



***Realizing Close Reading: Helping Struggling Readers Progress
from Strategy to Skill in the Social Studies Classroom***

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This curriculum unit is recommended for:
8th Grade Social Studies
North Carolina: The Creation of the State and Nation

Keywords: close reading, skill, cognitive strategies, literacy, struggling readers, fiction in the Social Studies classroom, conceptual mastery, explicit instruction, modeling, discourse, think-aloud, perspective, structure, word choice, purpose, textual evidence, graphic memoir, Vietnam War

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

Synopsis: This unit is designed to introduce middle school Social Studies teachers to strategies which can help struggling readers internalize the skill of close reading. Its specific purpose is to help these teachers learn how to create literacy-based activities in order to help struggling readers obtain mastery of cognitive reading strategies and essential Social Studies concepts.

I plan to teach this unit during the coming year to 182 students in 8th Grade Social Studies, North Carolina: The Creation of the State and Nation.

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Realizing Close Reading: Helping Struggling Readers Progress from Strategy to Skill in the Social Studies Classroom

Calen Randolph Clifton

Unit Introduction

This unit is designed to introduce middle school Social Studies teachers to strategies that can help struggling readers internalize the skill of close reading. Its specific purpose is to help these teachers learn how to create literacy-based activities in order to help struggling readers obtain mastery of cognitive reading strategies and essential Social Studies concepts.

At the heart of this unit are objectives from the College and Career Readiness Anchor Standards for Reading (CCRA), which are used to disaggregate and teach the strategies which are prerequisites to the skill of close reading. Conceptual objectives from the North Carolina Essential Standards for Eighth Grade Social Studies (NCES) are also integrated in order to help middle school Social Studies teachers understand how to utilize close reading strategies as tools to support mastery of essential Social Studies concepts.¹ To demonstrate this technique, example activities are supplied that utilize the CCRA to create close readings of fiction and nonfiction from the Vietnam War to enhance student understanding of concepts from the NCES. Although these activities can be implemented in the classroom as-is, the primary purpose of these activities is to demonstrate to applicability and efficiency of close reading within the middle school Social Studies classroom.

Working Definitions of Close Reading

As working definitions, this unit utilizes the established definitions of close reading given by the Partnership for Assessment of Readiness for College and Careers (PARCC), the CCRA, and Kylene Beers and Robert E. Probst in their 2013 book, *Notice and Note*.

According to the Partnership for Assessment of Readiness for College and Careers (PARCC), close reading is a process that encourages students to read and reread complex texts in order to determine the meaning of that text in a way that is both thorough and methodical. PARCC further elaborates on the purpose of close reading by saying that:

Directing student attention on the text itself empowers students to understand the central ideas and key supporting details. It also enables students to reflect on the meanings of individual words and sentences; the order in which sentences unfold; and the development of ideas over the course of the text, which ultimately leads students to arrive at an understanding of the text as a whole.²

Aligned with this definition are the principles of the CCRA, which define close reading as an umbrella skill that is a composite of nine component strategies. According to the CCRA, students begin the process of close reading by reading a text to understand its literal meaning. Then, students apply this knowledge in order to analyze the ways in which the text develops its key ideas and details, craft and structure, and integration of knowledge and ideas. Ultimately, conscious use of these strategies will create unconscious application of skills which allows students to “read and comprehend complex literary and informational texts independently and proficiently.”³

The definitions put forth by PARCC and the CCRA closely follow the principles set forth by the New Criticism writers and theorists of the mid-twentieth century, such as T.S. Eliot and I.A. Edwards, who subscribed to the idea that the meaning of a text is within the text itself and is not dependent on the individual reader. Opponents of this style of literary analysis believe that it may result in pedagogical proselytism from the teacher. These theorists promote a style of close reading in which the reader combines an understanding of the literal meaning of the text along with his or her own response in order to create a deeper understanding of the text. Building on the “reader-response theory” of Louise Rosenblatt, two of contemporary America’s most well-respected educational researchers Kylee Beers and Robert E. Probst summarize this approach by saying that:

(Close reading) should imply that we bring the text and the reader *close* together. To ignore either element in the transaction, to deny the presence of the reader or neglect the contribution of the text, is to make reading impossible. If we understand close reading this way, when the reader is brought into the text we have the opportunity for relevance, engagement, and rigor.⁴

The example close reading activities included within this unit utilize these definitions in order to foster engagement and mastery of subject matter while demonstrating to teachers the applicability of close reading across literary genres.

