



Utilizing Visual Thinking Strategies and Academic Conversation with *The Outsiders*

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This curriculum unit is recommended for:
Sixth Grade English Language Arts

Keywords: academic conversation, visual thinking strategies, close reading strategies, *The Outsiders*

Teaching Standards: See [Appendix 1](#) for teaching standards addressed in this unit.

Synopsis: Students will utilize close reading strategies and visual thinking strategies to analyze various “texts” to conduct academic conversation. Close reading strategies include chunking, annotation, and multiple reads will be used with the skill of visual thinking to analyze texts including traditional literature, infographics, poetry, websites, articles, and videos. Students will then have academic conversation focused around “Say Something” to share with small groups and whole class. After reading the novel *The Outsiders* by S.E. Hinson, students will view a variety of teacher determined images about societal divides to use close reading skills in conjunction with visual thinking strategies in order to have academic conversation in small groups. Students will then go on to create their own images of issues they feel strongly about in order to share with their classmates in a gallery walk. Honors students will conduct a mock trial of Ponyboy Curtis to determine his guilt or innocence based on information found in the text.

*I plan to teach this unit during the coming year to **85** students **6th grade English Language Arts.***

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Utilizing Visual Thinking Strategies and Academic Conversation with The Outsiders

Sarah Anne Korenyik

I. Introduction

“I didn’t know what I thought until I said it out loud”ⁱ The student quoted in Frey and Fisher’s article is one that is shared by students and adults alike. I have noticed with my students throughout many grade levels and years that reading a piece of literature and hoping that a student, often times working alone, dissects and understands the material is simply not enough. In my experience, even teachers oftentimes need to have a conversation with a peer in order to fully develop an understanding of an idea. If adults, with years of school experience, excel by working together to understand complex texts and ideas, why are we not affording our students the same opportunities?

One of my jobs as a teacher is to help my students develop skills to grasp text information and propel them to being college and career ready (CCR). However, simply being able to read is not enough to have a student be considered “college and career ready,” students also need to be able to incorporate several other skills in order to be successful moving towards a high school diploma, college, and eventually the workforce. As Zweirs and Crawford state, “after all, our duty as teachers is to prepare, to our utmost abilities, each student for a successful life-no matter how misguided and disjointed the educational system is.”ⁱⁱ In a study titled “Are They Really Ready to Work? Employer’s Perspectives on the Basic Knowledge and Applied Skills of New Entrants to the 21st Century U.S. Workforce” conducted by several nonprofit organizations, the top four “most important” job skills are the following: Professionalism/Work Ethic, Oral and Written Communications, Teamwork/Collaboration, and Critical Thinking/Problem Solving.ⁱⁱⁱ Employers are noticing a gap in these skills as students move into the work force, and utilizing close reading strategies, visual thinking strategies (VTS), and academic conversation incorporates several of these sought after skills to promote the deeper connections and understanding needed by students in order to be ready for their future.

II. Rationale

The 2016-2017 school year is my third year in the Charlotte-Mecklenburg school district as well as my third year at Northwest. In my three years, I have been granted the opportunity to enjoy several different types of professional development and committees within my school, district, and across the state. I enjoy these professional development opportunities deeply, as I believe they strengthen my teaching ability, my ability to grow students, connect with students, as well as network with fellow teachers. The most

fulfilling and job relevant opportunities have come from the professional developments involving close reading strategies and technology.

Last school year (2015-2016), I was introduced to close reading and a variety of ways to incorporate this technique in my classroom. Close reading was part of a district wide initiative presented by the Instructional Leadership Team (ILT). Northwest also implemented “Close Reading Days” once a quarter for all subject areas, including the arts departments, to allow teachers and students alike to realize that close reading was possible in all subject areas and a necessary skill, regardless of what you hoped to do in the future. While I had some understanding and already used many techniques without actually realizing what I was doing, the professional development really got my attention and worked wonders in my classroom. My fellow 6th grade teacher and I employed many strategies such as multiple reads with a different designated purpose, annotating, and working with peers to discuss answers to open ended questions about a text. My students responded to this by embracing it and really enjoying text in a way I had never seen before. While many would groan about multiple reads, in the end the conversation they exhibited within their small table groups and whole classroom discussion amazed them as well as me, and many even admitted it helped them connect deeper with the text and see things in ways they had never noticed before.

I had already reflected on these ideas from last year and ways that I would use them all year long to boost my students’ skills and I was excited to roll this out early. Upon the arrival of the school year, my principal asked if I wanted to join the ILT and I answered with a resounding yes! I was so pleased to join two other teachers, our media specialists, the academic facilitator, and our principal and assistant principal for this opportunity to continue my professional learning and to help spread the word to my colleagues. This year’s initiative continues to expand on close reading skills, however this time students will be engaging in academic conversations.

