcott (2002) explored how gender, race, and class influenced the literacy practices three adolescent boys engaged in. The researchers found each teen used their literacy skills in a different way. Furthermore, all three did not use their literacy skills in a way society might view a typical teenage boy would. For instance, one wrote poems and another wrote plays, both literacy activities that society in general does not consider normal for teenage boys. One boy was an immigrant whose conversations were based around academics, rather than social life. None of the boys seemed to feel comfortable with the way they fit into school settings. The case study concluded we should not jump to conclusions when considering types of literacy practices based upon gender, race, class. The researchers found that the boys act upon their masculinity and literacy depending upon the time or situation, discussing out of school literacy practices only with those who might find it acceptable.

Smith and Wilhelm (2002) studied literate behaviors of a variety of adolescent boys who struggled and excelled in the classroom, in a quest to develop teaching practices benefiting the adolescents. They found all of the young men were passionate about some activity in which they use literate behaviors. Students envisioned reading as “schoolish” but participated in a variety of literacy activities out side of school often reading comics, magazines, newspapers, video game instructions and song lyrics. Smith and Wilhelm assert students interests vary, but if educators understand why students like what they like, and respect student interests, an environment is created in which students are more inclined to engage in learning.

Lewis (1998) states many educators, have felt it is their duty to police the popular culture of young people in school. She suggests that school should be a place where adolescents talk about and use pop culture. Alvermann (2000) suggests educators find a way to use out of school interests in the computer and the media to foster in school subject matter learned.

Research has shown using popular culture text, or texts students have expressed interest in, within the classroom provides students an alternative or additional opportunity to learn and demonstrate critical literacy skills (Morrel 2004; Xu 2005). When considering the common belief that students are uninterested in reading by the time they reach the middle grades McKenna, Keaf, and Ellsworth (1995) sum it up best asserting secondary students do not necessarily loose interest in reading, but instead they have lost interest in the types of reading they are required to do in school.

Faran (1996) discusses the importance of secondary students engaging in culturally diverse genres and text focusing on both individual and social experiences in

reading, allowing students to learn more about themselves. Several researchers emphasize the importance of student voice and choice as a vital component when planning literacy activities for secondary students (Atwell, 1998; Morrel, 2004; Smith & Wilhelm, 2002; Xu, 2005). Ivey (1999b) asserts a need to make available appropriate, interesting materials that will “hook” reluctant readers, contending if the right books are in the secondary classroom, students will be more inclined to read. In their study, Alvermann, Hagood, & Williams (2001) worked with a low achieving eight-grade student who was given the opportunity to read, write, and talk about his favorite band while using and demonstrating critical literacy strategies.

Ivey and Broaddus (2001) stress the need for student choice, as teachers want students to read critically, but rarely allow students to converse about the books they read. Furthermore, educators want students to become independent readers, but secondary students get few opportunities to discover their own interests in reading or make independent decisions about what they will or won't read. Ivey and Broaddus stress “if the goal of instruction is to create skillful, versatile, engaged readers, then middle schools may be missing the mark” (p. 350).

Ivey and Broaddus (2001) focused on the students' views of reading instruction within the classroom. The researchers surveyed middle school students about the kind of material they like to read. Seventy-seven percent of the students preferred reading magazines, sixty-nine percent preferred adventure books, and sixty-eight percent preferred mysteries. There was a wide range of reading interests in the survey, and as Ivey and Broaddus state it is not surprising that students had difficulty finding books they wanted to read in the classroom or school library. When asked, most students stated they

buy books, or brought them from home to read in school. There was dissimilarity between the types of materials and the reading level of materials students reported reading at home when compared to school. Students also stated they read to learn about information as well as for entertainment at home. The students in the Ivey and Broaddus (2001) study emphasized the importance of having a choice about what they read as well as reading personally interesting materials.

Brophy (1988) highlights the importance of interdependence and motivation leading to success in academic tasks. Students must have a desire to improve literacy skills before gains can be made. Fischer (1999) shares an intervention model for at risk readers in which she emphasizes the importance of interesting and appropriate materials that are at student level. If interesting material is available, there will be an interest in reading.

In his book, *Linking Literacy and Popular Culture: Finding Connections for Lifelong Learning*, Morrel (2004) describes units designed linking music, film, and television, with traditional poetry and literature, as well as focusing on mass media and sports, while teaching critical literacy skills to otherwise indifferent, low achieving students. Morrel shares student discussion and projects demonstrating high student interest and high levels of student engagement. Furthermore, student discussion projects, and other assessments demonstrate students using “intellectually rigorous literacy practices” (p. 40).

Zunich, in Xu’s (2005) book, *Trading Cards to Comic Strips, Popular Culture Texts and Literacy Learning in Grades K-8*, describes a unit he developed connecting students interest in rap “with the novel Sachar’s novel *Holes*, Anderson’s nonfiction text

So You Wanna Be a Rock Star, and Peck's short story *Pricilla and the Wimps*." The students displayed critical literacy analysis skills in various ways; writing their own rap songs about characters, completing artistic collages representing a character's journey, or writing an essay. Zurich asserts students did complain about assignments, but notes students who traditionally produced little in class, worked hard and turned in quality assignments.

Alvermann et al. (1999), describe lessons teaching critical media literacy skills. Alvermann's lesson focused on engaging middle school student in critical media literacy, challenging a common misconception that students passively consume popular culture and do not critically analyze how it may affect their thinking about their lives. Students listened to two songs and looked at CD covers focusing on visual images while listening to the songs, the messages the CD covers and lyrics conveyed, and whether they agreed or disagreed with these images and messages, as well as how they might resist these messages. Throughout the lesson, students were engaged and demonstrated they were able to interpret and analyze contrasting elements, displaying critical literacy skills.

Researchers have found that high interest literature is essential. Literature with strong plots, lots of suspense, action and humor are most interesting for adolescents. Having a variety of genres available, including magazines and newspapers, aids in sparking interests for adolescents. It is important that multiple literacy options are available, giving students opportunities to succeed. Allowing students to write in journals, participate in class discussions, and create their own books, poems, lyrics, dance, art project, commercial, or short video fostering a creative literacy environment

(Ackerman, Weir, Metzler, & Dykerman, 1996; Alverman, Young, Weaver, Hinchman, Moore, Phelps, Thrash, & Zakowski, 1996, Kist 2005, Morrell 2004).

Approaches to Using Popular Culture Text in the Classroom

Xu (2005), discusses four approaches to using popular culture texts. The first approach is one in which teachers ban any type of popular culture text from the classroom because popular culture is seen as harmful to students academic and emotional development. The second approach is one in which teachers allow students to bring popular culture texts strictly for critical analysis, failing to recognize any pleasure the student may derive from it outside of the school setting. The third approach focuses strictly on student enjoyment of popular culture without any critical analysis of the text being used. The use of the text in the classroom is only for enjoyment. In the fourth approach students convey the pleasure they receive, sharing why they may like the particular text. The teacher takes it one step further asking students to discuss various issues related to the text, engaging them in critical analysis of the text.

Research on teachers' attempts to learn about student popular culture interest while integrating them into literacy curriculum is limited (Morrel 2004; Xu 2005). Researchers focus on discovering what students' popular culture interests are. As Morrel (2004) states interests may vary, and it is dangerous to assume all of students are interested in rap music or anime. It is essential the teacher takes time to become familiar with students' interests. Gee (2003) watched his son and other children play video games. Gee played the games himself and identified several critical analysis strategies needed for playing a well designed video game. Mahar (2003) learned about Japanese anime from her students. Similarly, Norton (2003) discovered many of her students used

critical literacy skills while listening to them talk about Archie comic books. Morrel (2004) reiterates using popular culture in the classroom encourages teachers to learn from their students how to incorporate popular culture in the classroom, focusing instruction on student interests.

Zunich , in Xu (2005), emphasizes discovering his students' popular culture interests was challenging. He points out that many teachers' popular culture interests are opposite of their students. Zurich immersed himself in teen popular culture by watching popular cable channels, listening to the types of music highlighted in these programs. He also learned the names of characters in popular movies and television shows. Furthermore, he carefully listened to student conversations. Zurich shares he thought he'd learned about adolescent popular culture interests, but points out there may be a difference in what is accepted as popular among teens on a national level when compared to what is popular on a local level. Morrel (2004) stresses popular culture varies from region to region and changes over time. Zurich solved this problem by creating a game to learn about his students specific interests. He created the "Truth Shuffle". In the last few minutes before class was over, he would make a statement, and if it was true about a student they would change seats. Zurich was then able to develop questionnaires or have students list specific interests based on the results of the game.

The Struggling Reader and Past Literacy Practices

Tovani (2000) discusses how much fun it is for those who love reading to escape from the world by jumping into a good book, or how helpful it is for them to read and understand a chapter they read in a textbook. Unfortunately, struggling readers do not experience any of this. By ninth grade many students are ashamed of labels given to

them due to low test scores, letter grades, or special groupings. For these students there is no purpose or pleasure for reading (Tovani, 2000).

McKenna, Keaf, and Ellsworth (1995) state many secondary students are known for negative attitudes and resistance towards reading. Gilles and Dickinson (2000) state the reading stakes are high at the secondary level. Teachers expect students to use comprehension skills to understand texts containing complex concepts, to respond to questions, formulate their own questions, and conduct experiments or projects. Thus, it is no surprise what seemed to be minor reading problems in lower grades, become major problems in the middle grades. Moreover, just because a student has learned how to read or acquired the basic skills for reading, it does not mean they are able to look beyond the literal meaning of the word, exploring the deeper meaning in text (Allington, 2001; McCray, Vaughn & Neal 2001).

Researchers assert the types of instructional practices provided to struggling readers contribute to the lack of their success in the classroom. They claim instructional practices have focused on skills such as oral fluency or the ability to answer literal comprehension questions rather than the actual process of reading. Researchers maintain, once identified as a poor reader or writer, many adolescents remain trapped in the traditional skills based remedial reading programs at the secondary level (Allington, 2001; Boyd & Galla 1997).

Hynds (1997) discusses the importance of unteaching the part-to-whole strategies learned in scope and sequence such as; skimming to find main ideas while answering teacher assigned questions, quickly reading a book for a teacher assigned book report, or drill and kill basic English skills. Hynds declares it is essential to make reading literature

in school more like reading literature at home. Finders (1997) and Hynds (1997) found that students used strategic comprehension strategies when reading for pleasure at school and home. Hynds mentions part-to-whole strategies learned in school are the same strategies that “keep them from enjoying aesthetic, absorbing aspects of reading literature” (p. 47). Comprehension almost becomes effortless for students when reading for enjoyment, because it is easier for them to picture and visualize what they are reading. Hynds (1997) and Finders (1997) assert that having to answer questions takes all of the fun out of literacy. They even go as far as to suggest educators should stop giving tests over material that is read, allowing students to respond to literature in journals, student created stories, and student centered discussion groups.

Characteristics of Effective Literacy Practices

Until recently, the majority of the discussion on reading instruction was about Reading First, or students’ ability to read at grade level by third grade. Biancarosa and Snow (2004) assert the above discussion needs to transform in to one focusing on effective literacy practices that allow students to acquire “reading skills that can serve youth for a lifetime” (p.3). According to researchers these practices must be student centered, allow for self directed as well as collaborative learning, and include explicit comprehension instruction (Biancarosa & Snow; 2004).

Discussion Based

In a study, Applebee, Langer, Nystrand, and Gamoran (2003) explored the relationships between students’ literacy performance and discussion-based approaches in a diverse set of classrooms to the development of complex literacy skills in middle and high school English classrooms. The researchers found that discussion based approaches

were effective for both low and high achieving students, although the use of discussion based approaches is used less often in lower tracks. Applebee, Langer, Nystrand, and Gamoran conclude when discussion based approaches are used with high academic demands, students are able to internalize the knowledge and skills needed to connect with challenging literacy tasks on their own. Hynds (1997) discusses the social nature of secondary students' learning and emphasizes the importance of allowing adolescence to socialize during literacy events thus, allowing students to make connections. She asserts adolescents need to be recognized and listened to by others.

Fischer (1999) reports student successes when adolescent readers are paired with younger students to tutor them in reading. The study showed tutoring younger students increases adolescent self-esteem, provides recognition, and offers practice in fluency. Regardless of skills or developmental level, all students involved benefited. More importantly, adolescents had a better understanding of literacy strategies. Paterson & Elliot (2006) describe a successful program implemented in a study in which ninth grade students enrolled in a remedial reading class, tutored second and third grade struggling readers, helping result in an average gain of two years in reading comprehension according to post tests.

Boyd and Galda (1997) maintain by giving students voice and the opportunity to discuss literature, such as in a cross-aged tutoring program with younger students, low achieving students become responsible for their own learning. Furthermore, Smith and Wilhelm (2002) emphasize the need to make reading social. The adolescents in their study stressed that working with others provided intrinsic motivation. The researchers maintain literary letter exchanges, book clubs, literature circles, cooperative learning

groups, reading buddies, and reciprocal reading groups allow for motivation and support to students.

