

Using Technology to Connect the Dots Between Inquiry and the Common Core Standards for Research in the High School English Classroom

Anne Marie Esposito

As Atticus Finch so poignantly states, “you never really know a man until you walk in his shoes.” And that is actually what I want my students to realize as they engage in a close reading of Harper Lee’s *To Kill a Mockingbird*. I want them to revisit Maycomb, Alabama with Scout, see what she sees as she painstakingly recounts her experiences all those years ago, and come to understand some of the hard truths that shaped her into the person she would become. Moreover, in doing this close reading, I want them to begin asking questions about what life must have been like in a small southern town in the 1930s and how experience might have been shaped by features like race, gender, and education. But even more importantly, I want this reading to offer my students the chance to engage in an inquiry-based research project that will let them generate their own questions, uncover the responses via an Internet-based web quest, and then compile their research and their learning using a web-based presentation tool so they can share it with their classmates.

Rationale

On October 9, 2012, the International Reading Association issued guidelines for the implementation of ELA Common Core Standards. According to IRA president Carrice Cummins, “the Standards set a foundation for focusing curriculum and instruction, and the IRA’s Reading Guidelines will serve as a lens to link them together and empower teachers to focus on what is needed to make a difference for their students” (1). The IRA Guidelines clarify for ELA teachers how and where they may need to adjust their curriculum so their classroom expectations and instructional planning align with the Common Core Standards. Although the Common Core State Standards for Reading focus on learning outcomes rather than explicit instructional content or resources, teachers must carefully select an instructional direction and incorporate materials and resources that challenge their students. The guidelines explain that in the area of reading comprehension ELA teachers are still required to provide students with opportunities “to read texts with an intensive focus on meaning, and with lively and critical discussion of ideas in the text” (2), yet adopt the “‘gradual release of responsibility’ models, in which teachers model the use of a strategy, then have students use it with teacher guidance, subsequently reducing the amount of guidance and support so that students come to use the strategy independently to understand and remember what they read” (3). Most ELA teachers who are veterans of the Delaware Standards Initiatives have already adopted this instructional approach. The approach is rendered tricky, however, by the way the Common Core Standards have addressed the integration of technology into the practice and assessment for student writing in the ELA classrooms.

In addressing the CCSS Writing Standards, the IRA Guidelines reiterate for teachers the importance of student writing about the information uncovered through reading. However, the Guidelines make it clear that “research and presenting the results of research—both in writing and multimedia formats—are central to the Standards” (4). Although I have been teaching the research process for years using the resources and technology available in my classroom, I will need to restructure and realign my approach to current classroom research projects so that they continue to assist students in becoming independent, critical readers and researchers who can successfully design a research-based product using 21st-century digital tools. Since time is short and expectations high, I plan to restructure the ninth grade research project tied to our required reading of *To Kill a Mockingbird* in a manner that maintains the Springboard textbook focus on student-based inquiry and media literacy while meeting the IRA’s recommendations for research. Let the good times roll!

Instructional Background and Demographics

As an English teacher in the New Castle County Vocational Technical School District, I have had the opportunity over the years to participate in many worthwhile educational opportunities. My district, which currently includes four high schools that enroll slightly over four thousand students, has been in the forefront of many Delaware State Educational Initiatives. When the first set of Delaware Standards were rolled out in the 1990s, I had the opportunity to learn firsthand how to design curriculum aligned with the new standards. As part of that wave I helped write assessments for the District and participated in summer workshops in which teachers tested reliability and addressed areas of concern. Later, when the educational winds shifted and standards and state testing were revisited, I again participated as permitted and realigned my classroom practices in the name of student achievement. Now, again, with Race to the Top mandates waning and the implementation of Common Core gaining momentum, I am ready to revisit, reassess, and redesign my ninth grade research project to meet the requirements of my District and the needs of my current ninth grade students.

My two sections of ninth grade English comprise a diverse group of learners who share one common characteristic: their high DCAS reading scores. Although my school district has historically targeted students who elected a hands-on, vocational approach to learning that focused primarily on helping students move from high school to the workplace, the changes in state measurements for students and the increasing interest of students in careers that require additional classroom training demand that students be more college ready. As part of my district’s plan to make our English curriculum more rigorous and thereby steadily increase student achievement in reading as evidenced through the DCAS, I learned late in August I would be piloting the Springboard curriculum in our new English 9 Honors class. These classes, like all required district academic classes, are blocked, ninety-minute, semester-long classes. Student and teacher success are directly tied to student performance on the district reading and writing

assessments and the DCAS. The DCAS is the state-mandated testing program that assesses student performance/growth in targeted disciplines. Student performance is reported as falling into particular levels: 1 – Below Standard; 2 – Approaching the Standard; 3 – Meeting the Standard; and 4 – Advanced. Obviously, students and teachers work to move students into or moving toward Levels 3 and 4.

The Springboard curriculum, published by College Board and aligned to the Common Core Standards, is designed to better prepare students for college. Divided into five distinct units, the Springboard textbook attempts to weave threads of inquiry and media literacy into a structured approach to close textual reading that emphasizes instructional modeling and student practice using selected reading strategies. Each unit includes a suggested research assignment tied to an embedded writing assessment. However, as always, it is the teacher who determines what research and writing skills to address so that students can responsibly and independently complete the assessments. In total, the 48 ninth graders who have scored a four on the eighth grade DCAS show little evidence of any consistent instruction in writing or the use of technology. For a seasoned teacher who has taught mixed-ability groups, that is a typical classroom scenario. What makes my current situation more frustrating than normal is that I must now work with a curriculum that demands a particular type of rigor, one that calls for a more inquiry-based student-centered learning approach to research without reliable technology or access to the software programs that meet the requirements of the district policy on the acceptable use of technology. Even though I have modeled inquiry in the past using the KWL strategy and small group investigations, I have structured and guided those activities to a specific outcome since earlier requirements and focus demanded less choice and more structured responses.