For my personal classroom, this is a skill I try to incorporate already. I have students write answers and verbally share, even if it’s just with an elbow buddy, quite frequently. The book *Academic Conversations: Classroom Talk That Fosters Critical Thinking and Content Understandings* by Jeff Zwiers and Marie Crawford is being read and discussed at our monthly meetings with fellow ILT teams from across the district. This thought provoking book is proposing new techniques and ways to open up conversation and push academics into the conversation for all disciplines. Academic conversations is not a new idea, however, it provides scaffolding for all students and for teachers, especially ones new to the field, on how to handle the bumps as well as ways to avoid it.

Quite frequently, students in groups will begin focused and may say a sentence or two about the desired topic, however, they veer off onto what weekend plans are or what happened on a television show last night. This book offers simple solutions to this problem, and one of the biggest ways to avoid this problem is by having a visual piece

that replaces the traditional text. In our current digital state, students are often not simply reading words on a paper, but rather digesting complex thoughts and messages through an image alone or combined with short pieces of text.

This idea really resonated with me in that I use Visual Thinking Strategies (VTS) in my classroom quite frequently and it is honestly one of my favorite things that I do all year long, even above reading novels with my class! All of my students have an opportunity to shine, especially some of my lower level students who often feel that do not have anything to contribute to English Language Arts due to the fact they may not comprehend text as well as their peers or simply feel “dumb.” This also allows my high flyers to be challenged, which is something they are not acquainted with, and see pictures from a different perspective. The idea of image as text also correlates nicely with the seminar of Literacy and Literacies due to the fact that the sheer definition of “literacy” can incorporate many different elements, which we discussed at length amongst 14 teachers and still could not arrive at one definitive answer.

My hope throughout this curriculum unit is to challenge the preconceived idea of literacy by introducing new forms of literacy through visuals-art, infographics, scenes from a piece of drama, etc.—and have students close read these items along with traditional text. I hope to challenge my students with these concepts by asking them to have academic conversations and to create their own piece of literature, whether it is the traditional written type or not, and have fellow students close read and converse about these creations.

III. Demographics

My school is Northwest School of the Arts (also referred to as simply Northwest or NWSA) near uptown Charlotte, North Carolina. Northwest is a magnet school of the arts within the Charlotte-Mecklenburg school district that serves grades 6-12. Our overall population is 1051 students with 590 students in high school and 461 in middle school. Our student body consists of 25.7% male and 74.3% female; 49.9% African-American students, 34.5% White students, 8.2% Hispanic, 1.8% Asian, and about 4.8% of our students come from other races and ethnicities.^{iv} Our population has fluctuated over the last year, which presents a new variety of backgrounds, experiences, and achievements and can change how a teacher presents instruction in the classroom. Northwest’s unique arts program include visual arts, dance, costume design, theater, orchestra, and chorus, with several sub-classes offered within these strands. These strands of art classes are known as the students’ majors (some students are double majors). Students are required to audition to enter the school, as well as enter the lottery. After passing these rigorous processes, students can continue to attend Northwest as long as they are passing their majors classes and must re-audition and pass before entering 9th grade. Our school has a wide variety of students from all walks of life who go on to achieve amazing feats at young ages.

Northwest has a unique culture that encompasses and encourages all students to celebrate their unique ideas, beliefs, and feelings. The culture allows students to express themselves in ways that I have never previously experienced, allowing students to thrive and articulate a desire to share their ideas in several ways, often times through their majors. Students also express themselves through written word, even for questions that do not have poetry or lyrical requirements. Every day I am amazed by their drive and willingness to express themselves without hurting others.

I teach three classes of sixth grade Language Arts to the same students every day. I have one honors class with thirty students and two standard classes with twenty-six and twenty-eight students. I have five students with 504 Plans. My honors classes are at or above reading level, while my standards classes are at or below grade level reading. This unit is intended for sixth grade language arts, but could be modified for seventh grade classes. My hope for this curriculum unit is that students will be able to develop connections to the studied pieces throughout the year by adapting a variety of close reading and academic conversation skills to enable them to have a better understanding of the text, as well as a deeper, more meaningful connection on several levels with the studied items.

Content Background

At the start of the school year, we begin a list of academic vocabulary that ranges in words from theme, genre, text structure, author's purpose, etc. and must be used within a Tic-Tac-Toe board for student choice. This also serves as a basis for when we begin specifically studying different types of literature. In the beginning of the year, before my classes begin reading any literature, we go over genre and discuss theme, persuasion, main idea, elements of nonfiction, and other content specific vocabulary. This is referenced throughout the year, and students can look back on their notes within their Interactive Notebooks.

Students also work throughout the year in groups, not only to help each other learn, but to also to improve on reading and writing skills, as well as work on interpersonal skills. These groups blend nicely with the ideas introduced this school year of academic conversation. I switch these groups up periodically to allow new relationships to form, as well as fresh ideas and conversations. These small groups also allow for lower level students to be near a high flyer and receive support as well as a glimpse at how the high flyer thinks and processes information.