Student Centered High Interest Reading

There is no question that at the secondary level success in reading is not only about skills and abilities but also about the importance of individual experience, focusing reading instruction on student choice and interaction (Allington, 2001; Atwell, 1998; Boyd & Galda, 1997; Gilles & Dickinson, 2000; Ivey & Broaddus, 2001; Smith & Wilhelm, 2002). Moje (2000) defines literacy as “reading and writing of written texts, with the acknowledgement that reading and writing are always acts situated in social practices, purposes, and contexts” (p. 655). Additionally, Ivey (1999a) asserts that “given appropriate instruction including strategies for word identification and comprehension, embedded within the context of interesting adolescent literature, students can become successful, engaged readers”(p. 176). Ivey states, educators must focus on strategies that are student involved. It is essential to help struggling readers take an active role in constructing meaning. When reading strategies and higher order thinking skills are taught and modeled struggling readers gain confidence in their reading abilities. Johannessen (2004) reaffirms the necessity of a cognitive approach in the classroom, stating teaching and learning need to focus on complex, meaningful questions that connect with student’s out of school experiences.

Smith and Wilhelm (2002) assert rather than the teacher telling students how to interpret literature, students should be invited to apply their own understandings of how to read while developing their own interpretations. Thus, student’s experiences in school resemble their experiences out of school. Smith and Wilhelm conclude that it is

important to do much of the teaching before students are asked to read texts, activating students' background knowledge, and then help them attain the procedural knowledge of how to conquer particular types of texts.

Rules in the Game of Reading

Unfortunately, many secondary students don't know what it means to actually comprehend or learn from their reading. This results in lack of confidence and disengaged readers. These students think learning happens "almost magically by glossing over material" (Santa, 2006, p.468). Several researchers proclaim teachers specifically need to demonstrate reading processes through explanation, modeling, and guided practice (Allington, 2001; Duffy, 2002; Estes, 1991; Santa, 2006; Tovani, 2000; Hamel & Smith, 1998; Harvey & Goudvis, 2000; Smith & Wilhelm, 2002).

In their study Smith and Wilhelm (2002) emphasize the need for teachers to focus on the "how" or the "rules of the reading game". Focusing on students' interests while showing how to apply "reading codes" to different types of texts, allows students to learn the "rules of the game", or the secrets that skilled readers know. Harvey and Goudvis (2000) assert teachers need to show students how teachers think when they are reading, teaching specific strategies while gradually releasing responsibility to the students. Harvey and Goudvis elaborate on Fielding and Pearson's (1994) description of the gradual release of responsibility approach in four phases:

- Teacher Modeling
 - The teacher explains the strategy.
 - The teacher demonstrates how to apply the strategy successfully

- The teacher thinks aloud to model the mental processes she uses when she reads
- Guided Practice
 - After explicitly modeling, the teacher gradually gives the student more responsibility for task completion.
 - The teacher and students practice the strategy together.
 - The teacher scaffolds the students' attempts and supports student thinking, giving feedback during conferring and classroom discussions.
 - Students share their thinking processes with each other during paired reading and small-and large-group discussions.
- Independent Practice
 - After working with the teacher and with other students, the students try to apply the strategy on their own.
 - The students receive regular feedback from the teacher and other students.
- Application of the Strategy in Real Reading Situations
 - Students apply a clearly understood strategy to a new genre or format
 - Students demonstrate the effective use of a strategy in more difficult text (p. 13).

Hamel and Smith (1998) question whether direct instruction of specific interpretive strategies, encourage critical engagement with literature for lower track students. In the study, Hamel implemented Smith's (1991) unit on understanding unreliable narrators. Hamel began by using simple cartoons and monologues, helping students identify the criteria used to determine reliability of a speaker in every day

situations. This allowed students to use their out-of-school literacy experiences connecting them with academic tasks. Hamel then used the short stories recommended in Smith's unit. Determining the reliability of the narrator and discussing their thoughts helped students relate to the characters. The students eventually read *Huck Finn*. Hamel and Smith conclude this unit provides the opportunity for lower track students to actively engage in constructing and supporting high-level interpretations of complex characters. The researchers assert in typical lower track classrooms educators focus on mechanics of language and low-level recall. However, when implementing the above unit students consistently referred back to the "basics" of the text, resolving high-level questions. Hamel and Smith emphasize that simply allowing students to express their opinions about literature may not work as lower-track students aren't aware of strategies good readers use. The researchers assert educators must help lower-track students internalize the questions skilled readers ask when reading, rather than just focusing on basic skills and literal comprehension.

Johannessen (2004) suggests educators should be aware of simply focusing on basic skills involving scaffolding, modeling, and making connections to students' lives outside of school. He emphasizes the importance of a cognitive approach focusing on problem solving and authentic classroom interaction as well. Johannessen (2004) suggests educators should be aware of simply focusing on basic skills involving scaffolding, modeling, and making non-school connections. He emphasizes the importance of a cognitive approach focusing on problem solving and authentic classroom interaction as well. Santa (2006) warns strategic teaching of reading strategies is not enough. Several researchers assert the goals for instruction need to allow struggling

students to use thinking strategies on their own when a teacher is not around to break the task into small parts (Allington, 2001; Tovani, 2000; Harvey & Goudvis, 2000; Routman 2003).

Santa (2006) stresses teenagers must understand how a particular strategy benefits their learning, otherwise they won't use it. Santa insists students must be taught and understand themselves as competent learners. She asserts this can be done by actually teaching students the concept of metacognition helping them internalize principles of learning. Teaching schema theory allows students to see the relationship of background knowledge to understanding, as well as the effects of organization on human memory. Furthermore, Santa asserts struggling students need to be taught active persistence or specifically what active learning and effort look and feel like. Students continually reflect upon what they are learning, responding by drawing, taking notes, asking questions, or developing concept maps (Santa, 2006).

Alfassi's (2004) study focused on combined strategy instruction in high school classrooms fostering strategic reading. Teachers in the first part of the study used the reciprocal teaching model (Palinsear & Brown, 1984) in which students practiced four comprehension strategies: (1) questioning, (2) summarizing, (3) clarifying word meanings or confusing texts (fix up strategies) and (4) predicting. Teachers in the second part of the study used direct explanation; clearly modeling, stating the strategy that is being taught while thinking aloud, thus, revealing his/her reading process followed by guided practice gradually releasing responsibility to students. Students then read the selection for two purposes, content and then applying the newly learned strategy (Duffy, 2002). Alfassi's results showed that students in the combined strategy instruction

classrooms provided significantly better results on standardized tests when compared to students who were in classes that did not receive reciprocal or direct explanation instruction. Furthermore, in their review of research Rosenshine & Meister (1997) reveal reciprocal teaching is most effective for older students as significant improvement in comprehension was shown at the secondary level when used.

Langer (2001) explored the characteristics of educational practices in schools leading to student achievement in reading, writing, and English in a five year study. The study focused on high literacy skills. Langer found high performing schools analyzed high stakes test demands adjusting their curriculum and instructional practices accordingly. High performing schools consistently integrated high stakes test preparation into grade-level content areas, compared to low performing schools practicing sample test items in isolated activities. Teachers at high performing schools focused on important information and essential reading strategies integrating them into skills instruction, while requiring students to be more reflective about their reading. Furthermore, students at high performing schools were allowed to work together and were strategically engaged while developing critical literacy skills. Langer asserts if students are able to engage in the above “high literacy” they will have the ability to use knowledge and skills in different situations as well as perform well on reading and writing assessments, including high stakes tests.

Strategic Comprehension Strategies

Allington (2001), Estes (1991), , Hamel & Smith (1998) Harvey & Goudvis (2000), Routman (2003), Pressley (2004), Smith & Wilhelm (2002), Tovani (2000) reiterate the importance of explicitly teaching comprehension tasks as well as modeling

these tasks enabling students to engage higher order thinking skills. For educational purposes, we can no longer consider simple recall of information from a text just read, or copying information from the text into a worksheet, or matching information in the text with an answer from a multiple choice test as evidence of student comprehension (Allington, 2001). Allington discusses the importance of developing thoughtful literacy, due to new national and state standards that require students to think about what they have read, as well as explain or describe their thinking. Consequently, not only must educators help struggling readers with their basic skills, a focus on specific strategies leading to deeper comprehension is essential (Allington, 2001; Estes, 1991; Tovani, 2000; Hamel & Smith, 1998; Harvey & Goudvis, 2000; Smith & Wilhelm, 2002). Alverman, Swafford, & Montero 2004; Routman, 2003; Tovani, 2000; Harvey & Goudvis, 2000; Pearson, Dole, & Duffy 1992 have identified strategies proficient readers use when comprehending text:

- Use existing knowledge, making sense of new information, making connections
- Ask questions of yourself, the author, and the text before, during, and after reading
- Draw inferences, predict, wonder, assess what's happening from the text during, and after reading
- Determine what is important and what is not (main idea and details)
- Monitor their own comprehension, applying fix up strategies when needed
- Synthesize information across texts and other reading experiences, creating new thinking.

Alverman, Swafford, & Montero (2004), Allington (2001), and Keene & Zimmerman (1997), Routman (2003) add visualization or sensory images affirming they help proficient readers comprehend what they read.

Researchers do not dispute that in order for students to learn and use the above strategies, teachers must explicitly teach them (Allington 2001; Alverman, Swafford, & Montero 2004; Estes, 1991; Hamel & Smith 1998; Harvey & Goudvis 2000; Nokes & Dole 2004, Routman, 2003; Pressley 2004, Smith & Wilhelm 2002; Tovani 2000). The strategies listed above that proficient readers used evolved from research in which expert readers were asked to “think aloud” as they read, making their comprehension strategies evident (Alverman, Swafford, & Montero 2004). Thus, researchers suggest teachers “think aloud” when teaching comprehension strategies. When teachers share what they are thinking out loud during instruction, following the gradual release of responsibility approach, the mysterious process of comprehension becomes more concrete for students. This mental modeling helps students understand how proficient readers comprehend text (Alverman, Swafford, & Montero 2004; Harvey & Goudvis, 2000; Tovani, 2000; Smith & Wilhelm, 2002).

Responding to educators wanting more information on how to perform think alouds, Block & Israel (2004) describe the benefits and share the steps and process of highly effective think alouds. Block and Israel are careful to point out think-alouds differ from prompting and modeling. In a think aloud teachers demonstrate how to select the appropriate comprehension process at certain points in a particular text. In a highly effective think aloud the thought process used when confused or in need of a fix up strategy is described.

Block and Israel (2004) assert the following processes need to be explained and modeled while using think-alouds in the classroom. Teachers must explain expert readers do an overview of the text before reading. In an overview the reader looks for

important information and tries to connect to the authors' big idea. Secondly, expert readers activate relevant knowledge by putting themselves in the book, revise prior knowledge, and predict as they are reading. Furthermore, expert readers recognize the author's writing style, determining word meanings and asking questions. Finally, expert readers notice novelty in text by relating the book to their life while anticipating how they will use the new knowledge. These authors stress think-alouds have been used several ways to assess students' comprehension abilities in different settings such as self-contained programs, after school programs, and tutorial settings. Once taught students can assess their own strengths and weaknesses by identifying how well they do when applying the above processes while reading.

Concerns Regarding Strategy Instruction

Some researchers have expressed concern that focusing on strategy instruction takes too much attention away from actual comprehension by students (Beck, McKeown, Sandora, Kucan, & Worthy 1996). Researchers have expressed apprehension in asking students to apply several strategies during the reading process. Requiring students to do this may make them feel all texts require deliberate processing and students may feel overwhelmed by the number of tasks they must perform, causing comprehension to suffer. Strategy instruction forces focus on the surface features rather than comprehension. Beck et al. recommends Questioning the Author rather than specific strategies. When questioning the author teachers ask questions allowing students to wrestle with and reflect on what the author is saying. Thus, comprehension becomes a problem-solving process rather than just using strategies.

In their review of research Sinatra, Brown. & Reynolds (2002) recommended using Beck et al. (1996) questioning the author technique, helping students develop an “active, strategic stance towards text” (p. 70). When students continually question the author or reflect upon what the author is saying they interact with the text. While students agree, disagree, or even become confused with the text they realize they should be engaged in an active conversation with the author, rather than serve as a passive listener. As a result, students question, predict, and infer, improving their comprehension.

Sinatra (2002) assert strategy instruction should be designed to move strategy use from deliberate to automatic, especially since lower achieving students do seem to benefit from specific strategy instruction. They contend teachers should only focus on strategies that are proven to improve comprehension and make sure the strategy being taught coincides with the text that is used. In addition, they recommend focusing on how the strategy aids comprehension rather than the number of steps or written products they must generate. Furthermore, once students demonstrate mastery of the strategy, focus should then be on comprehension of the text, rather than written work showing use of the strategy.

Goodman (2005) helped develop a program called “Middle School High Five” in her district. The goal was to alleviate the problem of teachers who were overwhelmed with strategy instruction and needed to improve students’ reading comprehension. After gathering support from language arts teachers, administrators, and content teachers staff agreed to focus on five specific reading strategies they all agreed would improve comprehension. After teacher training, a layered book was distributed to teachers

explaining the “Middle School High Five” containing step by step instructions and examples for the following before, during, and after reading strategies.