School Information

Martin Luther King, Jr. Middle School is a Title-1 school on the North-side of Charlotte, North Carolina that provides services to support the academic success of every student. All teachers practice an instructional model called Learning Focused that aims to ensure rigor and student engagement through differentiated instructional practices. The school also works to differentiate the learning environment in several ways, such as implementation of single gender classrooms, sheltered instruction for English Language Learners, and co-taught classes for Exceptional Children. Furthermore, the school implements Response to Intervention, a multi-tiered approach to identifying students with

special needs. Two afterschool enrichment programs and Supplement Educational Services Tutors are also available for students who further struggle with their classes.

Martin Luther King, Jr. Middle School also addresses the behavioral and socioeconomic needs of its students. All staff is trained to implement a behavioral model that aims to teach students positive social behaviors. Furthermore, three specialized faculty members known as Behavior Management Technicians oversee a caseload of students from their respective grade-levels who have a documented history of divergent behavior. The school has also partnered with two local programs, Right Moves for Youth and Communities in Schools, in order to help prevent at-risk students from dropping out of school. A Child's Place, another local program, offers additional support for homeless students. A strict uniform policy also helps ensure that students who are affected by high levels of poverty are not immediately visible within the learning environment.

The student population of the school is primarily composed of ethnic minorities. This demographic profile of the school is tabulated below.

| | |
|------------------|--------|
| African American | 59.05% |
| Hispanic | 33.89% |
| Caucasian | 3.57% |
| American Indian | .7% |

According to the most recent End of Year Test for Reading, sixty-eight percent of this year's eighth grade students are not proficient readers. Tabulated below are the respective percentages of students within relevant subgroups who met the standard of proficiency.⁵

| | |
|----------------------------|-------|
| African American | 25.3% |
| Hispanic | 37.4% |
| Caucasian | 40% |
| Limited English Proficient | 2.8% |
| Student with Disabilities | 5.3% |

Rationale

This unit promotes close reading and the use of fiction in the Social Studies classroom as methods to promote mastery of essential Social Studies concepts. Because the traditionally-trained Social Studies teacher may not be aware of the validity of these techniques, they are described in the following subsections.

Close Reading in the Social Studies Classroom

The proficiency rate of my students parallels the proficiency rate of eighth grade students across the country. According to the most recent results of the National Assessment of Educational Progress (NAEP), about 35% of all American eighth grade students are proficient readers.⁶ Although Social Studies teachers are not primarily reading teachers, they must teach their students how to comprehend their readings more effectively if they want their students to acquire core concepts. Therefore, the purpose of this unit is to introduce middle school Social Studies teachers of struggling readers to literacy-based activities that integrate acquisition of close reading skills with acquisition of conceptual understanding.

Fiction as a Tool for Conceptual Mastery in Social Studies Classrooms

In recent times, educational research has shown that teachers need to abandon instructional models that are based on content-coverage and replace them with models that seek to ensure mastery of content-specific concepts. Proponents of this position argue that a content-coverage approach “fails to support the transfer of deeper knowledge and skills through time, across cultures, and across situations.”⁷ In 2010, the North Carolina Department of Instruction mandated this curricular shift for all state-sponsored classrooms when it rewrote the content-heavy Standard Course of Study into a set of conceptually-focused Essential Standards. In order to help teachers of core contents make this transition, the North Carolina Department of Public Instruction created tools known as “crosswalks,” which demonstrate the relationship between the 2006 Standard Course of Study and the 2010 Essential Standards.⁸

This instructional paradigm shift places an educational focus on critical thought and analysis instead of rote memorization and recitation. For example, students in North Carolina were formerly assessed on their ability to recall information regarding various historical events for the sake of describing the event itself. However, these same students are now assessed on their ability to describe events in terms of the ways in which those events have impacted “the development of North Carolina and the United States,” allowing the teacher to instruct and assess student knowledge of concepts throughout time.⁹

While more challenging for the teacher and the student, a conceptual-mastery model creates opportunities for the Social Studies teacher to implement a wider variety of instructional approaches. One such approach is the use of fiction as a supplementary resource. Using fiction in the Social Studies classroom has been shown to boost student engagement and performance, help students create personal connections with critical issues of the past, bolster cross-cultural and global relationships, and support the development of reading comprehension that naturally occurs in the English-Language Arts Classroom.¹⁰ Therefore, the use of supplementary fiction in the Social Studies classroom will raise engagement in contextually-related nonfiction texts and support the conceptual mastery towards which teachers and students now strive.¹¹

Research-Based Essential Strategies to Support Close Reading for Struggling Readers

Close reading is a skill that is difficult for any student to acquire, especially if that student struggles as a reader. The following strategies make close reading more accessible for students who lack basic comprehension skills and help teachers assess and instruct struggling readers as they develop the strategies necessary for close reading.