Students will also work on Chromebooks to conduct research and create assignments for class. Our district has allotted one Chromebook per student. As of this school year, students are allowed to carry their Chromebooks from class to class, including art classes,

allowing students to research any questions that comes to mind and move some lessons from whole group to individualized learning and pace. Students are familiar with the usage of Chromebooks and use them throughout the year for various purposes within all their classes.

I require a binder that doubles as an Interactive Notebook (IN), as previously mentioned. The back of the binder is divided into five tabs; syllabus/forms, vocabulary, bellringer, notes, and EOG prep. Students keep track of all their vocabulary from the tic-tac-toe board in the second tab, and bellringers (which also reviews academic vocabulary and are similar to EOG style questions. Each question is tied to Common Core Standards, as well). Students' IN are used for class forms we reference frequently, practice of skills used in class, as well as foldables to be referenced throughout the year. These materials are needed in every class, as we are working on something within it every day.

In addition to the IN, our Holt-McDougal textbooks have what is called an Interactive Reader. This workbook already includes several close reading and comprehension questions built into texts that we read in class. Students can write in this workbook, which is great for practicing annotating, which is another great close reading skills. The Interactive Reader contains paired fiction and informational texts, as well as variety of graphs and charts. I have previously had groups work together on some of the more difficult items to have discussions, but this year I plan on having specific questions to use in conjunction with the ready-made questions to help facilitate academic conversations.

Finally, one of the biggest pieces of data that I have to drive my instruction comes from MAP testing in the fall (mid to late September), winter, and spring. MAP testing measure their various skills that are tested heavily on the EOG. In the reports generated by the test, we (student, parents, and I) learn their Lexile level, students' areas of strength, and which areas students struggle in. This can include informational text, vocabulary, and fictional text, to just name a few of the skills mentioned in the reports. Students receive a copy of a goal setting report to set their own goals and a specific way to move forward in trying to improve on this goal. This test is valuable as I look at the rest of the school year and figure out which areas as a whole group needs improvement as well as which students may need additional practice. One way to gain this practice is through Compass Learning, which most students really enjoy since it is fun and feels like a video game rather than a learning game.

IV. Objectives/Standards

In this unit, I hope to familiarize my students with critically reading every item of literature they encounter. First, we will need to define what literature even is and what all it could incorporate. Students, throughout the year, will connect closely to various types of literature we outline in our group discussions. I hope that collectively we can break down the barrier of what is considered text in the traditional sense of literature (novels,

short stories, etc.). We will also need to introduce ways to critically read by using close reading techniques, which many students are familiar with from previous school years. As a class, we will need to discuss expectations and what close reading is and is not. In addition to close reading techniques, we will need to introduce academic conversation, which will be a relatively new concept. By introducing norms, visual writing aids, and question stems, I believe that students will grasp the new concept of academic conversation quickly and easily.

The combination of close reading and academic conversation will play a vital role in the third component of my unit's focus, Visual Thinking Strategies (VTS). I believe this skill will help students succeed in all areas of their core classes and further their abilities on their End of Grade (EOG) tests. The three skills allow for deeper connections and meaning to form, thus increasing students' engagement with the "text" in whatever form that may take on. The main type of "text" I would like to have students practice outside of traditional literature will be through pictures. Looking at the entirety of the picture will also aid when students examine graphs or timelines, for example, in math, science, or social studies.

This unit is intended to cover a wide range and variety of skills within the sixth grade Language Arts Common Core Standards (CCSS). The main standards focused on this unit are Reading Informational Text and Reading Literature, particularly 6.1-citing evidence, Writing, Speaking and Listening, and Language. A complete list outlining in detail the standards used can be found in Appendix 1: Implementing Teaching Standards. The sixth grade skills are similar to seventh and eighth grade language arts skills as well, so ideas found within this unit can be built upon in the upcoming years. This unit will incorporate reading fictional and informational text, writing, speaking and listening, and would cover other standards from other subject areas.

V. Content Research

The subject of literacy is one that is dear to my heart; I have always loved reading and analyzing text, making connections to the text, as well as imagining the text in my mind.

However, not all students share this love. I went to school during the time where it was a traditional novel study; students read the piece, answering questions in a notebook from a pre-made reading guide, and answering a few questions during class discussion. For me, this worked wonderfully and held my attention, however I remember glancing around the classroom and noticing few others had the enthusiasm I held for the novel. As I became a teacher, I wondered how else I could engage the "other" students, however, in my young teacher mind, I was not sure there really was a different way to teach a novel.

Last school year when I was introduced to the ways of actually utilizing close reading beyond just students read independently, and I was amazed by the impact relatively small changes would have on the entire class. A majority of my high flyers were already excelling using the more traditional novel study, however in my standards classes, where

students are often below grade level, isolated work was not creating any type of excitement or work production. After implementing a few changes using close reading strategies such as having the opportunity to work with a small group over multiple reads to find the different parts of a text and defend their answers and understandings had students growing leaps and bounds within a short time.

