The effectiveness of a structured note taking and written retell intervention on increasing overall reading comprehension

Chase Prochnow

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The Effectiveness of a Structured Note Taking and Written Retell Intervention on Increasing Overall Reading Comprehension

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May Fourth, 2016

An Action Research Master’s Thesis presented in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree of Master of Urban Education School of Education College of Education and Leadership Cardinal Stritch University Milwaukee, Wisconsin 2016
This Graduate Research Project for
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has been approved for Cardinal Stritch University by
Dr. Heather Pauly

5/4/16
Date

Advisor signature
Abstract

This study was designed to determine the effectiveness of a structured note-taking and written retell intervention on improving reading comprehension in high school age students. The participants for this study were two freshmen, one male and one female, at a high school in a large urban Midwestern city. In order to qualify for the study, participants needed to score at least two levels below their current grade level on the Qualitative Reading Inventory (QRI-5: Caldwell & Leslie, 2011). Reading comprehension growth was measured using the QRI-5 as the pretest and the posttest. One student was chosen at random to participate in the experimental condition, while the other student only attended typical coursework as the control condition. The student in the experimental condition participated in ten one-to-one intervention sessions over the course of five weeks. Each intervention session included modeling of the note-taking skill, practice retelling a text, and answer comprehension questions. After the intervention, both participants were given a posttest to determine growth. The participant in the experimental condition increased her reading comprehension level more than the student in the control group. This suggests that the intervention was successful at improving reading comprehension in high school age students.
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Chapter One

As a classroom teacher, I was frequently faced with the challenge of teaching a class of students with a wide range of reading ability. Students were reading anywhere from three grades below grade level to three grades above grade level. Finding instructional strategies and practices to help encourage reading growth for all students was difficult and often left me frustrated. The action research described in this thesis was designed to be incorporated into any reading curriculum and determine instructional practices that lead to the fastest growth in reading ability possible for students reading at a variety of reading levels.

The intervention designed for this action research contained two components: structured note-taking with a graphic organizer and writing retells of a passage. The idea for having students use a graphic organizer to take structured notes while reading came from my own experience as a classroom teacher. I noticed that when I provided a structured way for students to take notes, they remembered more of the passage. I did not have any empirical data on if the use of a graphic organizer was effective at improving reading comprehension so the study was designed to determine its effectiveness. The idea for having students retell passages was inspired by research done by Gambrell, Koskinen, and Kapinus (1991). Their study determined the that having students write or give an oral retell of a passage led to greater growth in reading ability than having students review the passage after reading. Further research by Gambrell, Pfeiffer, and Wilson (1985) determined that having students retell a passage increased reading comprehension faster than having students illustrate passages. Both of the studies described above were conducted with elementary aged students. The current action research was designed to add to the existing research on retelling interventions by testing the effectiveness of a retelling intervention with high school age students.
Background of the Study

The action research was conducted at a small Christian high school located in a large Midwestern city. The overall reading level of students at the school varies widely as shown by scores on coursework in reading class, quizzes, and assessments. The intervention in the action research was designed specifically to meet College Reading Standards (ACT, Inc., 2016) that address finding the main idea and supporting details of a passage. Previous research on retelling interventions (Gambrel et al., 1985; Gambrel et al., 1991) prove that having elementary students engage in written retells after reading a passage can lead to an improvement in overall reading level. This research seeks to replicate the results shown in those studies with high school age students.

Overview of the Study and Timeline

The action research described focuses on two freshmen students who attend a Christian choice school in a large Midwestern city. The participants in the study were recommended by the Freshmen English teacher based on observations from class. The teacher was asked to recommend students that were struggling to complete coursework and seemed to have difficulties with reading comprehension. After receiving recommendations, only two students, one male and one female, were able to participate in the study. To qualify for the study, the students needed to score at least two years below grade level on the Qualitative Reading Inventory, Fifth Edition (QRI-5; Caldwell & Leslie, 2011). At the start of the study both participants scored low in the percentage of the story retold and comprehension question portions of the test, while performing well in the oral reading portion of the QRI-5 (Caldwell & Leslie, 2011). Both of the students had attended the school since the beginning of the year and were in the second quarter of their freshmen year throughout the duration of the study. Both students
were 14 years old, African American, and qualified for free and reduced lunch program upon enrollment for their freshmen year.

The reading ability and level of students in the sample pool that the participants were drawn from varies greatly. The school curriculum is designed to align with the Common Core State Standards (Common Core State Standards Initiative, 2012) and College Readiness Standards (ACT, Inc., 2016). The emphasis of both sets of standards is to teach students to learn independently from complex texts in all subject areas. Overall achievement is directly connected to reading ability, making school coursework extremely challenging for students that are below grade level or have reading difficulties.

At the time of data collection, both students were participating in normal instruction in all classes. They were receiving literacy instruction in four of the seven classes they were enrolled in. In class, both students quickly follow directions and attempt to complete all the work, but neither shared answers unless directly prompted by a teacher.

In summary, this study addresses two questions, 1) Does instruction on structured note taking improve reading comprehension? and 2) Does repeated practice of writing a retell of a text increase reading comprehension? To answer these questions, one participant took part in an intervention that addressed using a graphic organizer to take structured notes while reading and then wrote a written retell of the passage after reading. The other student took part in only typical reading coursework during the intervention. At the beginning of the study, both students took the QRI-5 (Caldwell & Leslie, 2011) as a pretest to determine their reading level. At the end of the study both students took the QRI-5 as a posttest to measure reading growth. The independent variable is whether or not the student received the intervention and the dependent variable was reading comprehension growth as measured by the QRI-5.
Timeline

The study was conducted over the course of seven weeks, beginning in October of 2015. Recommendations for students to participate in the study were made during the week of Oct. 5, and the pretests were administered to both participants the following week on October 12, 2015. The first session commenced on Oct. 20 and the final session took place on Nov. 19. The posttest was administered the following week on November 24, 2015.

Summary and Conclusion

The rest of the chapters in this research lay out the procedures followed during the administration of this study, show and explain the results of the pretest and posttest, and make conclusions about the effectiveness of the intervention. Connections to previous research on the effectiveness of retelling interventions are made to show how the current research fits into the wealth of research on reading interventions.

The next chapter summarizes the extensive research focusing on the relationship between differentiated reading instruction, small group reading instruction, tutoring, and different reading strategies on reading ability and comprehension. Many of the studies focus on reading interventions involving the instruction of written and oral retells of a text. In addition to sharing the findings of these studies, I share how each study influenced the design of the current action research and how the current study adds to the existing research on this topic.

Chapter Three gives an in-depth description of the procedures followed in the study. It describes the city and school the participants were chosen from, in addition to giving a detailed description of how the participants were selected for the study. From there the chapter lays out
the procedures for the administration of the pretest, the posttest, and the intervention, including
the schedule for the interventions and the overall length of the study.

In Chapter Four, the results of the study are displayed and analyzed. Comparisons are
made on the participant’s scores on the pretest and the posttest to determine growth and paint a
picture of the reading ability of each student at the beginning of the study and the end of the
study. After comparing the pre and posttest data for both students, the growth made by each student is compared to determine if the intervention was successful. Finally, conclusions that can be made from the data are shared.

Chapter Five connects the results of the current action research back to the studies reviewed in Chapter Two. These connections show how the research added to the existing research. After making connections to previous research, the results of the action research are explained in order to determine if the intervention was successful or not. This leads into a section that discusses the strengths and limitations of the research design. Finally, recommendations for the student are made that connect back to the College Readiness Standards (ACT, Inc., 2016). The recommendations include ideas for how to implement the instructional practices outlined in this study in the classroom, independently, and during private tutoring sessions.

Definitions

Retell: The act of telling what happened in a passage or text orally or in written form after reading (Gambrell et al. 1985).

Graphic Organizer: A worksheet with spaces to take specific notes while reading a text (Hagaman & Reid, 2010).
Chapter Two: Review of Literature

The purpose of the current action research was to determine the effectiveness of a researcher-designed reading intervention. There is an abundance of research on different reading strategies, programs, and interventions designed to help improve reading comprehension. It is not only important for teachers, especially reading teachers, to know which techniques work and which ones are not as effective, but to know which reading strategies provide the greatest amount of growth in the shortest amount of time. Large-scale reading intervention programs and new curriculums are rarely feasible for the average teacher, especially if they are serving students in lower performing school districts (Schisler, Joseph, Konrad, & Alber-Morgan, 2010). These factors shaped the design of the current study and helped generate two research questions, 1) Does instruction on structured note taking improve reading comprehension? and 2) Does repeated practice of writing a retell of a text increase reading comprehension? The studies reviewed in this chapter examine intervention strategies that may be easily replicated by all teachers, regardless of access to new resources, after school programs, and extra support staff to provide interventions. The current study’s design was influenced by the studies reviewed in this chapter and sought to determine the effectiveness of a researcher-designed reading intervention. The intervention engaged students in using a graphic organizer to take notes and writing a retell of a text after reading. In the current study, I administered a pretest to both participants in order to determine their independent reading levels. After administration of the pretest, the students were split into a control condition and an experimental condition. The student in the control condition participated only in typical courses, while the student in the experimental condition participated in typical courses in addition to attending ten intervention sessions lasting roughly 45 minutes each over the course of five weeks. During the first session of each week I modeled
using the graphic organizer to take notes and then asked the student to use the graphic organizer to take notes on a different text. After the reading and taking notes on the text the student was asked to write a retell of what they just read. Each session ended with the student answering ten comprehension questions about the text. The second session of each week started with me modeling how to take notes on a graphic organizer using the text the student read in the previous session. The student then practiced using the graphic organizer again with a new text, wrote a retell of the text, and answered ten comprehension questions. After the ten intervention sessions, both students took a posttest using the same assessment to measure reading growth. The following review is split into four sections that each highlight a different aspect of reading interventions: differentiated in-class reading instruction, supplementary reading instruction, reading interventions for students with Attention Deficit Hyperactivity Disorder, and reading intervention strategies involving retelling and the use of graphic organizers.

**Differentiated In-Class or Classroom Reading Instruction**

The amount of research on differentiated reading instruction is seemingly endless. It is imperative that teachers use the best practice available to ensure the greatest amount of growth in all students. The study reviewed in this section focuses on differentiated reading instruction approaches that can be used within the classroom.

In the research done by Little, McCoach, and Reis (2014), they are trying to find ways to engage and enrich the reading instruction for advanced readers while still improving the reading ability of struggling readers in schools with a high percentage of low-income demographics. The investigators implemented a reading program, the School-wide Enrichment Model-Reading (SEM-R) framework (Reis, Eckert, Schreiber, Jacobs, Briggs, Gubbins, & Muller, 2005). The researchers had two main questions they are trying to answer. First, to what degree can the
regular reading curriculum be replaced by an independent and interest-based program (SEM-R) without adversely affecting scores on standardized assessments of reading fluency and reading comprehension? Second, how does the performance of middle school students who participate in the SEM-R intervention compare with that of control group students on measures of fluency and comprehension? The independent variable in the study was reading instruction. Either a student received differentiated reading instruction through the SEM-R reading program in a treatment group or standard reading instruction in a control group. The dependent variables were student scores on a posttest that assesses reading fluency and comprehension.

The sample included 2,150 sixth- to eighth-grade students in 47 classrooms in four middle schools. The four schools were chosen for the study based on school size and demographics. The schools’ demographics ranged from 50 percent to 80 percent of students receiving free or reduced-lunch. At the time of the assessment all four schools reported fewer than 60 percent of students achieved passing levels on state reading tests.

Across each of the four schools teachers were randomly assigned to either control or treatment classrooms. In total there were 27 teachers assigned to treatment groups, and 20 teachers assigned to control groups. Students were assigned to the groups by administrators before teachers were selected or the groups were designated to be control or treatment.

Treatment group teachers participated in a day long professional development session providing an overview, modeling, and practice with the SEM-R in the summer. Additional professional development included a mid-year training session as well as ongoing classroom support from project staff members who visited regularly. Treatment group teachers were expected to implement the SEM-R for about 40-45 minutes a day or three hours per week in all of their classes, depending on their school’s scheduling.
The SEM-R lessons include three phases. Phase One was conducted for the first 10 to 15 minutes of the teacher’s regular reading block. During this phase teachers exposed students to a variety of books, genres, and authors through read-alouds and discussions. Teachers also had the opportunity to model reading strategies and conduct mini-lessons. Phase Two of the lesson provided between 10 and 30 minutes of independent reading in self-selected, challenging books. While students read, teachers conducted individualized conferences with students, meeting with each student about once every two weeks. Phase Three was only implemented in some of the schools for the second half of the year and involved interest-based project activities. Control group teachers conducted regular reading instruction as designated by their districts, which included textbook instruction, class novels, and other whole group reading instruction practices.

The Pretest was administered in September of 2009. The implementation of the SEM-R framework began shortly thereafter and continued until the posttest. Post-testing was conducted in April of 2010.

The study had very unclear results. Two of the middle schools showed that students receiving the SEM-R framework instruction scored significantly higher in fluency than students in the control group, but the other two middle schools showed no significant difference in the two group’s fluency scores. There were no significant differences found in the comprehension scores between control and treatment groups in any of the schools.

The researchers noted that the implementation of the SEM-R framework was inconsistent at best. Teachers did not always begin their lessons with a mini-lesson as Phase One of the framework suggested. Also, teachers did not consistently conference with students during the independent reading time. These two extraneous variables may have led to some major inconsistencies of the data. Since none of the treatment groups showed significant losses in their
achievement and in two cases outperformed the students in the control groups, this differentiated instruction was beneficial. Teachers should encourage students to read on-grade-level texts across a wide variety of genres and topics to increase both fluency and comprehension.

The previous study by Little et al. (2014) showed that comprehensive reading programs implemented across districts showed inconclusive results, except that students reading independently selected, on-grade-level texts showed the most growth. This study showed that allowing students to choose texts across a wide variety of genres may increase their engagement in reading and lead to growth in reading comprehension. The idea of using a variety of texts was implemented in my research by using both expository and informational texts in the intervention sessions.

The study in the above section showed that differentiated reading instruction does not automatically lead to increased growth for students because interventions are often not carried out as they were initially planned (Little et al., 2014) This shows that the type of interventions used and the efficacy in which they are carried out determines effectiveness, it is not just a matter of providing differentiated instruction. When considering the fidelity in which the interventions were carried out and how they affected the intervention’s effectiveness, I designed my research to be simple and straightforward so I could implement the interventions with efficacy.

**Supplemental Reading Instruction**

In addition to the many studies done on differentiated instruction within the classroom, there is also research on the effects of supplemental reading instruction in the form of tutoring, after school programs, and reading intervention elective classes. These interventions are done outside of the primary class that provides the universal reading instruction to all students.
Dyson, Miller, and Gagne (2008) sought to determine the effectiveness of a literacy intervention program to increase the reading skills of children in schools located in low-income neighborhoods. The independent variables were the type of reading instruction received; either a student received extra tutoring or just the regular classroom reading instruction. 305 participants were chosen from three low income neighborhood schools; 221 participants were put into a treatment group, while 84 were put into a control group. All participants were students in first, second, or third grade. The study was organized into three phases: pre-test, intervention, and post-test. The pre-test and post-test phases assessed children’s performance levels on the studied literacy skills and the intervention period provided programs to improve literacy skills in general. Pre and post-tests were the Peabody Individual Achievement Test-Revised (Markwardt, 1998) and Woodcock Reading Mastery Test – Revised (Woodcock, 1987).

The intervention consisted of three different components. First, groups received regular reading instruction with a slight modification that was delivered by the teachers. The regular reading instruction for intervention groups took place at a different time than for those in the control groups in order for them to receive the slight modification in classroom instruction. Second, students in intervention groups received tutoring from college students. The third component was an informal home reading program that was sent home. Parent education programs for the home reading programs were put on once a term only for those families whose children were receiving intervention.

The supplemental tutoring provided by college students took place three times a week. Each session was 20 minutes long and students were placed in groups of two or three for the tutoring. Tutoring took place in class during other classroom activities. The intervention with college students concentrated on the following areas: vocabulary or word study, reading
comprehension, phonemic awareness, and fluency. At the start of each session students began with a book walk and then would read independently with coaching from the tutor in the different focus areas.