The Instructional Challenge

The Springboard textbook titles Unit Five “Coming of Age Amidst Controversy.” Like the other units, it includes a research-based embedded assessment. The “teacher notes” for the unit clearly state that the teacher should adopt an inquiry-based approach to covering the historical context of the novel *To Kill a Mockingbird* but offers little more than an *opinionnaire* and other assorted worksheets. Yes, the students are expected to explore the Jim Crow laws because there is also an article in their copy of the Springboard textbook, but the textbook gives them no reason for studying these laws. In fact, it doesn’t give me, the teacher, much of a reason for anything we’re doing either other than the assumption that if we cover the recommended materials using the suggested instructional strategies, students will be more ready for college. Obviously, I have two instructional tasks. First, I have to uncover the rationale for why Springboard has structured and organized the material in this particular way and how the selected activities and related readings are tied to the development of a more inquiry-based approach to student learning. For me, that means finally connecting the dots between the suggested lessons and cooperative learning projects/assessments designed in earlier units

and the current unit of study. Secondly, if I truly want to make this a student-centered, constructivist approach to learning, I have to find a way to engage my students in the material so they will actually be interested in the reading and care enough about the subject to want to explore, discuss, and share information and materials with their classmates. If I want my students to be actively engaged in our course of study, it is my responsibility to apply the current research and develop an instructional plan for a student-centered, inquiry-based research project exploring the historical context of *To Kill a Mockingbird*, one that allows students to develop their own research questions, gather and evaluate information, and then design a vehicle for sharing it with others.

Everything I know and understand about teaching and learning comes back to authentic student engagement. Students have to want to know about a character or situation: they have to want to ask questions, make predictions, and share their thinking with those around them. During my initial Internet search on inquiry-based learning, I uncovered the Northeastern Illinois webpage “Inquiry Based Learning.” Relying on the work of Jeffrey Wilhelm, it justified the adoption of this approach to learning, saying that “by bringing the students’ own background and experiences to the learning table, students will find ways to connect to the topic and will have activated some basis for creating meaning with the text they are reading. The personal connection to learning increases a student’s motivation to explore, read, and struggle with difficulties as they arise” (5). This rationale reminded me of the work Kyleene Beers has done on the need to increase the rigor of our reading instruction. In one of her blogs she states, “independent readers are those readers who, along with other things, can formulate their own questions as they read a text” (6). Somehow teachers, as part of their routine instructional practice, need to focus more on modeling how good readers generate their own questions rather than worrying about the textbook questions that come at the end of a reading selection.

It was Kyleene Beers who first triggered my interest in taking a closer look at the whole idea of inquiry. Recently I participated in a workshop she and Robert Probst presented through the combined efforts of the Diamond State Reading Association and the Delaware Department of Education. In that workshop, Beers and Probst, citing the research they had done for their book *It’s Rigor, Not Rigor Mortis*, focused on strategies that would engage and encourage students to ask relevant, focused questions about texts. As part of the workshop she demonstrated how teachers could effectively use the KWL strategy to have students generate good research questions. With this strategy students compile first a list of things they currently *know* about a subject, then a list of things they *want to know* more about the subject, and finally, after their research, a list of things they have *learned* about the subject. However, using the work she did with a sixth grade teacher as an example, she demonstrated that teachers often fail to model the ways the *What I Want to Know* is the natural extension of the *What I Know*. It is in the *What I Want to Know* column that students work to build on their prior knowledge by generating investigative questions. Afterwards, I remembered a classroom of my own where I was observed doing just this type of focused questioning with a class of ninth graders. I had

introduced a research project on the subject of the T-shirt by asking students to complete a quick write exercise describing their favorite T-shirt and explaining why it was their favorite. After asking them to share the exercise with their shoulder partners, I used the KWL strategy to create student-generated investigative questions. Although the students were actively involved and actually posed the types of questions I had secretly hoped they would, I kept worrying about the length of time we had spent on the activity and wondered whether my administrator would have thought we were wasting time. It was affirming to hear Beers say that the inquiry she modeled for the sixth grade teacher took over forty-five minutes. Time may be in short supply in today's test-driven classrooms, but if inquiry-based learning is the direction we need to take, then teachers will need to make the time.

In "Engaging Readers and Writers with Inquiry: Promoting Deep Understanding in Language Arts and the Content Areas with Guiding Questions," Donna Forsyth examines the work Jeffrey Wilhelm has done with inquiry-based instruction. She clarifies Wilhelm's position on inquiry-based instruction within any discipline by saying that it "must engage students in accessing, constructing, and using knowledge and processes consistent with that particular discipline" (8). If we want to adopt this more student-centered approach to teaching and learning, she contends, then we have to rethink our approach to instructional planning and how we think about the allocation of time. She quotes Wilhelm as saying that we cannot see inquiry-based instruction as "unwieldy, time-consuming, student-centered projects that collapse despite good intentions" (9). Fortunately for me, the Springboard curriculum shares this line of thinking. But it assumes that teachers will immediately understand how to connect the dots between suggested lessons and assessments in one unit and those in another, and that they will know what to add to the instructional planning so that units are truly problem-based.