The seminar of Literacy and Literacies drew me in because I was curious about the other “literacies” in the title. On the night of our first session, a group of 14 professionals could not agree on what literacy actually was. Over the course of the weeks of discussion that followed, we still could not arrive at a definitive answer, but we all learned to cooperatively work together on our journey of all the types of literacy and how best to incorporate them in our various classrooms. Hearing all the other teachers speak of their own experiences, I noted that language was a big issue across the age groups and content areas; it was an issue in not knowing the language (having English Language Learners, ELLs, in the classrooms), not knowing the academic vocabulary for the content, and not knowing how to engage peers in conversation, either academic or social.

The lack in ability is often not because students do not want to talk to their peers, but due to not being allowed to have academic conversations with their peers:

Academic talk is most scarce where it is most needed—in classrooms with high numbers of linguistically and culturally diverse student. These students...tend to speak nonmainstream versions of English and come from low-income backgrounds. Often, because of test-score pressures, diverse students are placed in classes that emphasize quiet practice of isolated skills and facts. Several studies have shown that teachers tend to give students from low-income backgrounds fewer opportunities to talk about content and engage in critical thinking activities than teachers of higher-socioeconomic students.^v

The lack in ability, often due to the diversity of linguistic skills, can create a lack of student interest and, at times, a fear that the classroom may turn into a room that seems to lack classroom management. These factors cause many teachers to shy away from any attempt of academic conversation, myself included in previous situations; “Faced with the possibility that classroom control will devolve into chaos, some teachers limit opportunities for interactions between students in order to keep the lesson moving”^{vi} However,

Middle and high school students are uniquely positioned to engage in sustained interactions and to work with one another for developmental reasons. Students at this age have attained a level of understanding about the abilities of their peers and are similarly learning about their own abilities. Much of this learning about one’s identity occurs in the company of others, a critical consideration because there is a decline in self-concept after the age of 12.^{vii}

The importance of allowing students to work is necessary for them to grow by recognizing their own abilities as well as their peers. By ensuring that a language purpose of content (specific to that day's lesson), language (academic vocabulary), and social (example-work together and listen) goals has been set at the beginning of class allows for a focus within the small groups, thus lessening the likelihood of off task conversation.^{viii}

Verbally stating the objectives and vocabulary, in addition to writing it on the board or having a word wall available in the room, reinforces the necessity of the vocabulary and is an easy way to scaffold for students who may not be as familiar with the language, particularly ELLs.^{ix} The beauty of academic conversation is that everyone benefits from this type of learning; high flyers have their ideas challenged, ELLs are able to learn and utilize academic vocabulary in a meaningful way, and the middle students have an opportunity to grow their pre-existing language skills. Frey and Fisher state "talking provides students with practice with the language and an opportunity to clarify their understanding in the presence of their peers. As students talk, teachers gain a greater understanding of students' mastery of the subject matter."^x

However, this conversation does not just happen overnight. Prior to engaging students, I believe it is crucial that the teacher practices this skill with fellow teachers. Oftentimes, teachers are already having these academic conversations in their Professional Learning Communities (PLCs), staff meetings, and professional developments. This places the teacher in the students' seat and serves as a reminder of just how difficult it can be to think about a text and share information based on that text. To move this activity into the classroom, teachers need to establish a set of norms, or rules, for the academic conversation. Zweir and Crawford provide seven norms that you can utilize and add to (see Appendix 2). It is also crucial to provide sentence frames and sample questions students can use to ask each other to gain an understanding of each other's learning, especially for ELLs and low performing students. This prevents students from simply stating "I don't know" and having one student provide all the information. This is also where having the academic vocabulary displayed is helpful because this allows students to put it to action! At the end of the academic conversation, it is also crucial to allow students to reflect on their work for the day. Frey and Fisher provide a great sentence frame, "my role in the group was _____. I was most proud of _____. One skill I need to improve is _____. I learned that _____."^{xi} This reflection could serve as a great exit ticket to show not only a positive and a negative on the student performance today, but also showing what students learned that day.

The other key component of my unit is the usage of visual thinking strategies (VTS). Visual thinking strategies integrates close reading, but not in the traditional text sense, with arts and academic conversation; "With visual literacy — the ability to both understand and make visual statements — we become sensitized to the world around us, the relationships and systems of which we are a part. Visual literacy integrates personal experience and imagination with social experience, technology and aesthetics."^{xii} The ability to combine these different aspects of our students' lives is crucial according to

research by Deborah S. Peterson of Portland State University "...research indicating arts education increases mathematics, reading, and thinking skills in addition to improving social skills, flexible thinking, and motivating students to want to learn. Further, arts education improves the school environment, a key condition to successful learning for youth of color."^{xiii} At Northwest, arts education is crucial.