Before reading teachers taught students to “Read Around the Text” specifically explaining strategies for previewing text. Teachers also focused on vocabulary before reading in which students defined words using their own information or definition and then created a memory cue/picture. Reciprocal teaching was used during reading, allowing students to work in cooperative groups taking on roles as predictor, clarifier, questioner, and summarizer. Finally, after reading students were asked to focus on summarization. As they were reading students were asked to highlight main ideas with sticky notes. The sticky notes were used because they could be easily removed when readers found more important information. Students worked together to determine the three most important main ideas for their summary. After comparing district wide test scores from fall and spring of the same school year, all middle schools showed above average growth. Goodman attributes the focus on specific strategies as one of several contributing factors.

Dole, Brown, and Trathen (1996) argue all students do not need strategy instruction. In their study, Dole and his colleagues compared the effects of teaching lower achieving and achieving students’ strategy instruction. The lower achieving students showed gains in strategy use and in comprehension. However, achieving students’ comprehension scores actually declined, even though they learned how to use the strategy. During interviews achieving students shared the instruction on strategy use was irritating leading the researchers to believe what was an easy task turned into a difficult one because of overt strategy instruction.

Dole (1996) assert we need to teach struggling readers comprehension strategies, promote word recognition skills, read books with world knowledge students need, and to do greater amounts of reading affecting fluency and background knowledge. Routman (2003) contends teachers should not concentrate on the one right or best way to teach something. Routman asserts the focus should be on what is right or best for a certain student or group of students depending on where they are at this point in time. Pressley (2002) reminds educators of the need for a balanced approach referring to research that has shown students must be able to decode fluently helping their comprehension.

AutoSkill Academy of Reading

AutoSkill Academy of Reading is a research based software learning program designed to supplement a reading program. The program is developed and provided by AutoSkill International. The only research found on the Academy of Reading program was produced by AutoSkill International. The program was developed and based upon neuroscience, neuropsychology, and educational psychology (Focus on Research: Academy of Reading, 2002).

Student mastery of AutoSkill is based on five core areas identified by the National Reading Panel: phonemic awareness, sound-symbol association, visual match, auditory-visual match, and comprehension. Academy of Reading measures both processing speed and accuracy as part of the mastery criteria, focusing on automaticity (Focus on Research: Academy of Reading, 2002). According to the Focus on Research Report, "Academy of Reading uses a balanced approach to reading including: phonemic awareness; the subskills of reading for developing fluency in decoding different modalities of text; automaticity principle for ensuring automatic recognition of words and

the mastery of the component skills; and a comprehension program that helps students develop fluency”(p. 5). Although Academy of Reading can be used in kindergarten through twelfth grade, only research at the secondary level is reviewed in the following.

Dr. L'Tanya Sloan (2000) conducted an independent study in the Washington DC Public Schools during the 1998-99 school year. Twenty-eight schools participated and students in second through ninth grade were tracked in the program. Results were evaluated using the Stanford 9 Achievement Test. Students were identified based on initial scores as belonging to one of the following categories: below basic, basic, proficient, or advanced. Students worked in the program three to five times a week for twenty to thirty minute intervals. These students were compared to a control group who did not receive the training. Post tests showed students who used Academy of Reading out-performed the control group in all four categories of reading assessment. Sixty-eight percent of the students in the below basic group scored higher than the control group in post testing. Furthermore, fifty percent of the basic and proficient students showed gains over their control group.

Dr. Eric Michael and Connie Strunk (2004) evaluated the effectiveness of the Academy of Reading in a group of eight grade students enrolled in a junior high school during the 2000-2001 school year. Students who showed at least a two year delay in their reading ability used Academy of Reading for three forty minute sessions each week for the entire school year. Of the eighty-two students who trained on the program forty-eight were given a pre and post Stanford Diagnostic Reading Test. Pre tests indicated an average reading grade level of 5.7. Post tests indicated an average reading grade level of 8.1. According to the report eighty-three percent of the students achieved gains of more

than one grade level. Students displayed an increase in reading proficiency on the Academy of Reading pre and post cloze paragraph reading tests. Student's averaged a 5.4 reading level score on the pre test and a 7.5 reading level on the post test.

In a meta study, Loh (2005) analyzed training data from a number of high schools in the United States. Using pre and post test data for 1,226 students from the Academy of Reading Cloze test students showed an average gain of 1.6 levels in proficiency. Loh claims previous studies show a gain of one level in Autoskill assessment is close to a grade level gain on a standardized assessment. The Focus on Research Report (2002) concludes Academy of Reading is effective in "building" reading skills of all types of learners at different stages because the program addresses the individual needs of each student.

In their review of literacy and intervention programs at the secondary level, Alvermann and Rush (2004) warn educators many computerized programs assume the problem lies within the student if they are struggling with reading, and the programs can fix the problem. Furthermore, Alvermann and Rush express concern about programs that allow teachers to turn struggling students over to a computer program, rather than focusing on how classrooms and instructional methods should be changed to meet the students' needs. Although Academy of Reading was not one of the programs reviewed by Alvermann and Rush, in their report Michael & Strunk (2004) specify Academy of Reading is a supplemental program. Furthermore, Peter Cleary (personal communication, April 17, 2006), Director of Educational Services for AutoSkill International, asserts the types of skills taught and reinforced by Academy of Reading are necessary, but not always sufficient for improving fluency and comprehension. Cleary

concluded, Academy of Reading is an intervention program and to be effective must compliment classroom activities such as vocabulary development and comprehension instruction.

Summary

There are a variety of approaches to teaching reading skills and strategies at the secondary level. The research reviewed supports the use of popular culture and media in the classroom, along with comprehension strategy instruction, modeled by the teacher, and gradually releasing responsibility to the students. Additionally, phonics instruction must be included for secondary students struggling with word attack skills.

This chapter gives definitions of what popular culture is and strategies for using popular culture, media, and literacy instructional practices, allowing reading instruction for secondary students to be the most effective as possible. Implementing popular culture into curriculum motivates student interest, specifically those who traditionally have not succeeded in school because their literacy practices do not match traditional in school literacy practices (Alverman 1999, Gee 2003, Morrel 2004, and Xu 2005). Furthermore, successful programs recognize the importance of individual experience allowing for student choice and interaction with peers. Using popular culture along with effective literacy instructional practices allows the teacher to focus on student interests while differentiating the delivery of content and instruction, which is determined by student needs.

CHAPTER THREE

PROCEDURES OF THE PROJECT

Introduction

This project aims to help teach students strategic comprehension strategies while using popular culture and media in the classroom. The toolkit in Chapter Four, will provide ideas and strategies for teachers to use with secondary students in the classroom. The use of popular culture and the media will engage students and explicit teaching of strategies will help students make connections, ask questions about the text, visualize, infer, monitor their comprehension, apply “fix up” strategies when confused, determine what’s important, and synthesize information creating new thinking thus, improving student comprehension.

The toolkit includes a list of sources providing information about popular adolescent literature as well as a list of websites teachers and students can access when integrating popular culture in the classroom. These will be excellent resources for integrating high interest literature, popular culture, and media in the classroom.

Development for the Project

A toolkit was designed to give teachers a resource to use with struggling readers incorporating popular culture and media to aide in teaching strategic comprehension strategies. Schools are charged with developing strategic improvement plans and the Office of Superintendent of Public Instruction K-12 Reading Model Implementation Guide emphasizes a three tier program focusing on remediation for struggling readers at all levels. This toolkit will provide ideas and resources for teachers who want to use popular culture and media while implementing comprehension strategy instruction.

Hopefully, these ideas and resources can be used in conjunction with current curriculum, enhancing their programs.

Procedures

Information from the project was gathered from books, existing curricula, journals, and the internet. Key terms used in the search were: “adolescent literacy,” “comprehension at the secondary level,” “comprehension strategy instruction,” “popular culture in the classroom,” and “struggling adolescent readers.” Several articles were obtained at Central Washington University Library and off the library web page using ProQuest and ERIC. The springboard for this project was a research paper on Youth Culture and Literacy completed for a graduate course by the author and *I Read It, But I Don't Get It: Comprehension Strategies for Adolescent Readers* by Chris Tovani (2000). The research paper affirmed the author's conviction of the importance of using curriculum relevant to students' lives, while Tovani (2000) furnished strategies easily incorporated with any curriculum. After further research, it became evident other educators were recognizing the importance of using popular culture and specific strategy instruction at the secondary level.

Finally, several frustrated educators at the secondary level asked the author how they were supposed to teach comprehension at the secondary level in an effort to improve student comprehension and help them pass the WASL. It was here that the need for maintaining student interest while implementing effective literacy strategy instruction was revealed.

**Using Popular Culture and Effective Literacy
Instruction in the Secondary Language
Arts/Reading Classroom**

By

Stephanie Marie Sevigny

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CHAPTER FOUR

THE PROJECT

Introduction

The No Child Left Behind Act (2002) called a great deal of attention to reading instruction within America's classrooms. Until recently, the focus of attention was at the primary level. Fortunately, policy makers have recognized a need to focus on middle and secondary students' literacy needs. The Reading Next Report (2004) indicated seventy percent of secondary students require some form of "differentiated instruction". Even more alarming, and close to home, the 2005 Nation's Report Card stated only thirty-four percent of the eighth grade students in Washington state can competently read challenging subject matter or at a proficient level.

Regardless, it has become obvious educators must determine how they are going to help secondary students read with purpose, monitor their own comprehension, apply "fix-up" strategies, ask questions about reading material, and connect new with old information. To put it simply, middle and secondary students must be taught how to comprehend! In a speech at the 2006 High School Summit, Dr. Terry Bergeson emphasized the need to refine instructional strategies based upon the needs and culture of students. This project will focus on integrating popular culture while teaching strategic comprehension strategies to secondary students identified as needing remediation but don't qualify for special services.

The purpose of this project is twofold. First, the necessity for teachers to include curricula in the classroom students can relate to and are interested in, specifically popular culture and media. Many teachers are reluctant or uncomfortable including popular

culture in their curriculum due to several factors. Hopefully, this project will help alleviate apprehension. Secondly, the author would be remiss in excluding effective research based literacy strategies educators can use when integrating popular culture in the classroom.

The project has been designed as a toolkit for teachers at the secondary level. The project has been specifically tailored for the Selah High School Remedial Read Write Class, in an effort to help provide ideas and material relevant to students' lives, thus motivating struggling students, but is appropriate for use in any secondary classroom. The majority of students struggling with reading at the secondary level lack strategic comprehension skills. Subsequently, the author included ideas for strategic comprehension strategy instruction. Furthermore, the project also addresses the AutoSkills Academy of Reading Program recently implemented at Selah High School with students who specifically need intervention in word attack, fluency, and comprehension skills.

The toolkit is divided into three separate sections; Implementing Popular Culture, Effective Comprehension Strategy Instruction, and an Appendix. Cognizant of the fact teachers are asked to support why they are using certain curriculum in their classroom, the author included a brief overview in each category of popular culture explaining its' relevance to students and literacy practices. Each overview is followed by two popular culture activities. Samples of student-completed work for each activity are included as well.

Until recently, the focus in many secondary classrooms has been on content assuming students had the skills to critically read the assignments given. Several teachers

at Selah High School have requested information regarding comprehension strategy instruction. Aware that many of these teachers have limited background in teaching students how to read, the author included research based methods for teaching comprehension strategies along with sample activities for comprehension strategy instruction.

The activities in each section have been used by the author in her classroom. The author carefully selected activities based upon effectiveness of skills, strategies, and concepts taught. Many of the activities included have been adapted from other sources. Various activities have been completely altered as the author acquired a general idea from the source listed, whereas other activities were slightly adapted after the author reflected upon the activities strengths and weaknesses after they were used in class. One activity was taken directly from its source and included because it is extremely effective in teaching irony as well as questioning the author.

The appendix contains reproducibles for all activities as well as resources for teachers interested in implementing or further researching the use of popular culture and effective comprehension strategy instruction in the classroom. The appendix lists popular culture websites teachers or students can use. The majority of the websites were taken directly from Morrel (2004) for this one time use as websites change frequently. All websites were checked and in use as of April 30, 2006. Finally, the author included a suggested list of anthologies and short stories relevant to students' lives.

POPULAR CULTURE

Research has shown using popular culture text, or texts students have expressed interest in, within the classroom provides students an alternative or additional opportunity to learn and demonstrate critical literacy skills (Morrel 2004; Xu 2005). When considering the common belief that students are uninterested in reading by the time they reach the middle grades McKenna, Keaf, and Ellsworth (1995) assert secondary students do not necessarily lose interest in reading, but instead they have lost interest in the types of reading they are required to do in school. Alvermann, Moon, and Hagood (1999), Gee (2003), Morrel (2004), and Xu (2005) contend focusing on popular culture in the classroom motivates student interest because it is relevant to their lives, specifically those whose literacy practices outside of school do not match traditional in school literacy practices. Gee (2003), Kist (2005) and Lankshear & Knobel (2003) contend traditional school type (reading and writing of text) literacy practices are at odds with complex new literacies (interpretation and analyzing symbol systems in media, video games, music, and the internet) students are using outside of school.

In an attempt to define popular culture, theorists commonly use the terms: mass culture, folk culture, and dominant culture. Storey (1998) describes popular culture as:

1. Culture that is well liked by many people (dominant).
2. What remains after we have decided what is high culture (the belief that popular is an inferior culture).
3. Mass culture.
4. Originates from the people (general public or folk culture).