My initial failure to connect the dots between the advertising campaign project in unit one and the upcoming research project on the Jim Crow laws in unit five is a perfect example of this instructional problem. Like any teacher who has been asked to pilot a new class on short notice, I quickly reviewed the curriculum materials, realized I would never have enough time to cover them all, and then quickly began to pick and choose what we would and would not cover in class. Luckily, when we first began, I realized that the opening lessons were all designed to introduce students to inquiry, and I implemented all the lessons tied to developing effective interview questions. I also noted the attention given to media literacy and included the lessons on advertising and rhetorical appeals that would help students design their independent, small-group advertising campaigns for an independently read coming-of-age novel. In fact, a report from the Alliance for a Media Literate America (AMLA), clearly states that "the purpose of media-literacy education is to help individuals of all ages develop the habits of inquiry and skills of expression that they need to be critical thinkers, effective communicators, and active citizens in today's world" (10). However, it was only as I continued my independent research on how to help students ask good research questions that I had my own personal "Ah-ha" moment,

the moment where I realized that having my students view a toothpaste commercial for the purpose of identifying the rhetorical appeals of pathos, ethos, and logos and thereby scaffolding their learning in preparation for the advertising campaign was in fact a much needed introduction to Aristotle's Rhetorical Triangle and the role it would eventually play in helping them understand the purpose and focus they would need in developing their research questions for the Jim Crow laws research project. In terms of horizontal and vertical curriculum alignment, a mini-lesson on Aristotle's Rhetorical Triangle will certainly help my students understand the importance of asking good questions.

In an inquiry-based model of instruction, students are presented with an open-ended question they must answer or problem they must solve, and as always they must begin to develop their own research questions in order to find the answers. As Milos Radakovic explains on the webpage "The Origins—Where is the Connection Between Persuasion and Rhetoric," Aristotle said that persuasion is dependent on three factors:

1. The truth and logical validity of what is being argued
2. The speaker's success in conveying to the audience a perception that he or she can be trusted
3. The emotion that a speaker is able to awaken

Radakovic then goes on to explain that Aristotle wanted to "equip political representatives with a means to interpret, to evaluate, and to act upon the argument and opinions" (11) of their constituency. Again, this did not make complete sense for me until I read the abstract for Teresa Henning's "Ethics as a Form of Critical and Rhetorical Inquiry in the Writing Classroom." This essay describes how "ethical inquiry is one type of inquiry required to think critically" (12) and argues that "a connection between critical thinking and ethos is only possible...when ethics (ethos) is defined not as a static list of rules but as a 'mode of questioning'" (13). In reading this I suddenly realized that ethics/ethos could be easily tied to the evaluation of what kinds of questions students need to ask in order to answer a problem-based question. where they need to look for their answers, and whether their sources really provide them the appropriate information. Ethos, although a distinct entity, is closely tied to logos, the facts and information that will validate a position, and pathos, the emotional reaction the information will evoke within the members of an audience upon hearing the information. I plan to revisit the time my students and I spent examining and discussing advertising and rhetorical devices as part of their preparation for the advertising campaigns when I introduce the research question on the Jim Crow laws in a much more focused way.

Once I realized why it was important to help students make the connection between developing an effective advertising campaign using rhetorical appeals and understanding how those rhetorical appeals actually drive the development of good questioning skills, I was determined to develop an inquiry-based instructional plan that continues to facilitate

student learning in how to ask good research questions. And my response to that challenge is outlined in three initial steps.

First, I must pose a broad, problem-based research question, as Jeffrey Wilhelm discusses in a Scholastic video titled “Jeffrey Wilhelm: Inquiry-based Learning.” In this video, he explains that if teachers ask the right questions and give students the opportunity to explore and solve problems, then teachers will be actually teaching children to think and they will become life-long learners (14). In fact, he modeled an example by reducing an introduction to the study of *Romeo and Juliet* to a single line of inquiry: What makes or breaks a relationship? Robert Probst supports this approach in his article “Reader-Response Theory and the English Curriculum” when he says that teachers need to teach “so that the experience with literature is its own justification so that the time spent talking and writing is compelling enough that it doesn’t require formal defense” (15). Sadly, although the Springboard curriculum proposes an inquiry-based approach to teaching and learning, it provides nothing more than suggested assessments that include cooperative-learning projects and essential questions that address Common Core Standards. Developing questions that will arouse the interest of students and motivate them to embrace the tasks of reading and writing research is the responsibility of the teacher.

Next, I must prepare a list of websites where students can begin gathering and evaluating the data they need to answer their questions. Even though a teacher could simply send students to the web and hope they find the information they require, that procedure might undermine the integrity of their work and result in needless frustration. Two fine articles, “Investigating Implementation Strategies for WWW-Based Learning Environments” and “Web-based Learning: How Task Scaffolding and Web Site Design Support Knowledge Acquisition,” cite research study after research study to make the same point. Using authentic information as the foundation for inquiry-based research not only gives students the opportunity to learn how to navigate responsibly through a site so they can uncover the required information but provides them with a constructive learning experience in which they continually ask and answer their own questions concerning the available information. Both articles also make it clear that all successful web-based investigations include some guidance to help students through the discovery process. The first article, written by Jan Herrington, Ron Oliver, and Arshad Omari, provides evidence that “implementing classroom-based WWW learning activities as collaborative exercise and with guiding printed notes provides a number of instructional advantages over individual and unguided use” (16). Although the Springboard textbook provides seven pages of assorted explanations and worksheets, it doesn’t include any suggestions for where the students can look for the information they will need to answer their questions or any guidelines for finding their way through a website. I will have to design both a mini-lesson that provides them with the WebQuest information and a modeling session where we actually work our way through a website so that I can be sure all students can do so comfortably. Fortunately, there are many WebQuests published on the

Internet, and I have uncovered many websites I can use to augment the existing collections of resources. There is no need to reinvent the wheel; all I need is to tweak an existing one so that it best meets the instructional needs of my students.