It is a fact that students apply to go to school there, meaning that typically they have some sort of arts background. However, the continuation of these arts programs keeps many students in school and engaged in a lesson, even outside of their arts major. According to McLoughlin & Krakowski, "Theorists have emphasized that visual thinking is a fundamental and unique part of our perceptual processes and that visualization is a partner to the verbal and symbolic ways we have of expressing ideas and thoughts,"^{xiv} showing just how crucial it is to all students to have some sort of exposure to visual thinking and it is another tier of all of our learning. McLoughlin & Krakowski go on to state that "more effective working memory processing capacity is available if learners work in multiple modes, such as text and graphics"^{xv} Utilizing multiple ways of presenting and allowing students to think benefits all of my students in the long run, especially when combined with the trifecta of close reading, academic conversations, and visual thinking strategies.

VI. Teaching Strategies

I teach language arts every day to the same group of students. I plan to use components of this unit throughout the year, but will introduce it at the beginning of year, at about the fourth week of school. There are several strategies I implement to analyze and close read text in hopes of making connections and facilitating academic conversations that include:

- Think-pair-share
- Socratic Seminar
- Jigsaw
- Gallery Walks
- Peer editing and review
- Analyzing literary elements
- Cooperative Learning
- Blended Learning
- Notice and Notes* signpost
- Visual Thinking Strategies
- Academic Conversation

While not all of these may be used, and there are a variety of ways to utilize these strategies, I will specifically map out how I intend to use each strategy specifically to get the desired results. It will take some front loading, such as introducing what academic

conversation is and the vocabulary associated with it, and norms for the conversation to occur, it will be worth the work up front to allow students to grow themselves. Academic conversations and visual thinking strategies have several different ways to be used in the classroom, and each situation is different. I will explain how I use it in my classroom, because I know it works for my students and within what I am comfortable having in my classroom.

Visual Thinking Strategies are used to help with critical thinking and deepen connections to the piece of work being analyzed. It is based off of three questions:

- 1) “What is going on in this _____” (fill in the blank for what you’re looking at, example-painting, picture, etc.)
- 2) What do you see that makes you say that (have evidence and proof for what you say. The catch phrase “Don’t talk smack, bring it on back!” is utilized in my class quite frequently. Students know that this means they need to have proof before they can just say anything within the work.
- 3) What more can you find. This requires students to look deeper at the item and find something more to add to their previous thoughts about the piece.

Students typically do the first two questions during a 10-12 minute timed independent writing portion of class. Then we have a class discussion, where students must share their answers. Students draw a line where they stopped writing on their paper before finally, the third part is when students can write new ideas from hearing other students’ answers, or continuing off their previous ideas. My students really enjoy this and get excited to work on this, even if it means writing for almost ten minutes straight! Additional ideas for norms while completing VTS can be found in appendix two.

The final component, academic conversation, is one that also has several different techniques in order to pull students in to want to share their information as they are analyzing text. For language arts, I have adopted several different strategies found from within *Academic Conversations* by Zwier and Crawford. After establishing the norms (Appendix 2), I use some sort of anticipation guide for most items (even for reading shorter items, including short articles or political cartoons), and my most successful implementation has been “Say Something.” (Appendix 2). Students must be able to complete any of the five options about the text they are reading, or else they must re-read that chunk of text again. I typically make my students write their “say something” on sticky notes after every two paragraphs. My students enjoy the ability to share their differing ideas with each other, as well as help each other out when needed. I also have large posters of sentence starters available throughout my room to give students ideas of how to begin sentences or to come up with ideas of appropriate comments to add to the academic conversation.

VII. Classroom Activities

I intend to teach this unit to my students in the spring in conjunction with our third and final novel study of *The Outsiders* by S.E. Hinton. Prior to beginning this novel, students will have become familiar with academic vocabulary in addition to close reading strategies, such as annotating, chunking, multiple reads, etc., visual thinking strategies, and academic conversation. They will have used these strategies for a variety of texts and images.

Materials needed in order for this unit to be successful:

- Copies of *The Outsiders* by S.E. Hinton. A class set is fine since all reading will take place in class.
- Audiobook of *The Outsiders* (Optional, but a great addition for lower performing students)
- *The Outsiders* the movie
- Chromebooks (or other technology)
- “Nothing Gold Can Stay” by Robert Frost
- Infographics, pictures, short articles, etc. of divides in society
- Copies of “Say Something”
- Sticky Notes

While reading, I encourage students to complete “Say Something” in addition to completing a *Notice and Note* reading log of signposts noticed throughout the novel as we are reading/listening. I will be stopping the novel periodically to have students complete a think-pair-share of their “Say Somethings” and signposts findings throughout the lesson and allow whatever conversation stems from there to organically happen. As the novel progresses, students become more engrossed in the text and have more to share, especially when the rumble happens. I don’t note exactly where I will stop in these daily outlines, as each class period is different.

Day One: Students will begin by answering an anticipation guide of agree/disagree statements relating to the upcoming novel. Students will also use alpha boxes to associate words with the sixties. Upon completing this, students will break into three small group stations completing “Say Something” at each station;

one will be exploring the PBS website on the 1960s

(<http://www.pbs.org/opb/thesixties/index.html>),

a second station will be reading the Scholastic Scope article at

http://www.onlinedigitalpubs.com/display_article.php?id=783057

finally, the last group will be exploring music of the time by watching performances by Elvis Presley and The Beatles.