After tutoring with the college students for at least 20 weeks, the posttest showed significant improvement in the areas of Reading Recognition and Reading Comprehension for the group who received more than 20 weekly sessions of tutoring, totaling 60 minutes of tutoring per week. Also, when they compared the growth of students they categorized as “low-performing” readers to the growth of students categorized as “high-performing” readers the results showed that interventions were more effective in increasing achievement in Word Recognition, Word Comprehension, and Total Reading subtests of the Woodcock Reading Mastery Test – Revised (Woodcock, 1987) for the “low-performing” readers.

This study showed that students who are lower performing in reading can benefit the most from one-on-one time with a tutor (Dyson et al., 2008). Also, the results showed that tutoring can be effective in improving literacy skills but the tutoring needs to be consistent and be over a prolonged period of time. If teachers provide tutoring the sessions, they should be held regularly and go for the duration of a term or school year. Dyson et al. (2008) informed the current study in that the interventions for my research were supplemental to their reading instruction and did not replace or interfere with the reading regular reading instruction.

The previous study by Dyson et al. (2008) showed that tutoring can help lower-performing students improve their literacy skills. The next study by McGee (1982), looked specifically at how readers’ awareness of text structure affects their reading level. This study is considered a study of supplemental reading instruction because they did not focus on a specific
reading intervention. Instead they looked at specific skill used in reading and sought to determine a distinction to between poor and good readers.

McGee (1982) investigated how aware both poor and good readers are of text structure. McGee (1982) measured awareness of text structure by analyzing written retells of a passage to see how similarly the organization of the retell aligned with the organization used by the author of the text. It also sought to make a connection between a reader’s awareness of text structure and their ability to recall a text. The independent variables in the study are the current reading and grade levels of the individual students. The student’s ability to recognize text structure of different reading passages, and include idea units of a story in a recall were the dependent variables.

Sixty students in third and fifth grade from four different elementary schools participated in the study. The 20 third-grade students that were considered “good” readers (reading at 3.0-4.5 grade level equivalence) were selected randomly. Twenty fifth-grade students that were considered “poor” readers (reading at 3.0-4.5 grade level equivalence) were selected randomly. The final twenty fifth-grade students were selected randomly from the group that was considered “good” readers (reading at a 5.5-7.0 grade level equivalence).

The investigators wrote two passages that would be used to assess a student’s ability to recall the passage. These passages were designed specifically to assess a student’s ability to recognize text structure. When students came in to be tested they were given a booklet with a practice passage and the two recall passages. Students were asked to read a passage then do an addition problem as a distractor. After the math problem students were asked to tell the investigators everything they remembered about the passage. When the student stopped their recall, the investigator would ask if there was anything else they remembered about the passage.
This procedure was used on all three passages. All of the recalls were tape recorded to be scored later on how many idea units they included in their recall of the text. The idea units of each story were broken into two categories based on the hierarchy of skill they fell under such as predicates and arguments. The idea units in the top two categories were labeled as “superordinate” ideas, and the idea units in the third category were labeled “subordinate” ideas. Examples of these “superordinate” idea units were: propositions, predicates, and arguments. Students were considered to have fully identified the text structure, as defined by McGee (1982) if they included at least three idea units from each section of the text. This means that the student was able to identify how the author organized the passage throughout the entire text, not just the beginning, middle, or end. Furthermore, this demonstrates that the student did not just guess or get lucky by identifying three idea units from one section of the passage and shows consistent understanding of text structure.

The investigators found that there were significant differences in the total number of idea units included in the recalls of students in the three different groups: “good” third-grade readers, “poor” fifth-grade readers, and “good” fifth-grade readers. The biggest difference in the three group’s performance was how many “superordinate” idea units were included in the recall. “Good” fifth-grade readers included significantly more “superordinate” idea units than “poor” fifth-grade readers, and they included significantly more “superordinate” idea units than “good” third grade readers. According to McGee (1982), if a student’s retell of a text is structured similarly to how the author structured the passage, it means the student has a strong understanding of text structure. Because of this, the inclusion of “superordinate” idea units in a recall showed a greater awareness of the way the text was organized and written by the author.
This study showed that good readers have a higher awareness of text structure and this leads to greater comprehension of the passage and much greater recall of a passage (McGee, 1982). Understanding the way a text is structured leads to better comprehension because these students do not miss or forget as many idea units of a story. Teachers should keep text and story structure in mind when teaching students how to read certain passages and give students a chance to practice recognizing them on their own. If a student is aware of more text structures they are likely to read at a higher level and be able to recall more complex ideas from a passage. McGee’s (1982) work informed the current study by adding the use of a graphic organizer to take notes. I felt that having a student take notes in a structured way could lead to him or her using a similar structure when writing a retell of the text and I wanted to see if taking notes in a structured way would increase a student’s ability to recall a text organized in a similar way.

The previous study by McGee (1982) showed students with a higher awareness of text structure were more likely to be higher performing readers. This makes instruction on text structure a very important aspect for teachers to fit into their curriculum. The next study by Vaughn, Roberts, Wexler, Vaughn, Fall, and Schnakenberg (2014), examines how content specific reading instruction can increase performance in those content areas. In the study by Vaughn et al. (2014), the researchers had three research questions. 1) What effect do reading interventions aligned with content instruction in social studies and science have on improving foundational reading skills? 2) Does a reading intervention aligned with the specific content instruction improve performance in related content area coursework? 3) Does improved reading ability influence performance in social studies and science content area coursework?

The independent variable in the study was the reading intervention program during the elective class period; therefore, the intervention is considered supplemental for the purposes of
this literature review. Students were randomly placed in either the treatment group or a business as usual (BAU) group. One dependent variable is the student’s grades in both their social studies and science classes. The other dependent variable was the student’s score on the reading comprehension subtest of the Gates-MacGinitie Reading Tests (MacGinitie, MacGinitie, Maria, Dreyer, & Hughes, 2000).

Students participating in this study were selected from three urban southwestern high schools. The schools were very diverse with a majority Hispanic population. Additionally, 42.6 percent of students in participating schools were economically disadvantaged. The researchers used the reading test scores from the students’ seventh grade Texas Assessment of Knowledge and Skills (TAKS: Texas Education Agency, 2004). Students with failing scores on the TAKS were eligible for the study. Additionally students without a TAKS test score for seventh grade were eligible for the study if they had a failing grade in one of their core classes. 457 seventh eighth graders were selected for the study, 375 of which were placed in the treatment groups.

The qualifying eighth-grade students were randomly sorted into either the treatment or business as usual (BAU) group. Students in the treatment group participated in small group instruction in classes with less than ten students for 50 minutes a day during their elective class period, while students in the BAU group attended elective classes instead of supplemental reading instruction. During the first phase of the intervention, during semester one, interventions were focused primarily on advanced word study. Students were taught affixes, prefixes, and other word parts while learning six to eight words pulled from expository texts in their content area coursework. During the second phase, which took place in semester two, interventions were split into one to two week instructional units that focused on specific texts used in their content
area coursework. Throughout the intervention students were given specific reading goals for
each content area to help improve engagement.

The results showed statistically significant growth in students’ reading comprehension
scores on the reading comprehension subtest of the Gates-MacGinitie Reading Tests (MacGinitie
et al., 2000). Also, students participating in the treatment group earned higher grades in their
social studies coursework due to their improved reading ability. There were no measurable
improvements to students’ science grades based on the reading interventions. The study shows
that focused small group reading instruction can help struggling readers improve their reading
comprehension in middle school. This study suggests that it is a good idea to use elective class
periods to focus on reading comprehension and word work. Also, the study shows that this
particular reading intervention had a greater impact on student success in social studies courses
than it did on science courses. Vaughn et al. (2014) informed the current study by adding an
emphasis on informational texts that related to students social studies and science coursework
when possible. Therefore, in the design of the current study I utilized both narrative and
informational texts during the intervention.

In the previous study by Vaughn et al. (2014), the researchers determined that
interventions focusing on word study and specific instruction using texts from content areas can
lead to an increase in reading comprehension and improved success in content specific
coursework. In different study, Vaughn, Cirino, Wanzek, Wexler, Fletcher, Denton, and Francis
(2010), sought to determine the effectiveness of a different intervention involving fluency
instruction, repeated reading, decoding practice, and vocabulary practice.

In the Vaughn et al. (2010) study, they investigated the effects of a Tier Two intervention
provided in relatively large groups of 10-15 students on the reading-related outcomes of
individuals with reading difficulties. The independent variable in this study is whether or not a student was in the Tier Two treatment group and received the intervention or was in the control group and did not receive the intervention. The dependent variable was the student’s growth in reading ability as measured on the Texas Assessment of Knowledge and Skills (Texas Education Agency, 2004). Individual reading skills were also assessed using other methods. Decoding and spelling was assessed using the Woodcock-Johnson III Tests of Achievement (WJ-III; Woodcock, McGrew, & Mather, 2001), and fluency was assessed using the Test of Word Reading Efficiency (TOWRE; Torgesen, Wagner, & Rashotte, 1999). The researchers also administered the Kaufman Brief Intelligence Test—2 (Kaufman & Kaufman, 2004) to test participant’s verbal knowledge.

Sixth-graders from seven middle schools participated in the study, including three schools from a large urban district in one city and four schools from two medium districts in a smaller city. The rate of students qualifying for reduced-cost or free lunch ranged from 40 percent to 86 percent at both sites. The preliminary sample included 2,034 fifth-grade students who took the Texas Assessment of Knowledge and Skills (Texas Education Agency, 2004) in the spring of 2006 and had useable scores. These students were then designated as either struggling readers or typical readers. There were 759 struggling readers that were randomly assigned within a school in a 2:1 ratio to either a researcher-provided Tier Two intervention or a comparison condition. Many of the students did not return to the same school in the fall for their sixth grade year, so in the end there were 241 Tier Two students and 115 comparison students that began sixth grade the year of the study.

To begin the study, the research team provided professional development on evidence-based practices for teaching vocabulary and comprehension to sixth grade teachers. This session
took place at the beginning of the school year. Teachers then met with study groups approximately once a month. All teachers received this training so students in both the Tier Two treatment group and the comparison group benefitted from this intervention. The students in the Tier II treatment group were placed in homogenous groups as class schedules allowed and received intervention for an academic year. The intervention was conducted in three phases.

During Phase I, students in the treatment group participated in roughly 25 lessons over eight weeks that emphasized word study and fluency. Fluency was taught using oral reading and by pairing higher and lower readers for partner reading. It also included repeated reading with a partner. Word study was promoted by teaching strategies for decoding multisyllabic words. Students progressed to more difficult concepts as they mastered the previous one. Students also received daily practice with letter sounds, letter combinations, and affixes. Vocabulary was also addressed each day by teaching words through basic definitions. Comprehension was addressed by asking students to answer relevant comprehension questions.

During Phase II, students in the treatment group participated in lessons over 18 weeks that focused on vocabulary and comprehension. Skills previously taught in Phase I were reviewed daily to ensure they were retained. Students were taught vocabulary by reading new words and then giving the basic definition. During this phase students read informational articles and narrative novels. Words for vocabulary instruction were chosen from these texts and comprehension was taught by teaching students to generate questions while reading, identify the main idea, and summarize.

During Phase III, students in the treatment group participated in interventions over 10 weeks that continued the focus on vocabulary and comprehension, but there was an increased focus on fluency and word reading activities. During Phase III, instructors worked with students
on all of the different topics and skills taught in the previous sessions, but time was more evenly divided between vocabulary, comprehension, and fluency instruction. Strategies taught during Phase II (i.e. determining the meaning of words from context and reading strategies) were used more frequently during independent reading and were assessed during the lessons through comprehension questions asked before discussions.

Results showed that students in the Tier Two intervention group on average grew more than their peers on almost every posttest administered by the researchers. The most significant growth was made in Word Attack, Spelling, and Decoding skills as measured by the WJ-III (Woodcock et al., 2001). Student’s comprehension scores grew more if they were in the intervention group but did not grow enough to show a statistically significant change.

The study primarily focused on practice with fluency, word attack strategies, word study, and vocabulary (Vaughn et al., 2010). Comprehension was taught but it was not always a focus. Educators should strive to implement Tier Two interventions when possible but they may not prove to be very effective in the end. Since all teachers received training on educational strategies at the start of the year this clearly benefited all students, therefore quality whole class instruction is most important to student growth. Since the study by Vaughn et al. (2010), was most effective at improving the Word Attack, Spelling, and Decoding skills as measured by the WJ-III (Woodcock et al., 2001) and did not show significant growth in reading comprehension, I decided not to include fluency practice in my intervention since the purpose of my study was aimed and increasing students overall reading comprehension level.
Reading Interventions for Students with Attention Deficit Hyperactivity Disorder

Many of the studies done on reading comprehension involve students that are lower achieving when compared to their peers. Achievement can be impacted by many factors; some factors exist outside the individual and others exist within individuals. The study in this section looks at the reading ability of students that are categorized as inattentive, hyperactive, or both inattentive and hyperactive. Attention Deficit Hyperactivity Disorder (ADHD) is defined as the “current term for a specific developmental disorder seen in both children and adults that is comprised of deficits in behavioral inhibition, sustained attention and resistance to distraction, and the regulation of one’s activity level to the demands of a situation (hyperactivity or restlessness)” (Barkley, 1998). A review of research specific to people with ADHD is included in this review because many students in the school the study is being conducted in are suspected of having ADD or ADHD by educators, parents, and administration, because of frequent inattentive behavior in class. Also, practices used to stimulate and educate students with ADD or ADHD are often best practice and can be effective for all students (Barkley, 1998).

The studies reviewed in this section examine the effectiveness reading interventions designed to increase reading comprehension for students with ADD or ADHD. The purpose of Cain and Bignell’s (2014) study was to determine whether or not reading comprehension was directly associated with teacher ratings of two subtypes of attention deficit hyperactivity disorder: inattention and hyperactivity. The study was designed to also examine if comprehension was associated with word reading level as assessed by the Neale Analysis of Reading Assessment – Revised British Edition (NARA-II: Neale, 1997) and ADD-H as measured by the Comprehensive Teacher Rating Scale (ACTeRS: Ullmann, Sleator, & Sprague, 1999).
Sixty-six students between the ages of seven and eleven participated in the study. All students were from a suburban school district that serves middle-class and lower-middle class families in East England. None of the students were diagnosed with any specific learning difficulties and were included in the study based on teacher ratings of inattention and hyperactivity. All students were assessed using the ADD-H Comprehensive Teacher Rating Scale (ACTeRS: Ullmann et al., 1999). The researchers then split the students into three categorical subtypes of ADHD: inattention only, hyperactivity only, and combined. They then matched each student with a peer who scored in a developmentally appropriately level on the ACTeRS in order to have a matched control. The dependent variables in the research are the test scores on word reading and comprehension for each group of students. The independent variables are the scores on rating scales, which divided participants into three different student groups: inattention, hyperactivity, and combined symptom.

All participants were then given the British Picture Vocabulary Scale – II (BPVS-II: Dunn, Dunn, Whetton, & Burley, 1997) in order to assess their current vocabulary level. Their nonverbal skills were assessed using the Matrix Analogies Text – Short Form (MAT-SF: Naglieri, 1985), and their word reading ability and reading comprehension was assessed by the NARA-II (Neale, 1997). The scores were then analyzed to see which groups (as rated on the attention scale) had reading difficulties compared to the control group of peers.

The results of the assessments showed that there were significant differences in reading ability between the inattention group and the combined group (inattention and hyperactivity) when compared to their respective control groups. The inattention group and the combined group both had more reading difficulties, especially in receptive vocabulary, word reading, and reading
comprehension. The hyperactivity only group did not differ from the control group in any of the measures.