Finally, I must select a software tool that students can use to share their information with the class. This issue is particularly frustrating for me. Even though I can find several studies that say having students use web-based tools is critical to preparing them for the 21st century workplace and I can point to the Common Core Standards that require students to use emerging technology not only to gather and evaluate information but to design a product for sharing it, my district's Acceptable Use Policy prohibits teachers from having students create web-based products that are visible on the web. Whenever I have been involved in an email conversation with the administrator who oversees the use of technology in our district, it always ends in the same way: unless my department purchases a license for a program that keeps student-created products within a closed system, my students will be forced to use an antiquated version of Microsoft PowerPoint rather than Prezi, a whiteboard that allows users to make visible connections between their questions and their selected sources and then creatively embed the information they uncovered that helped them answer their questions. It is my hope, however, that I can encourage my building principal to consider purchasing a license for Prezi so that students can use it as a concept map to illustrate their inquiry process, beginning with their initial research question. What makes Prezi better than PowerPoint as a tool for learning is the ability it offers students to include pictures and sound in their mapping, creating a more dramatic and multi-sensory record of the avenues students took as they uncovered the information needed to answer their questions. More importantly, however, all this information does not need to move in a flat, linear sequence. Prezi allows students to move in and out and around their information, highlighting particular points and illustrating the connections they have made. Paul Hill has demonstrated just how useful Prezi can be in the classroom by creating a Prezi for his blog, "The Power and Point of Using Prezi in the Classroom." He illustrates the ways Prezi can be used to arrange and focus information in a variety of ways that demonstrate a synthesis of information and learning (17). I am convinced that using a software program that lets students manipulate their information more actively will create a memorable product that showcases their learning.

To implement the inquiry-based approach to the research project on the Jim Crow laws my students will complete in preparation for their reading of *To Kill a Mockingbird*, I will augment the existing materials and suggested learning activities provided through the Springboard textbook in several specific ways. The research I have done has given me a better understanding of what it means to have an authentic, student-centered, inquiry-based instructional plan for my classroom and a more complete rationale for the instructional choices I must make about which of the materials provided through Springboard I will use and how I will use them.

An Instructional Plan

The teacher's edition of the ninth grade Springboard textbook supplies the basic materials/resources needed to implement a general, inquiry-based approach to a study of the novel *To Kill a Mockingbird*. Both the student and teacher versions of the textbook include an anticipatory guide, related graphic organizers, an article on Jim Crow, a list of the Jim Crow laws, and a research project that can serve as an embedded assessment tool. The annotated teacher's textbook provides a series of instructional suggestions that direct teachers to employ a kinesthetic approach to a classroom discussion of student positions on controversial issues concerning race, ethnicity, gender, and sexual orientation and a student-centered examination of photographs of people and community life from the 1930s. Both activities are designed to engage student interest and generate questions about life and attitudes during that era which, of course, will help them develop good questions for their research on Jim Crow and during their reading of *To Kill a Mockingbird*. Together with the two essential questions addressing Common Core Standards on analyzing and presenting informational text, a teacher could provide a rudimentary introduction to the novel with minimal effort. However, a teacher who truly wanted to implement an inquiry-based approach would be required to analyze and possibly restructure the teacher suggestions, develop her own collection of Jim Crow era photographs, and then successfully tie it together, as Wilhelm suggests, with an overarching, thought-provoking question that immediately engaged and focused students. Moreover, after assessing the independent research skills of her students, the teacher would need to develop all the scaffolding materials required to facilitate and guide the development of student-generated research questions about Jim Crow, the list of possible sources, a guide for citing the sources, and a direction sheet for the design of a product to share the information gathered. Therefore, after carefully reviewing the instructional suggestions and materials provided and trying out most of them, I learned that my students and I would be better served if we used a more limited selection of the Springboard materials and I supplemented the research project with my own teacher-designed resources. My current instructional plan for this unit includes five days of guided-inquiry and at least three days for students to design and present their projects.

Since all the opening activities suggested by Springboard focus on creating opportunities for students to generate questions about the social, cultural, historical, and geographical context of life in the south during the 1930s, I need to provide the time for students to examine and generate those questions and the one overarching question to cover all the others. Although Springboard suggests I begin with an *opinionnaire* to serve as my anticipatory guide, I think it best to combine the suggested use of the *opinionnaire* with the current research on inquiry-based learning presented by Wilhelm. So I plan to open my classroom inquiry with the question: Why do we like some people and dislike others? Using the *quickwrite* strategy, students will have about eight minutes to respond to the question in writing, and I will remind them to support and extend their responses using text-to-text, text-to-self, or text-to-world connections. To guarantee the

participation of all students, they will then *pair-share* their responses using what I call an *A-B Conversation*: the student on the right of the partnership is *A* and the student on the left is *B*; *A* speaks uninterrupted for 45 seconds and then *B* speaks uninterrupted for 45 seconds. My students, familiar with the strategy, will share with each other first. Then students will share their thoughts and comments with classmates in a more general classroom discussion.

Next I will turn my students' attention to the *opinionnaire* located in their Springboard textbook and ask them to record whether they agree or disagree with each of the sixteen statements listed on the page. This *opinionnaire* is composed of statements dealing with concepts and issues related to the novel *To Kill a Mockingbird*. (This *opinionnaire* is similar to the traditional Anticipatory Guide teachers generally design as part of any introduction to a new reading selection or unit of study.) As directed by the teaching suggestions in the annotated copy of the text, I will have Agree and Disagree signs on opposite sides of the room, and students will move to stand by the sign that reflects their position on several pre-selected statements. Each time the students move for a statement, we will stop and briefly discuss why they have taken a particular position. This activity, not unlike any other classroom strategy where teachers have students physically move around the classroom, provides the perfect opportunity to remind students to listen and respond to the various responses given in a quiet and courteous manner. Then, in preparation for the upcoming research project, working in groups of four and using a large sheet of paper, students will categorize the statements and post their results around the room. When all groups have completed the assignment, they will participate in a gallery walk so each group can see how the other groups handled the problem and identify the similarities and differences. Finally, as an extension of the activity, for homework, students will select one statement from the *opinionnaire* with which they most strongly agree or disagree and write a paragraph explaining why they feel so strongly. Of course, students will be reminded to consider what was discussed during class and to support and extend their responses using reasoning and personal and/or textual connections. These paragraphs will serve as the introduction to the next lesson in the unit.