Popular culture has also been defined as everyday culture, recognizing that producers convey the meaning, and consumers are able to critically analyze or make their own

meaning (Alvermann, Moon, & Hagood, 1999; Buckingham, 1998; Xu, 2005). More definitively, Gee (2003) describes everyday culture as the way we interact with others and the media to make sense of what they are doing and saying. Everyday culture is one educators can focus on to help develop critical literacy skills in the classroom, allowing students to analyze popular culture (Alvermann et al., 1999; Kist, 2005; Lankshear & Knobel, 2003; Morrel, 2004; Xu, 2005).

The types of popular culture texts used in the classroom should be texts students use in their every day lives such as: televisual and film texts, television shows, films, videos, and DVDs; mass media, hypermedia texts, internet, advertising, news reporting; musical texts, CDs and music television channels; comic book texts, comic books, comic strips, and mangas (Japanese comic books); trading card texts, Pokemon etc.; game texts, games on PC's, Playstation, Nintendo, Game Cube, Xbox, Game Boy, Zine texts, commercially or self-published, or e-zines (found on the internet). Although these are current forms of popular culture, because of its nature, popular culture is always evolving and changing depending upon time and place. What is popular one year, may not be popular with students the following year, making it challenging for educators wishing to integrate popular culture in the classroom. Based upon the support the author found in research and literature on the use of popular culture and effective literacy strategy instruction in the classroom, a toolkit has been designed for teachers to refer to in implementing an intervention program for students at Selah High School.

POPULAR CULTURE

Exploring Students' Interests

One of the most challenging aspects of using popular culture and media in the classroom is determining what students are interested in. In most cases student interests vary from region to region, school to school, class to class, and student to student. Furthermore, some forms of popular culture are viewed as “trash” by educators (Xu, 2005). Before integrating popular culture in the classroom it is essential educators explore their own opinions about popular culture as well as use students as a major resource for learning about popular culture. The appendix contains a sample letter home to parents, explaining why popular culture will be integrated in the classroom, as well as reproducibles of forms used as examples. The following includes activities to help determine interest of students, as well as teachers' view of popular culture.

POPULAR CULTURE

Activity 1: Exploring Students' Interests - Truth Shuffle

This is a game that can be used during the closing minutes of class which is non-threatening and allows you to learn more about your students. It may need to be adapted depending on the maturity level of students.

Purpose: Determine popular culture interest of students

Procedures:

1. Explain to students if the statement you make is true about them they must change seats.
2. Begin with something simple as:
 - “Those of you wearing white socks change seats.”
 - “ If you’re wearing earrings change seats.”
 - “All those who like pepperoni pizza change seats.”
3. After playing the game a couple of times with non-threatening questions, get more specific. Ask about particular television shows, cartoon characters, musical tastes, movies
4. Once you state a question and only a few students stay put, you’ve encountered something the majority of the class likes. It is at this point you can ask students to write specific music artists, movie actors etc. allowing you to research what can be incorporated in class.

Zunick, L. (2005). Integrating popular culture texts in developmental reading classes for sixth-to eight-grade students. In Xu, S.H. *Trading Cards to Comic Strips*. International Reading Association: Newark DE.

POPULAR CULTURE

Activity 2: Exploring Teacher and Students' Popular Culture Interests

Purpose: Explore teacher and students' use of and interests in popular culture.

Procedures:

1. As a class discuss and describe what the teacher and students think popular culture consists of, trying to elicit some of the following from students:

Music (Radio or on T.V.)
Newspapers, magazines, Books
Television Shows
Video Games
Internet (chat rooms), (sites), etc.

2. Explain to students you want them to document in a log over the next three days any type of popular culture or media they view in an effort to understand them as individuals to help you determine what types of popular culture interest them and can be used in class.
3. Show them your sample log. Explain you will share your log with them and read individual student logs, compiling common interests when they are finished.
4. Compile teacher log and common student interests for students to view and discuss. (Blank sample log and example of completed log on following pages).

Adapted from: Xu, S.H. (2005). *Trading cards to comic strip* .(p. 94) International Reading Association: Newark DE.

POPULAR CULTURE

Exploring Students' Interests

Activity 2 Example Popular Culture Documentation Log Teacher/Student

Date	Mrs. Smith (Teacher)	Student
9-10-06	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> · listened to 105.7 radio (features soft rock music from 1980's to current) · read morning newspaper · checked email · scanned cookbooks · read Family Circle Magazine · read Hop on Pop by Dr. Seuss 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> · listened to KFFM 107.3 radio (features top 20 music, morning talk show) · read back of Fruit Loops cereal box · listened to Tim McGraw CD · watched MTV Crib (TV show depicting houses of celebrities) · got on myspace.com (websites and chat rooms with other people my age)
9-11-06	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> · watched Survivor (reality TV show) · listened to 104.1 (country music station) · watched Hannity & Colmes (Fox News Network dealing with current issues) 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> · read Seventeen magazine · watched Scrubs (Comedy TV show about doctors) · read emails · surfed the internet for information on colleges
9-12-06	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> · listened to channel 816 (Sunny XM satellite radio) instrumental music · read Journal of Adolescent and Adult Literacy (Professional journal) · watched Young & the Restless (Soap Opera) · watched food network (how to cook) 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> · got on internet chat room and chatted · read comics in the newspaper · watched CSI (Forensic detective show) · read "To Kill A Mockingbird" for school assignment · wrote in journal · watched Reality TV Network

POPULAR CULTURE

Activity 2 Extension - Exploring Students' Interests

Purpose: Students will learn the types of literacy knowledge and skills they use when enjoying popular culture.

Procedure:

1. Copy some of students and teachers answers from Activity 2 onto an overhead of the Popular Culture – Literacy Knowledge and Skills log on the next page.
2. Review the types of skills students and teacher used when enjoying popular culture as you read over the log you copied onto the overhead.
3. Note the types of literacy skills used on the log. Point out the types of skills used when enjoying popular culture are similar to those used at school when given assigned readings etc.
4. Explain the types of skills covered in class are the very same skills they use outside of school.

Adapted from: Xu, S.H. (2005). *Trading cards to comic strips* (p. 94). International Reading Association: Newark DE.

POPULAR CULTURE

Sample Activity 2 Extension - Exploring Students' Interests

Teacher Text Genres	Literacy Knowledge & Skills	Students Text Genres	Literacy Knowledge & Skills
<u>Television Shows/Movies</u> · Survivor · Hannity & Colmes · Young & the Restless · Food Network	· predicting · making inferences based on music, facial expressions · making connections to personal experiences and other texts · differentiating between reality & fantasy	<u>Television Shows/Movies</u> · CSI · Scrubs · MTV Crib · Reality TV Network	· predicting · making connections to personal choices/experiences · differentiating between reality and fantasy
<u>Music</u> · Soft Rock · Country · Instrumental	· making inferences · making connections · figuring out unknown words based on contextual clues	<u>Music</u> · Top 40 · Country	· making inferences · making connections · figuring out unknown words based on contextual clues
<u>Internet</u> · Email	· making inferences · making connections	<u>Internet</u> · chat rooms · info search · email	· making connections · trial and error · using synonyms to find more information

POPULAR CULTURE

Exploring Students' Interests

Student Interest Survey

The student interest survey on the following page allows students who may not feel comfortable in sharing some of their interest in a group setting to record them. It is another tool that can be used to gather information on students' interests and literacy practices outside of school. Interests from this survey may be recorded on the "Popular Culture Literacy Knowledge and Skills" chart on the previous page, allowing the teacher to review the skills needed when enjoying or analyzing popular culture and the media.

Exploring Students' Interest Survey

Name _____

Date _____ Period _____

Student Interview

Tell me about any hobbies you have or sports you play. _____

Name at least four of your favorite TV Programs. _____

If you play video games list at least three of your favorite. _____

List any magazines, comics, or comic books you like. _____

Have you ever read or seen a graphic novel (a book written like a comic)? _____

If so, please list a few. _____

Can you think of one or more books you really liked? _____

What type of things do you read at home (include anything for example: cereal box, internet, video game instructions) _____

Directions: Answer the following questions with a **T** for true and a **F** for false.

1. _____ I want to improve my reading skills.
2. _____ I think I read well and do not need any help with reading.
3. _____ I want to learn how to write better.
4. _____ I think I write well and don't need any help with writing.
5. _____ I feel comfortable asking for help when I need it.
6. _____ I do not like asking questions in front of other students.
7. _____ I would rather ask another student for help than the teacher.

POPULAR CULTURE

Musical Text

Musical texts consist of lyrics and music. Xu (2005) asserts images of artists, stage setting, and the cover of a compact disc are also texts as they help provide clues to the theme of songs on the album. It would be difficult to argue music does not have an immense impact or play a large part in the lives of youth today. The success of MTV, BET, American Idol, and the number of CD's sold to young people prove this. Thus, musical texts capture student interest and can help teach critical literacy skills. Giving students the opportunity to critically analyze images and lyrics allows them to practice new comprehension strategies with interesting material. Musical text is an excellent source for compare/contrast with other texts read in the classroom. The appendix includes useful sources for finding appropriate music for the classroom.

The basal texts used in most secondary classrooms contain poetry units. Integrating musical lyrics with poetry units allows students to explore their own interest in poetry while critically analyzing text. However, musical lyrics contain many themes connecting with several types of literature and should not be limited to integration in poetry units. The following activities are examples of how musical text can be used in the classroom. The appendix contains resources for teachers to use when trying to find appropriate musical text.

POPULAR CULTURE

Musical Text

Activity 1 Musical Text

Purpose: Teach students to critically analyze an appropriate song of their choice.

Procedure:

1. Introduce poetry unit reviewing the use of poetry and role of a poet in society.
2. Review the importance of understanding the historical period when a poem was written in order to critically analyze the poem, and outline historical/literary periods that will be covered in the unit.
3. Explain that the students current musical interest or lyrics from their favorite songs can be considered a form of poetry. Explain they will be critically analyzing lyrics of their choice taking into consideration the historical/literary period it was written in, using the comprehension strategies they have been practicing.
4. Choose an appropriate song read the lyrics as a class as well as listen to the song. Model the use of appropriate comprehension strategies or use the Tips for Reading a Poem form for students while analyzing the lyrics. (Section 2 of this project contains comprehension strategy instruction forms.)
5. After modeling your thought processes while reading the lyrics, have students choose songs. If the use of necessary comprehension strategies is new to students, the author recommends allowing them to work in groups. However, this activity would serve as an excellent resource assessing individual use of comprehension strategies.

The following page contains an example of the above activity conducted in class. The author chose the song, *Have You Forgotten*, because of its readability and several students had relatives or friends serving in Iraq at the time, and a majority of the class frequently listened to country music. The current literature text used in the World Literature Class at Selah High School contains several poems written during war times, allowing students to make connections as well as compare and contrast.

POPULAR CULTURE

Sample Activity 1 Musical Text

Have You Forgotten

Popular Culture

Sample Activity 1 Musical Text

Worley, D., Varble, W. (2003) Retrieved October 14, 2005 from
http://www.countrygoldusa.com/have_you_forgotten.asp

Please note: Content on this page was redacted due to copyright concerns.

POPULAR CULTURE

Activity 1 Musical Text (cont.)

Tips for Reading a Poem

1. Read the poem all the way through, twice.
2. Think about and record any background knowledge you have that helps you connect to people, animals, or objects in the poem. Record any historical significance or information you think is important

I've been in the military so I connect to the people serving in the war. I also know people who lost family members on 9/11. I currently hear people debating and questioning why we are in Iraq. The history is obvious, he is referring to 9/11 and why we went to war in Iraq, perhaps why we are still there. I remember getting a frantic call from my sister in the morning asking me if I had the TV on. I remember the sick feeling in my stomach when I saw the second plane hit the tower.

3. Try to make a picture in your head of what's happening in the poem. Describe what you see.

I've seen the video several times, so images of that come to mind. I see the American flag, soldiers dressed in BDU's (Battle Dress Uniform), I see the pillars of smoke, the chaos of that day in New York, as well as images of chaos in war.

4. What do you think the poem is about?

The author is trying to remind people we went to war for a reason, but they seem to have forgotten why. He is also trying to remind us the soldiers know why they are there and we need to support them and their families.

Textual evidence	Background Knowledge
The author states "Have you forgotten?"	Many people have argued against the war
"I hear people saying we don't need this war."	I know people who are in Iraq and the struggles families go through.
"They remember just what they are fighting for."	Horrid images of 9/11 and war

Adapted from: Tovani, C. (2000). *I read it, but I don't get it: comprehension strategies for adolescent readers*. Portland, ME: Stenhouse.

POPULAR CULTURE

Activity 2 Musical Text

Purpose: Allow students to complete an expressive project, describing the experience of a main character in a story or novel.

Procedures:

1. After reading a story or novel as a class create questions a person would have to answer regarding the important details/ major theme when summarizing the story. (Use example on following page as a model if needed.)
2. Develop the list of questions into a checklist for students to guide them.
3. When the checklist is ready explain to students their assignment is to create lyrics for a song, a rap, or poem describing the main characters experience.
4. Explain powerful song lyrics help us feel what the singer is feeling. Students must put themselves in the characters place. They should ask themselves the following questions:
 - a. How do you feel about your life?
 - b. How do you make sense out of what is happening to you now?
 - c. How do you feel when you are or aren't successful?