This study shows that students with hyperactivity are less likely to have reading difficulty compared to students with inattention. Hyperactivity is more visible to a teacher, whereas inattention can exist without being easily detected (Cain & Bignell, 2014). This suggests teachers currently spend more time thinking of adaptations to their reading lessons to hyperactive students keep hyperactive students engaged, whereas they also need to put more effort into keeping inattentive students engaged in the lesson. The research done by Cain and Bignell (2014) influenced the current study by reinforcing the need for small group instruction. If a student may have attention difficulties, a smaller group will ensure that the student is not inattentive or off task during instruction. If the interventions for this study were done in too large of a group inattentive students could become an unintended variable. In small group instruction students are unable to become inattentive because of student to teacher ratio. With a small student-teacher ratio, the teacher is able to manage student behaviors to keep all students on task.

Retelling Interventions

There are a multitude of studies done on different reading interventions, curriculums, and programs to increase student achievement in reading comprehension. Although many of the programs are very successful, they usually require large amounts of money to purchase and require many district-run professional development sessions for the teachers. This is not feasible for all districts, and therefore not beneficial to a majority of the teachers trying to help their students make the gains necessary. With a limited amount of time to teach reading during the day, teachers must use the most effective interventions to not only help students catch up to grade level, but to keep pace. One indicator of comprehension is the ability to retell a story or the
events in a text (Gambrell, Pfeiffer, & Wilson, 1985). Overall, students who can retell the events of a text after reading have higher comprehension (Caldwell & Leslie, 2011); therefore, it is often a focus of intervention for comprehension. The studies in this section focus on interventions that involve retelling the story after students finish reading.

In a study by Schisler et al. (2010), they compared the instructional effectiveness and efficiency of oral retelling, written retelling, and passage-review comprehension strategies on third-grade students’ accuracy and rate of answering reading comprehension questions. The independent variables for the study were the effects of the following instructional practices: repeated reading with passage review, repeated reading with oral retell, and repeated reading with written retell. The dependent variables were a set of ten multiple choice comprehension questions (five literal and five inferential) that corresponded to each reading passage from Timed Readings: Fifty 400-Word Passages with Questions for Building Reading Speed, Book 1, Third Edition (Spargo, 1989).

The teachers identified twenty-two third-grade students who were fluent readers but had difficulty comprehending text. Parental consent was obtained for 14 students and they were screened for the study by taking the Oral Reading Fluency measure from the Dynamic Indicators of Basic Early Literacy Skills (Good & Kaminski, 2002) assessment tool to determine current oral reading fluency performance levels. These 14 students also participated in the Reading Comprehension subtest of the Diagnostic Achievement Battery, Third Edition (Newcomer, 2001) to determine current reading comprehension performance levels. In the end only five students were picked for the study. The five participants were third-grade students from three general education classrooms without identified educational disabilities in a rural elementary school in Central Ohio. The participants did not receive any specialized instruction at their school.
After selecting the participants for this study each student met with an instructor for a training session to learn the procedures for each of the experimental instruction practices. While teaching the procedures the instructors used a script to maintain consistency in the way the procedures were taught to all participants. Each experimental condition was implemented in a one-on-one instructional format for 15 sessions. Each session was carried out over two days because each of the three experimental conditions required between 10 and 20 minutes in which the students were removed from regular classroom instruction. This meant that two instructional conditions were implemented on one day, and one was implemented the following day.

During each session, participants were directed to read a third-grade level reading passage from *Timed Readings: Fifty 400-Word Passages with Questions for Building Reading Speed, Book 1, Third Edition* (Spargo, 1989) aloud to the instructor. Each reading of the passage was timed by the instructor. When the participant made an error in oral reading or omitted a word the instructor used a phrase drill error-correction procedure to teach the new word. This involved reading the sentence with the misread or omitted word correctly and then asking the student to reread the sentence correctly three to five times before moving on. The timer continued to run while using the phrase drill error-correction procedure. The students were then asked to do a repeated reading of the passage aloud for the instructor. During this time the same phrase drill error-procedure was implemented. After this reading the instructor informed the students that they would be given three minutes to do one of the following tasks: engage in a review before answering comprehension questions, an oral retell, or a written retell of the passage.

If the experimental condition was to engage in a review the student would have three minutes to look over the passage to review for questions the instructor would ask them. If the
student did not desire to use the entire three minutes they could inform the instructor that they were ready and begin the questions early. The instructor would ask one time, “Is there anything else you would like to look over before I ask the questions?” If the experimental condition was an oral retell the student was given three minutes to tell the instructor everything they remembered about the passage. If the student stopped before the three minutes were up the instructor would prompt one time and ask, “What else can you tell me about what you read?” If the experimental condition was a written retell the student was given white lined paper and a sharpened pencil. They were told they have three minutes the write down everything they remembered about the passage. If the student stopped working before the three minutes the instructor would prompt one time by asking, “What else can you write about what you read?” All five students participated in all three conditions over the course of the intervention.

The results of the study show that students’ comprehension rates were higher when they were asked to do a retell, whether oral or written, than when they engaged in a review and answered comprehension questions. Students answered more comprehension questions correctly on average after completing the oral retell than when they completed the written retell. The instructors also measured the rate at which students answered questions correctly compared to the amount of time they spent in each condition. These results also show that oral and written retelling conditions were the most effective use of instructional time because they grew more than the students that engaged in a review of the text in a shorter amount of time spent in the condition. All of the student’s comprehension rates consistently grew throughout the course of the sessions for all three experimental conditions.

Schisler, et al.’s (2010) study showed that the process of repeated reading and the phrase drill error-correction procedure along with time to review and retell a text could increase student
achievement in reading comprehension. This is clear because all of the student’s comprehension scores grew almost linearly from the first session to the last session. The study also indicated that students comprehend more of a passage when they give a retell, either written or oral, after reading a passage. On average students scored a little higher after giving an oral retell so this seemed to be the most effective practice of the three examined in this study. Due to the limitation of a small sample (five students), more studies related to retelling are reviewed next. The Schisler et al. (2010) study directly influenced the current study to include written retells of a text in the intervention.

The previous study by Schisler et al., (2010), shows that both written and oral retellings of a passage can increase a student’s reading comprehension. The following study by Gambrell, Pfeiffer, and Wilson (1985) found that student’s reading comprehension increased when they were taught retelling strategies and that other activities, such as illustrating a passage are not as effective.

In Gambrell et al.’s (1985) study, they investigated the effect of retelling on reading comprehension. The independent variable is the type of training participants received; either finding important ideas and supporting details or training on illustrating what they read. The dependent variable was the student’s scores in a free retell and a cued recall after the final session as measured using an adaptation of Spencer’s (1973) prose scoring system.

Students from nine fourth-grade classrooms in four different North Carolina public schools were drawn for the study. The students met two criteria: their scores on the California Achievement Test were at the third stanine and above, meaning they were average or above average readers; and they were native English speakers. There were 93 total students that participated in the study. Participants were assigned randomly to one of two treatment
conditions: retelling or illustrating. The students in the retelling group were asked to retell “all the important ideas from the story.” The students from the illustrating group were asked to illustrate “all the important ideas from the story.” All students participated in four training sessions according to their treatment condition and one test session to measure the impact of the treatment condition.

In the four training sessions for the retelling group, subjects were taught in small groups of six to eight students. Students were told they were going to read a passage and decide what the important ideas in the passage were. After silent reading they were given an outline with the title “Important Idea” at the top and supporting details underneath. Students were told to fill in what they thought was the most important idea and the supporting details. Teachers did not correct any ideas. During the third and fourth sessions students were expected to work through a different reading and take notes more independently. During the fourth session students were asked to retell what they read in a new passage to a partner.

The procedures for the illustrating group were consistent with those of the retelling group except after they read the passage the subjects were asked to illustrate all the important ideas and details from the story in picture form. The students in this group were not asked to take notes. All other materials and procedures were kept consistent in all four training sessions.

During the testing session the fourth grade participants met individually with an investigator. All students read the same passage and then completed the important idea, supporting details outline. Each student was then asked to retell the passage. After the retell students were asked 20 cued recall questions designed by researchers. The retell and the cued recall were recorded to be scored at a later time.
The tests showed that students given training in finding important ideas and supporting details included significantly more details from the text in both their free retell and their cued recall than the students receiving training in illustrating what they read. On average they included more than two more important details per passage in their retell. This study showed that giving student’s instruction in retelling and finding important ideas in a text increased their ability to recall ideas from the passage. According to Gambrell et al.’s (1985) study, teachers should cut lessons in their curriculum that focus on having students illustrate passages and instead focus students on writing or sharing a retell of the passage with a partner. Gambrell et al. informed the current study by showing the importance of having students retell texts in order to improve general reading ability.

The previous study by Gambrell et al. (1985) found that giving students opportunities to retell stories along with instruction on finding important ideas in a text can increase recall of passages. The next study by Gambrell, Koskinen, and Kapinus (1991) affirmed this assertion by showing that instruction in story retelling can increase reading comprehension in both high and low achieving readers.

Gambrell et al. (1991), investigated the effects of practice in retelling on the prose comprehension of fourth-grade readers (both proficient and less-proficient) across four practice sessions. The independent variables for this study were the different interventions given to the student in each of the four sessions. Also, the students’ reading ability was the dependent variable since the study wanted to compare how effective the intervention was for proficient readers and less proficient readers. The subjects were 48 fourth graders from four elementary schools in Maryland. Twenty-four of the students were proficient readers (68th percentile or
above on the California Achievement Test (CTB/McGraw Hill), while the other 24 students were less proficient readers (41st percentile or below on the California Achievement Test).

Participants in both the proficient-reader group and the less-proficient reader group were randomly assigned to one of four story-order conditions. The participants in the proficient-reader group were told they would meet individually with the researcher for four sessions over two weeks. They were told they would read stories and have a chance to practice becoming storytellers. They were told their retellings would be tape-recorded so younger children could listen to them tell stories. Students were introduced to the story and given time to read the story silently. After reading, participants were instructed to take time to think about how they will tell the story. After two minutes the subject began the retelling by stating the title of the story. After the first and fourth sessions, subjects responded to eight orally administered comprehension questions about the story they had read. The procedures in the less-proficient reader group were identical to those used with the proficient-reader group. The only difference was that students in the less proficient reading group were given passages that were at a second grade level rather than a fourth grade level.

Student retellings in both groups were scored according to how many story elements they included; elements were counted as propositions. At the conclusion of the intervention, scores from the student retellings and comprehension questions from session one and session four were compared. For proficient readers the mean number of propositions recalled from the first session to the fourth session increased by over seven. For the less proficient readers the mean number of propositions recalled from the first session to the fourth session increased by two. After the retelling treatment, both the less proficient readers and the more proficient readers were able to increase their reading comprehension scores in only four sessions.
This study shows that both proficient and less proficient readers can greatly benefit from instruction on retelling a story. Teachers should focus on having students retell stories orally (Gambrell et al., 1991). The more proficient readers would benefit from the retelling practice and telling the stories to younger students would help motivate them to be more thorough and include more details from the text in their retell. Grambrell et al.’s (1991) study informed the current study by further demonstrating the effectiveness of retelling texts as a way to improve student ability to comprehend a passage.

The previous study by Gambrell et al. (1991) showed that instruction in story retelling can increase reading comprehension. The next study by Blickenstaff, Hallquist, and Kopel, (2013) examines the effectiveness of a specific retelling strategy across three different classrooms. The purpose of Blickenstaff et al.’s (2013) study was to determine the effectiveness of the five-finger retell reading intervention on elementary age students’ reading comprehension. The study was implemented in three classrooms from different schools. The classrooms vary greatly in the number, age, and needs of the students. The independent variable is the reading intervention known as the five-finger retell (Richardson, 2009). All students involved in the study received instruction on how to use this strategy to check their comprehension. The students’ growth in reading comprehension (i.e., dependent variable) was then measured using pre and posttests, as well as comprehension questions on passages read in the classroom (explained below).

Blickenstaff et al.’s (2013) study was implemented in three classrooms from three different schools. The classrooms varied greatly in the number, age, and needs of the students. One classroom contained sixteen fourth grade students from a rural school district in Northern Minnesota. The second classroom contained 21 kindergarten students from a suburb of
Minneapolis. This classroom contained nine English Language Learners from diverse backgrounds. The final classroom contained five students in a Developmental Cognitive Disabilities (DCD) classroom. This classroom is a part of a large school district in the Minneapolis area.

Each of the three teachers began the study by given a pre-assessment based on the resources provided by their school districts and what was developmentally appropriate for each age group. No standard assessment was given across all three classrooms, therefore student growth was measured against him or herself. After the pretest, all instructors taught their class the five-finger retell reading intervention. The five finger retell consists of asking each student the following questions: 1) Who was in the story? 2) Where and when does the story take place? 3) What happened in the beginning? 4) What was the problem in the story? and 5) How was the problem solved (Richardson, 2009). They also taught their classes when they should ask these questions (during reading) to check and see if they were comprehending the story correctly.

The teacher in the fourth grade classroom worked individually with students during center time to check if they could answer each one of the questions after reading a story aloud. She also collected a comprehension test from a reading textbook used in her school at the end of every week. In the kindergarten classroom, students were split into two groups. One group received the five-finger retell intervention, while the other group received instruction on monitoring fluency. In the DCD classroom, students were split into two groups based on their pretest reading scores. Both groups received the five-finger retell intervention when they met with the instructor.

At the end of the six-week reading intervention program, all three instructors gave posttests that aligned to the pretests given in their classrooms to measure reading comprehension.
Students in the fourth grade classroom grew from an average score of 77 percent as a class to an average score of 88 percent on the same assessment. This shows that the intervention was successful at increasing the reading comprehension in fourth graders as measured by the given assessment. Students in the kindergarten classroom showed a 17 percent increase on the reading comprehension posttests. This also showed that the intervention was successful at improving kindergarten students’ reading comprehension as measured by that assessment. Students in the DCD classroom all grew between one and two levels on the Diagnostic Reading Assessment (Bates, 2010) between the pre and posttest.

This study shows that the five-finger retell reading intervention is successful when administered in a variety of ways to elementary age students. Since all the classrooms that used this intervention showed growth, the five-finger retell indicates promise as an intervention for elementary students’ reading comprehension. Blickenstaff et al. (2013), informed the current study by showing that using an age appropriate retell strategy can be effective in increasing reading comprehension. Since the current study involves high school students, the five-finger retell was not included in the intervention, but having the students write a retell of the text was.

The study by Blickenstaff et al. (2013) showed that the five-finger retell (Richardson, 2009) can effectively improve reading comprehension in young children. The following study by Hagaman and Reid (2008) explored the effect of a different reading strategy on student’s ability to retell a story and answer comprehension questions about that story. The purpose of Hagaman, and Reid’s, study was to investigate the effectiveness of teaching the Read a Paragraph (RAP: Schumaker, Denton, & Deshler, 1984) reading comprehension strategy along with the self-regulated strategy development (SRSD) on the reading comprehension of struggling readers. The RAP reading strategy was implemented by teaching students to read a paragraph and then either
tell or write down the main idea and two details. The dependent variable in the research were the participants’ reading comprehension level determined by an oral retell and comprehension questions from Gates MacGinitie Reading Test, Fourth Edition (GMRT-4; MacGinitie et al., 2000). The independent variable was the administration of the Read a Paragraph (RAP) reading instruction intervention.

The participants for the study were from a rural elementary school in a Midwestern state. Participants were first screened for the study using the GMRT-4 (MacGinitie et al., 2000). Only students scoring below grade level on the GMRT-4 were eligible for the study. Fifteen students met this criterion. The teachers then selected five students from the fifteen that struggled with reading comprehension within the Reading Enrichment Classroom, a classroom that focused on teaching foundational reading skills that students were expected to have mastered in previous grades. From these five, parental consent was only received for three of the students. These three students were then assessed using the Gray Oral Reading Test, Fourth Edition (GORT-4; Wiederholt & Bryant, 2001). Students were only eligible for the study if they scored below the 25th percentile on the GORT-4. All three of the students did qualify for the study. All three of the participants were female, one was Hispanic while the other two were Caucasian.

During baseline data collection, the three sixth-grade participants read aloud selections of text from a Social Studies textbook written at a fourth grade level specifically for English language learners. They were told they would not be timed, that the researcher would tell them any word they did not know, and that after they were done reading they would tell the researcher everything they could remember about it. After reading, the passage and any notes they took while reading were removed, they retold everything they could remember about the passage. The
researcher then asked six free response questions while the students responded orally. These baseline probes were later analyzed by the researchers.