After each group has gone to the three stations, I will ask students to find the most surprising change from the 1960s to now and if they see any similarities. We will also

discuss as a whole group their findings and any of the “Say Somethings” found in the groups, recording questions and predictions on an anchor chart in the room.

Day Two: Students will read and listen to chapter 1. Students will complete the three-question comprehension check as their ticket out the door.

Day Three: Students will read and listen to chapter 2. Students will complete the three-question comprehension check as their ticket out the door.

Day Four: Students will read and listen to chapter 3. Students will complete the three-question comprehension check as their ticket out the door.

Day Five: Students will read and listen to chapter 4. Students will complete the three-question comprehension check as their ticket out the door.

Day Six: Students will read and annotate “Nothing Gold Can Stay” by Robert Frost with the teacher. Students will work in small groups first finding what they believe to be the meaning of the items within the poem. As a whole group, we will discuss the actual meaning of the poem.

Day Seven: Students will read and listen to chapter 5. Students will complete the three-question comprehension check as their ticket out the door.

Day Eight: Students will read and listen to chapter 6. Students will complete the three-question comprehension check as their ticket out the door.

Day Nine: Students will read and listen to chapters 7 and 8. Students will complete the three-question comprehension check as their ticket out the door.

Day Ten: Students will read and listen to chapters 9 and 10. Students will complete the three-question comprehension check as their ticket out the door.

Day Eleven: Students will read and listen to chapters 11 and 12. Students will complete the three-question comprehension check as their ticket out the door.

Day Twelve: After completion of the novel, I will set up stations around my classroom for students to complete various “texts” to analyze using close reading strategies and VTS.

Station One: Infographic on bullying (<http://i55.tinypic.com/23j37si.png>) Students will take note of surprising facts and other noticings using “Say Something”

Station Two: Infographic on youth today (<http://www.master-of-education.org/americas-youth/>) Students will take

note of surprising facts and other noticings using “Say Something”

Station Three: Fact Sheet on Youth Violence

(http://www.cdc.gov/violenceprevention/pdf/yv_factsheet2012-a.pdf)

Students will take note of surprising facts and other noticings using “Say Something”

Station Four: Scene from *The Outsiders* the movie depicting the ending rumble. Students will notice the violence (or lack thereof) by the characters and notice the build up to the rumble. Students will think about what changes could have been made prior to this scene

Station Five: Students will view a picture or painting of the teacher’s choice (This will be chosen at the teacher’s discretion, depending on the grade level and maturity of students.) Students will complete VTS on the painting/picture.

After completing all five stations, the small groups will come up with a theme they believe all the stations have in common as well as how it all connects to *The Outsiders*.

Day Thirteen and Day Fourteen: Students will next come up with their own social issue they feel strongly about, for example the protests that occurred in Charlotte earlier in the school year, refugees, education, women’s rights, etc. Students will research this topic and will be responsible for creating some type of visual to share with the class. This visual could be an infographic they create using facts they find (venngage.com is a great free tool to use to create infographics with premade layouts), a piece of art, a skit, etc. All students will be responsible and need to have a set role in the group. Students will practice self and peer assessing their work within the group (student have this rubric in their IN).

Day Fifteen: Students will present their visual to the class. The classmates will assess students based on meeting the criteria (students will have a grading rubric)

Day Sixteen and Seventeen: For honors students, I will add in an additional piece for differentiation, which is a trial for Ponyboy Curtis. Students will be divided up into two groups of 16 consisting of two prosecutors, two defenders, and 12 jurors. I will act as the judge. All students are responsible for finding evidence for either side (the jurors can choose which side to help, but ideally they would divide equally into six helping the prosecution and six helping the defenders). Students would need to have several pieces of evidence arguing why Ponyboy is guilty or innocent, taking into consideration all parts of his life, the events leading up to the murder in the park, and his actions after the murder. Students would also need to research the different types of murder, decide what to charge Ponyboy with, as well as what the possible sentence could be and what they recommend his sentence and where he would serve it, if found guilty.

This exercise will require quite a bit of cooperation between a rather large group of students, as well as a conversation to convince the judge of Ponyboy's guilt or innocence. Oftentimes students are conflicted over whether or not Ponyboy is guilty, as well as their feelings about Johnny. This is a unique experience for these students to think about the future of someone not too much older than they are. Also, several students have told me they wish to become lawyers when they grow up, so this is their chance to get an early practice!

Assessment

Students will be assessed throughout the unit, both informally and formally. CMS' grading policy is that informal assignments consist of 35% of a student's grade, while a formal assignment weighs more heavily at 65%. The informal assessments will include the short ticket out the door comprehension questions, the sticky notes from the "Say Somethings," as well as daily classroom discussions of the novel. I will also collect my students' *Notice and Note* signpost reading log they should have been completing as the novel progressed. An additional informal assignment will be the first day's center work, where students were answering questions at each station in addition to their "Say Somethings." A final informal assessment will be the analysis of the various images and information from the group work from day twelve, consisting of "Say Somethings" and a short paragraph stating the connection to *The Outsiders*.