The following page contains an example student checklist, as well as an example of a students poem after reading the book Holes (1998) by Luis Sachar.

POPULAR CULTURE

Activity 2 Musical Text

Student Checklist

Your assignment is to create lyrics for a song, a rap, or a poem that will describe Stanley's experience in the book *Holes*. The most powerful song lyrics help us to feel what the singer is feeling. Put yourself in Stanley's place. How do you feel about your life? How do you make sense out of what is happening to you now? How do you feel when you are successful?

Content:

Include major experiences from the story.

- _____ Why was Stanley sent to Camp Green Lake?
- _____ Who does Stanley meet at the Camp?
- _____ What is the curse on Stanley and his family?
- _____ What does Stanley do for Zero?
- _____ Why does Stanley run away?
- _____ Where do Stanley and Zero go?
- _____ Why do the boys come back to Camp Green Lake?
- _____ What changes does Stanley go through?
- _____ What happens in the end?

Writing Conventions

- _____ Correct format
- _____ I have one idea per sentence
- _____ Capitalization
- _____ Punctuation
- _____ Spelling
- _____ Proofread

Adapted From:

Zunich, L. (2005). Integrating Popular Culture Texts in Developmental Reading Classes for Sixth- to Eight-Grade Students in Xu, S.H.. *Trading cards to comic strips popular culture texts and literacy learning in grades K-8*. Newark, DE: International Reading Association.

POPULAR CULTURE**Sample Activity 2 Musical Text****A Student's Song About Stanley**

Please note: Content on this page was redacted due to copyright concerns.

POPULAR CULTURE

Film and Television

Step into the hallway during passing times and many of the conversations are centered around a movie or television show students watched the night before or over the weekend. Film and television do not need to be defined for most people as it has been around a long time. Television and film differ as a television show may not have a complete story in one episode, the problem may be solve after several episodes. A film usually tells the entire story (Xu, 2005) .

Traditionally, use of television and film has been reserved for lazy Fridays or for a substitute. However, some high schools now offer critical film study courses and English teachers are showing film versions of text read in class, allowing students another opportunity to analyze the story, or showing the film rather than reading the text. The narrative structures of film and televisual text are similar to text stories read in class. There is a solution and conflict, and due to time constraints the conflict is often quickly resolved in televisual texts. The following activities are examples of how film and televisual can be used in the classroom. Although both examples are used with televisual text, they can be used with film text as well.

POPULAR CULTURE

Film and Television

Activity 1 Film and Televisual Texts

Purpose: Students will determine the sequence of events in television show and establish or infer the causes of those events.

Procedures:

1. Make a copy of the Cause and Effect Timeline.
2. Model with students how to write events with or without dates above the thick line. Each event should go above one of the lower arrows.
3. Put the causes of the events below the line inside the arrows. Each cause should be directly under the event it corresponds with. Each cause needs to be supported with evidence and can be inferred.
4. If needed, draw additional lines (diagonal) to connect upper events to additional causes below (some causes will contribute to other events not directly written above the cause, or some events will cause new events). It is important for students to be able to explain why they drew the additional line.

Extension: Have students use the timeline to write a summary of the text the timeline describes.

An example timeline and summary completed by a student in the authors class are on the following pages.

Adapted from: Zwiers, J. (2005). *Building reading comprehension habits in grades 6-12: A Toolkit of Classroom Activities*. Newark, DE. International Reading Association.

POPULAR CULTURE**Student Completed Time Line**

Name _____
Date _____ Period _____

POPULAR CULTURE

Activity 1 Film and Televisual Texts

Student Completed Summary

This episode of "Law and Order SUV" begins with the sounds of a girl moaning in a bathroom. It sounds like she's in pain. First, a guy asks her if she was attacked and she tells him she was raped. They report it to the police and she identifies the two attackers in a lineup. When they investigate the police find out she asked the two boys to have sex with her because she wanted to lose her virginity to impress someone else. Next, the two boys and the girl are kicked out of school. The girl is scared and depressed so she decides to commit suicide by getting in a car wreck. When she tries to kill herself she ends up killing two pedestrians on the sidewalk. Then the girl is charged with murder. She pleads insanity because she is bipolar and had stopped taking medicine when she tried to commit suicide. Consequently, she stops taking her meds again in the middle of the trial and goes crazy in court. The judge charged her with contempt of court. The witnesses testify she acts different when she is on meds. Finally, the jury convicts her of murder and she is placed in the psychiatric ward of a hospital.

POPULAR CULTURE

Activity 2 Film and Televisual Texts

Purpose: Study in depth the character traits in one episode of a television show.

Procedure:

1. Choose a television show and decide which characters will be evaluated, students can help decide.
2. Brainstorm a list of up to four possible positive/negative traits that characters have to varying degrees.
3. List the character names Character Report Card sheet.
4. Generate a grading system such as A-B-C-D-F or some other system students are familiar with.
5. Model with students how to start the trait columns before entering a grade. Explain the students must have evidence from the show for each character's trait. Model for students, "I think she deserves a B in patience because she..."
6. This activity can be done individually, in partners, or a group.

Extension: Have students pick their favorite character from the show. Have them write a short essay describing why this is their favorite character including specific examples and details from the show.

Adapted from: Zwiers, J. (2005). *Building reading comprehension habits in grades 6-12: A Toolkit of Classroom Activities*. Newark, DE. International Reading Association.

POPULAR CULTURE

Sample Activity Completed in Class

Name _____

Date: _____ Period: _____

Character Report Card

Character	Courage Grade	Comments (Evidence)	Tenacity Grade	Comments (Evidence)
Gibbs	A	He has courage because he did whatever it took to save the director, risking his life	A	He has tenacity because he didn't back down to the captors or Ziva.
DiNozzo	B	He has courage because he was laying in a dead guys lap and drove the car without seeing out the windshield.	C	He is not very tenacious he is lazy because he's always sleeping and doesn't follow through.
Director Shepard	A	She has courage because she tried to escape and when she was being held captive.	A	She is tenacious because she kept playing mind games with her captors, even though he knew she was doing it.
Ziva David	A	She has courage because she got out of the car to save the director. She could have been shot.	A	She has tenacity because she would not stop asking Gibbs if she could leave her desk.

POPULAR CULTURE

Sample Activity Completed in Class

Character Report Card

Character	Caring Grade	Comments (Evidence)	Patriotic Grade	Comments (Evidence)
Gibbs	A	He is caring because he treated Ziva like a daughter when he told her to stay at her desk. He obviously cares.	A	He is patriotic because he works for the Navy still and served time as a Marine.
DiNozzo	D	He is not very caring, he is selfish because he only worried about how he looked.	C	He is not very patriotic because he is a goofball and always joking, not taking his job seriously.
Director Shepard	B	She is caring because she felt bad when her driver was killed.	A	She is patriotic because she works for her country and risks her life by being Director of NCIS.
Ziva David	B	She is caring because she called Tony sweet when he was trying to make him feel better.	C	She is patriotic towards her own country, she is always talking about it and what it means to her.

POPULAR CULTURE

Mass Media

Media advertising and news reporting for all purposes could be considered part of televisual text. However, for the purposes of this project newspaper, magazines, and media advertising as well as the internet in general will be considered part of mass media. Researchers have declared literacy educators need to help students critically analyze mass media, helping them understand how mass media influences identity development as well as their view of the world (Morrel, 2004). Morrel (2004) asserts adolescents need to understand how to differentiate between reality and the media's various representations of reality. Furthermore, Morrel (2004) argues students must realize media representation reflect beliefs and stances around the world. Students' ability to realize the news is not neutral and those who wish to be informed need to be able to read news media carefully.

Text on the internet is considered hypermedia text composed of words and multimedia including sound effects, animations, images, pop-up windows (Xu, 2005). Reading text on the internet can be a complicated process. Xu (2005) asserts the challenges students face when exploring the internet make student acquisition of critical literacy skills essential. These skills are necessary for students to successfully read and comprehend hypermedia text. In fact, Lanshear & Knobel (2003) argue these are the types of literacy practices the real world demands of us, and they should be included in the types of practices focused upon in school. The following activities are example of how mass media text can be used in the classroom.

POPULAR CULTURE

Mass Media

Activity 1 Mass Media (Internet)

Purpose: Allow students to critically read expository text on a person of their interest while practicing comprehensions strategies.

Procedure:

1. The day before the planned activity, ask each student to write down at least three popular people they would like to learn more about.
2. Choose a comprehension strategy you want students to focus on (See comprehension strategies in Section Two).
3. Have student look up their person of interest on www.Biography.com. If their first choice is not there, try the others.
4. Have students read and print the biography of their person and complete comprehension strategy assignment.

Extension: If students have previously used anticipation guides, (example anticipation guide is included in comprehension strategies section) have them create their own anticipation guide to give to students in the class, and then act as a discussion leader after the entire class reads the article, or when sharing information to the class about the article they read.

The example on the following page was completed by a student after looking up the rapper Eminem on Biography.com.

Sample of Student Completed Activity

Name _____

Date _____ Period _____

Person of interest: Eminem

- Before you begin to read, write down everything you know about the topic already.

He is a famous rapper who is white, most rappers are black. He has a Daughter and several hit records.

- Highlight confusing parts or words. Next to each highlighted section, list at least one fix-up strategy you used to construct meaning.

- List five important Facts.

1. Moved back and forth between Kansas City and Detroit when he was a child.
2. He dropped out of high school and focused on music.
3. Belonged to rap Duo Sould Intent
4. Dr. Dre, a famous rapper discovered him.
5. He was the first rapper to win an Academy Award for best original song "The Real Slim Shady".

- Write three important questions.

1. Why did Eminem commit suicide, was the pressure of being famous too much?
2. What was the result of the trial where his mother sued him?
3. Does Eminem write his own lyrics?

- Write a complete and thoughtful response on the last page of the piece.

Eminem has faced many problems in his life. He moved a lot and he doesn't get along with his mom because she sued him. He divorced and then got back together with his wife. All of these problems probably made him feel depressed which is why he tried to commit suicide. He has not let these problems stop him because he is still popular and won Academy Award. Eminem can probably be described as a hard worker because he still has popular music and he doesn't give up, even though he's had many problems.

POPULAR CULTURE

Mass Media Activity 2 (Newspaper)

Purpose: Teach students to ask questions and predict possible answers while they are reading.

Procedures:

1. Have a group or pair of students pick a newspaper article of interest to them.
2. Hand out Asking Questions worksheet and explain each student will fill one out on their own and then discuss it with the other students in their group.
3. Monitor each group and have students discuss their questions and possible answers, noting similarities and differences, as well as help clear up each other's confusion.

The example on the following page was completed by a student after reading an article in the Unleashed Section of the Yakima Herald Republic.

Sample of Student Completed Activity

Name _____

Date _____ Period _____

Asking Questions

Directions: While reading, highlight or mark a part of the text or picture where you have a question. Write down the part that surfaces your questions and then record your questions below. If you think you are headed toward an answer share that too.

Quote or Picture from Text

"Mom," or "Dad" we say, groaning. "You don't really want to watch this show, do you?"

My Question

Why does someone not want their parents to watch T.V. with them?

Possible Answers

Embarrassed by parents, tired of them being around

Quote or Picture from Text

"When we come face to face with these words in real life, most of us turn away, embarrassed."

My Question

What does the author mean by "real life", because I hear swearing all the time and it doesn't bother me?

Possible Answers

In the hall at school, in the grocery store, at home, at work

Quote or Picture from Text

"T.V doesn't give us any satisfaction because it doesn't do any good for us."

My Question

Why does the author think all T.V. programs are bad?

Possible Answers

She doesn't watch any educational shows like the ones they have on National Geographic channel.

Adapted from: Harvey, S. & Goudvis A. (2000). *Strategies that work: teaching comprehension to enhance understanding*. Portland, ME: Stenhouse.

POPULAR CULTURE

Comics, Graphic Novels, Young Adult Novels

Xu (2005) asserts comics have amused, engaged, and encouraged readers to think critically about current issues. She contends reading comics is not always an easy task as students need to follow the picture for a storyline and draw inferences based upon the picture and limited number of words. Comic books contain traditional storybook text structure such as characters and conflict and also depict tragedies and triumphs. Mangas and graphic novels are two genres similar to comics or comic books. Mangas are Japanese comic books depicting Japanese animes (animations) and graphic novels are novels written in comic book format. Mangas and graphic novels have become increasingly popular among students. Furthermore, traditional literature such as Shakespeare's plays, have been rewritten by comic authors and artists and provide an excellent opportunity for students to enjoy classic literature (Xu, 2005).

The author has included young adult novels in this section because the majority of novels currently assigned in English classrooms at Selah High School are traditional texts, containing characters many students don't relate too. High interest, young adult novels, with characters and plots students can relate to are an excellent source for improving comprehension strategies (Atwell, 1998; Langer, 2001; Morrel, 2004; Xu, 2005).