Once the baseline was determined, the researchers began instruction with one participant until he or she reached the criterion level for independent performance. Instruction, based on the RAP intervention, included having students read a paragraph and then pause to orally paraphrase the paragraph and include the main idea. The instruction aspect of RAP included modeling the skill of paraphrasing and including the main idea of the paragraph within the paraphrasing. Once students were able to orally state the main idea and two details from each paragraph independently, the student was then moved to the independent performance phase of the study. The same procedures were used for the remaining two participants. After receiving the treatment procedures defined above, the participants were given four more comprehension probes following the same procedures used to determine the baseline. After two weeks, the participants were given two more comprehension probes that followed the same procedures as before. Each comprehension probe (a total of six) was scored for a percentage of text recalled and the number of correct responses to the questions asked by the researcher.

All three participants showed a dramatic increase in the percentage of story retold from the first probe to the sixth probe. The baseline percentage of the text recalled for the three participants was 9.6, 24.5, and 10.2. After receiving the treatment all three of the participants percentage of the text recalled increased to 59.5, 47.5, and 85.25 respectively. The treatment effects were also maintained after the two-week follow up. During the follow-up, the percentage recall scores did drop slightly but they were still well above the baseline level. The three participants also showed a major increase in correct free response questions. These improvements were also maintained after the two-week follow up. Hagaman and Reid’s (2008)
study informed the current study by because of the effectiveness of paraphrasing information. Students in the current study were not asked to paraphrase like they were Hagaman and Reid’s (2008) study, but they did take notes using a graphic organizer to aid in comprehension. Incidentally, taking notes often includes the need to paraphrase.

The previous study by Hagaman and Reid. (2008) discovered that instruction in stating the main idea and details of each paragraph increased student’s ability to recall ideas from a story. The next study by de Quirós, Lara-Alecio, Fuhui, & Irby (2012) investigated the effectiveness of structured story reading intervention, story retelling, and higher order thinking for English Language and Literacy Acquisition. The study followed elementary students over the course of two years to determine the best practices for increasing English language acquisition. Researchers were trying to determine the effectiveness of the English structured story reading intervention, known as STELLA. The treatment group received the structured story reading and story retelling intervention while the students in the control group had the same stories read aloud to them but did not receive any intervention.

The study took place in a school district in Southeast Texas. The majority of students in the population where the study took place qualified for free or reduced lunch. Participants were all identified by state criteria as limited English proficient. At the time of admission, students took a Home Language Survey that indicated Spanish as the primary language spoken at home. Seventy-five second-grade students were randomly selected from a larger study that was happening within the school district. Forty students were placed in treatment group and 35 were placed in a control group. Three students withdrew from the study to leave the total at 72 students, with 38 in the treatment group and 34 in the control group. The treatment group was made up of 22 male and 16 female students, and the control group was made up of 20 male and
14 female students. Eleven teachers from 9 schools participated in the study. Six were in the treatment condition and five were in the control condition. All teachers read the same story titles for the duration of the study.

Before implementing the study students were given a pretest to determine their vocabulary knowledge, comprehension skills, and nonverbal ability. The assessments used were the subtests of Picture Vocabulary, Listening Comprehension and Passage Comprehension in Woodcock Language Proficiency Battery-Revised (Woodcock, 1991; Woodcock & Munoz-Sandoval, 1995). Students' nonverbal ability was measured by the Naglieri Nonverbal Ability Test (Naglieri, 1997), which is designed to give a reliable and valid nonverbal appraisal of general ability.

STELLA (described below) was implemented every day for 40 minutes in first grade classrooms and 35 minutes in second grade classrooms. The intervention had a five day cycle that was repeated with different readings each week. On day one, vocabulary from the week’s passage was explicitly taught using student friendly definitions, teacher modeling, student practice, and connecting to prior knowledge. The storybook for the week was introduced but not read. Connections to prior knowledge were made and a theme was discussed using a topic web graphic organizer. On day two the teacher read the entire story to the students and asked levelled questions after each page. Students were expected to answer in complete sentences. If they used incorrect grammar the teacher would model using correct grammar. In addition to answering questions, story elements such as character, setting, problem, and solution were discussed. On day three, vocabulary was reviewed and new words were introduced. The teacher would read the story aloud again and then lead the class in a choral reading to promote fluency. The story was then reviewed using questions to guide a discussion. The students ended the session by writing
one or two sentences to answer a prompt related to the story. On day four students participated in a choral reading and worked on writing about the story elements. Students would then participate in a retelling activity with a small group or a partner. On day five the story was read aloud again by the teacher and students participated in a story circle activity. Students concluded the week by writing a short paragraph about the story topic.

Vocabulary instruction for each passage was also taught in a specific procedure. Twelve words were selected for each passage that the instructor would explicitly teach, give examples of the word in context and out of context, and then words were revisited by the students while reading the text. The teachers then used a cloze or a sentence stem where they needed to fill in the correct word missing from the sentence. By contrast, in the control group, the teachers were required to read the same story book that was used in treatment group classrooms during the intervention. Other than that they were given no direction for how to implement a lesson or give vocabulary instruction.

After the interventions both groups of students were tested on their retellings. The instructor would read the story to the student in English and then ask the student to retell. Then, the instructor would read the story in Spanish, the student’s first language, and as the student to retell. Both retellings were recorded, transcribed verbatim, and scored. The retellings were scored on a rubric that looked for the setting, characters, plot, problem, and resolution of the story. After the intervention sessions students were also given a post-test to determine the effectiveness of the interventions. The post-test included a score of the student’s final retell based on the Thorndyke (1977) scoring system, which scores the students recognition of story grammar (i.e. characters, setting, plot and conflict).
The pretests showed that there were no statistically significant differences in vocabulary, reading comprehension, or nonverbal ability between the treatment and control groups at the outset of the study. The results of the final retells showed that students in the treatment group scored significantly higher than the control group in identifying the story grammar elements in both their English and Spanish retell of the story, based on Thorndyke’s (1977) scoring system.

This study showed that systematic reading comprehension and vocabulary instruction for English language learners increased student’s ability to identify the elements of a story at a faster rate than typical or less structured story-reading instruction. This study did not give a post-test to determine the overall growth in vocabulary, reading comprehension, and nonverbal skills so the overall effectiveness of the interventions is unclear. The results of this study informed the current study by showing the effectiveness of modeling in the skills being taught at the beginning of each cycle. Modeling the skill being used or practiced at the beginning of each session ensures that the student knows exactly what to do, and is getting better practice during the rest of the session. The intervention for the current research involves the teacher using the same text from first session of each week to model taking notes on a graphic organizer during the second session of the week. The idea to use the text from the previous session was adapted from the de Quirós et al. (2012) study. Additionally, the current study was designed to have the instructor model using a graphic organizer at the beginning of each session to ensure that the participant practices the skill correctly throughout the course of the intervention.

Conclusion

The study by Little et al., (2014) shows that differentiated instruction during class is an effective way for students to increase their reading comprehension. Students need differentiated instruction, including access to books on their reading level (Little et al., 2014). This study
influenced the current research to have a simple and straightforward intervention so it could be carried out with fidelity. This would ensure that the data collected is accurate and any growth can be attributed back to the intervention.

In addition to differentiated instruction during class time, students can greatly benefit from tutoring (Dyson et al., 2008) or other programs designed to help students outside of school or during a support time (Vaughn et al., 2014). This can be done in numerous ways, but instruction in vocabulary, text structure, and retelling are proven to help increase student achievement in reading (McGhee, 1982). Both the act of asking students to retell and providing instruction in how to retell a story can be successful as interventions for all readers (Hagaman & Reid, 2008; Gambrell et al., 1991). There are numerous strategies, structures, and practices to teach students how to retell a story, from the Five-Finger retell (Richardson, 2009) to the “Read a Paragraph” (Schumaker et al., 1984) and story-telling interventions (de Quiros et al., 2012). The key in all of the studies in this section is ensuring that students know they will have to do a retell of a story when they finish reading, and then giving them myriad opportunities to practice. All of these studies on retelling interventions influenced the current research design to include ample opportunities for the student to retell passages. None of the studies reviewed above implemented a retelling intervention with high school age students. The current research was designed to add to the field of research on this topic by seeing if retelling interventions are also successful in improving reading ability for high school students. Furthermore, these studies informed the design of my study by isolating the skills and practice of retelling a text and note taking while reading.

The study by Cain and Bignell (2014) showed that one that of the most important factors in lesson design, is to ensure that all students, both inattentive students and hyperactive students,
are engaged and participate in all aspects of the lesson. This research impacted the design of the current study by limiting the number students in an intervention session to one. This allowed for the instructor to easily manage student behavior and keep the focus of the session on the instruction of the intervention and practice using the retelling strategy.

In my research design I included modeling the skill every week as was done the study by de Quiros et al. (2012). This practice ensured that the skill was being practiced in a consistent manner throughout the action research. Also, the study by Schisler et al. (2010), greatly influenced the purpose of the current study because they also were trying to find the most effective and fastest way to improve reading comprehension. This is an important factor for the current study because it shares a similar purpose to the Schisler et al. (2010) study.

The design of the current study was structured to replicate aspects of the studies reviewed above that involve a retelling intervention and determine if consistent results could be found when using the intervention with high school age students. If successful, the intervention could be replicated by other researchers or instructors to help students make dramatic readings gains and catch up to students that are currently outperforming them.
Chapter Three

The current study was derived and inspired by research conducted by Vaughn et al. (2010), which is summarized in Chapter Two. Vaughn et al. sought to determine the effectiveness of Tier 2 interventions on improving reading comprehension. The purpose of the current two student case study with a single subject design was to determine the effectiveness of a researcher-designed reading intervention that engaged two students in using a graphic organizer to take notes and write a retell of a text after reading. The study has two research questions, 1) Does instruction on structured note taking improve reading comprehension? 2) Does repeated practice of writing a retell of a text increase reading comprehension?

In the current study, I administered a pretest to both participants in order to determine their independent reading levels. The sample in the study conducted by Vaughn et al. (2010) were sixth graders, while the students I worked with were freshmen in high school. Additionally, the control and experiment conditions contained 10-15 students, whereas I had one student receiving the intervention and one student participating in all “normal” coursework as a control. The assessment used for the pretest and post-test was the Qualitative Reading Inventory, Fifth Edition (QRI-5; Caldwell & Leslie, 2011). After the pretest was administered, the students were split into a control condition and an experimental condition. The student in the control condition continued with normal instruction and classes. The student in the experimental condition, in addition to her normal classes, attended ten reading intervention sessions on the use of a graphic organizer while reading and writing a retell of the text after reading. The ten sessions happened over the course of five weeks. During the first session of each week I modeled using the graphic organizer to take notes and then asked the student to use the graphic organizer to take notes on a different text. After reading and taking notes on the text the student was asked to write a retell of
what he or she just read. Each session ended with the student answering ten comprehension questions about the text. The second session of each week started with the researcher modeling how to take notes on a graphic organizer using the text the student read in the previous session. The student then practiced using the graphic organizer again, wrote a retell of the text, and answered ten comprehension questions. After the ten intervention sessions both students took a posttest using the same assessment to measure reading growth. My hypothesis was that the student in the experimental condition would show more reading comprehension growth on the QRI-5 than the student in the control condition. The following sections will include a description of participants as well as the procedures used to conduct the study.

**Description of Site and Participants**

The participants included in this study were two freshmen students from a high school in a large, urban Midwestern city. The school involved in this study participates in the School Choice program and is a part of a larger network of schools in the city. Although it is a part of a larger network of schools, it is the only high school option in the network and students matriculating from middle schools do not have to attend the high school. It has a total enrollment of around 200 students with only two sections of each grade level. Students in the freshmen class range in age from 13 to 16 years old. When the study was conducted, there were about 100 students in the freshmen class; two of the students are Hispanic and the rest are African American. The school is dedicated to improving the quality of education they provide by having weekly professional development for teachers that includes data analysis, curriculum planning, and coaching in instructional practices.

The participants in the study were purposively selected in conjunction with the Freshmen English teacher based on observations from class. This particular teacher is a reliable resource
because she is responsible for the students’ reading instruction and knows the status of her students’ ability to read on-grade-level texts in her classroom. I asked the teacher to recommend students that were struggling to complete coursework and seemed to have difficulties with reading comprehension. In order to determine comprehension difficulties the teacher gathered evidence including current grades in her course on book quizzes and unit tests that assessed comprehension of the current assigned book. The teacher also looked at her daily homework, that included reading sections of the text and summarizing paragraphs, and considered participation in classwork. She recommended students whose homework displayed inaccurate facts about the text and were scoring below the average score on the aforementioned classroom assessments.

After receiving recommendations, only two students, one male and one female, returned the informed consent form and were able to participate in the study. Both of the students had attended the school since the beginning of the year and were in the second quarter of their freshmen year throughout the duration of the study. Based on the school’s information directory, both students were African American and qualified for free and reduced lunch program upon enrollment for their freshmen year. Both participants in the study were fourteen years of age.

Both students were described as having reading difficulties in their English class; tasks that seemed difficult for the students included answering comprehension questions about a text, book quizzes, and book discussions. The students participated, and were enrolled in the required courses for freshmen as prescribed by the school. Neither student had previously taken the QRI-5 (Caldwell & Leslie, 2011) before participating in this study.

Description of Procedures

This two student case study with a single subject design action research was completed in three phases. Phase one was gathering baseline data on students, phase two was the
administration of the graphic organizer and written retell intervention, and phase three was the gathering of posttest data.

The first phase of this two student case study with a single subject design action research was to collect data on the students’ reading level. I administered the QRI-5 (Caldwell & Leslie, 2011) to both students and analyzed the students’ retelling of the text and answers to comprehension questions. To qualify for the study, both students needed to score below grade level by at least three reading levels as measured by the QRI-5 (Caldwell & Leslie, 2011) and both did. Once both students were tested, I split them into a control condition and an experimental condition by randomly selecting one for each condition. Random selection was done by flipping a coin after assigning one student heads, and the other student tails.

The second phase of the action research was the teaching of the structured note-taking and retelling practice intervention for the student in the experimental condition. The student in the control condition continued with normal instruction in all classes. The student in the experimental condition participated in intervention sessions during a portion of lunch and study hall. The student in the experimental condition participated in individual instruction on how to use graphic organizers (see Appendices A & B) to take notes during reading and write retells when finished reading. Readings required the use of both narrative and expository graphic organizers. The texts (see Appendix C) used for the intervention were chosen from Readworks.org (n.d.) and classified as fourth grade level texts to match the reading level of the student in the experimental condition’s reading level. The 45 minute sessions took place twice a week and were carried out over the course of five weeks, so in all, there were ten intervention sessions using two different graphic organizers. The student in the control condition attended
lunch and study hall as regularly scheduled; both students attended English class as regularly scheduled.

Both students’ regularly scheduled English instruction included literacy instruction that is based around teaching reading strategies from a class novel. The curriculum is developed by teachers and academic coaches within the school to align to the College Readiness Standards (ACT, Inc., 2016). In addition to the English curriculum, the one student who participated in the experimental condition met with me separately for ten intervention sessions over the course of five weeks.

After session ten, both the students in the treatment and control conditions completed the posttest administration of the QRI-5 (Caldwell & Leslie, 2011) with the same procedure described in detail in the next section to determine if reading levels were impacted by the intervention. I also kept the written retells from the sessions to analyze and determine qualitative growth. Analysis used to determine growth and increased ability to retell a text on writing samples for narrative text included looking for story elements, such as characters, setting, plot, and conflict included in the retell and determining if the student used specific language from the text to describe these story elements. Analysis used to determine growth and increased ability to retell a text on writing samples for expository texts included identification of the text’s subject, descriptions of the subject, background information on the subject, key ideas, and conclusions made by the author.