The first formal assessment will consist of the work completed in groups to create the original visual created to express the newfound information of a societal divide. This assessment will take into consideration the work completed by each individual student according to their role, the self and peer assessment, as well as the quality of the work produced. The second formal assessment will be the presentation of the visual to the class. This will consist of a presentation rubric that students are already familiar with from a prior project in addition to the class grade given during the presentation.

My honor students will receive a third formal grade for their participation in the Ponyboy trial. Students will again self and peer assess, as well as submit their findings from the research conducted in class. Students will utilize their self and peer assessment rubric they are already familiar with. I will also incorporate my own grading based on the presentation rubric used previously in other projects. I expect my students will enjoy this task and take it quite seriously, which their grades will reflect.

Appendix 1: Implementing Teaching Standards-NC-CCSS^{xvi}

Reading Literature and Informational Text Standards

We will use RL 1 and RI 1 to cite textual evidence to support analysis of what the text says explicitly as well as inferences drawn from the text. This will be used with the novel comprehension questions, “say somethings,” center work, and the mock trial for honors students. RL 2 and RI 2 determine a theme or central idea of a text and how it is conveyed through particular details, which can again be seen in the comprehension questions, “say somethings”, and mock trial. RL 5 discusses how a scene fits into the overall theme of the story, which will be noted in the mock trial. RL discusses the differences in one form of text compared to the other, which students will be noticing in the center work viewing the scene of the rumble from the movie. For RI7 discusses presenting information in different forms, which students will do when creating their own visual. RI and RL 10 discusses complexity of text, which students will be reading in the novel and accompanying pieces, such as the poem, article, infographics, etc.

Speaking and Listening Standards

SL 1 deals with working collaboratively with peers, which we will incorporate all the sub-standards, particularly focusing on SL 1b, c, d. These standards are found in use whenever there is academic conversation or collaborative work, which is almost daily in the unit.

SL 2 discusses interpreting text from a variety of forms and explaining it, which students will utilize in the center work before and after the novel, as well as in the creation of their own visual aid

SL 4 discusses finding claims and sharing them with the class, utilizing eye contact and volume, which students will do when creating their own visual and honors students will accomplish during their mock trial.

SL 5 utilizes components to clarify ideas and understandings using multimedia components, which students will use in their creation of the visual.

SL 6 discusses using command of the English Language, which students will do in all of their presentations.

Writing Standards

W 1 is using evidence to support claims, which be used daily in the comprehension questions, “say somethings,” creating a visual and the mock trial.

W 9 discusses using evidence from the text to support analysis, which will be used daily in the comprehension questions, “say somethings,” creating a visual and the mock trial.

Appendix 2-Resources within the classroom for teachers and students

Shared Conversation Norms:

- We listen to each other.
- We share our own ideas and explain them.
- We respect one another's ideas, even if they are different.
- We respectfully disagree and try to see the other view.
- We let others finish explaining their ideas without interrupting.
- We try to come to some agreement in the end.
- We take turns and share air time.^{xvii}

Table 1 VTS Teaching Methods

- All students have the opportunity to express their opinions about the artistic piece.
- Students all receive positive affirmations for their contributions in the form of paraphrasing and pointing by the facilitator.
- Students learn to value each other's comments as a means of viewing the art for multiple meanings.
- The facilitator maintains neutrality but shows interest in each comment. • Each participant comment is acknowledged.
- The facilitator points as people talk, seeking to confirm understanding but also keeping eyes on the image.
- Teachers encourage active participation. • Instructors continually point at the painting, maintaining the group's focus on the art piece in front of them.^{xviii}

Table 2: Say Something^{xix}

Before you begin, decide how you will tackle the text with your partner:

- Chunk the text.
- Silent reading? Aloud? Take turns?

Begin reading the first chunk.

1. With your partner, decide who will "say something" first and who will "say something" second for each chunk of the text.
2. When you say something, do one or more of the following:
 - make a prediction

- ask a question
- clarify something you had misunderstood
- make a comment
- make a connection

3. If you can't do one of those five things, then you need to reread the section.

Make a Predication

- I predict that ...
- I bet that ...
- I think that ...
- Since this happened (fill in detail), then I bet the next thing that is going to happen is ...
- Reading this part makes me think that this (fill in detail) is about to happen ...
- I wonder if ...

Ask a Question

- Why did ...
- What's this part about ...
- How is this (fill in detail) like this (fill in detail) ...
- What would happen if ...
- Why ...
- Who is ...
- What does this section (fill in detail) mean ...
- Do you think that ...
- I don't get this part here ...