The activities on the following pages do not cover Mangas or graphic novels as the authors' classes have not expressed interest in these. However, Mangas and graphic novels can be used in the classroom just as novels are, focusing on comprehension strategies relevant to those texts. The first activity was taken from Smith (1991) unit on

unreliable narrators and shows an example used in the author's class to demonstrate the importance of questioning a narrators' reliability as well as help teach irony. The author has also used the first as an example of a reader inferring information, as Xu (2005) infers comics are an excellent tool to help students improve inference skills.

POPULAR CULTURE

Comics, Graphic Novels, Young Adult Novels Activity 1

Purpose: Use comics as a pre-reading strategy to initiate the use of background knowledge, practice inference skills, and introduce a new concept that will be taught in class.

Procedures:

1. Many comics or comic books depict real life situations relating to topics or concepts taught in class. Find a comic (see appendix for sources) relating to the topic or concept being taught.
2. Based on the comic, create questions for discussion or for students to answer on paper helping them connect to background knowledge necessary for topic or concept to be covered (see example activity on the following page.)
3. Have students read the comics and then discuss their answers to the questions regarding the comics as a class, activating any prior knowledge they have.

Extension: Have students record inferences they made when reading the comics.

POPULAR CULTURE

Example Comics, Graphic Novels, Young Adult Novel Activity 1

Purpose: Depict the process of questioning the narrators' reliability.

Procedure:

1. Have students read the "Doonesbury" cartoon (see following pages) and ask the following questions:
 - A. Did Mike's nephew really suffer all those injuries?
 - B. Did a squad of Nazi frogmen break into the room?
 - C. If none of these things happened, why was Mike's nephew so late in writing?
 - D. Why don't you believe Mike's nephew?

Students should remark they don't believe the nephew because he is making excuses. Explain the process below that the students went through to reconstruct the meaning:

- A. They evaluated the reliability of the source of the information (Do you believe what this person is saying?).
 - B. They checked the facts of the situation (in the case, that the thank-you was very late and that the present was a tie).
 - C. They applied their knowledge of the world (in this case, their knowledge of excuses and children's imaginations).
2. Write the above process on the board and have students record it in their notebooks.
3. Move on to "Calvin and Hobbes" cartoons and ask the following.
 - A. Does Calvin like Susie Derkins?
 - B. How do we know that Calvin doesn't really want Susie to suffer a "debilitating brain aneurysm?"

(Students should comment that Calvin's actions do match his words: He notices the new girl, complained too loudly that he does not like her, and calls out to her. Reiterate the consistency of people's words and actions helps us understand whether or not to believe them. Review the three-step process students went through to understand that Calvin really does like Susie:

POPULAR CULTURE

Example Comics, Graphic Novels, Young Adult Novel Activity 1

1. They determined that Calvin wasn't reliable; his words and behavior were inconsistent.
2. They checked the facts: in this case Calvin's actions
3. They applied their knowledge of the world; in this case, how young boys girls related and the motive for too-loud protests.

Explain that over the next few weeks student swill apply the tree-step process to a series of stories).

The cartoons on the following pages are taken from Smith (1991) for this one time use.

Smith, M.W. (1991). *Understanding unreliable narrators, Reading between the lines in the literature classroom*. Urbana, IL. National Council of Teachers of English.

POPULAR CULTURE

Doonesbury by G.B. Treaudau (1982)

POPULAR CULTURE

Calvin & Hobbes Universal Press Syndicate (1986)

POPULAR CULTURE

Comics, Graphic Novels, Young Adult Novel Activity 2

Purpose: Students will apply a variety of comprehension strategies while reading a text, determining important information, record it, and use this information to help them summarize and write an opinion about what they have read.

Procedures:

1. After doing anticipatory activities, introduce journal and explain its purpose to students. (An example of an anticipation guide used for the book *Monster* (2000) by Walter Dean Myers is included on the following page.)
2. After reading as a class each day, give students at least ten to fifteen minutes to record new evidence or inferences for that days reading, and ask them to record predictions when appropriate.
3. When the novel is completed, ask students to write a short essay summarizing their opinion, using important information, persuading their classmates to form the same opinion.

The example activity on the following page is used in conjunction with the young adult novel "*Monster*" written by Walter Dean Myers (1999). "*Monster*" is written as a movie script/journal and is about Steve, a 16 year old boy, on trial for murder. The author's class reads this novel after completing a unit on questioning the reliability of narrators. It helps the students question the reliability of witnesses as well as Steve throughout the novel. The author adapts the student form depending upon the needs of the class, or individual students, helping them focus on specific comprehension strategies they need to improve upon.

POPULAR CULTURE

Example Comics, Graphic Novels, Young Adult Novel Activity 2

Name _____

Date _____ Period _____

Anticipation Guide

Directions: Before we begin reading, *Monster* by Walter Dean Myers, fill out this anticipation guide. These questions are to help you start thinking about some of the ideas expressed in the novel. Read the following statements and write whether it is true or false on the line. Briefly describe your reasoning (why) it is true or false in the space provided below the question. Think about each question carefully before answering. You will be graded on completion and thought, rather than correctness.

1. In a court room, a person is always guilty until proven innocent. _____
2. Racism and prejudice aren't problems today. _____
3. There are consequences to every poor decision we make. _____
4. Monsters are imaginary creatures, usually large and frightening. _____
5. Peer pressure is always negative. _____
6. Discrimination can occur because of age. _____
7. Jail is a place where only guilty people go. _____
8. Personal stories are told in narrative form only. _____
9. Writing in a journal is a good way to express feelings. _____
10. People who commit crimes come from broken homes and dysfunctional families. _____

POPULAR CULTURE

Example Comics, Graphic Novels, Young Adult Novel Activity 2

Case File #0301-2005-8001

STATE vs. STEVEN HARMON

JUROR NAME: _____

Instructions: As a juror in this case, you will have to determine the guilt or innocence of 16-year-old Steven Harmon. His fate depends on you. Please take careful notes during the trial. Write down witnesses' names, evidence, or your reflections (**FACTS, BACKGROUND KNOWLEDGE, AND INFERENCE**) they offer that might prove Steve's guilt or innocence. Write **F** for fact, **BK** for background knowledge or **I** for inference helping you determine Steve's innocence or guilt. You may also include what you learn from Steve's film script and journals which have been entered as evidence in the case. Later you will make a determination of innocence or guilt and tell why.

Date	Page #	Evidence Proving Steve is Innocent	Write F, BK, or I

Questions I have about what I have read so far:

Possible answers to my questions:

EFFECTIVE COMPREHENSION STRATEGY INSTRUCTION

McKenna, Keaf, and Ellsworth (1995) assert many secondary students are known for negative attitudes and resistance towards reading. This is problematic as reading stakes are high at the secondary level (Gilles & Dickinson 2000). Teachers expect students to use comprehension skills to understand texts containing complex concepts, to respond to questions, formulate their own questions, and conduct experiments or projects. Thus, it is no surprise what seemed to be minor reading problems in lower grades, become major problems in the middle grades. Moreover, just because a student has learned how to read or acquired the basic skills for reading, it does not mean they are able to look beyond the literal meaning of the word, exploring the deeper meaning in text (Allington, 2001; McCray, Vaughn, & Neal 2001).

Researchers assert the types of instructional practices provided to struggling readers contribute to the lack of their success in the classroom. They claim instructional practices have focused on skills such as oral fluency or the ability to answer literal comprehension questions rather than the actual process of reading. Hynds (1997) discusses the importance of unteaching the part-to-whole strategies learned in scope and sequence such as; skimming to find main ideas while answering teacher assigned questions, quickly reading a book for a teacher assigned book report, or drill and kill basic English skills.

Unfortunately, many secondary students don't know what it means to actually comprehend or learn from their reading. This results in lack of confidence and disengaged readers. Several researchers proclaim teachers need to specifically

demonstrate reading processes through explanation, modeling, and guided practice (Allington, 2001; Duffy, 2002; Estes, 1991; Santa, 2006; Tovani, 2000; Hamel & Smith 1998; Harvey & Goudvis 2000; Smith & Wilhelm 2002).

Several researchers reiterate the importance of explicitly teaching comprehension tasks as well as model these tasks enabling students to engage higher order thinking skills. For educational purposes, we can no longer consider simple recall of information from a text just read, or copying information from the text into a worksheet, or matching information in the text with an answer from a multiple choice test as evidence of student comprehension (Allington, 2001). Allington discusses the importance of developing “thoughtful literacy,” due to new national and state standards that require students to think about what they have read, as well as explain or describe their thinking.

Consequently, not only must educators help struggling readers with their basic skills, a focus on specific strategies leading to deeper comprehension is essential (Allington 2001, Estes, 1991, Tovani 2000, Hamel & Smith 1998, Harvey & Goudvis 2000, Smith & Wilhelm 2002).

Research has shown student centered discussion-based approaches are effective for low and high achieving students, although the use of discussion based approaches is rarely used in lower tracks (Applebee, Langer, Nystrand, & Gamoran 2003). Hynds (1997) discusses the social nature of secondary students learning and emphasizes the importance of allowing adolescence to socialize during literacy events. Thus, allowing students to make connections. She asserts adolescents need to be recognized and listened

to by others. This section focuses on effective comprehension strategy instruction and includes suggested methods for teaching comprehension strategies, example strategy instruction activities, and an appendix with resources for teachers implementing popular culture and effective comprehension strategy instruction.

Suggested Methods for Teaching Comprehension Strategies

Gradual release of responsibility

In their study Smith and Wilhelm (2002) emphasize the need for teachers to focus on the “how” or the “rules of the reading game”. Focusing on students interests while showing how to apply “reading codes” to different types of texts, allows students to learn the “rules of the game”, or the secrets that skilled readers know. Harvey and Goudvis (2000) assert teachers need to show students how teachers think when they are reading, teaching specific strategies while gradually releasing responsibility to the students. Harvey and Goudvis elaborate on Fielding and Pearson’s (1994) description of the gradual release of responsibility approach in four phases:

- Teacher Modeling
 - The teacher explains the strategy.
 - The teacher demonstrates how to apply the strategy successfully
 - The teacher thinks aloud to model the mental processes she uses when she reads
- Guided Practice
 - After explicitly modeling, the teacher gradually gives the student more responsibility for task completion.
 - The teacher and students practice the strategy together.
 - The teacher scaffolds the students’ attempts and supports student thinking, giving feedback during conferring and classroom discussions.
 - Students share their thinking processes with each other during paired reading and small-and large-group discussions.

EFFECTIVE COMPREHENSION STRATEGY INSTRUCTION

Gradual release of responsibility

- Independent Practice
 - After working with the teacher and with other students, the students try to apply the strategy on their own.
 - The students receive regular feedback from the teacher and other students.
- Application of the Strategy in Real Reading Situations
 - Students apply a clearly understood strategy to a new genre or format
 - Students demonstrate the effective use of a strategy in more difficult text (p. 13).

Reciprocal Teaching

In their review of research Rosenshine & Meister (1997) reveal reciprocal teaching is most effective for older students as significant improvement in comprehension has been shown at the secondary level when students using the reciprocal teaching model and discuss texts in groups allowing them to develop academic thinking and literacy skills. Reciprocal teaching allows students to focus on four comprehension habits: questioning, clarifying, summarizing, and predicting. It is important the teacher follow the gradual release of responsibility model before using the reciprocal teaching method so students understand what it looks like, teacher expectations, and what they are responsible for. Although the traditional reciprocal teaching model assigns individual responsibilities for each student, the author suggest using a graphic organizer allowing students to record their questions, summarizations, clarifications, and predictions.

EFFECTIVE COMPREHENSION STRATEGY INSTRUCTION

Otherwise, many students stop participating once their job is completed. The following describes the process of reciprocal teaching.

Reciprocal Teaching Activity

Procedure:

1. Assign students to groups of four and have each group decide on the order of facilitation and on who will start as facilitator. Other members of the group need to take on roles such as questioner, word finder (clarifier), summarizer, or predictor. You can change roles and assign specific comprehension strategies you want the group to focus on such as making connections (connector).
2. Before reading activate students' background knowledge using a pre-reading strategy.
3. Questioning: The group facilitator decides on a stopping point in the text, and the students silently read as a group. Those who finish early can start writing notes in their organizer. The facilitator asks for questions that focus on the main themes or ideas, require and inference from the reader or ask the reader to contemplate what they know about the character, examining the thoughts and feelings of the character.
4. Clarifier: The person in charge of clarifying as for or gives clarifications of difficult concepts or vocabulary words.
5. Summarizer: This person summarizes the reading and other students add too (or subtract from) the summary.
6. Predictor: This person predicts what is going to happen next based on prior evidence. Other students can agree or disagree, giving their evidence for doing so.
7. This process continues throughout the reading, with members switching roles as facilitators (questioner, clarifier, summarizer, predictor) until reading has been completed.

Adapted from: Zwiers, J. (2005). *Building reading comprehension habits in grades 6-12: a toolkit of classroom activities*. Newark, DE: International Reading Association.