**Description of the Intervention**

During the first meeting of each of the five weeks with the student in the experimental condition, the intervention session focused on using the graphic organizer to take notes and
writing a retell of the text. I modeled using a graphic organizer to take notes while reading a short story or article, making sure that the specific graphic organizer used matched the text structure and type of the reading material. The specific story or article was chosen at a fourth grade reading level, based on the initial reading inventory assessment. Reading level of the texts were determined using the Lexile of the text, which is what is utilized by Readworks.org (n.d.). After instructional modeling, the student then practiced note taking independently while I monitored accurate use of the graphic organizer. I did not explain the text for her, but instead directed her to fill out the graphic organizer in the way I previously modeled. In order to maintain consistency, modeling language before reading included statements such as, “This paragraph was all about what Jimmy bought at the baseball game. I am going to write down that Jimmy bought popcorn, pretzels, and ice cream from the concession stand,” or “I notice that Jenny is very sad because she was not allowed to go to the movies. I am going to write down, Jenny is very sad because she was not allowed to go to the movies.” Modeling language during reading included prompts and cues such as, “What was the paragraph you just read mostly about?” or “What is the main character think or feeling in this section of the text?” After completion of the graphic organizer and finishing the text, the participant wrote a retell of what she just read. The student was given five minutes to write her retell. If the student finished writing before the time limit was up, she was asked if she wanted to add any more. The idea for the placing a time limit on the retell came from the study done by Schisler et al. (2010). The rationale for including a time limit on the retell in the current study was twofold, to ensure that the intervention session did not exceed the 45 minutes allotted and to encourage the participant to use the entirety of the five minutes. The time limit set an expectation for how long a written retell can take, encouraging the student to potentially write more than she would have initially.
After the student wrote a written retell she answered ten questions aligned to the text by Readworks.org (n.d.) to determine how well she comprehended the passage.

During the second meeting of the week the intervention focused on the student using the graphic organizer independently and still writing the retell of the text. The passage from the second session of the week was the same text type as the first session, but was a novel text; therefore, the same graphic organizer was used. I modeled writing a retell for the passage from the previous session, then the student read and practiced taking notes on the new passage using the same type of graphic organizer from the previous session. I monitored for accurate use of the graphic organizer but still did not aid the student in comprehending the passage. When the student finished reading and note taking she turned over the graphic organizer and received a blank sheet of paper to write a timed retell of what she just read without looking at the graphic organizer. I set a timer for five minutes and asked the student to stop writing when the five minutes were up. If the student finished the retell before the timer went off, I would use the prompt, “Do you remember anything else from the story?” to help make sure she was not just stopping early. After the student wrote a retell she answered ten questions that came with the passage from Readworks.org (n.d.) to determine how well she comprehended the passage. Each of the five weeks followed the same procedure as above for the two sessions. Passage types and graphic organizers (Appendix A) followed the sequence as seen below in Table One. The narrative and informational graphic organizers were the same throughout the course of the intervention.
Table 1

*Intervention Session Schedule*

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Week</th>
<th>Session One Text Type</th>
<th>Session Two Text Type</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Week One</td>
<td>Narrative</td>
<td>Narrative</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Week Two</td>
<td>Informational</td>
<td>Informational</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Week Three</td>
<td>Narrative</td>
<td>Narrative</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Week Four</td>
<td>Informational</td>
<td>Informational</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Week Five</td>
<td>Narrative</td>
<td>Narrative</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Description of Data Collection**

At the onset of the study, both students’ reading levels were assessed using the QRI-5 (Caldwell & Leslie, 2011). To begin administration of the assessment, I met with each student independently and began by giving the student the word list (see Appendix C). I used the instructional level word list to determine what level of text to start with as prescribed by the instructions for implementing the assessment. The student then began oral reading the student version of the text (see Appendix C) used for the assessment. While the student read, I annotated miscues on the teacher copy of the assessment (see Appendix C). If the student reached the instructional threshold for miscues during oral reading I continued on to have the student give an oral retell of what they just read. As the student gave a retell of the text I marked down story elements he or she included (see Appendix C). After the student gave a retell of the text I asked eight comprehension questions (see Appendix C) and recorded answers on the teacher copy of the assessment. The number of comprehension questions answered correctly determined if this
level of text was the student’s independent, instructional, or frustration reading level. The same procedure outlined above was used to conduct the posttest.

During at the end of every intervention session I collected all of the worksheets and readings used. This included the graphic organizer used by the student to take notes, the written retell completed by the student, and the answers to the comprehension questions asked after reading.

**Description of Assessment Instruments**

Both students were assessed using the Qualitative Reading Inventory, Fifth Edition (QRI-5; Caldwell & Leslie, 2011). The QRI-5 is designed to determine a student’s instructional reading level and give educators a full picture of the specific reading skills students have and have not currently mastered. The first part of the QRI-5 consists of giving students leveled word lists (see Appendix D) to determine what level of words they are familiar with and can read with automaticity. This score is then used to help determine which level of text on which to ask a student to begin reading. The second part of the QRI-5 measures a student’s familiarity with a passage, oral fluency in reading, ability to retell a story, and ability to answer both implicit and explicit comprehension questions. Before reading, students are asked questions (see Appendix D) to determine their familiarity with the topic and content of the text in order to determine whether or not the student has background knowledge about the content of the text. This is recorded for later analysis. Students then read the text aloud while being timed by the examiner. During the reading, the examiner marks down any errors in oral reading and records them on a copy of the text. After reading the students are then asked to give an oral retell of what they just read without looking at the text. The retell is scored by the number of story elements or ideas they included in the retell. After the retell, students are then asked eight comprehension questions
from the text that have answers that are either explicitly stated in the text or implied (implicit). The implicit questions can only be answered correctly if students made inferences about the characters, events, or situations while reading. Students are allowed to use look-backs, finding the answers in the text, to answer any questions they missed the after the first time on passages leveled third grade or above.

Data were collected on writing samples by looking for the language used in the written retell. In order to measure growth, I looked for an increase in using language directly from the text that connected to the plot of the story instead of just describing characters or events. An example of the framework I used is provided in Table 2 below.

Table Two

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Story Element</th>
<th>Number of times included</th>
<th>Specific Language(^a)</th>
<th>General Language(^b)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Characters</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Setting</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Plot</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Conflict</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Theme</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

\(^a\)(i.e. After Jimmy got to the game, he bought peanuts and ice cream from the concession stand)

\(^b\)(i.e. Jimmy liked baseball games, peanuts, and ice cream)
Data Analysis Plan

I analyzed the data collected in multiple ways. First, I will compare the students’ pretest scores with their posttests scores. I will not only compare the overall reading level, but scores on each individual subtest of the QRI-5 (Caldwell & Leslie, 2011) including the number of oral miscues, story elements included in the retell, and correctly answered comprehension questions. After comparing the pre and posttest scores of each student, I will then compare the growth made by the student in the control condition to the growth made by the student in the experimental condition to determine if the intervention was successful in helping the student in the experimental condition grow more than the student in the control condition. Additionally, I will analyze growth in the number of comprehension questions answered correctly at the end of intervention sessions by the student in the experimental condition. I will also compare the percentage of story elements included in her retells from each session to determine growth in this component of the intervention as well.

Conclusion

The experimental action research was aimed at comparing the reading growth made by a student receiving typical instruction to a student receiving additional instruction on note-taking using text-matched graphic organizers and written retelling. Both students began the study by taking a pretest to determine their reading level at the onset of the study. The two students were split into a control condition and an experimental condition. The student in the control condition attended only typical courses while the student in the experimental condition attended typical courses and participated in a researcher designed intervention. The intervention was aimed at increasing reading comprehension as quickly as possible to help struggling readers catch up to their on-grade-level peers. The student in the control condition received typical reading
instruction. The student in the experimental condition received one-to-one instruction on using a graphic organizer while reading and writing a retell of a text after reading. The student in the experimental condition received this one-to-one instruction in ten sessions over the course of five weeks. After the ten sessions, both students took a posttest to assess if their instructional reading level increased. Within-student growth (for the student in the experimental condition) was also measured by comparing the percentage of story elements included in the student’s retell and the number of comprehension questions answered correctly from the first session to the tenth session. The next chapter will display the results from pretest, written retells, session comprehension questions, and posttest.
Chapter Four: Results and Analyses

This chapter shares data, both qualitative and quantitative, to describe the effects of the two student case study with a single subject design. The purpose of the current study was to determine the effectiveness of a researcher-designed reading intervention that engaged one student in using a graphic organizer to take notes and write a retell of a text after reading. The study has two research questions, 1) Does instruction on structured note taking improve reading comprehension? 2) Does repeated practice of retelling a text increase reading comprehension?

In the current study, I administered a pretest to both participants in order to determine their independent reading levels. The assessment used for the pretest and post-test was the Qualitative Reading Inventory, Fifth Edition (QRI-5; Caldwell & Leslie, 2011). After the pretest was administered, the students were split into a control condition and an experimental condition. The student in the control condition continued with normal instruction and classes. The student in the experimental condition, in addition to her normal classes, attended ten reading intervention sessions on the use of a graphic organizer while reading and writing a retell of the text after reading. The ten sessions happened over the course of five weeks. During the first session of each week I modeled using the graphic organizer to take notes and then asked the student to use the graphic organizer to take notes on a different text. After reading and taking notes on the text the student was asked to write a retell of what he or she just read. Each session ended with the student answering ten comprehension questions about the text. The second session of each week started with the researcher modeling how to take notes on a graphic organizer using the text the student read in the previous session. The student then practiced using the graphic organizer again with a new text, wrote a retell of the text, and answered ten comprehension questions. After the ten intervention sessions both students took a posttest using the same assessment to measure
reading growth. My hypothesis was that the student in the experimental condition would show more reading comprehension growth on the QRI-5 than the student in the control condition. In the following sections I will display and compare the pre-test data from both control and experimental conditions to the posttest data they took at the end of the study in order to describe and compare student growth after the five-week intervention time period. Additionally, I will share the analysis of the written retells and answers to the comprehension from each session for the student in the experimental group. After the analysis of the written retells, the posttest scores for each participant is displayed to compare growth. Finally, I will objectively analyze the results.

**QRI-5 Pretest Results**

To begin the QRI-5 (Caldwell & Leslie, 2011) administration, both participants were read word lists, as described in the previous chapter. For the student in the control condition, the pretest showed that he was reading at a fifth grade reading level according to the QRI-5. During the word list inventory portion of the QRI-5, the student scored as Independent for the Third, Fourth, and Fifth grade lists. For the Sixth grade and Upper Middle School word lists the student identified 17 out of 20 words automatically and identified one additional word by decoding the letter sounds in the word. This still put him at an independent level for these lists. During the High School word list, the student identified nine words automatically and 4 words by decoding. This placed him at the frustration level for this word list (see Figure 1).
During the pretest, the student had zero miscues during the oral reading of the Level Five passage and read at a rate of 158 words per minute. This showed that the student was independent in his oral fluency at this level. During the retell of the text the student only identified 15 out of 81 story elements. Additionally, the student correctly answered six out of eight comprehension questions. The threshold for determining instructional reading level is six to seven correct comprehension questions, thus placing him at a Level Five instructional reading level.

The student in the experimental condition pretested at a fourth grade reading level according to the QRI-5. During the word list inventory portion of the QRI-5, the student scored as Independent for the Third and Fifth grade lists. On the Fourth grade list she automatically identified 15 words and identified two words by decoding (independent level). For the Sixth grade list, she identified 14 words automatically and one word by decoding; making Sixth grade as her instructional level for the word list inventory. On the Upper Middle School word list the student identified 11 out of 20 words automatically and identified one additional word by
decoding the letter sounds in the word. This put her at a frustration level for the Upper Middle School list (see Figure 2).

![Graph showing QRI-5 Word List Inventory results](image)

*Figure 2.* QRI-5 Word List Inventory results for the student in the experimental condition.

Instructional level estimated at Sixth Grade word list.

During the pretest, the student in the experimental condition had eight miscues during the oral reading of the Level Four passage and read at a rate of 118 words per minute. Having eight miscues in oral reading identified this as the student’s instructional reading level. During the retell of the text the student identified 15 out of 47 story elements. Additionally, the student correctly answered six out of eight comprehension questions. The threshold for determining instructional reading level is six to seven correct comprehension questions, thus placing her at a Level Four instructional reading level.

At the beginning of the study the student in the control condition and the student in the experimental condition were at two different reading levels. The student in the control condition read at 158 words per minute (WPM) compared to 118 words per minute for the student in the experimental condition. In addition to reading at a faster rate, the student in the control condition had zero miscues during the oral reading while the student in the experimental condition had
eight. This showed that the student in the control condition had better oral fluency and showed more accuracy in reading than the student in the experimental condition.

The student in the control condition included a smaller percentage of the text in the oral retell than the student in the experimental group, but both students answered six out of eight comprehension questions correctly (see Table 3).

Table 3

*Pretest Results*

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Reading Skill</th>
<th>Control Condition</th>
<th>Experimental Condition</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>WPM</td>
<td>158</td>
<td>118</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Oral Reading Miscues</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Percentage of Text Retold</td>
<td>18.52%</td>
<td>31.91%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Correct Answers</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Reading Level</td>
<td>5&lt;sup&gt;th&lt;/sup&gt; Instruction</td>
<td>4&lt;sup&gt;th&lt;/sup&gt; Instruction</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Graphic Organizer and Written Retell Intervention Results**

The student in the control condition did not participate in any of the interventions and attended the typical reading instruction provided by the school. The student in the experimental condition participated in the ten intervention sessions over the course of five weeks in addition to the typical reading instruction provided by the school. During the first session of each week I modeled using the graphic organizer to take notes and then asked the student to use the graphic organizer to take notes on a different text. After reading and taking notes on the text the student was asked to write a retell of what they just read. Each session ended with the student answering
ten comprehension questions about the text. The second session of each week started with me modeling how to take notes on a graphic organizer using the text the student read in the previous session. The student then practiced using the graphic organizer again but with a novel text, wrote a retell of the text, and answered ten comprehension questions. After the ten intervention sessions both students took posttests using the same assessment to measure reading growth.

During the intervention sessions, the student in the experimental condition answered comprehension questions related the passage read at the end of every session. During the first session the student correctly answer six out of ten comprehension questions. The student improved the amount of comprehension questions she answered correctly per session throughout the course of the intervention (see Figure 3).

![Figure 3](image.png)

*Figure 3. Comprehension questions answered correctly by the student during the experimental condition at the end of intervention sessions.*

The passages used for the intervention did not have a consistent number of story elements so I was unable to analyze the written retell from each session for the number of story elements recalled, but instead determined the percentage of the story elements included. I determined the total number of story elements for narrative texts by adding up the total number of characters,
different settings, and events that related to the plot of the story. I determined the total number of story elements for expository texts by adding up the following parts of the text: subject, descriptions of the subject, background information on the subject, key ideas, and conclusions made by the author. The student improved in the percentage of the text retold (see Figure 4).

Figure 4. Percentage of story elements included in written retell by student in experimental condition after reading and taking notes on a passage.

I also analyzed the written retells for the language used. In the first session, fifty percent of the sentences included in the retell were descriptive statements about the main character. These sentences did not include information about the plot of the story. In later sessions, the written retells started to follow the plot of the story more, with closer to 25 percent of the retell being descriptive statements about the main character. In written retells for expository texts, the participant included more details about the subject of the text. The participant did not show as much of an improvement in the retelling of expository texts as she did in the retelling of narrative texts. In the third session, the first one that included an expository text, close to two-thirds of the statements were just general information that only described the topic of the text. The remaining statements included supporting details and other specific information shared in
the passage. In the eight session, the last one that included an expository text, a little more than half of the statements included in the written retell included supporting details or specific information shared in the passage.

**Post-test Results: Within Student Comparison**

The student in the control condition took the posttest after the five week intervention took place with the student in the experimental condition. The student in the control condition read the same passage that was used in the pretest as prescribed by the QRI-5 (Caldwell & Leslie, 2011). The student tested at a level five instructional level. During the posttest, the student had zero miscues during the oral reading of the passage and read at a rate of 162 words per minute (see Figure 5).

![Figure 5. Pretest and Posttest reading rate scores as measured on the QRI-5 for the student in the control condition.](image)

The student in the control condition had zero miscues during his pretest and his posttest. No growth in this category can be measured. This showed that the student in the control
condition was independent in his oral fluency at this level. During the retell of the text the student identified 25 out of 81 story elements (see Figure 6).