Specific and Explicit Instruction from a Master Close Reader

Because close reading is a skill, it must be internalized by the repeated practice of specific, purposeful strategies. Struggling readers, in comparison to their proficient peers, need to experience increased levels of explicit instruction and modeling of strategies if they are to achieve mastery of these strategies. Therefore, struggling readers will only acquire the skill of close reading if their teachers are close readers with the ability to model the strategies behind close reading.¹²

Consider the following analogy. A baseball coach notices that there is one player on the team who struggles to hit the ball. The coach, knowing that all players can learn to hit the ball, further assesses the player to determine why the player is not hitting the ball. After determining that the player's swing is not level, the coach suggests to the player that the player needs to practice leveling the swing of the bat. Then, the coach swings the bat to show the player what a level swing looks like. Finally, the coach monitors and provides the player with feedback as the player practices performing a level swing. The next time that the player goes to bat, the player remembers to keep a level swing and, having practiced a level swing, hits the ball.

Most likely, the player in the analogy above would not have been able to hit the ball without explicit instruction from a coach who can hit the ball. Furthermore, the coach would not have been able to suggest a strategy for the player to practice and employ had the coach been unaware of the components of an efficient swing. In the same way, teachers who wish to create competent close readers need to be competent close readers with the ability to explicitly model, formatively instruct, and comprehensively assess the development of the close reading strategies that are most-suited to the needs of their students.

Reading and Thinking Aloud to Explicitly Model Core Cognitive Strategies

Independent development of the skill of close reading depends on the ability of the student to monitor and improve their own cognitive strategies. Research has shown that proficient readers utilize the following six strategies to make meaning of a text before, during, and after they read: (1) previewing the text to observe any textual features which

may contribute to its meaning, (2) making predictions about the text based off of these observed features, (3) self-questioning, (4) creation of inferential ideas, (5) rereading to clarify confusion, and (6) synthesizing the information within the text with prior knowledge to create new knowledge.¹³ These strategies may seem obvious to the reader of this unit, but they are not obvious to struggling readers.

Struggling readers will begin to use these strategies if the teacher consistently models their use, meaning that the teacher must be able to model the thoughts of a close reader.¹⁴ To do this, teachers should routinely perform modified read-alouds known as “think-alouds” that verbalize these cognitive processes. For example, a teacher may pause during a read-aloud of any text and say, “I do not understand what I am reading. I think I will read it again so that I can understand.” In this way, a read-aloud becomes a think-aloud and exposes struggling readers to the cognitive processes that lead to the close reading actions that they are expected to perform if they are to succeed. Requiring students to read and think aloud during class will force the students to think about what they are reading and give the teacher opportunities to assess and directly instruct the thought processes of each student.

Guided Student-to-Student Discourse as a Structure for Engagement

In order to grow as close readers, struggling readers need to be engaged in their reading. These readers are more likely to be engaged when they feel comfortable sharing their ideas about the text and know that their thoughts, whether “wrong” or “right,” will be accepted. Therefore, one way to enable struggling readers is by surrounding them in a collaborative and supportive atmosphere in which they can safely engage in guided student-to-student discourse with their peers. The teacher should set expectations for discussion by providing students with scaffolded questions that provoke higher levels of thought. Then, in order to further assess and inform student thought processes, the teacher should step back and observe the questions that students ask each other as they seek answers to the teacher-given questions.¹⁵

Examples of Close Reading Activities

This section features literacy-based activities that are modeled around the following five strategies and characteristics of quality close reading:

1. Close reading works best with short passages.
2. Close reading provokes intense focus by the reader.
3. Close reading allows students to make connections within and across the text.
4. Close reading involves discourse between students.
5. Close reading involves and requires rereading.¹⁶

Along with these characteristics, the essential close reading strategies for struggling readers that are described in the previous section are integrated within the overall

structure of each activity. Close reading strategies of a more specific nature correspond with the objectives within the “Learning Goals” of each activity and the objective of the CCRA that precede the questions within each activity. Also, because many readers struggle to comprehend what they read because they do not possess any background knowledge about the topic of the text itself, background knowledge information has been provided in the “Historical Context” subsection of each activity and should be utilized to prepare students for the following close reading activity.¹⁷