Name _____
Date _____ Period _____

Reciprocal Teaching Graphic Organizer

<p>Questions</p>	<p>Interesting Words</p>
<p>Summary</p>	<p>Predictions</p>

EFFECTIVE COMPREHENSION STRATEGY INSTRUCTION

Suggested Methods For Teaching Comprehension Strategies

Peer Tutoring

Research has shown student success when struggling adolescent readers are paired with younger students to tutor them in reading. Tutoring younger students increases adolescent self-esteem, provides recognition, and offers practice in fluency, and specific reading strategies. Regardless of skills or developmental level, all students involved benefit. More importantly, adolescents gain a better understanding of literacy strategies (Fischer 1999). Boyd and Galda (1997) maintain by giving students voice and the opportunity to discuss literature, such as in a cross-aged tutoring program with younger students, low achieving students become responsible for their own learning (Fischer 1999).

Paterson & Elliot (2006) describe a successful program implemented in a study in which ninth grade students enrolled in a remedial reading class, tutored second and third grade struggling readers, helping result in an average gain of two years in reading comprehension according to STAR posttests. The author has included this program because it is one that could be used and modified if needed to fit the needs of Selah High School students.

Classroom instruction in the high school remedial reading class consisted of forty minutes of sustained silent reading (SSR), followed by journal entries using a double entry form allowing students to summarize, respond, and predict. Vocabulary instruction, reading in the content areas, and fluency practice followed the SSR time. The above took place for eight weeks before students started working with the second

and third graders. Participation in the tutoring program was provided as an option, those who chose not to participate in another reading class or assist in the tutoring program in other ways.

The high school reading course provided instruction throughout the year. Students were taught fundamentals in tutoring and practiced expressive reading of storybooks. Lesson plans were provided for their first tutoring sessions. A reading specialist and the teacher provided additional instruction on implementing specific reading strategies and presented model minilessons. Students eventually wrote their own lesson plans incorporating comprehension strategies. The reading strategies covered throughout the program included units on phonics, context clues, expressive reading, paired and echo reading, sight words, prediction, questioning, summarizing, rereading, and journaling.

The high school student regularly discussed their session with the teacher and wrote in a journal reflecting upon each session. As Paterson & Elliot (2006) share one of the best ways to learn something new is to teach it to someone else. The tutors experienced this as they applied and modified new strategies they had learned in an authentic way.

EFFECTIVE COMPREHENSION STRATEGY INSTRUCTION

Suggested Methods for Teaching Comprehension Strategies

Strategy Instruction Activities

Several researchers have identified strategies proficient readers use when comprehending text:

- Use existing knowledge, making sense of new information, making connections
- Ask questions of yourself, the author, and the text before, during, and after reading
- Draw inferences, predict, wonder, assess what's happening from the text during, and after reading
- Determine what is important and what is not (main idea and details)
- Monitor their own comprehension, applying fix up strategies when needed
- Synthesize information across texts and other reading experiences, creating new thinking (Alverman, Swafford, & Montero, 2004; Routman, 2003; Tovani, 2000; Harvey & Goudvis, 2000; Pearson, Dole, & Duffy, 1992).

Alverman, Swafford, & Montero (2004), Allington (2001), and Keene & Zimmerman (1997), Routman (2003) add visualization or sensory images affirming they help proficient readers comprehend what they read.

Researcher's do not dispute in order for students to learn and use comprehension strategies, teachers must explicitly teach them (Allington, 2001; Alverman, Swafford, & Montero, 2004; Estes, 1991; Hamel & Smith, 1998; Harvey & Goudvis, 2000; Nokes & Dole, 2004; Routman, 2003; Pressley, 2004, Smith & Wilhelm, 2002; Tovani, 2000).

The strategies identified that proficient readers use evolved from "Think-Aloud" research in which expert readers were asked to "think aloud" as they read, making their comprehension strategies evident (Alverman, Swafford, & Montero 2004). When

EFFECTIVE COMPREHENSION STRATEGY INSTRUCTION

teachers share what they are thinking out loud during instruction, following the gradual release of responsibility approach the mysterious process of comprehension becomes more concrete for students. This mental modeling helps students understand how proficient readers comprehend text (Alverman, Swafford, & Montero, 2004; Harvey & Goudvis, 2000; Tovani, 2000; Wilhelm 2001).

Researchers are careful to point out think-alouds differ from prompting and modeling. In a think aloud teachers demonstrate how to select the appropriate comprehension process at certain points in a particular text. In a highly effective think aloud the thought process used when confused or in need of a fix up strategy is described. Think-alouds have been used several ways to assess student's comprehension abilities in different setting such as self-contained programs, after school programs, and tutorial settings. Once taught students can assess their own strengths and weaknesses by identifying how well they do when applying the above processes while reading (Block & Israel 2004). The activities on the following pages describes how to implement a think-aloud, as well specific strategy instruction in the classroom.

EFFECTIVE COMPREHENSION STRATEGY INSTRUCTION

Think Aloud Activity

Procedure:

1. You may use a variety of reading texts to model. A text that is actually difficult for you gives students a genuine sense of your thinking struggles and how you attack challenging texts.
2. Place the text you will read on an overhead projector so students can follow along. Uncover text as you read, pausing to make comments about what you are thinking in order to comprehend text.
3. Verbalize your purpose for reading, as you read verbalize thoughts, predictions, visualizations, confusing parts, connections to background knowledge. Verbalize minisummaries as you read. Examples:

When I read (words from text), it reminds me of _____. Experienced readers connect new knowledge to known knowledge.

When I read (words from text), I wonder _____. Experienced readers Ask question when they read to help themselves make inferences.

I am confused when I read (words from text), so I am going to (specify fix-up strategy you are going to use to clear up the confusion). Experienced readers recognize confusion and know how to restore meaning.

4. Think-alouds can be used to focus on specific strategies showing how to monitor comprehension, using fix up strategies (looking back, reading on), and connecting pieces of text.
5. After modeling, you can use appropriate text and stop at times to ask students what they are thinking as they are reading with you.

Adapted from: Tovani, C. (2000). *I read it, but I don't get it: comprehension strategies for adolescent readers*. Portland, ME: Stenhouse. and Zwiers, J. (2005). *Building reading comprehension habits in grades 6-12: A toolkit of classroom activities*. Newark, DE: International Reading Association.

EFFECTIVE COMPREHENSION STRATEGY INSTRUCTION

Marking Text Activity

Tovani (2000) adapted and expanded this activity, originally called coding text, to include sticky notes. She suggests teaching this early in the year as it helps students stay engaged while they are reading. The activity below allows students to focus on the types of strategies you think they need to engage while reading. The author chose to use this activity to model using existing knowledge or making connections.

Procedure:

1. Assign codes to the types of thinking in which you would like students to engage. As students read they mark these codes next to the passages in the text that trigger these kinds of thinking and explain the connection. For example:

BK represents connections the reader makes between their life and the text.
A written response may start with, "This reminds me of..."

? represents questions the reader has about the text.
A written response may start with, "I wonder..."

I represents and inference or conclusion the reader draws from the text.
A written response may start with, "I think..."
2. Model the coding process by thinking aloud as you read and code on a transparency. Do not assign to many codes at once, start with one and when students are comfortable with it move on to the second, and so on. Be precise, if you are explaining BK, verbalize the connection and share how they help you better understand the text.
3. Allow students to practice with appropriate text, they must mark the code but explain their thinking as well. If the text can not be marked in, have them use sticky notes attaching it to the appropriate spot.
4. Student can discuss their connections or record them on a "Connect to" sheet on the following page.

Adapted from: Tovani, C. (2000). *I read it, but I don't get it: comprehension strategies for adolescent readers*. Portland, ME: Stenhouse.

Name: _____

Date: _____ Period: _____

Connect To

Directions: Record the connections you made on sticky notes below. Record the words and the page number where your connection occurred. Explain the connections you made.

1.

2.

3.

4.

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

EFFECTIVE COMPREHENSION STRATEGY INSTRUCTION

Asking questions before, during, and after reading

Harvey and Goudvis (2000) assert “Questioning is the strategy that propels readers forward. When readers have questions they are less likely to abandon the text.” (p. 22) Furthermore, experienced readers question the author, events, issues, and ideas of the text before, during, and after reading to help construct meaning and clarify confusion. The following pages contain two “access tools” (Tovani, 2000) allowing students to apply the strategy.

Name _____

Date _____ Period _____

Asking Questions

Directions: While reading, highlight or mark a part of the text or picture where you have a question. Write down the part that surfaces your questions and then record your questions below. If you think you are headed toward an answer share that too.

Quote or Picture from Text**My Question****Possible Answers****Quote or Picture from Text****My Question****Possible Answers****Quote or Picture from Text****My Question****Possible Answers**

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

Name _____
Date _____ Period _____

Asking Questions Throughout the Reading Process

Directions: Readers ask questions before, during, and after reading. Preview the book, record any questions you might have before you start to read. While reading, record any questions you have and highlight or mark the part of the text with a sticky note the question relates to. After you have finished reading write down any remaining questions. If you have answered any questions write them in the space below.

Questions Before Reading

Questions During Reading

Questions After Reading

Possible Answers

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

EFFECTIVE COMPREHENSION STRATEGY INSTRUCTION

Inferring and Predicting

Harvey and Goudvis (2000) describe inferring as “the bedrock to comprehension.” (p. 105) Tovani (2000) describes struggling readers in her classroom searching the text hoping to find a stated answer when asked an inferential question. Tovani illustrates inferring to her students by reading a text in which students can connect to and easily infer and make connections too. She informs them their ability to infer relies upon “seen text” and “unseen text”. Tovani tells her students seen text is anything the reader can see; words, pictures, charts, and graphs or anything that can be used to make meaning. She then explains unseen text as the information already in the readers head: opinions, ideas, background knowledge, which is unique to each reader, helping them understand what they have read as well as predict what may happen next. The “access tool” on the following page allows students to record their inferences as they read, as well examples from the text supporting their inferences.

Name _____
Date _____ Period _____

Directions: Write any predictions, or inferences you make and the evidence from the text that supports your idea.

What I Think	Support for That Idea

EFFECTIVE COMPREHENSION STRATEGY INSTRUCTION

Determining the Importance in Text (Main Ideas and Details)

Traditionally, students have been asked to read, highlight the main ideas, and determine supporting details. As Harvey and Goudvis (2000) state this is much easier said than done. In most cases, students are searching for main idea and detail when reading non fiction text. Thus, Harvey and Goudvis assert the importance of teaching previewing strategies as well as the important features of nonfiction. The following “access tool” allows students to record the main idea (topic), its details. A third column could be added requiring the reader to respond or reflect. Harvey and Goudvis suggest using a young adult magazine to introduce the two column note taking as articles can contain several paragraph heading followed by two or three paragraphs containing details. The heading help students as they practice the two column note taking. For additional strategy lessons teaching main idea and detail in nonfiction text please see Harvey & Goudvis (2000) *Strategies That Work*.

Name _____
Date _____ Period _____

Determining Important Information

Directions: As you read, record the main idea or topic and important details next to it.

Main Idea	Detail

EFFECTIVE COMPREHENSION STRATEGY INSTRUCTION

Monitoring Comprehension and Applying Fix up Strategies

Tovani (2000) emphasizes teachers traditionally have taken on the responsibility of monitoring students' comprehension, and contends students have no problem surrendering this responsibility. Researchers assert students must take control and monitor their own comprehension and know when and how to apply fix up strategies (Routman 2003, Tovani 2000, Harvey & Goudvis 2000, Pearson, Dole, & Duffy 1992).

Tovani teaches her students six signals to look for when they read identifying confusion:

1. The voice inside their head is not interacting with text. One voice recites the text, the other voice converses with the text, asking question, agreeing or disagreeing with content. When they only hear themselves reciting words, they are confused or bored and won't remember what they have read.
2. The reader does not get a visual image from the words.
3. The reader's mind begins to wander and think about something else.
4. The reader can't remember what they've read.
5. Clarifying questions asked by the reader aren't answered.
6. The reader reencounters a character and doesn't remember when the character was introduced. (p. 38)

Tovani then passes out a sheet listing fix up strategies:

- Make a connection between the text and your life, knowledge of the world, or another text.
- Make a prediction
- Stop and think about what you have already read
- Ask yourself a question and try to answer it.
- Reflect in writing on what you have read.
- Visualize

EFFECTIVE COMPREHENSION STRATEGY INSTRUCTION

- Use print conventions
 - Retell what you've read.
 - Reread
 - Notice patterns in text structure.
-
- Adjust your reading rate: slow down or speed up. (p.51)

The comprehension constructor “access tool” on the following page allows student to record and work through their confusion, while identifying what strategies they are using to fix it.

Name _____
Date _____ Period _____

Comprehension Constructor

Directions: While reading use the following to record and identify confusion, and determine the fix up strategy necessary.

I am confused by (copy directly from the text whatever your confusion is): _____
_____ (Pg. #) _____

I am confused because (try to diagnose why you are confused): _____

I will try (record different fix-up strategies you try): _____

I understand (explain how your understanding is deeper as a result of the fix up strategies you've used): _____

I am confused by (copy directly from the text whatever your confusion is): _____
_____ (Pg. #) _____

I am confused because (try to diagnose why you are confused): _____

I will try (record different fix-up strategies you try): _____

I understand (explain how your understanding is deeper as a result of the fix up strategies you've used): _____

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

EFFECTIVE COMPREHENSION STRATEGY INSTRUCTION

Synthesizing

Harvey and Goudvis (2000) assert of all comprehension strategies, synthesizing is the most complex. When teaching this comprehension strategy explain to students they synthesizes what they've read when an "Aha" occurs, or when they experience a "lightbulb" moment. As new information is taken in, understanding is enhanced. The "Aha" or "lightbulb" moment occurs over time and transpires when a reader interacts with text. When synthesizing words and ideas from the text merge with the readers personal thoughts providing an opportunity for new insight. An opportunity to personally respond to what they've read allows students to ascertain how their thinking has changed (Harvey & Goudvis, 2000). The "access tool" on the next page allows students to record new ideas as they read text.