The lesson on day two centers on a PowerPoint showcasing a series of photographs depicting American life in the 1930s, especially Jim Crow laws. Collecting the images and creating the PowerPoint, although time-consuming, is relatively easy. However, in selecting the photographs, teachers should be sure to choose those that will raise the most questions in the minds of students. For example, although some teachers may find it uncomfortable, I have included a photograph of a lynching along with those depicting rural landscapes, gender roles, and racially segregated schools and facilities. Beginning this class with a review of the questions examined and categorized in the previous lesson will naturally refocus students on the issues that made life in the 1930s hazardous for so many Americans.

As I mentioned earlier, Day Two will open by having students *pair-share* the paragraphs they wrote for homework using the *A-B Conversation strategy*. This activity will provide a new opportunity to generate additional background information on why people like or dislike others and provide the perfect segue into sharing my collection of Jim Crow photographs. Before taking them through the PowerPoint, I will ask my students to view the photographs, noting what they can infer about the time period, geographical location, and social/cultural attitudes or values of people or communities depicted in the photographs. Since the Springboard textbook includes a graphic organizer in which students may record the details they note in each photograph, the inferences/responses they make, and at least one question each photograph creates in their minds about the situation and people depicted, I will have my students use it to record this information. A teacher could just as easily have her students create a similar chart by having them fold a sheet of loose leaf or computer paper horizontally into four columns and label them accordingly: Photograph Number; Picture Description; Inference or Response to the Image; and Possible Question Generated. Students will be told that they will use their notes first to generate a list of inferences or responses to the various photographs and then to compile a list of questions about the historical, geographical, social and/or cultural context of the novel.

Next, students will view the photographs included in the PowerPoint. (Although Springboard suggested a teacher display the photographs around the classroom and conduct a *gallery walk* with her students, I do not have the budget or resources to enlarge and print photographs.) I have made sure my PowerPoint included the Common Core/Springboard essential questions on how the setting of a novel can affect story events and a reader's reaction to those events and how a picture can both engage and inform a reader. As the class moves through the PowerPoint, students should be given adequate time to comment on the pictures and to record their inferences and questions. In fact, for the first two or three photographs, the teacher should actually take the time to have students stop and share their inferences and questions. Since the generation of researchable questions is at the heart of the entire research portion of the *To Kill a Mockingbird* unit, this modeling is likely to be very useful to the students. Once the students have seen all the photographs and recorded their inferences and questions, I will have them form groups of four so they can share their comments and questions. To assess their work and provide a vehicle for sharing, I will have the students categorize their questions under the headings of social, cultural, historical, and geographical. Then I will close the activity with a *gallery walk* and general class discussion of what they know about the 1930s and what they would like to know as a result of their discussions.

On Day Three of the unit students will do a close reading of an article found in the Springboard textbook along with a list of Jim Crow laws. The class will begin with a *pre-reading strategy* wherein students will reflect on the images from the PowerPoint they viewed during the previous lesson and complete the first two columns in a KWHL chart. Before reading, using the chart provided in their textbooks or one I created, the students

will take about eight minutes to compile a list of all the things they *Know* about life in the South during the 1930s and *What* they want to know about life in the South during 1930s. Given two minutes more, students will *pair-share* what they included on their charts. Then, using either the Blackboard or Elmo, I will record all the things students know about life in the South during the 1930s. Now, taking the advice Kylee Beers shared during the Delaware workshop, I will record student questions. Beers suggests that before I begin recording their questions, that I take a moment to draw horizontal lines under items students listed in the *Know* column into the *What They Want to Know* column. In this way students and I can begin organizing or grouping their questions so there is a clear relationship between the facts they know and the questions they have generated about those facts. Armed with their knowledge and questions, students will read the short selection titled “Jim Crow: Shorthand for Separation,” written by Rick Edmonds, using the *mark the text* strategy (18). This strategy requires students to underline key words or phrases and write comments about what they are beginning to understand about the selection. Since they are reading a selection on Jim Crow, students should underline any statements that help them define the term and any related information, especially information that may answer any of their student-generated questions. When they finish reading, as suggested by Springboard, the students should create a working definition for Jim Crow laws.

Now that students have a basic understanding of Jim Crow, they are ready to examine sample Jim Crow laws. Although the Springboard textbook provides a list of thirty-six laws covering a variety of situations, a similar list can be pulled from the Internet. Springboard suggests that students, working in small groups, examine the list and then categorize them. When I initially used this activity, I directed students to review the first few laws on the list, and together we created subject categories for a few before I allowed students to move into their groups. This actually helped students work more quickly and efficiently, and they were able to group the laws using the large poster paper I provided. Sadly, I overlooked the opportunity to have students generate more questions about the Jim Crow laws since they now had the chance to really look at them closely. When I use this activity again, I will have students record their additional questions and then bring them together as a class and add their new questions to our classroom-created KWHL chart.