The structure of each “Facilitating the Activity” is very similar due to the importance of continuous, reciprocal teaching and modeling to the acquisition of the skill of close reading. At all times, the teacher must be able and ready to model the strategies that are necessary for the students to make meaning of the text and its corresponding questions. The teacher must be alert and in tune with student discourse in order to provide meaningful feedback to students who are struggling to perform each strategy. Always acknowledge and value all responses, but be prepared to perform think-alouds to model the strategies necessary for answering the questions if an acceptable answer to each question does not emerge. Ask students who give particularly good responses to model their strategies for the class. The ability of the teacher to remain flexible in a potentially chaotic situation will pay dividends in the form of increased student close reading capabilities.

Although the reader of these activities may not find them suitable for their own students, it is important for readers to note the way in which the CCRA are used to craft questions which incorporate practice of close reading strategies with mastery of the subject matter contained within the texts. Overall, the implementation of the specific questions within the unit should help students begin to internalize the skill of close reading and give them an understanding of several perspectives which surrounded the causes, events, and effects of the Vietnam War.¹⁸

Activity One: Close Reading Primary Sources to Compare the Perspectives of Ho Chi Minh and Thomas Jefferson

Close reading requires students to cite textual evidence to support conclusions, and also for the reader to analyze the word choices of the author and the structure of a text in order to understand how these concepts contribute to the meaning of the text as a whole. Application of these strategies to the *Vietnamese Declaration of Independence* will help students interpret the perspective held by Ho Chi Minh in regards to French control.

Learning Goals

- To understand how to cite textual evidence to support a conclusion
- To understand how the word choices of an author and the structure of a text contribute to its overall meaning

- To understand how the *Vietnamese Declaration of Independence* constructs an argument which reflects the perspective of French control held by Ho Chi Minh

Required Materials

- Untitled copies of the *American Declaration of Independence* and the *Vietnamese Declaration of Independence* for all students¹⁹

Historical Context

At the conclusion of World War II, the United States and the Soviet Union were regarded as the world's most powerful countries. However, each of these countries had their own sphere of influence which was classified and delineated by the number of countries who shared their respective political and economic ideologies. Over the course of the next several decades, the United States and the Soviet Union attempted to lessen each other's global influence and gain sole ownership of superpower status by promoting either worldwide communism or worldwide capitalism. Although the two countries never engaged in open warfare against each other, they did become involved in civil wars that were fought to determine whether the respective country would join the ranks of American capitalism or Soviet communism.

Immediately after World War II, regional alliances formed during World War II led to post-World War II domestic turmoil between communist and capitalist contingents in the French colony of Vietnam. In northern Vietnam, Ho Chi Minh led a communist coalition known as the Viet Minh in a successful movement to oust the French. He then declared national independence for the whole of Vietnam and created a national capital in the northern city of Hanoi. Minh's government was soon recognized as the official government of Vietnam by the Soviet Union.

Preparing for the Activity

Present students with the historical context for Ho Chi Minh's *Vietnamese Declaration of Independence* as described in the previous subsection. Inform students that they will compare the literal meaning of this document with another, similar document in order to determine how the authors' word choices and structure contribute to the overall meaning of the text. Stress to students that if they do not understand Ho Chi Minh's perspective, then they will not be able to use his text for as a basis for comparison.

Facilitating the Activity

1. Pass out the untitled copies of the *Vietnamese Declaration of Independence* to student discourse groups.

2. Post the following questions on the board and encourage students to discuss them one at a time during their initial reading of the text:
 - CCRA.R.6: Why did Ho Chi Minh write this document? Cite textual evidence that supports your conclusion.
 - CCRA.R.6: How do Minh's word choices help you understand his perspective of French control? List three words or phrases that you feel best illustrate his perspective.
 - CCRA.R.4: How do the sections of this text contribute to Minh's argument for Vietnamese independence?
3. Conduct classroom discourse that ensures that all students in the class have the content needed for the comparison inherent in the next section of the activity. Encourage students to ask if their own group responses are acceptable, and ask students groups why they think they responses are acceptable.²⁰
4. Now, post the following questions on the board and have the students record their responses. These questions require rereading and synthesis of both documents.
 - CCRA.R.8: How are the lines of reason within the arguments of Ho Chi Minh and Thomas Jefferson similar? How are the examples that they provide relevant to the overall argument?
 - CCRA.R.9: How does an author's point of view shape the content and style of a text? Consider the perspectives, word choices, and structure of Minh and Jefferson.
6. Once time has expired, conduct classroom discourse which acknowledges the responses of all groups and encourages students to ask questions which determine whether their conclusions are appropriate. If necessary, perform a think aloud to model the strategies necessary to the questions. Remember, teacher flexibility is crucial to the growth of students.
7. To conclude the activity, ensure that the "Learning Goals" have been met by asking students to respond in writing to the following question: "Why are the word choices of Ho Chi Minh similar to those of Thomas Jefferson? Cite two phrases, one from each document, which you feel summarize their perspectives."