Name _____
Date _____ Period _____

Synthesizing

Quote or Picture from Text	New Idea

EFFECTIVE COMPREHENSION STRATEGY INSTRUCTION

Visualization

Alverman, Swafford, & Montero (2004), Allington (2001), Harvey and Goudvis (2000), Keene and Zimmerman (1997), and Routman (2003) define visualization or sensory images as the “movies” that are played in readers minds while reading text and assert visualization personalizes and keeps readers engaged. Harvey and Goudvis (2000) recommend introducing visualization by discussing books and movie adaptations making the strategy tangible for students. The “access tool” on the following page provides an opportunity for students to record their visualizations while reading by drawing or writing them.

Name _____
Date _____ Period _____

Visualization

Directions: While reading, highlight or write a sentence or two when you get a clear picture in your mind that helps you understand what your reading. In the space below, copy the words from the text and write down or draw what you visualize.

Quote from Text

What I Visualize

Quote from Text

What I Visualize

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

AutoSkill Academy of Reading

AutoSkill Academy of Reading is a research based software learning program designed to supplement a reading program. The program is developed and provided by AutoSkill International.

Student mastery of AutoSkill is based on five core areas identified by the National Reading Panel: phonemic awareness, sound-symbol association, visual match, auditory-visual match, and comprehension. Academy of Reading measures both processing speed and accuracy as part of the mastery criteria, focusing on automaticity (Focus on Research: Academy of Reading, 2002). According to the Focus on Research Report, "Academy of Reading uses a balanced approach to reading including: phonemic awareness; the subskills of reading for developing fluency in decoding different modalities of text; automaticity principle for ensuring automatic recognition of words and the mastery of the component skills; and a comprehension program that helps students develop fluency"(p. 5).

The author recommends the Academy of Reading as a supplemental program for secondary students needing remediation in word attack skills and should be used with comprehension strategy instruction. According to the AutoSkill guidelines, students must average at least ninety minutes of time in program each week to achieve success. How the program is implemented in the classroom has been left to teacher discretion, but the author recommends twenty minutes a day, five times a week, or thirty minutes a day , three times a week, with the rest of the class time used for strategic comprehension strategy instruction.

APPENDIX A

Reproducibles

Dear Parents/Guardians,

This year, students interests in popular culture will be incorporated in the classroom. Popular culture texts are often multimedia and include television shows, movies, music, video games, Internet, and magazines. Popular culture texts tend to motivate students because these texts are relevant to their lives.

The purpose of using these texts is to address curriculum standards in an innovative way, improving students literacy skills. Due to their nature, popular culture texts may address controversial issues such as drug and sexual abuse. If at any time students are uncomfortable with the issues addressed in class they may ask to be given an alternate assignment.

Please return the following consent slip back to me, indicating your consent for your child to participate in literacy activities involving popular culture. I'd appreciate that you share your reasons so I can plan a set of alternative texts for your student to read during the activities. Thank you for your support of my exploration of innovative ways of teaching.

Sincerely,

Students Name: _____

_____ I give consent for my child to participate in literacy activities with popular culture texts.

_____ I DO NOT give my consent for my child to participate in literacy activities with popular culture text. Here are the reasons:

Popular Culture Documentation Log Teacher/Student

Date	Mrs. Smith (Teacher)	Student

Adapted from: Xu, S.H. (2005). *Trading Cards to Comic Strips* .(p. 94) International Reading Association: Newark DE.

Popular Culture – Literacy Knowledge and Skills

Teacher		Students	
Text Genres	Literacy Knowledge & Skills	Text Genres	Literacy Knowledge & Skills
<u>Television Shows/Movies</u>		<u>Television Shows/Movies</u>	
<u>Music</u>		<u>Music</u>	
<u>Internet</u>		<u>Internet</u>	

Adapted from: Xu, S.H. (2005). *Trading Cards to Comic Strips* .(p. 94) International Reading Association: Newark DE.

Name _____

Date: _____ Period: _____

Character Report Card

Character	Courage Grade	Comments (Evidence)	Tenacity Grade	Comments (Evidence)

Zwiers, J. (2005). *Building reading comprehension habits in grades 6-12: A toolkit of classroom activities*. Newark, DE: International Reading Association

Character Report Card

Character	Caring Grade	Comments (Evidence)	Patriotic Grade	Comments (Evidence)

Zwiers, J. (2005). *Building reading comprehension habits in grades 6-12:
A toolkit of classroom activities*. Newark, DE: International Reading Association

Name _____

Date _____ Period _____

Asking Questions

Directions: While reading, highlight or mark a part of the text or picture where you have a question. Write down the part that surfaces your questions and then record your questions below. If you think you are headed toward an answer share that too.

Quote or Picture from Text**My Question****Possible Answers****Quote or Picture from Text****My Question****Possible Answers****Quote or Picture from Text****My Question****Possible Answers**

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

APPENDIX B – Popular Culture Sourcebook

Due to the ever changing nature of popular culture and websites found on the internet the following is actual text as found in Morrel (2004) for this one time use. This text was included because a variety of sources were listed. Furthermore all websites were current and in use as of April 30, 2006.

Popular Culture Sourcebook

APPENDIX C: Internet Resources for Teachers and Students

Xu (2005) included the majority of the websites below in her book, *Trading Cards to Comic Strips Popular Culture Texts and Literacy Learning in Grades K-8*. The author reviewed websites useful at the secondary level and has included them below.

Television Shows and Movies

Anime Web Turnpike: www.anipike.com

This website offers almost everything about Japanese animation (anime's). Anime' fan club listings, manga industry, manga series, fandom pages, fan fiction, and games. It offers links to websites about Japanes culture and to websites of other aimes and mangas (Xu, 2005).

The Internet Movie database: www.imdb.com

This website provides information about movies including casts, directors, producers, and movie synopsis. It also has information related to other media genres (e.g., music) and short biographies of entertainers.

Nielsen Media Research: www.nielsenmedia.com

This website offers a listing ranking top television programs on a weekly basis, illustrating the popularity of television shows and programs.

TV Tome: www.tvtome.com

This website offers information on past and current television shows and series. The information ranges from a summary of a show or series, to cast and crew information, schedules, and interesting facts about the show or series (Xu, 2005).

Music

Lyrics.com: www.lyrics.com

This website allows people to search the lyrics from an artist's album. Artists are listed in alphabetical order, and the music they perform ranges form soft rock to rap, pop songs, and country music (Xu, 2005).

Worldwide Music Resource: www.music.indiana.edu/music_resources

The website provides links to artists and musicians of all genres, plus types of music, research and study, journals and magazines, and composers.

Comic Books for Young Adults:

<http://ublib.buffalo.edu/libraries/units/lml/comics/pages/index.html>

This comprehensive website, which is intended for librarians can be sued by classroom teachers. Comic formats and genres, guidelines for selecting comic books, recommended comics, rationales for an inclusion of comic books and graphic novels in libraries, and other relevant Internet resources.

APPENDIX C: Internet Resources for Teachers and Students

DC Comics: www.dccomics.com

This website features comic books, graphic novels, and mangas. News is provided about the comics world, sneak previews of soon-to-be-released comics, and features some popular comics (Xu, 2005).

King Features Syndicate: www.kingfeatures.com/features/comics/comics.htm

This website offers a comprehensive list of popular comic strips. The website provides a brief history for each comic strip series and a search function allowing readers to find any strip published during the previous month (Xu, 2005).

E-Zines

gUrl.com: www.gurl.com

This website for teenage girls covers a wide range of topics, including music, movies and media, friends and family, school and careers, body image, and fashion and styles. For each topic, one can take a poll, join in an ongoing conversation, and read responses to posted questions or answer the questions (Xu, 2005).

John Labovitz's E-Zine-List: www.e-zine-list.com

The website provides a list of e-zines on almost every subject (Xu, 2005).

Teen Ink: <http://teenink.com>

This website features reviews of movies, music, and books. It also publishes essays in various genres, which are written by and for teens. Teen Inks is also published as a printed magazine (Xu, 2005).

High interest young adult literature:

http://www.reading.org/resources/tools/choices_young_adults.html

This website provides lists of books chosen yearly by young adults dating back to 1989. This list is updated yearly and appears in the November issue in the *Journal of Adolescent and Adult Literacy*.

APPENDIX D: High Interest Short Stories for Strategy Instruction and Practice

The following short stories are recommended by Smith (1991) to use when teaching irony. Smith includes a unit that is easily used or adapted for teaching the concept of unreliable narrators/irony.

The Somebody by Danny Santiago

Raymond's Run by Toni Cade Bambara

I Got a Name by Zachary Gold

That's What Happened to Me by Michael Feisser

My Sister's Marriage by Cynthia Marshall Rich

Suggested Anthologies:

The anthologies below contain several short stories easily used for comprehension strategy instruction.

Athletic Shorts: Chris Crutcher (ed.) 2002.

The athlete protagonists in these stories deal with racism, homophobia, and sexism. The characters are from a variety of ethnic heritages and vary in cognitive and physical ability levels. The stories challenge the typical dumb jock stereotype.

Shrapnel of the Heart Letters of Remembrances from the Vietnam Veterans Memorial: Laura Palmer (ed.) 1987.

Laura Palmer found many of the letters and messages that have been left at the Vietnam Memorial Wall. Palmer found and interviewed many of the people who left them. This book includes the messages and comments of those who wrote them. Many of the stories stir deep emotions and are examples of the reality of war for adolescents.

No Easy Answers: Short Stories About Teenagers Making Tough Choices: Donald R. Gallo (ed.) 1997.

The short stories in this book illustrate many of the moral issues facing teenagers today, including blackmail, peer pressure, abuse, and self-censorship. Many of the stories lack conclusions making them excellent for stimulating conversations in the classroom.

Necessary Noise: Stories About Our Families as They Really Are: Michael Cart (ed.) 2003.

Teens are able to relate to the characters in these stories dealing with all types of family issues as they face realistic situations all too familiar to today's teens. The stories question and challenge what it means, these days, to be in a family.

On the Fringe: Donald R. Gallo (ed.) 2001.

The stories in this book revolve around the adolescents who are considered geeks, unathletic, poor, loners or unattractive by current standards. The stories are all from the point of view of these adolescent outsiders as well as those who viewed others being bullied. The characters reveal how their perceptions change as they examine the situation.

CHAPTER V

SUMMARY AND CONCLUSION

Summary

It is essential secondary students engage in authentic reading experiences in classrooms preparing them for life beyond high school. Integrating popular culture in the classroom fosters student engagement in literacy activities; Thus, strengthening the literacy skills needed to succeed in and out of school. The author researched the use of popular culture specifically focusing on student' interests, a variety of comprehension strategies, and techniques implementing strategic comprehension instruction in the classroom, and concluded integrating popular culture with strategic comprehension instruction allows teachers to refine instructional strategies based upon the needs and culture of students. As a result, struggling students are provided an opportunity to improve comprehension skills to achieve growth in literacy skills.

The author relied upon research and research based effective literacy practices, as well as her own classroom experience to create a toolkit for teachers to use when implementing popular culture and effective comprehension strategy instruction in the classroom. The activities in the toolkit were chosen based upon the author's successful implementation in her classroom and researched based best practices.

Conclusions

Through review of research and literature along with successful implementation in her classroom the author concludes integrating popular culture with effective comprehension strategy instruction engages students in the classroom, providing genuine literacy experiences while students are learning to use effective comprehension strategies.

Alvermann et al (1999), Gee (2003), Morrel (2004), and Xu (2005) state popular culture in the classroom motivates students because it is relevant to their lives, specifically those whose literacy practices outside of school do not match traditional, in school literacy practices. Thus, students become “hooked” on literacy practices because these practices are relevant to their own life (Atwell, 1998; Morrel 2004; Xu, 2005).

While focusing on literature students can relate to, effective comprehension strategy instruction must train students to: use their background knowledge making connections; ask questions before, during, and after reading; predict; draw inferences; monitor their own comprehension; and apply fix up strategies when comprehension breaks down. As Tovani (2000) states, literacy instruction at the secondary level is at a “crossroads”. Current and future citizens must have the ability to analyze, validate, and ask logical questions rather than just memorize words. Using only traditional “school type” literature in the classroom will not prepare students for what they will face upon completion of school (Langer, 2001). Recognizing the above will be a step towards improving student achievement. However, policy makers, researchers, administrators, and teachers must work together reforming literacy instruction at the secondary level.

Recommendations

Policy makers have placed an emphasis on educators using research based best practices. Unfortunately, research on effective literacy practices at the secondary level is limited when compared to research at lower levels. There is a need for qualitative and quantitative studies conducted at the middle and secondary level. Educators and researchers should continue to explore the use of popular culture in the classroom. In addition, the project needs further use and testing with students.

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