![Figure 6](image_url)

**Figure 6.** Pretest and Posttest percentage of story elements included in oral retell as measured by the QRI-5 by the student in the control condition.

Additionally, the student correctly answered seven out of eight comprehension questions (see Figure 7).

![Figure 7](image_url)

**Figure 7.** Pretest and Posttest scores for correctly answered comprehension questions as measured by the QRI-5 for the student in the control condition.
The threshold for determining instructional reading level is six to seven correct comprehension questions, thus placing him at a Level Five instructional reading level. The student in the control condition grew in reading rate, percent of story elements included in the retell, and comprehension questions answered correctly but did not grow in overall reading level according to the QRI-5 (Caldwell & Leslie, 2011).

The student in the experimental condition took the posttest after participating in the five weeks of intervention. The student also re-read the same instructional passage that was used in the pretest as prescribed by the QRI-5 (Caldwell & Leslie, 2011). During the posttest, the student in the experimental condition had one miscue during the oral reading of the Level Four passage and read at a rate of 130 words per minute (see Figure 8).

Figure 8. Pretest and Posttest reading rate scores as measured on the QRI-5 for the student in the experimental condition.

Having one miscue in the oral reading identified this as the student’s independent reading level for oral reading accuracy (see Figure 9).
Figure 9. Pretest and Posttest number of miscues made during the oral reading as measured by the QRI-5 for the student in the experimental condition.

During the retell of the text the student identified 37 out of 47 story elements (see Figure 10).

Figure 10. Pretest and Posttest percentage of story elements included in oral retell as measured by the QRI-5 by the student in the experimental condition.

Additionally, the student correctly answered all eight comprehension questions (see Figure 11).
The threshold for determining independent reading level is eight correct comprehension questions thus placing her at a Level Four independent reading level. The student in the experimental condition grew in all aspects of the reading assessment. The student did not grow to a new reading level but did progress on the Level Four text from an instructional level to an independent level according to the QRI-5 (Caldwell & Leslie, 2011).

Comparison of Student Growth Across Students

Both students involved in the study grew in at least three sections of the QRI-5 assessment, but the student in the experimental condition grew more in each section. The student in the control condition increased his reading rate by four words per minute. The student in the experimental condition increased her reading rate by 12 words per minutes (see Figure 12).
In the oral retell section of the QRI-5, the student in the experimental condition grew more than the student in the control condition. The student in the control condition included 12.34 percent more idea units from the text in the posttest. The student in the experimental condition included 59.15 percent more idea units from the text in the posttest (see Figure 13), growing almost five times more than the student in the control condition.

**Figure 12.** Growth made on posttest in reading rate as measured by the QRI-5 for students in the control and experimental condition.

**Figure 13.** Growth made on posttest in percentage of story elements included in oral retell as measured by the QRI-5 for students in the control and experimental condition.
In the comprehension question section of the QRI-5, the student in the experimental condition grew more than the student in the control condition. The student in the control condition answered one more comprehension questions correctly in the posttest. The student in the experimental condition answered two more comprehension questions correctly in the posttest (see Figure 14).

![Figure 14. Growth made on posttest in correctly answered comprehension questions as measured by the QRI-5 for students in the control and experimental condition.](image)

The student in the control condition did not improve enough in the individual sections of the QRI-5 (Caldwell & Leslie, 2011) to show an increase in overall reading level, and stayed at a level five instructional reading level. The student in the experimental condition did show enough improvement in the individual sections of the QRI-5 to show progress in reading level, and grew from level four instructional to level four independent.
Findings Related to the Research Question

The results described above show growth in different aspects of reading, but growth in overall reading level primarily connects to the research questions of this study, 1) Does instruction on structured note taking improve reading comprehension? 2) Does repeated practice of writing a retell of a text increase reading comprehension? The results described above show the student in the experimental condition grew from level four instructional to level four independent as assessed on the QRI-5, while the student in the control condition displayed no growth in overall reading level. The growth made in the number of comprehension questions answered correctly at the end of each session and the percentage of story elements included in the retell also connect to the research questions of this study. The results described above show the student grew in the number of comprehension questions answered correctly from six to nine and grew in the percent of the story elements included in the retell from 20.51% to 61.18%. Thus, it appears that instruction on structured note taking and repeated practice of writing a retell of a text improved reading comprehension within this study.

Conclusion

During the intervention the student in the experimental condition increased the number of comprehension questions answered correctly at the end of the session. In the first session, she answered six of the questions correctly, whereas in the final two sessions, she answered nine of the questions correctly. The pretest and posttest data showed that the student in the experimental condition grew more than the student in the control group in the same amount of time. Even though both students did improve in the reading rate, oral retell, and comprehension question sections of the QRI-5, the student in the control condition did not improve in his overall reading level, while the student in the experimental condition progressed within her reading level, from
instructional to independent. The student in the experimental condition comparatively grew the most in the percent of the story included in the oral retell. Additionally the student in experimental condition showed significant growth in the number of story elements included in her written retells for both narrative and expository texts. She showed more growth in her retells of narrative texts than she did for retells of expository texts. In Chapter Five, I connect the results of the current study to existing research, explain the results, explore the strengths and limitations of the study, and make recommendations for future research and practice.
Chapter Five: Conclusions

The two student case study with a single subject design described in the above chapters sought to determine the effectiveness of a researcher-designed reading intervention that engaged one student in using a graphic organizer to take notes and writing a retell of a text after reading. The study has two research questions, 1) Does instruction on structured note taking improve reading comprehension? and 2) Does repeated practice of retelling a text increase reading comprehension? The purpose of using a graphic organizer to take notes while reading the text was to provide a structured and consistent way for the student to practice taking notes and organize their thoughts while reading. Using the graphic organizer allowed for the note-taking to be replicable week in and week out. The idea of having students write a written retell after reading a passage came from the study done by Schisler et al. (2010) in which they studied the effectiveness of students doing an oral retelling of a text, a written retelling of a text, or reviewing the passage. Schisler et al. (2010) determined that students who either wrote a written retell of the passage or orally retold the passage were able to answer more comprehension questions correctly than students that engaged in a review of the passage. The researchers also determined that students that engaged in oral and written retells improved more in their overall reading ability than students that engaged in a review of the passage in the same amount of time. The idea of finding an intervention that could help struggling readers grow quickly and close the gap between them and their on-grade-level peers was a main motivation for this study.

The study also sought to determine if these interventions could lead to accelerated reading growth when compared to the growth made by students only participating in typical courses. High school students have such a limited time before they need to be ready for the academic rigors of college. I wanted to apply the idea of having students practice retelling a text
to the high school age group. The Schisler et al. (2010) study involved third grade students whereas the current study was designed for freshmen in high school with the goal of helping closing the skill gap for students that currently are reading two or more years below grade level.

In the current study, I administered a pretest to both participants in order to determine their independent reading levels. The assessment used for the pretest and post-test was the Qualitative Reading Inventory, Fifth Edition (QRI-5; Caldwell & Leslie, 2011). After the pretest was administered, the students were split into a control condition and an experimental condition. The student in the control condition continued with normal instruction and classes. The student in the experimental condition, in addition to her normal classes, attended ten reading intervention sessions on the use of a graphic organizer while reading and writing a retell of the text after reading. The ten sessions happened over the course of five weeks. During the first session of each week I modeled using the graphic organizer to take notes and then asked the student to use the graphic organizer to take notes on a different text. After reading and taking notes on the text the student was asked to write a retell of what he or she just read. Each session ended with the student answering ten comprehension questions about the text. The second session of each week started with the researcher modeling how to take notes on a graphic organizer using the text the student read in the previous session. The student then practiced using the graphic organizer again, wrote a retell of the text, and answered ten comprehension questions. After the ten intervention sessions both students took a posttest using the same assessment to measure reading growth. My hypothesis was that the student in the experimental condition would show more reading comprehension growth on the QRI-5 than the student in the control condition.

This concluding chapter will seek to connect the two student case study with a single subject design to existing research related to differentiated in-class reading instruction,
supplementary reading instruction, reading interventions for students with Attention Deficit Hyperactivity Disorder, and reading intervention strategies involving retelling and the use of graphic organizers. Additionally, the chapter will provide an explanation of the results stated above, as well as a discussion of the strengths and limitations of the research design and implementation. Finally, recommendations for future research as well as implications for personal practice will be offered on the basis of the research results outlined above.

Connections to Existing Research

In this section, research on reading interventions summarized in Chapter 2 will be reviewed in order to connect literature to the current action research purpose and design. This section will provide specific detail as to how the current action research was founded and designed, as well as provide context for the interest in which the action research was founded.

There are numerous studies done on reading intervention programs and strategies with a wide variety of scope and design. Amidst this variety, many researchers designed studies to determine the effectiveness of differentiated in class reading instruction. Little et al. (2014) study sought to determine the effectiveness of replacing regular reading curriculum with an independent interest-based program at improving scores on standardized assessments. The Little et al. (2014) study had unclear results due to a lack of fidelity by teachers in carrying out the interventions, but it was clear that students that read a wide variety of independently chosen on-grade-level texts either grew at the same rate or more than peers receiving regular instruction. Even though the results of the Little et al. (2014) study were inconclusive, the idea of given students choice in what they read influenced the design of the current study by allowing the student in the experimental condition a choice between two texts during each intervention session.
Further research on the effectiveness of in class reading interventions sought to determine the effectiveness of a Tier II reading intervention. The study by Vaughn et al. (2010), used the Texas Assessment of Knowledge and Skills (TAKS: Texas Education Agency, 2004) to assess growth in students reading ability. The intervention involved sixth grade students meeting with their instructors in small groups of 10-15 students for instruction in vocabulary and comprehension strategies and remedial skills like decoding and fluency. Vaughn et al. (2010) determined that students in the Tier II intervention group on average grew more than their peers. The specific instructional strategies implemented by Vaughn et al. (2010) were not adapted to the current study, but the study’s structure and design of using a consistent pretest and posttest to measure reading growth as well as meeting with students in small groups did influence the design of the current study.

Literature on supplementary reading instruction was critical in informing the design of the current study because the interventions had to take place outside the regular classroom due to scheduling restraints. The regular reading class in which study participants were attending is 50 minutes, leaving very little time for small group or independent work with an instructor, especially specific instruction on note-taking and written retells.

In Dyson et al. (2008) study, researchers found participation in a one-on-one tutoring program that occurred outside of the regular reading instruction lead to faster growth in reading comprehension, especially for students categorized as “low-performing.” The design of the current study to meet with students in the experimental group outside of regular instruction was influenced by the Dyson et al. (2008) study. Additional research on the effectiveness of supplemental reading instruction was done to determine if tutoring in content specific reading instruction can increase performance in those content areas. Vaughn et al. (2014). The Vaughn et
al. (2014) study did determined that content specific interventions can lead to both increased reading comprehension and improved performance in content coursework. The Vaughn et al. (2014) study influenced the current study to include informational texts. The current study was not designed to find a connection between the graphic organizer and retelling intervention and content coursework, but it was designed to improve reading comprehension like the Vaughn et al. (2014) study.

In a different study by McGee (1982), the researchers sought to make a connection between awareness of text structure and reading ability. They discovered that “good” readers had a higher awareness of text structure. This was determined by analyzing how many idea units students included in a written retell. The current study varies greatly from this study in design, but incorporated McGee’s (1982) findings that “good” readers were aware of text structure by including instruction on using a graphic organizer to take notes while reading texts. The graphic organizer was designed to highlight the text structure and organization of the text.

Literature on retelling interventions were incredibly influential in the design of the current study, particularly the intervention itself. The study by Schisler et al. (2010) sought to determine the instructional effectiveness and efficiency of oral retelling, written retelling, and passage-review. The Schisler et al. (2010) study determined that having students do either an oral or written retell of a text in combination with repeated reading led to greater gains in reading comprehension than asking students to do a passage review in combination with repeated readings. The current study adapted the idea of using a written retell as part of a reading intervention because Schisler et al. found that having students do a written retell lead to an increase in their reading comprehension. The Schisler et al. study was not the only research done that included having students do a written or oral retell as a part of the intervention. In Gambrell
et al. (1985) study they determined that students who were taught note taking and retelling strategies had better comprehension of a text when compared to students who illustrated what they read in picture form. The Gambrell et al. (1985) study further cemented both aspects of the current study’s intervention, using a graphic organizer for note taking and writing a retell of a text. Further research on the effectiveness of retelling interventions was done by Gambrell et al. (1991) to determine if retelling interventions were more effective at improving reading comprehension for proficient or less-proficient readers. Gambrell et al. (1991) determined that although asking all students to engage in and practice doing an oral retell of a text, it is more effective at increasing the reading comprehension of less-proficient readers, than proficient readers. This connects directly to the current study because the purpose of the current study was to find interventions and reading practices that can help students who are below grade level catch up to their on-grade-level peers. The Gambrell et al. study was designed for fourth graders, while the current study is trying to replicate some of its design to determine the effectiveness of a retelling intervention with high school-age students.

The studies by Blickenstaff et al. (2013) and Hagaman and Reid (2008) used developed reading strategies designed to help students retell a text. Blickenstaff et al. determined that the use of the Five-Finger Retell (Richardson, 2009) with elementary age students lead to an increase in reading comprehension. The Hagaman and Reid (2008) study used a method previously developed by Schumaker, Denton, and Deshler called Read a Paragraph (RAP: 1984). The RAP intervention involved having student paraphrase key information and the main idea of each paragraph orally while reading. Hagaman and Reid determined that students that participating in the RAP intervention showed significant growth in the number of story elements included in a retell of a text. The current study did not specifically use either the five-finger retell
(Richardson, 2009) or the RAP (Schumaker et al., 1984) strategy, it did include having students take notes while reading, which is similar to paraphrasing, and used an age appropriate retelling method.

The study by de Quirós et al. (2012) examined how instruction on structured story reading can impact a student’s reading comprehension. The researchers determined that students who participated in a reading program designed around repeated interactions with the same text that culminated in writing a retell of the text had higher reading growth than students who participated in regular reading instruction. The intervention for the current research involves the teacher using the same text from first session of each week to model taking notes on a graphic organizer during the second session of the week. The idea to use the text from the previous session was adapted from the de Quirós et al. (2012) study.

There are many different studies that seek to determine the effectiveness of a reading intervention program. Many of the interventions used in the studies above did lead to increased reading comprehension for students involved in the study, but the interventions that over and over again were consistent in increasing reading comprehension ability were retelling interventions. The main difference between the current study, and the above studies that used retelling interventions, is that the current study includes only high school participants, whereas the previous research used only middle school and elementary age students. By using high school participants, the current study seeks to add to the wealth of research on the topic by showing that retelling interventions can be effective with older students, as well as younger students.
Explanation of Results

This section will discuss the results outlined in Chapter 4, and explain what the results imply. Specifically, the tables and figures provided in Chapter 4 will be expounded upon and assessment results from the Qualitative Reading Inventory, Fifth Edition (QRI-5; Caldwell & Leslie, 2011) for each student will be compared.

The pretest results from the QRI-5 assessment showed that the student in the control condition began the study at a Fifth-Grade Instructional level while the student in the experimental condition began the study at a Fourth-Grade Instructional level. It would have been ideal to have both students test at the same level, but since they were only one level apart and both were performing more than two years below grade level they were chosen as participants in the study.

The student in the experimental condition answered comprehension questions connected to the text used at the end of each session. Over the ten sessions the student improved in the number of questions answer correctly from six correct questions in the first session to nine correct questions in the last two sessions. This implies that the student’s ability to comprehend texts improved as she participated in the study. This improvement in reading comprehension can be attributed to the time spent retelling passages. During the course of the intervention the student in the experimental group practiced retelling the passage before answering the questions, this repetition of writing about the passage helped the student remember the main ideas of the story. The written retells of the text were also analyzed to determine what percentage of the text was included. The student improved in the percentage of text elements included over the course of the study from 20.51 percent of text elements included in the first session to 61.18 percent of text elements included in the tenth session. The percentage of text elements included were
significantly lower during Week Two and Week Four of the intervention. This could be attributed to the use of informational texts during those weeks as opposed to the narrative texts used during Week One, Week Three, and Week Five. When the type of text is taken into account, the student grew in the percentage of text elements included for both narrative and informational texts. The growth in percentage of text elements included can be attributed to the practice of retelling texts during the intervention. Since the student practiced retelling the passage it was expected that she would improve in her written retells. The student in the control condition did not participate in any of the interventions so for these two data sets, there is no comparison between the experimental and control condition.