With these introductory lessons complete, my students and I will be ready to begin the actual research process. Day Four will focus on helping students generate a guiding research question and the additional focus or investigative questions they will use to direct their research. On this day I will distribute the directions for the research project tied directly to Jim Crow and the rubric I will use to assess their work. Naturally, students will have the chance to form their research teams and review and refine their questions. Day Five will center on using the Internet to access and evaluate information relevant to the student research questions. This day will begin by having the students return to the KWHL chart and work on the How column. Together, students can compile a list of

possible sources they could use to find the information they will need to answer their research questions. A brief discussion of what makes one site better than another will encourage students to revisit Aristotle's rhetorical appeals of pathos, logos, and ethos. Afterwards, I will distribute the list of the websites students will use for this project as well as explicit directions for recording information. As I discovered through my own research, guiding students through the process helps them develop and refine their research skills. Although I did not have the opportunity my first time through this unit, I plan to walk my students through a keyword search using at least two of the databases available through UDLibSearch, the online library of databases available through the University of Delaware. This will allow me to make sure all my students are familiar with the site, know how to access it from school and home, and can correctly cite the sources for the information they may want to use. Day Six will be a day for in-class research. Students, working in groups, will be required to complete all parts of the webquest. On Day Seven, students will compile their information using either PowerPoint or Prezi software. Presentations will be shared on Day Eight, and students will write a reflection on the research project.

Conclusion

Since classroom time is limited, I decided to center the initial research on a common area of interest. Although Springboard suggests that the teacher offer students choices among topics, I wanted to model the required steps, and that meant using a common topic. Many of my students who have limited experience with the research process need practice in navigating a database and citing sources. By focusing entirely on the Jim Crow laws, I can require students to examine both primary and secondary sources, including photographs. Apart from teacher suggestions and workbook pages that provide directions or charts for recording information, the Springboard textbook does not provide any concrete strategy for accessing and evaluating online sources. The unit I have designed aims to fill that gap. Since the teacher needs to design the supplemental lessons to direct and guide students through the research process, directing and supervising individual choices requires a good deal of additional work and classroom time. When I go through this process again, I hope I can include other online inquires to provide the required scaffolding and experience that will allow me to extend the activity to allow students more freedom in choosing their topics.

Teaching students how to use the Internet to access, analyze, and evaluate information purposefully and then to synthesize that information and design a product they can share with their classmates using technology is no easy task. It is time-consuming and messy but worth the effort. Fortunately, as I grow more accustomed to the challenges and problems in using technology in the classroom, I can relinquish more and more control and my students will develop and refine the critical thinking skills they need to complete interesting and thought-provoking projects. Like Scout, Jem, and Dill, students can begin

to ask the questions that allow them to see the various sides to a given issue and walk in someone else's shoes.

Endnotes

1. Dan Mangan. "International Reading Association Issues Guidelines for Implementing the ELA Common Core Standards (Press Release)." October 9, 2012.
2. International Reading Association Common Core State Standards (CCSS) Committee. *Literacy Implementation Guidance for the ELA Common Core State Standards* [White paper]. (2012). Accessed November 9, 2012.
http://www.reading.org/Libraries/association-documents/ira_ccss_guidelines.pdf
3. International Reading Association Common Core State Standards (CCSS) Committee. *Literacy Implementation Guidance for the ELA Common Core State Standards* [White paper]. (2012). Accessed November 9, 2012.
http://www.reading.org/Libraries/association-documents/ira_ccss_guidelines.pdf
4. International Reading Association Common Core State Standards (CCSS) Committee. *Literacy Implementation Guidance for the ELA Common Core State Standards* [White paper]. (2012). Accessed November 9, 2012.
http://www.reading.org/Libraries/association-documents/ira_ccss_guidelines.pdf
5. "Inquiry Based Learning." Northeastern Illinois University, accessed November 9, 2012,
<http://www.neiu.edu/~middle/Modules/science%20mods/amazon%20components/AmazonComponents2.html>
6. Kyleene Beers. "An Ah-Ha Moment." *Kylene Beers: Thinking About Literacy in the Twenty-first Century*. (November 2, 2009). Accessed November 9, 2012,
<http://kylenebeers.com/blog/2009/11/02/an-ah-ha-moment/>
7. Kyleene Beers. "Its Rigor, Not Rigor Mortis." *Kylene Beers: Thinking About Literacy in the Twenty-first Century*. (July 22, 2012). Accessed November 9, 2012, <http://kylenebeers.com/blog/2012/07/22/its-rigor-not-rigor-mortis/>
8. Donna J. Forsyth. "Engaging Readers and Writers With Inquiry: Promoting Deep Understandings in Language Arts and the Content Areas With Guiding Questions." *Journal of Adolescent & Adult Literacy* 52, No. 4 (2008): 361+. Accessed November 9, 2012.
<http://go.galegroup.com/ps/i.do?id=GALE%7CA191315716&v=2.1&u=dove10524&it=r&p=EAIM&sw=w>
9. Donna J. Forsyth. "Engaging Readers and Writers With Inquiry: Promoting Deep Understandings in Language Arts and the Content Areas With Guiding Questions." *Journal of Adolescent & Adult Literacy* 52, No. 4 (2008): 361+. Accessed November 9, 2012.