Activity Two: Close Reading Fiction to Understand the Impact of Combat on the Perspective of American Soldiers in Vietnam

Close reading requires students to determine how key ideas and themes develop and also to assess how point of view shapes the content and style of a text. Application of these to excerpts of Tim O'Brien's "The Man I Killed" will help students understand the impact that "search and destroy missions" and "free fire zones" had on the war-time perspectives of many American combat soldiers.

Learning Goals

- To understand how key ideas and themes develop over the course of a text
- To understand how point of view shapes the style of a text
- To understand the impact that American military tactics used in the Vietnam War had on the war-time perspectives of many American combat soldiers

Required Materials

- An untitled copy of selected excerpts from Tim O'Brien's "The Man I Killed" for every student that includes the first paragraph of the story, the first full paragraph of page 121, and the last full paragraph of page 122²¹

Historical Context

In 1954, the United States supported the establishment of an anti-Ho Chi Minh government in the southern city of Saigon. Subsequently, Ho Chi Minh viewed this government as a threat to his goal of a unified communist Vietnam and led military action against South Vietnam. This marked the beginning of civil war in Vietnam.²²

Because of the harsh policies of its leader, the people of South Vietnam turned against their government. After several years of guerilla activity in South Vietnam, a pro-Minh organization known as the National Liberation Front announced its intention to overthrow the Republic of Vietnam and soon had more popular support than the official government in Saigon. The United States noticed this rise in discontent and labeled it as a threat to its sphere of influence. In November 1963, the American Central intelligence agency funded the assassination of the South Vietnamese President by several South Vietnamese generals. However, the strength of the National Liberation Front continued to grow.

In August 1964, President Lyndon B. Johnson, without an official declaration of war from Congress, began sending American soldiers to Vietnam. When these soldiers arrived in Vietnam, many of them conducted missions in "free fire zones," areas where all Vietnamese people were considered to be enemies. Civilian men, women, and children alike often perished inside of their own burning huts. If a Vietnamese village was thought to be hiding the members of the National Liberation Front or Viet Minh, officers would authorize "seek and destroy missions" in which no person or structure was to be left standing.

Preparing for the Activity

Present students with the historical context of "The Man I Killed" as described in the previous subsection. Then, inform students that they will analyze the development and

point of view of O'Brien's short story in order to determine how combat in Vietnam affected the war-time perspectives of many American soldiers.

Facilitating the Activity

1. Pass out the copies of the untitled excerpts from "The Man I Killed" to student groups.
2. Post the following question on the board and encourage students to discuss their individual responses to the following question. Have students agree on a single group response and be prepared to verbally present that response to the class. This will create student discourse in which each student presents the merits of his or her own interpretation while listening to the challenging interpretations of other students. Encourage students to go back into the text to see if the interpretations of their group mates are valid.
 - CCRA.R.5: The first selection from this story is one paragraph which contains at least three separate descriptions. Traditionally, authors use paragraphs to structure their writing by theme. If you could divide this paragraph into at least three new paragraphs, where would you create your paragraphs? What would be the theme of each paragraph?
3. Lead classroom discourse that acknowledges and values the responses of all student groups. In order to avoid appearing to validate one interpretation over another, offer your own interpretation only if it is different from the interpretations given by the students. Then, have the class agree on one interpretative answer to the question. This will stimulate further rereading of the text and support the understanding that is necessary for the next questions.
4. Now, post the following question and ask for students to discuss their responses with their group.
 - CCRA.R.2: In a part of the story that I did not give to you, another character tells the narrator to "stop staring" at the body of the man that he killed. Now, read the other excerpts of the story. How does the idea that that narrator is staring at a dead body develop over the course of the text? Provide at least two instances of text in which the narrator builds on this theme.
5. Encourage students to follow along as you perform a think-aloud of the relevant sections of the text. Then, get student groups to agree on a response and write their responses down. Finally, tell the students that the idea that the narrator is staring at a dead body develops through the use of specific repetitive phrases which emphasize the physical features of the body. Have students compare this response with the response of their group and see if their response is acceptable. If students have other responses, ask them to validate their response with textual evidence. Then, lead discourse in which students highlight the phrases which repeat over the course of the excerpts. This requires rereading of the text and will result in deeper understanding of the overall meaning of the text.