In Chapter Four, the Post-test Results start by comparing the each student’s pretest scores to their posttests scores, then compares the growth. The student in the control condition increased his reading rate from 158 words per minute to 162 words per minute. The student in the experimental condition increased her reading rate from 118 words per minute to 130 words per minute. The student in the control did not make any miscues during the oral reading portion of the QRI-5 (Caldwell & Leslie, 2011) so his growth in word reading accuracy was unable to be measured for this subtest. The student in the experimental condition had seven fewer miscues during the post-test of her oral reading portion of the QRI-5. Even though the study was not designed to improve reading rate or fluency, it did lead to growth in both areas for the student in the experimental condition. The lack of improvement for the student in the control condition could be due to that fact that he did not make any miscues during the oral reading and therefore, may have read at a normal or even fast reading rate for the given text.

On the oral retell portion of the QRI-5 (Caldwell & Leslie, 2011), the student in the control condition included 12.34 percent more of the text in the posttest. For the oral retell
portion the student in the experimental condition included 59.15 percent more of the text in the posttest. Comparing the results on this subtest shows that the student in the experiment condition grew almost five times more than the student in the control condition. The intervention focused on having the student write a retell of the text, so the large increase in this subtest was expected and shows that the intervention was successful at improving reading comprehension by this measure. It was successful because the student included 71.49 percent of the text elements in her retell of the passage in the posttest. She was able to recall a majority of the text elements in this passage because she had specific practice at retelling passages and knew how to add more detail to the retell. Being able to retell more of a passage leads to greater comprehension because it means that the student remembers more of the details from the passage.

The final subtest in the QRI-5 (Caldwell & Leslie, 2011) is a set of eight comprehension questions. The student in the control condition answered one more comprehension correctly in his posttest than he did on his pretest. The student in the experimental condition answer two more questions correctly on the posttest than she did on the pretest, growing one more point than the student in the control condition. These data give evidence that the intervention was successful in increasing reading comprehension better than just attended regular reading courses. The student in the control condition only attended regular reading courses while the student in the experimental condition attended regular reading courses and the retelling interventions. Since the student in the experimental showed more growth in this subtest, it implies that participation in the retelling intervention led to greater growth than only attended the typical reading instruction.

The scores and growth made in the subtests of the QRI-5 (Caldwell & Leslie, 2011) by the student in control condition did not indicate growth in overall reading level. The scores and
growth made in the subtests of the QRI-5 by the student in the experimental condition were enough to indicate growth from Level Four instructional to Level Four independent. Since the student in the experimental condition made progress within her reading level in the QRI-5, the intervention was successful in increasing reading comprehension at a faster rate than having students participate in regular courses only.

Analysis of the growth made on the QRI-5 (Caldwell & Leslie, 2011) showed the graphic organizer and retelling intervention was successful in increasing student reading comprehension levels. Furthermore, the student in the experimental group grew more than the student in the control group, showing that participating in the intervention increased reading level rather than only participating in regular reading instruction. These results show that this intervention could help below grade level readers catch up to more advanced peers.

**Discussion of the Connections between the Literature and Results**

In Chapter Two I discussed research done on different types of reading interventions and programs that fit into four different categories: differentiated in class reading instruction, supplementary reading instruction, reading interventions for students with Attention Deficit Hyperactivity Disorder (ADHD), and reading intervention strategies involving retelling and the use of graphic organizers. The current action research did not include any students that were diagnosed with ADHD so the results do not add anything to previous research done on that topic. Additionally, the current research was not designed to replace a reading curriculum, and therefore does not connect to the previous research done on differentiated in class reading instruction.
The current research was designed as supplementary reading instruction and meant to add to the regular reading instruction similar Vaughn et al. (2014) and Dyson et al. (2008). Specifically, the Dyson et al. study included one on and one tutoring just like the current research. In the Dyson et al. study, the tutoring focused on vocabulary, word study, reading comprehension, phonemic awareness, and fluency whereas the current action research focused on structured note-taking and writing written retells. The results of both the current research and the Dyson et al. study show that one-to-one tutoring in addition to attending regular courses is likely to lead to growth in reading comprehension. The current study aligns with the previously existing research to show that students benefit from one-to-one instruction in reading.

The intervention used in the current research is very similar to the intervention used in the Gambrel et al. (1991) study. In the current research the intervention was designed to have students write a written retell of a passage immediately after reading. In the Gambrel et al. study the participants either gave an oral retell, a written retell, or engaged in a passage review after reading a text. The results of the Gambrel et al. study showed that students who engaged in either written or oral retells of the passage grew more than the students that engaged in a passage review. The results of the current study connect to the Gambrel et al. study because the data show that the retelling intervention was also successful for improving the reading comprehension ability for high school students. The current research was able to replicate the results of the Gambrel et al. study with a different age group, showing that retelling interventions may be effective for students of almost any age group.

Finally, the only other study reviewed that taught structured note taking was done by Gambrel et al. (1985). This study showed that students who were taught note taking strategies in addition to retelling texts improved in reading comprehension more than students that illustrated
what they read. In the current study, students were taught both structured note taking and asked to write a retell of what they read. The results of the current study show that this intervention can lead to growth in reading comprehension and are consistent with the results from the Gambrel et al. study. The biggest addition to the existing research is that the retelling intervention was proven to be successful at improving reading growth for high school age students and not just elementary age students.

**Strengths and Limitations**

In this section, the strengths and limitations of the research design will be outlined and described. The strengths given for the current action research include the use of the QRI-5 (Caldwell & Leslie, 2011) for pre and posttest assessments, allowing the participants to participate in all regular coursework, and having a straightforward, easy to replicate intervention. The limitations given for the two student case study with a single subject design action research include the use of only one reading assessment for the pre and posttest, the lack of longevity in the research design, as well as the limited number of participants involved.

The greatest strength of the research design was the use of the QRI-5 (Caldwell & Leslie, 2011) as a consistent assessment for the both the pretest and posttest. The QRI-5 is a reading assessment with established validity and reliability. Having data from the same assessment allowed for the comparison of each participants pretest and posttest and the growth made by the student in the experimental and control condition. Additionally, the QRI-5 has several different subtests that allow for in depth analysis of data and not just the determination of overall reading level. Even though the study was not designed to measure growth in reading rate or fluency, the results from the QRI-5 show that the intervention did lead to growth in both of those reading skills. Since only one reading test was used, the results are very clear, and involved no
guesswork at how different reading assessments line up to determine growth in reading comprehension.

Another strength of the study was that it did not require the student in the experimental condition to miss any of her regular coursework. This allowed the student to focus on the interventions at hand instead of worry about making up the work she missed during class. Also, this allows the current research done to fit into previous research done by Dyson et al. (2008), McGee (1982), and Vaughn et al. (2014) that implemented supplemental reading instruction interventions.

Additionally, the design of the intervention itself is a strength of the action research. Since the student in the experimental condition received consistent messaging, modeling, and practice during all of the sessions it allowed for the intervention to be same each week. Without consistent messaging the intervention would not be replicable. Since the design of the intervention was simple and straightforward, the methods used in the current action research could be replicated by other researchers. Since a verbal protocol was not used for this study, researchers would not be able to replicate the intervention exactly, but they could use the same graphic organizers have students write a retell of the passage when they finish reading.

Although the use of only one assessment is a major strength of the research design, it was also one of the limitations of the research. Only having one measure for overall reading growth makes the results of the study less powerful. If another reputable reading assessment was used to confirm the results of the research it would have more conclusively shown the effects of the intervention. Further, it would have allowed for more comparison between the pre and posttests in addition to more comparison in the growth made by the experimental and control conditions.
The longevity of the study is also a major limitation of the research design. Five weeks is a short amount of time to implement an intervention and measure overall reading growth. To truly determine if the graphic organizer and retelling intervention could successfully help a below grade level reader catch up to his or her on-grade-level peers, the intervention need to continue over the course of the whole year or even longer. This would have allowed for analysis on if the intervention is only successful when utilized for short periods of time or if it can show increased results.

Similar to the limitation of longevity is the limitation of the number of participants. The research design included only two students due to number of informed consent forms returned. With only two students involved in the study, there is not enough data to prove the effectiveness of the intervention. The intervention needs to be tested on more students to see if it can lead to increased reading comprehension.

Another limitation to the research design was the lack of including an on-grade-level reader in the study. Since the purpose of the study was to determine if the intervention could help below grade level readers catch up to on-grade-level peers, it would have been more beneficial to compare growth made by the below grade level reader in the experimental condition to growth made by the on-grade-level reader participating in typical coursework. Since the student in the control condition was also far below grade level in reading ability, the design of the study only determined if the graphic organizer and retelling intervention could increase overall reading comprehension.
Recommendations for Future Research

If future research is conducted on the effectiveness of a retelling intervention on improving overall reading comprehension the study should take place over a longer period of time. The current research only measured reading growth made during a five-week period. If further research is conducted over longer periods of time, it could determine if the retelling intervention should be incorporated into regular reading curriculum or if it should just be used in reading interventions. Additionally, future research on retelling interventions could include using retelling as a part of a reading classroom’s regular curriculum. Again, this would determine if retelling is an effective instructional strategy to use for whole class instruction or just in small group or one-to-one tutoring sessions.

If future researchers wanted to replicate the current action research, I would recommend utilizing only one of the strategies used. The current research included instruction on using a graphic organizer to take notes while reading and asked the student to write a retell of the passage after reading. Since there were two variables, it is unclear whether the growth in reading comprehension came from the use of the graphic organizer or the retelling of the passages. Picking one or the other would allow for the isolation of one variable and a true determination of the interventions effectiveness.

Recommendations for Students and Implications for Personal Practice

In this section, I will provide recommendations for students based on the action research in tandem with the review of literature on reading intervention programs and retelling interventions. Recommendations for students will be geared first towards school, and then
extended to home. These recommendations will be based on the data gathered and conclusions drawn in this action research.

Based on the data collected and reviewed above, my recommendation for students that score below grade level on reading assessments, would be to use a consistent method to take notes while reading and to practice writing a retell what they read. This intervention could involve the classroom teacher designing classroom instruction to incorporate the use of a graphic organizer and creating time for students to practice writing retells of a passage. It also could involve utilizing this type of intervention for just some students in the class that are performing at a lower level than their peers. The teacher would need to plan time to explicitly teach how to use these practices to the whole class, or the individual students that will be using them. This could be used to help teach reading standards that involve finding the main idea and key details of a text as outlined in the College Readiness Standards (ACT, Inc., 2016). Even though the results of this action research only show that this intervention can lead to growth for students reading below grade level, it could possibly be used for students of all reading abilities.

One specific recommendation I would make for parents, is to ensure that any private tutoring children receive on reading involves having students retell the text if reading comprehension is an area weakness. The results of this study show that having students retell a text in writing leads to greater comprehension of the specific text being read and improvement in the student’s overall reading ability. This intervention could be used to help facilitate reading growth and help students that are behind catch up.

Throughout the course of the action research I learned a lot about my practice as an instructor and a researcher. When teaching reading, I will plan lessons to include opportunities for students to write or share a retell of a text. Additionally, I plan on using graphic organizers to
help students to structure notes and thoughts about texts they are reading. I also want to do informal research and data analysis on a continual basis to analyze the effectiveness of my instructional practice.

The results from this action research clearly showed that the use of one-to-one instruction on the use of a graphic organizer and written retelling of a text can lead to growth in reading level for students reading below grade level. The results showed that participation in the intervention lead to more growth than only attended regular coursework. If the graphic organizer and written retelling intervention was effective in increasing growth in overall reading level for one student, it may also prove to be effective in increasing reading comprehension for others.
References


Appendix A

Literature Text Note Taking Graphic Organizer

Use bullet points to fill in the five boxes to give

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Who</th>
<th>What</th>
<th>Where</th>
<th>When</th>
<th>Why</th>
</tr>
</thead>
</table>

In the boxes that follow record “Who” is doing “What” for every two or three paragraphs.
Appendix B

Informational Text Note Taking Graphic Organizer

Record the correct information in each box.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Topic</th>
<th>Text Features</th>
</tr>
</thead>
</table>

Label the paragraph number and record “Who” is doing “What” for each paragraph.

1. 
2. 
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Appendix C

Example of Text Used for Intervention

It’s Opening Day
By W.M. Akers

The weather was growing crisper. It was getting dark later, and Matthew had stopped wearing a coat to school. Spring was coming, but that didn’t matter to him. What was really important was it was April. April meant baseball. April meant the end of the long, cold off-season. April meant opening day.

The local team was called the Crickets. It wasn’t a very tough name for a baseball team, but that was okay. The Crickets weren’t a Major League team, with a 50,000 seat stadium, expensive tickets, and big-name players. They were a minor league team, and that suited Matthew just fine. The stadium was small, the tickets were cheap, and the players weren’t famous—at least not right now. Some were young players, only seven or eight years older
than Matthew, with dreams of playing in the big leagues, and the talent to make it happen. Other players were older, their time in the big leagues finished, but they stuck around the Crickets because they weren’t ready yet to let go of the game that had defined them ever since childhood.

And then there were players like Willie Carney, the shortstop. He had manned the space between second and third base for as long as Matthew could remember. Each year he was one of the two best players on the team, but he never did quite well enough to get called up to the majors. Each opening day, Matthew was shocked to see that Willie was still playing for the Crickets.

“Jeez, Dad!” he would say. “I can’t believe Willie didn’t get called up to the big leagues this year.”

“You think he played pretty well last season?” his father would ask.

“Are you kidding!?” Matthew’s face turned purple whenever anybody questioned Willie Carney. “He hit twenty-seven home runs! He had ninety-eight RBIs! He walked more than anybody else on the team!”

Matthew didn’t need a baseball card to tell him Willie’s statistics. He knew them by heart, from studying the sports page every morning at breakfast, to see how Willie and the other
Crickets had played the night before. Over the winter, he committed all of their numbers to memory, and at night he would recite them to himself until he fell asleep.

"How was his fielding?" Matthew’s father would ask, teasing him. "I bet he made a lot of errors."

"Dad—are you crazy? He moves like a spider out there. Nobody turns a double play faster than Willie. Nobody’s better at tagging runners out. Last season, he didn’t make an error for..."

Matthew thought for a moment, doing the math in his head. "Forty-seven games!"

"That’s not bad."

"Then how come he didn’t get called up to the majors?"

"I don’t know."

"It’s not fair. He’s better than most of the guys you see playing on TV."

"It’s good news for us, right? Now we get to watch him play live for another season."

"I’m telling you, Dad. He’s the best."

Matthew and his father had gone to see the Crickets play every opening day since Matthew was born. Their family celebrated a lot of holidays—Thanksgiving, Halloween, the Fourth of July, not to mention Matthew’s and his sister’s birthdays—but as far as he was concerned,
opening day was the best one. It was usually on a weekday, and his dad always let him skip school to go.

“There are some things you can only learn in school,” he told Matthew once, “and there are some things you can only learn at the ballpark.”

Each year, Matthew and his dad wore Crickets jerseys and Crickets hats, and they always got to the ballpark early enough to watch the hitters take batting practice. County Stadium was an old ballpark, almost as old as Matthew’s dad himself, and it had started to get a little shabby by the time Matthew started going to games. The scoreboard was rusty; the speakers were screechy, and the chairs weren’t as comfortable as they could have been. But on a sunny day, Matthew thought, it was the most beautiful stadium in the world. Last year was perfect. The sun was bright, the sky was clear, and there was just enough of a breeze to remind him that summer wasn’t quite here yet. The Crickets won 4-2, Matthew ate two hot dogs and a plastic baseball helmet full of ice cream, and Willie Carney bowed to the fans when he ran out onto the field. They went to a lot of games the rest of the summer, but opening day—as always—was his favorite. On the coldest days of winter, when wind cut through Matthew’s parka and his fingers turned as pink as Vienna sausages, Matthew remembered opening day, and the outfield grass that was as green and perfect as the Emerald City in the Wizard of Oz.
“I’ve got bad news,” said Matthew’s father, two days before the season started. “I can’t go to opening day this year.”