- <http://go.galegroup.com/ps/i.do?id=GALE%7CA191315716&v=2.1&u=dove10524&it=r&p=EAIM&sw=w>
10. "Alliance Provides 'Core Principles' for Media Literacy." *Education Week* 26, No. 42 (June 20, 2007): 21. Accessed November 9, 2012.
<http://go.galegroup.com/ps/i.do?id=GALE%7CA167177175&v=2.1&u=dove10524&it=r&p=PROF&sw=w>
 11. Milos Radakovic. "The Origins – Where is the Connection Between Persuasion and Rhetoric?" *Diplo Interactive*. (2010). Accessed November 9, 2012.
<http://www.diplomacy.edu/resources/general/origins-%E2%80%93-where-connection-between-persuasion-and-rhetoric>
 12. Teresa Henning. "Ethics as a Form of Critical and Rhetorical Inquiry in the Writing Classroom." *English Journal* 100, No. 6 (July 2011): 34 - 40.
 13. Teresa Henning. "Ethics as a Form of Critical and Rhetorical Inquiry in the Writing Classroom." *English Journal* 100, No. 6 (July 2011): 34 - 40.
 14. "Jeffrey Wilhelm: Inquiry-based Learning." *The Scholastic Channel*. Youtube. (March 11, 2010). Accessed November 9, 2012.
<http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=3x-pTBZw8mg>
 15. Robert Probst. "Reader-response Theory and the English Curriculum." *English Journal* 83, No. 3 (March 1994): 37-44. Accessed November 4, 2012.
<http://www.ERIC.ed.gov>
 16. Jay Herrington, Ron Oliver, and Arshad Omari. "Investigating Implementation Strategies for WWW-based Learning Environments." *International Journal of Instructional Media* 25, No. 2 (1998): 121. Accessed November 9, 2012.
<http://go.galegroup.com/ps/i.do?id=GALE%7CA53420246&v=2.1&u=dove10524&it=r&p=PROF&sw=w>
 17. Paul Hill. "The Power and Point of Using Prezi in the Classroom." *Learningblog.org*. (May 4, 2010). Accessed November 9, 2012.
<http://learningblog.org/2010/05/04/the-power-and-point-of-using-prezi-in-the-classroom/>
 18. Rick Edmonds. "Jim Crow: Shorthand for Separation." *Springboard: English Textual Power Level 4*. Collegeboard. (2011). 346 – 347.

Bibliography

- Alliance Provides 'Core Principles' for Media Literacy. *Education Week* 26, No. 42 (June 20, 2007): 21. Accessed November 9, 2012.
<http://go.galegroup.com/ps/i.do?id=GALE%7CA167177175&v=2.1&u=dove10524&it=r&p=PROF&sw=w>
- Barclay, Kathy and Traser, Lynn. "Supporting Young Researchers as They Write to Learn." *Childhood Education* 75, No. 4 (1999): 215. Accessed November 9, 2012.

- <http://go.galegroup.com/ps/i.do?id=GALE%7CA54482222&v=2.1&u=dove10524&it=r&p=EAIM&sw=w>
- Bolinger, Kevin B., David M. Memory, Wilson J. Warren, and Carol Y. Yoder. "Creating Thinking and Inquiry Tasks that Reflect the Concerns and Interests of Adolescents." *The Social Studies* 95, No. 4 (2004): 147+. Accessed November 9, 2012.
<http://go.galegroup.com/ps/i.do?id=GALE%7CA122325503&v=2.1&u=dove10524&it=r&p=EAIM&sw=w>
- Beers, Kylene. "An Ah-Ha Moment." *Kylene Beers: Thinking About Literacy in the Twenty-first Century*. Blog. (November 2, 2009). Accessed November 9, 2012.
<http://kylenebeers.com/blog/2009/11/02/an-ah-ha-moment/>
- Beers, Kylene. "It's Rigor, Not Rigor Mortis." *Kylene Beers: Thinking About Literacy in the Twenty-first Century*. Blog. (July 22, 2012). Accessed November 9, 2012.
<http://kylenebeers.com/blog/2012/07/22/its-rigor-not-rigor-mortis/>
- Colburn, Alana. "Constructivism and Conceptual Change, Part I." *The Science Teacher* 10 (2007). Accessed November 9, 2012.
<http://go.galegroup.com/ps/i.do?id=GALE%7CA169596144&v=2.1&u=dove10524&it=r&p=PROF&sw=w>
- Demski, Jennifer. "Building 21st Century Writers: Student Achievement Scores Take Off with the Implementation of Tech-Supported Writing Initiatives that Cross Curriculum Lines. *T H E Journal* [Technological Horizons In Education] 39, No. 2 (February-March 2012): 23+. Accessed November 9, 2012.
<http://go.galegroup.com/ps/i.do?id=GALE%7CA284937280&v=2.1&u=dove10524&it=r&p=EAIM&sw=w>
- Fitzhugh, Will. "Meaningful Work: How the History Research Paper Prepares Students for College and Life. *American Educator* 35, No. 4 (Winter 2011): 32+. Accessed November 9, 2012.
<http://go.galegroup.com/ps/i.do?id=GALE%7CA296961820&v=2.1&u=dove10524&it=r&p=EAIM&sw=w>
- Forsyth, Donna. J. "Engaging Readers and Writers With Inquiry: Promoting Deep Understandings in Language Arts and the Content Areas With Guiding Questions." *Journal of Adolescent & Adult Literacy* 52, No. 4 (December 2008): 361+. Accessed November 9, 2012.
<http://go.galegroup.com/ps/i.do?id=GALE%7CA191315716&v=2.1&u=dove10524&it=r&p=EAIM&sw=w>