6. To conclude this activity, ensure that the “Learning Goals” have been met by asking students to respond in writing to the following question:
- CCRA.R.1: This short story is actually a chapter within a larger book. In the chapters before this short story, the narrator supported American involvement in the Vietnam War. After reading this short story, do you think that the narrator’s perspective of the Vietnam War was affected by the fact that he killed a man? Consider the style and theme of the text when constructing your answer.

Activity Three: Close Reading a Graphic Memoir to Understand Vietnamese Perspectives on Unified Communism

Close reading requires an evaluation of the way in which visual information is presented within a text. Furthermore, the purpose of the author is reflected by the way in which this visual information is integrated into the text.

Learning Goals

- To understand the relationship between visual and written information
- To understand how an author’s purpose shapes the content of a text across the development of the text
- To understand the immediate effect of unified communism in Vietnam on the perspectives of the Vietnamese people

Required Materials

- A copy of selected excerpts from the Gia-Bao Trans’ *Vietnamerica* for every student, including pages 55-58, 183-188, and 220-225²³

Historical Context

After the media relayed coverage of American military actions in Vietnam back to the United States, the American public began to protest American military involvement in Vietnam. In 1973, after several years of faltering public opinion, President Richard Nixon began a program to withdraw all American troops from Vietnam. In April 1975, President Gerald Ford announced that the United States had officially ended all involvement in Vietnam. A week later, the army of North Vietnam captured the southern capital of Saigon and the country was reunified as the Socialist Republic of Vietnam. Vietnamese citizens reacted in different ways end of the Vietnam War, with some applauding the unification of Communist Vietnam while others began to live in fear of the new government because of their pro-American actions during the war.

Preparing for the Activity

Present students with the historical context of the events described within Gia-Bao Tran's *Vietnamerica* as described in the previous subsection. Then, inform students that they will analyze the relationship between the imagery and text within *Vietnamerica* to understand how an author's purpose shapes the content of a text while discovering the immediate effect of unified communism on Vietnam on the perspectives of the Vietnamese people.

Facilitating the Activity

1. Pass out the copies of the selected excerpts from *Vietnamerica*.
2. Inform students the *Vietnamerica* is a graphic novel which depicts the effect of unified communism in Vietnam on the perspectives of the Vietnamese people.
3. Direct student attention to pages 55-58. Inform students that here, Tran's father tells him about the way that Vietnamese people who supported the United States during the war were treated by the communist government after the war.
4. Tell students to focus on page 55. Post the following question on the board and encourage students to discuss their responses within their group.
 - CCRA.R.7: Describe the author's purpose on this page. How do the illustrations support the purpose of the author? Give an example to support your conclusion.
5. Lead classroom discourse which consolidates student answers and supporting textual evidence. If it was not mentioned by any student, point out that Tran framed the illustrations within the smoke of a cigarette lighter to imply that Vietnam literally went "up in smoke."
6. Next, ask students to read pages 56-57. Point out the recurrence of the "up in smoke" imagery. Post the following questions on the board and encourage students to discuss their responses within their group.
 - CCRA.R.5: Why does Tran incorporate the story about his great-grandmother at this point in the novel?
 - CCRA.R.6: How is the perspective of Tran's father evident in the way in which he describes communist Vietnam?
7. Direct student attention to pages 187-190. Inform students that this section describes the actions of Tran's grandfather, a member of the Vietminh, during the struggle against France and the Vietnam War. Post the following questions on the board one at a time and encourage students to discuss their responses within their group before being asked to discuss as a class; to promote rereading, the question corresponding to CCRA.R.7 should not be displayed until after the question corresponding to CCRA.R.4 has been discussed.