Make a Connection

- This reminds me of ...
- This part is like ...
- This character (fill in name) is like (fill in name) because ...
- This is similar to ...
- The differences are ...
- I also (name something in the text that has also happened to you) ...
- I never (name something in the text that has never happened to you) ...
- This character makes me think of ...
- This setting reminds me of ...

Clarify Something

- Oh, I get it ...
- Now I understand
- This makes sense now ...
- No, I think it means ...
- I agree with you. this means ...
- At first I thought (fill in detail), but now I think ...
- This part is really saying ...

Make a Comment

- This is good because ...
- This is hard because ...
- This is confusing because ...
- I like the part where ...
- I don't like this part because ...
- My favorite part so far is ...
- I think that ...

Annotated Bibliography for Students and Teachers

Casner-Lotto, Jill, and Linda Barrington. *Are They Really Ready to Work? Employers' Perspectives on the Basic Knowledge and Applied Skills of New Entrants to the 21st Century US Workforce*. Partnership for 21st Century Skills. 1 Massachusetts Avenue NW Suite 700, Washington, DC 20001, 2006.

This source was used to find information about what skills employers are looking for out of students entering the workforce. This study indicates the four top skills in addition to the noted gaps based on the amount of education received by prospective employees.

Frey, Nancy and Douglas Fisher. "Structuring the Talk: Ensuring Academic Conversations Matter." *The Clearing House* 84(2011).

This article is a great read for teachers looking to begin utilizing academic conversation in the classroom. This article provides quick sentence starters that can be used in any classroom.

McLoughlin, Catherine, and Krzysztof Krakowski. "Technological tools for visual thinking: What does the research tell us." In *Apple University Consortium Academic and Developers Conference*. 2001.

This article discusses Visual Thinking and why it is important and needed in the classroom.

Peterson, Deborah S. "A Culturally Responsive Alternative to "Drill and Kill" Literacy Strategies: Deep Roots, Civil Rights." In *Multicultural Perspectives* 16(4). 2014.

This article explores how arts education is important in classrooms, especially with African American students with low academic performance.

Reilly, Jo Marie, Jeffrey Ring, and Linda Duke. "Visual thinking strategies: a new role for art in medical education." *Fam Med* 37, no. 4 (2005).

I used this article for the norms of Visual Thinking Strategies, as well as to gain a further understanding of the importance of VTS in all classrooms, regardless of the content or age group.

Zwiers, Jeff and Marie Crawford. *Academic Conversations: Classroom Talk That Fosters Critical thinking and Content Understands* (Maine: Stenhouse Publishers, 2011).

This fantastic book is utilized for reading and discussion in Charlotte Mecklenburg Schools Instructional Leadership Team meetings. It has ways to begin academic conversations in your classroom, norms, sentence starters, and activities to use in any classroom, regardless of content or age group.

ⁱ Frey, Nancy and Douglas Fisher. "Structuring the Talk: Ensuring Academic Conversations Matter." *The Clearing House* 84(2011): 19.

ⁱⁱ Zwiers, Jeff and Marie Crawford. *Academic Conversations: Classroom Talk That Fosters Critical thinking and Content Understands* (Maine: Stenhouse Publishers, 2011), 11.

ⁱⁱⁱ Casner-Lotto, Jill, and Linda Barrington. *Are They Really Ready to Work? Employers' Perspectives on the Basic Knowledge and Applied Skills of New Entrants to the 21st Century US Workforce*. Partnership for 21st Century Skills. 1 Massachusetts Avenue NW Suite 700, Washington, DC 20001, 2006. 9.

^{iv} <http://schools.cms.k12.nc.us/northwestHS/Documents/NWSA%20SIP%20R5%20FINAL%202016%20-%202017.pdf>. This is Northwest's School Improvement Plan

^v Zwiers and Crawford, 8.

^{vi} Frey and Fisher, 15.

^{vii} Frey and Fisher, 15.

^{viii} Frey and Fisher, 15-16.

^{ix} Frey and Fisher, 16.

^x Frey and Fisher, 19.

^{xi} Frey and Fisher, 19.

^{xii} McLoughlin, Catherine, and Krzysztof Krakowski. "Technological tools for visual thinking: What does the research tell us." In *Apple University Consortium Academic and Developers Conference*. 2001. 13-2

^{xiii} Peterson, Deborah S. "A Culturally Responsive Alternative to "Drill and Kill" Literacy Strategies: Deep Roots, Civil Rights." In *Multicultural Perspectives* 16(4). 2014, 235.

^{xiv} McLoughlin and Krakowski, 13.5.

^{xv} McLoughlin and Krakowski, 13.5.

^{xvi} "English Language Arts Standards." | Common Core State Standards Initiative. <http://www.corestandards.org/ELA-Literacy/>.

^{xvii} Zwiers and Crawford, 30-31.

^{xviii} Reilly, Jo Marie, Jeffrey Ring, and Linda Duke. "Visual thinking strategies: a new role for art in medical education." *Fam Med* 37, no. 4 (2005): 250-2.

^{xix} Adapted from "Rules for Say Something" in CMS ILT binder