“Dad,” said Matthew. “That is a dumb joke.”

“I’m not kidding. Your sister’s play is Sunday afternoon.”

“Her play is happening for three days. We’re watching it at school on Monday. Why don’t you just come then?”

“I’ve got to work, kid. I’m really sorry.”

Matthew’s father looked sad, but Matthew did not. He did not cry; he did not scream; he did not yell at his father about breaking promises. One of the things that he could only learn at the ballpark is that there’s no crying in baseball, so Matthew didn’t cry. But he wanted to.

“Why don’t we go to the game Monday night?” his father asked.

Matthew wanted to explain that night games were no good, that he had been waiting all winter for blue skies and green grass and sunshine. Night games were fine in the middle of the summer, when it was too hot to sit out in the sun, but it was April. He didn’t want to go to County Stadium in his parka, but he didn’t know how to put it into words.

“I want to go to opening day,” he said, finally.

“I’ve got an idea,” said his dad. “It’s kind of crazy but...do you want to go by yourself?”

“What?!”
"You're old enough now. When I was your age I'd go to games alone all the time. I know it's not what we usually do, but it could be fun."

"Go to the game...alone?" asked Matthew. He had to admit: it was better than not going at all.

The sky was blue, the grass was green, and Matthew wore his Crickets jersey and Crickets hat. His seat was right where he liked—along the first base line, behind the home dugout—and all his favorite players were in the lineup, with Willie Carney batting first. He took out his scorecard and carefully wrote their names down. During the game, he would make notes of what happened—who got a double, who struck out, who had the big home run. It was an old-fashioned thing to do, but Matthew liked it, because it helped keep him focused on the game. His father had taught him how to keep score.

It was a perfect day for baseball. So why did Matthew feel so gloomy?

During the second and fifth innings, Matthew bought hot dogs from the hot dog vendor. His dad had given him $20 to spend, and Matthew was going to spend all of it. He wanted to get a plastic baseball helmet full of ice cream, but he had to go to the concessions stand for that, and if he stopped watching the game, he wouldn't be able to write down what happened
on his scorecard. If it were later in the season, this wouldn’t worry him so much, but today was opening day, and the scorecard—everything—had to be perfect.

He decided to skip the seventh inning stretch. This was a big sacrifice, because singing “Take Me Out To The Ballgame” was one of the best parts of going to see the Crickets. The mascot—a big green cricket in a foam costume—would run out onto the field and dance around and throw t-shirts. But Matthew already had plenty of Crickets t-shirts. What he didn’t have was ice cream.

He waited in line, and paid the last of his money for a plastic baseball helmet full of mint chocolate chip. When he got back to his seat, the sun had gone away. Matthew balanced his ice cream in the cup holder in front of him, and frowned at his scorecard. In the space for “Weather” he had written “Sunny.” He changed it to “Sunny/Clouds.” He put his scorecard aside and focused on his ice cream, which was beginning to melt. As he ate it, he shivered.

The game was over. The Crickets had won, 6-1. A blowout, but not a very exciting one. According to his scorecard, Willie Carney had a single and a walk, but no runs batted in—a good day, but not a great one. As always, Willie had bowed to the people when he ran out onto the field, and Matthew bowed back. When he hit his single, with a sound like a judge’s gavel, Matthew cheered louder than he had all day. He fixed the image in his mind: Willie
Carney, hustling down the first base line, right in front of his eyes. He would tell his father about it when he got home, and he would remember it come winter.

Matthew's dad had told him to call when the game was over and he would come pick him up, but now, standing outside the stadium, he didn't want to leave. He sat on a bench outside the stadium, making sure his scorecard was perfect. He erased wobbly lines and redrew them, straight, bold and firm. Flawed letters—a wobbly K, a slouching B—he went over until they looked like they had been put there by a computer. By the time he was finished, nobody could have done a better job.

Matthew looked up, and saw the parking lot was empty. Behind him, the stadium was closed—and with it, the only pay phone. How would his dad know to come pick him up? The sun was long gone now, and Matthew began to wish he had brought his parka. It was windy in the County Stadium parking lot.

He walked around the ballpark, hoping to find another phone, but all he found was cracked concrete and overgrown grass. On the other side from the outfield wall, he saw a battered old baseball—a forgotten home run from the season before. He picked this up and put it in his pocket. A boy can never have too many baseballs. Holding it as he picked his way across the gravel, he felt less afraid. As he completed the loop around the stadium, he heard a door close behind him.
"Hey kid," said a voice, and Matthew's heart leapt. It was Willie Carney. Out of uniform, he looked bigger than he did on the field, like he could crush a rock into dust with one hand. He was smiling, just like he had when he bowed to the crowd that afternoon. "You here by yourself?"

"Kinda," said Matthew. "My dad's supposed to pick me up, but I don't have a way to call him."

Silently, Willie took his cellphone out of his pocket and handed it over. Matthew dialed his father's number, and told him to meet him by the main entrance. When he handed the phone back to Willie, he said thanks, quietly.

"No problem," said Willie. "You want some company while you wait?"

"Sure," said Matthew, as they walked back to his bench.

"Enjoy the game today?"

"It was pretty good," said Matthew. "That was a nice at-bat you had in the sixth, when you drew the walk."

"Thanks. It must have been seven, eight pitches."

"It was nine," said Matthew. "I was counting."

"Glad to know somebody's paying attention. That a baseball in your pocket?"

"I found it on the other side of the center field fence."
“They don’t clean back there as much as they should. Want me to sign it?”

Matthew handed Willie the ball, his heart in his chest. As Willie traced his wide, looping signature across the grimy yellow leather, Matthew asked the question that had been bothering him all day.

“Do you ever get sick of playing here?” he asked.

“What do you mean?”

“You’re good enough to play in the majors. I know it. You know it. The whole crowd knows it. You hit twenty-seven home runs last year! You had ninety-eight RBIs! You walked more than anybody else on the team! Doesn’t it drive you crazy to be stuck down here, in this crummy old ballpark, playing for nobody?”

For a moment, Willie looked hurt. Then a smile broke out across his face, and he started laughing. “Are you nuts, kid?” he asked. “I get to play baseball for a living! It’s not much money, but it’s enough. And if I can keep the people entertained here, who cares about the big leagues?”

“Yeah?”

“It’s opening day. We’re at the ballpark. What have we got to complain about?”

The End
1. What does Matthew like to do every April?

A  go for a bike ride in the sunshine and blue skies
B  eat ice cream and watch a movie at home
C  see the Crickets play on opening day
D  see his sister perform in a school play

2. What is the climax of the action in this story?

A  Matthew eats ice cream at the ballpark,
B  Matthew's father says that he cannot go to opening day.
C  Matthew commits Willie Carney's statistics to memory.
D  Matthew talks to Willie Carney.

3. Matthew is excited to meet Willie Carney.

What evidence from the story supports this statement?

A  "During the second and fifth innings, Matthew bought hot dogs from the hot dog vendor."
B  "Each opening day, Matthew was shocked to see that Willie was still playing for the Crickets."
C  "One of the things that he could only learn at the ballpark is that there's no crying in baseball, so Matthew didn't cry."
D  "Hey kid," said a voice, and Matthew's heart leapt. It was Willie Carney."

4. Based on what Willie says, how does he feel about playing baseball for the Crickets?

A  Willie is happy about playing baseball for the Crickets,
B  Willie is tired of playing baseball for the Crickets,
C  Willie is worried about playing baseball for the Crickets,
D  Willie does not care much about playing baseball for the Crickets.

5. What is a theme of this story?

A  the pleasures of winter
B  the pleasures of baseball
C  the damage that war can cause
D  the damage that nature can cause
6. Read the following sentence: "Doesn’t it drive you crazy to be stuck down here, in this crummy old ballpark, playing for nobody?"

What does the phrase playing for nobody mean in the sentence above?

A. not caring about how well a baseball team plays  
B. not playing in a baseball game on opening day  
C. not playing for very many people or anyone important  
D. playing in a ballpark that does not have any seats

7. Choose the answer that best completes the sentence below.

Willie looks hurt ________ Matthew asks him whether playing in a crummy old ballpark drives him crazy.

A. after  
B. before  
C. for instance  
D. however

8. For Matthew, what is the best holiday of the year?
9. When Matthew asks Willie whether playing for nobody in a crummy old ballpark drives him crazy, what does Willie say?

10. What do Matthew and Willie have in common? Support your answer with evidence from the passage.
Appendix D

QRI-5 Assessment Materials

Examiner Word Lists

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Total Correct Identified \( \frac{x}{20} = \% \)
Total Number Correct \( \frac{x}{20} = \% \)

### LEVELED

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Where the Ashes Are—Part 1

“Wake up, wake up!” my mother shouted. “We’ve got to get out of here! How can you sleep through all this?” She pulled the covers off me, handed me my clothes, and rushed out of the room.

“Wait!” I cried out, throwing off my pajamas. One leg in and one out of my dark blue school trousers, I stumbled over to my sister Dieu-Ha’s room. My mother was yelling, “Are you deaf? Get out! We’re going downstairs!”

It was five in the morning. Explosions and gunfire echoed through the high-ceilinged rooms of the government guesthouse. Arch corridors surrounded the twenty bedrooms on the second floor of the massive French-style mansion. My parents had taken the master suite at the end of the hall while my two sisters and I had large rooms next to one another. We had arrived at the end of January 1968, two days before the lunar New Year. Our family were the only guests in the building. Rather than having us stay at my grandfather’s small house, my father felt we would be safer at the guesthouse, where extra platoons of local soldiers had been assigned to protect him. He also preferred the guesthouse because it was built along the bank of the river in Hue, the old imperial city, and away from the town’s noisy center. The nearby train station was defunct, since the war had disrupted all but a few railway lines.

For many years my father had been working for the government of South Vietnam. Assigned to central Vietnam as a civilian deputy to the military governor, he was based in Da Nang, a coastal town just over an hour’s drive from Hue. He sent us to visit his parents there regularly, especially at holidays. He came along on this holiday visit—for the lunar New Year, Tet, in 1968.

Although my father had been warned about a possible escalation in the fighting, he said to my mother: “There’s a ceasefire. It’s New Year’s. We’ll be safe.” But he abandoned his plan to drive and instead arranged for a flight to Hue. We’d landed at the Phu Bai airport in midafternoon.

The road into town had been taken over by an endless convoy of tanks and army trucks transporting U.S. soldiers, most likely toward Khe Sanh, an American base that had been under siege for several months. Along with a few other civilian cars, small trucks, and innumerable motorcycles, we inched our way toward Hue. I kept looking out the car window, glimpsing rice fields here and there. Mostly, though, the view was blocked by the olive green steel of tanks and trucks.

My mother sought to distract us. “You kids are going to be spoiled this year. I bet your grandparents will have lots of treats for you. But I want you to behave.”

Settled in at the guesthouse, on the second night of our stay my mother and sisters and I fell asleep just after twelve, insulated by its thick walls and heavy curtains. Endless rounds of firecrackers went off as the people of Hue celebrated the arrival of Tet. No one knew that along with the Year of the Monkey, the dreaded Viet Cong soldiers had also arrived. No one could tell when the firecrackers stopped and the gunfire began.

Dieu-Ha and I followed my mother into my other sister’s room. Dieu-Quynh hid herself under a pile of blankets. Ma shook her. “Come on, we’re going downstairs!” As she started to rifle through Dieu-Quynh’s drawers, grabbing clothes for her to change into, she said to Dieu-Ha and me, “Go see if your father’s downstairs and stay with him!”
We rushed down the corridors toward the double staircase. Its marble steps
formed a half-circle framed by an intricately carved banister. A bullet shattered a
porthole as we skipped down the steps. Dien-Ha screamed. Pieces of glass and
marble flew by. We raced past the elephant tusks in the huge vestibule and to-
ward the reception hall. A chilly wind blew through the huge room. Someone
had opened the drapes and shutters of the dozens of windows rising from knee
level to ten feet above my head, each framing a view of the River of Perfume,
Song Hu'ong.

By Nguyen Quy Duc, from Literature and Integrated Studies, copyright © 1967 by Scott, Foresman and Co.
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"Where the Ashes Are—Part 1"

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Level: High School

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windows rising from knee level to ten feet above my
head, each framing a view of the River of Perfume,
Song Huo'ng. (707 words)
Level: High School

Retelling Scoring Sheet for “Where the Ashes Are—Part 1”

Setting/Background

- “Wake up,” my mother shouted.
- Explosions and gunfire echoed through the rooms of the government guesthouse.
- It was two days before the New Year.
- Rather than stay at grandfather’s house, my father felt we would be safer while soldiers had been assigned to protect him.
- My father worked for the government of South Vietnam as a civilian deputy to the governor.

Goal

- He sent us to visit his parents.

Events

- Although my father had been warned about a possible escalation in the fighting, he said, “There’s a ceasefire. It’s New Year’s. We’ll be safe.”
- The road into town had been taken over by a convoy of tanks and trucks transporting soldiers.
- In the guesthouse, my mother, my sisters, and I fell asleep.
- Firecrackers went off as people celebrated the New Year.
- No one knew

- that along with the Year of the Monkey, the soldiers had arrived.
- the Viet Cong soldiers.
- No one could tell when the firecrackers stopped and the gunfire began.
- A bullet shattered a porthole as we stepped down the steps.

45 Ideas

Number of ideas recalled _______

Other ideas recalled, including summary statements and inferences:

Questions for “Where the Ashes Are—Part 1”

1. What is the story mostly about so far?
   Implicit: a family in Vietnam who are visiting relatives for the New Year and get involved in a battle or attack

2. When did the story take place?
   Explicit: January 1968 (The reader should remember both the month and the year)

3. Describe what the road into Hue looked like from the car as the family drove into town.
   Explicit: tanks, army trucks; U.S. soldiers; cane, small trucks; motorcycles; or rice fields (Accept any three descriptions)

4. Why did the mother try to distract the children from the view out of the car window?
   Implicit: she was afraid that the army trucks and tanks would scare the children.
Level: High School

5. Who do you think wrote “Where the Ashes Are”?  
   Implicit: one of the children (If the reader gives the author’s name, ask who that was in the story.)

6. During the family’s trip to Hue, why did the father choose to stay at the guesthouse instead of at the grandfather’s house?  
   Explicit: he thought it would be safer there because extra soldiers had been assigned to protect him; it was built on the bank of a river; or it was away from the town’s noisy center.

7. Describe the guesthouse.  
   Explicit: it was large; it had high-ceilinged rooms; arched corridors; twenty bedrooms; thick walls; heavy curtains; a double staircase; marble steps; a carved banister; elephant tusks; a huge vestibule; a reception hall; and windows over ten feet. (Because the author uses detail to evoke imagery, the reader should be able to describe at least three features of the guesthouse.)

8. What was Father’s position within the government of South Vietnam?  
   Explicit: he was a civilian deputy to the military governor, or he worked for the government. (The most important idea is that he worked for the South Vietnam government as a civilian and was not part of the military.)

9. Give two reasons why the family went on this trip despite the possibility of increased fighting.  
   Implicit: they usually went during the holidays; the father believed they would be safe; or they visited their grandparents a lot.

10. Why weren’t the children afraid to go to sleep on the evening before the New Year despite all the loud noise?  
    Implicit: there were so many firecrackers going off that they couldn’t tell gunfire and fireworks apart; they thought all the noise was fireworks; or they didn’t really hear it because of the insulated walls and heavy curtains.

Without Look-Backs
Number Correct Explicit: ___
Number Correct Implicit: ___
Total: ___
   — Independent: 9–10 correct
   — Instructional: 7–8 correct
   — Frustration: 0–6 correct

With Look-Backs
Number Correct Explicit: ___
Number Correct Implicit: ___
Total: ___
   — Independent: 9–10 correct
   — Instructional: 7–8 correct
   — Frustration: 0–6 correct

Rate: 707 x 60 = 42,420 ___ seconds = ____ WPM