- CCRA.R.4: On page 187, Tran tells us that his grandfather was a “nationalist.” Read pages 187-190 to determine what it meant to be a “nationalist” in the context of the Vietnam War.
 - CCRA.R.7: Was Tran’s grandfather for or against communist unification of Vietnam? Reread this section in order to cite an example of text-illustration integration to support your conclusion.
8. Direct student attention to pages 220-225 and propose the following question after informing students that this section describes the reaction of Tran’s father to the announcement of President Gerald Ford that the United States was about to evacuate the remainder of its military presence in South Vietnam. Be sure to inform students that an efficient answer to this question will require them to reread one of the previous excerpts.
- CCRA.R.5: How does the illustration on pages 222-223 summarize the perspective of Tran’s father, Tri, towards the possibility of a unified communist Vietnam? Provide evidence from an earlier passage in the text to support your conclusion.
9. To conclude this activity, ensure that the “Learning Goals” have been met by asking students to individually respond in writing to the following question:
- CCRA.R.3: Consider the illustration on page 224. Given the excerpts that we have read, the figure in the bottom right corner is not cheering simply because the war is over. Compare his perspective towards a unified communist Vietnam to another figure within the illustration of your choice. Provide evidence from an earlier passage in the text to support your conclusion.

Conclusion

The principles and strategies behind the skill of close reading are necessary for all students to master as teachers begin to implement conceptually-based instructional models. However, it is important to note that we cannot create close readers out of our students unless we are close readers ourselves. This requires all teachers to have an in-depth knowledge of cognitive strategies, both general and specific, and the ability to explicitly model these strategies in a way that is comprehensible to struggling readers. At all times, teachers should work to assess the reading abilities of their students by getting their students to think-aloud and discuss their thoughts about textually-related questions with their peers in an environment that is accepting of all viewpoints. If struggling readers feel valued, they will be more likely to speak up. The more that those students participate in discourse opportunities, the more likely they are to master cognitive reading strategies that will result in the internalization of the skill of close reading.

Appendix: Implementing Teaching Standards

This unit incorporates both the North Carolina Essential Standards for Eighth Grade Social Studies and the College and Career Anchor Standards for Reading. The first subsection of this appendix is an annotated list of the NCES which are most relevant to the conceptual focus of this unit, while the second subsection is an annotated list of the CCRA that are most emphasized within the example activities.²⁴

Ultimately, this unit is designed to help students internalize the skill of close reading. Therefore, the CCRA objectives should be the teacher's primary focus for teaching and assessment. However, due to the inclusion of objectives from the NCES, the teacher must work to ensure that students are analyzing the perspectives that are described within each example activity. An accurate utilization of the CCRA objectives should inherently lead to an accurate understanding of the NCES objectives, but the teacher should be prepared to explain the relationship between each reading strategy to the acquisition of conceptual Social Studies knowledge.

Emphasized North Carolina Essential Standards for Eighth Grade Social Studies

The following objectives form the rationale for the concepts of context and perspective that are emphasized within this unit. Although the example activities utilize content from the Vietnam War, the teacher should assess student work to determine the degree to which each student understands these concepts.

- 8.H.1.2: Summarize the literal meaning of historical documents in order to establish context.
- 8.H.1.3: Use primary and secondary sources to interpret various historical perspectives.

Emphasized Common Core College and Career Readiness Anchor Standards for Reading

The following objectives form the rationale for the close reading strategies that are the true focus of the example activities. Although the example activities emphasize the concepts of context and perspective, mastery of these standards is the overarching goal of the unit.

- CCRA.R.1: Read closely to determine what the text says explicitly and to make logical inferences from it; cite specific textual evidence when writing or speaking to support conclusions drawn from the text.
- CCRA.R.4: Interpret words and phrases as they are used in a text, including determining technical, connotative, and figurative meanings, and analyze how specific word choices shape meaning or tone.

- CCRA.R.5: Analyze the structure of texts, including how specific sentences, paragraphs, and larger portions of the text (e.g., a section, chapter, scene, or stanza) relate to each other and the whole.
- CCRA.R.6: Assess how point of view or purpose shapes the content and style of a text.

CCRA.R.7: Integrate and evaluate content presented in diverse media and formats, including visually and quantitatively, as well as in words.

Bibliography for Teachers and Students

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A secondary source that presents a social history of the United States. Specifically, this unit utilizes its chapter of the Vietnam War entitled "The Impossible Victory: Vietnam.

Notes

¹ For an annotated list of the CCRA and the NCES objectives, see Appendix I.

² Partnership for Assessment of Readiness for College and Careers, "PARCC Model Content Frameworks: English Language Arts/Literacy, Grades 3-11," p.7, http://www.parcconline.org/sites/parcc/files/PARCCMCFELA_Literacy_August2012_FINAL.pdf (assessed 10/25/2014).