- Henning, Teresa. "Ethics as a Form of Critical and Rhetorical Inquiry in the Writing Classroom." *English Journal* 100, No. 6 (July 2011): 34 - 40.
- Herrington, Jay, Oliver, Ron, and Omari, Arshad. "Investigating Implementation Strategies For WWW-Based Learning Environments." *International Journal of Instructional Media* 25, No. 2 (1998): 121. Accessed November 9, 2012.
<http://go.galegroup.com/ps/i.do?id=GALE%7CA53420246&v=2.1&u=dove10524&it=r&p=PROF&sw=w>
- Hill, Paul. "The Power and Point of Using Prezi in the Classroom." *Learningblog.org*. (May 4, 2010). Accessed November 9, 2012.
<http://learningblog.org/2010/05/04/the-power-and-point-of-using-prezi-in-the-classroom/>
- International Reading Association Common Core State Standards (CCSS) Committee. *Literacy Implementation Guidance for the ELA Common Core State Standards* [White paper]. (2012). Accessed November 9, 2012.
http://www.reading.org/Libraries/association-documents/ira_ccss_guidelines.pdf
- Jones, Pauline, Lisa Kervin, and Sophie McIntosh. "The Interactive Whiteboard: Tool and/or Agent of Semiotic Mediation." *Australian Journal of Language and Literacy* 34, No. 1 (February 2011): 38. Accessed November 9, 2012.
<http://go.galegroup.com/ps/i.do?id=GALE%7CA249223397&v=2.1&u=dove10524&it=r&p=EAIM&sw=w>
- Grant, Kendra. "Tossed but not Transformed." *Learning & Leading with Technology* 39, No. 8 (June-July 2012): 8. Accessed November 9, 2012.
<http://go.galegroup.com/ps/i.do?id=GALE%7CA293949193&v=2.1&u=dove10524&it=r&p=EAIM&sw=w>
- Mangan, Dan. International Reading Association issues guidelines for Implementing the ELA Common Core Standards (Press Release). October 9, 2012.
- Meyer, Daniel Z., et al. "Eight ways to do inquiry: a study of over 300 inquiry activities recommends eight models for the classroom." *The Science Teacher* 79, No. 6 (2012): 40+. *Expanded Academic ASAP*. Web. Accessed November 4, 2012.
<http://go.galegroup.com/ps/i.do?id=GALE%7CA307184806&v=2.1&u=dove10524&it=r&p=EAIM&sw=w>
- Probst, Robert. "Reader-Response Theory and the English Curriculum." *English Journal* 83, No. 3 (March 1994): 37-44. Accessed November 4, 2012.

<http://www.ERIC.ed.gov>

Radakovic, Milos. "The Origins – Where is the Connection Between Persuasion and Rhetoric?" *Diplo Interactive*. (2010). Accessed November 9, 2012.
<http://www.diplomacy.edu/resources/general/origins-%E2%80%93-where-connection-between-persuasion-and-rhetoric>

Soloway, Elliot, and Raven Wallace. "Does the Internet Support Student Inquiry? Don't Ask." *Communications of the ACM* (May 1997): 11+. *Expanded Academic ASAP*. Web. Accessed November 4, 2012.
<http://go.galegroup.com/ps/i.do?id=GALE%7CA19569205&v=2.1&u=dove10524&it=r&p=EAIM&sw=w>

SpringBoard: English Textual Power Level 4 (2011). The College Board: United States of America, 2011.

Student Resources

Edmond, Rick. "Jim Crow: Shorthand for Segregation." *SpringBoard: English Textual Power Level 4*. The College Board: United States of America, 2011.

Lee, Harper. *To Kill a Mockingbird*. Grand Central Publishing: New York, New York, 1960.

SpringBoard: English Textual Power Level 4. The College Board: United States of America, 2011.

Appendix

As most schools works to align curriculum to the existing state standards and the new Common Core Standards, teachers are under more and more pressure to revamp and revise their classroom curriculum. Now, in addition to providing their students with consistent practice in analyzing text, both literary and information, and in developing a coherent written response to selected text, teachers most expand their units to include more inquiry-based research and technical experience.

The unit I have designed, one built around the SpringBoard curriculum piloted by my school district, focuses primarily around the Common Core Standards addressing the Production and Distribution of Writing and the use of Research to Build and Present Knowledge. The first, CCSS.ELA-Literary.W.9-10.6, requires students to use technology to produce, publish, and update individual or shared writing products. It even asks that students be able to display this information *flexibly* and *dynamically*. Fortunately, since my unit encourages students to access information through a variety of source, including photographs and video, and then share it through the creation of a Prezi, The standards on research, CCSS.ELA-Literacy.W.9-10.7; CCSS.ELA-Literacy.W.9-10-8; and CCSS.ELA-Literacy.W.9-10.9, are also addressed in my unit since students must generate their own research questions and then access and evaluate online sources to answer them responsibly. Moreover, since this is a product-based inquiry, students must synthesize the information and design a product they can share with the class. Upon completion of the unit, all students, to varying degrees will have participated in what I believe will be a meaningful learning experience.

Curriculum Unit Title

Using Technology to Connect the Dots Between Inquiry and the Common Core Standards for Research in the High School English Classroom

Author

Anne Marie Esposito

KEY LEARNING, ENDURING UNDERSTANDING, ETC.

All research begins with a question and that leads to other questions that direct and guide their investigation
In conducting an online search they should include a variety of reliable sources and document those sources in a reference page
In designing a product to share information they must consider their audience and select and organize information that will engage and inform others

ESSENTIAL QUESTION(S) for the UNIT

1. How do effective researchers identify an area for research and then develop and revise questions to guide their research?
2. How do effective researchers identify, access, and evaluate potential sources of information?
3. How do effective researchers incorporate and cite information from outside sources into a product they will share with others

CONCEPT A

CONCEPT B

CONCEPT C

ESSENTIAL QUESTIONS A

ESSENTIAL QUESTIONS B

ESSENTIAL QUESTIONS C

How do effective researchers identify an area for research and then develop and revise questions to guide their research?

How do effective researchers identify, access, and evaluate potential sources of information?

How do effective researchers incorporate and cite information from outside sources into a product they will share with others

VOCABULARY A

VOCABULARY A

VOCABULARY A

Opinionnaire
KWL
Levels of Questioning: Literal, Interpretive, and Evaluative

Primary and Secondary Sources
Database

Documentation
Citation
Annotation
Bibliography
MLA/APA

ADDITIONAL INFORMATION/MATERIAL/TEXT/FILM/RESOURCES

It is very important that a teacher create both a collection of photographs of 1930s life in the segregated South and a WebQuest for an online investigation of issue prevalent in the segregated South of the 1930s prior to implementing this unit. Of course, many of these materials and/or resources are available online and a teacher can easily elect to use one of these documents.