³ David Afflerbach, P. David Pearson, and Scott G. Paris, "Clarifying Differences between Reading Skills and Reading Strategies," *The Reading Teacher* 61, no. 5 (February 2008): 364-373, <http://northfieldtownshipschools.pbworks.com/f/Difference+between+reading+skills+and+strategies.pdf> (accessed October 29, 2014).

⁴ Kylee Beers and Robert E. Probst, *Notice and Note: Strategies for Close-Reading* (Portsmouth, NH: Heinemann, 2012), 36-29. For an in-depth look at "reader-response theory," see Louise Roseblatt's *Literature as Exploration*.

⁵ Data within the tables on this page was calculated by the author from a hard copy of currently unpublished state data.

⁶ National Center for Educational Statistics, "National Assessment of Educational Progress 2013 Reading Assessment," Institute of Education Sciences, http://www.nationsreportcard.gov/reading_math_2013/#/student-groups (accessed November 18, 2014).

⁷ H. Lynn Erickson and Lois A. Lanning, *Transitioning to Concept-Based Curriculum and Instruction: How to Bring Content and Process Together* (London: Sage Publications, 2014), 1-2.

⁸ North Carolina Department of Public Instruction, "Eighth Grade Social Studies Crosswalk, 2010," under "Essential Standards Support Tools," <http://www.ncpublicschools.org/docs/acre/standards/support-tools/crosswalks/social-studies/8th.pdf> (accessed October 25, 2014).

⁹ See the comparison of objective 2.01 from the 2006 North Carolina Standard Course of Study and objective 8.H.2.1 from the 2010 North Carolina Essential Standards available on page 7 of the crosswalk referred to in the previous endnote.

¹⁰ Barbara C. Cruz, "Stimulating Interest and Thought in U.S. History: Utilizing Historical Fiction in the Social Studies Classroom," National History Education Clearinghouse, <http://teachinghistory.org/issues-and-research/roundtable-response/25289> (accessed September 1, 2014).

¹¹ For example, one of the example activities within this unit utilizes a short story in order to help students understand the emotions behind a soldier's perspective towards the Vietnam War. Asking students to explain the rationale behind a person's perspective, instead of simply asking them whether or not the person was for or against an event or issue, results in a deeper understanding of the concept of perspective and is a skill that is transferable across time, cultures, and situations.

¹² The Center for Critical Thinking, "The Art of Close Reading (Part One), The Foundation for Critical Thinking, <http://www.criticalthinking.org/pages/the-art-of-close-reading-part-one/509> (accessed November 1, 2014); Afflerbach, Pearson, and Paris, 364; William H. Rupley, Timothy R. Blair, and William Nichols, "Effective Reading Instruction for Struggling Readers: the Role of Direct/Explicit Teaching," *Reading and Writing Quarterly: Overcoming Learning Difficulties* 25, nos. 2-3 (March 2009): 125-138, <http://www.tandfonline.com/doi/pdf/10.1080/10573560802683523> (accessed October 29, 2014).

¹³ Betty D. Roe, Barbara D. Stoodt-Hill, and Paul C. Burns, *Secondary School Literacy Instruction: The Content Areas*, 9th ed. (New York: Houghton Mifflin, 2007), 128

¹⁴ *Ibid.*, 135.

¹⁵ Beers and Probst, 28 -31

¹⁶ Ibid., 37-38.

¹⁷ All information in regards to historical context is taken from Howard Zinn, *A People's History of the United States: 1492 to the Present*, 5th ed. (New York: Harper Collins, 2003), 469-501.

¹⁸ Strategies are more explicitly-written in the first activity, as the author assumes that the reader will realize opportunities for such strategies within later activities.

¹⁹ If the teacher desires to incorporate the strategy of using text features to predict the content of the text, then copies can be made that feature the title of the document.

²⁰ This is the point in each activity where the teacher will need to be flexible and read to model strategies explicitly.

²¹ This material is currently protected by copyright law. In order to use this excerpt within the classroom, teachers must ask for permission from the publisher or gain access to a class set of *The Things They Carried*. If the teacher desires to incorporate the strategy of using text features to predict the content of the text, then copies can be made that feature the title of the narrative.

²² This war, although eventually known simply as the "Vietnam War," was originally known as the Second Indochina War due to its geographic location and its relation to the First Indochina War, now known as the "Korean War."

²³ This material is currently protected by copyright law. In order to use this excerpt within the classroom, teachers must ask for permission from the publisher or gain access to a class set of *Vietnamerica*.