Textual Features of Narrative Fiction That Lead to Situational Interest

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Abstract

The purpose of my study is to develop a list of criteria for secondary English teachers to consult when choosing texts for their students. Teachers wanting to engage their students with texts think about issues such as their instructional practices, the classroom environment they create, and the texts they choose for their students. Typically, however, secondary English teachers have limited options from which to choose to use as whole-class texts. As they examine the departmental closet of books, how do they know which texts are most likely to engage their students? One possibility is to choose a text that is most likely to be of interest to the majority of their students. To that end, my research study explores the following questions:

A. What features of young adult narrative fiction texts make them interesting to their intended audience?

    1. What literary features do texts enjoyed by young adult readers have in common?

    2. How might traditional literary analysis and analysis using socio-cognitive descriptions of interesting texts work together to create a more robust model of interesting texts?

The two theoretical perspectives that ground my work are socio-cognitive theory and transactional theory. Socio-cognitive theory is a learning theory that explains people's motivation for behavior, and transactional theory is a literary theory that explains the nature of literature and the encounter between reader and text.

Using textual analysis, including qualitative content analysis and literary analysis, this study examines texts from the International Reading Association's Young Adults' Choices Reading List to identify and define textual features that build secondary students' engagement with texts by appealing to their situational interest.

Findings support previous research that shows adolescents prefer novels with round, dynamic protagonists; progressive action; chronological narrative order; a serious tone; and a theme focused on identity. In addition, all eight novels include themes focused on relationships – with family members, friends, and/or romantic partners. Combining literary analysis with qualitative content analysis using socio-cognitive descriptions of interesting texts (vividness, coherence, and life themes) adds to previous research on interesting texts. Not only are the themes of young adult novels important to the readers, but also the novels must be vivid and coherent. Vividness is an important textual feature of interesting texts further explained by style. Likewise, coherence is an important criteria of interesting texts, particularly for plot, character, and style.

Table of Contents

List of Tables

Chapter One: Introduction

The overarching goal of many English educators is to create lifelong learners/readers. They want their students to be people who are curious and critical, who want to find out about the world and have the skills, knowledge, and abilities to do so. Yet, by the time they reach high school, many students are either interested in grades only or are uninterested in school. High school classes are populated with students who either constantly ask questions related to whether the information presented will be on the test, or who rarely ask questions. Though their teachers expect them to constantly read for information, and their English teachers, at least, hope they are reading aesthetically, as well, these students often avoid reading. In fact, the results of the 2013 NAEP (National Assessment of Educational Progress) reading assessment, which measures students' use of both informational and literary texts, indicate that only 32% of 12th graders read at the Proficient level. Based on this assessment, it seems a rather small percentage of students graduate from high school with the reading abilities they need much less what their English teachers hope they have. These abilities assessed by the NAEP are also outlined in the Common Core (2015) Standards for English Language Arts, grades 6 through 12, indicating the importance of identifying, analyzing, and evaluating both informational texts and literature. If students are not interested in school or are only interested in their grades, and if students are not interested in reading or are not even proficient in reading, they are unlikely to exhibit the curiosity and ability to be critical that their teachers hope to see. Educators who want to create lifelong learners/readers may ask ourselves, How can we help these students value reading?

To help students value reading, we need to pay attention to and foster students' motivation to read. Motivation refers to "the goals that humans are striving to reach, the choices they make among several actions, and their persistence exhibited when they encounter difficulties in pursuing their goals" (Reed, Schallert, Beth, & Woodruff, 2004, p. 253). In general, motivation "influences adolescents' choices of which activities to do . . . activates adolescents' behavior . . . [and] influences how committed they are to the activity" (Wigfield, 2004, p. 60). If students are motivated to read, they choose to read and they keep reading even when it becomes difficult for them. Since this is what we as educators desire for our students, we need to focus on student motivation.

Because motivation is a broad term, researchers in the field "have defined a number of important motivational constructs" (Wigfield, 1997, p. 15) that they tend to study separately. Three motivational constructs significant in adolescent literacy research that, though often studied separately, have been found to "relate positively to one another" (Wigfield, 1997, p. 20) are competence beliefs, achievement goals, and intrinsic motivation. Competence beliefs refer to students' self-perceptions and are influenced by their beliefs about effort and ability, whether or not they think they are good at something and what kind of control they have over becoming better. One motivational construct within this construct of competence beliefs particularly relevant to adolescents, self-efficacy, is "defined as individuals' assessments of their ability at different activities and their sense that they can accomplish that activity" (Wigfield, 2004, p. 58). It is "hypothesized to have effects on task choice, effort, persistence, and achievement" (Schunk & Pajares, 2002, p. 16). Alderman (2004) explains, "Self-efficacy judgments,

whether accurate or inaccurate, help determine (a) which activities to undertake and which to avoid, and (b) how much effort we will expend and how long we will persist in the face of obstacles" (p. 70).

While students' self-efficacy helps determine which tasks to undertake and the amount of effort to expend, achievement goal orientations help determine how students will approach a task: "Students with a *learning goal* pattern are seeking to understand the material they are learning, master a skill, and increase their competence through their own effort . . . Students with a *performance goal* pattern are more concerned with their ability, how their performance compares to others, and extrinsic incentives" (Alderman, 2004, pp. 87-88). Adolescents are particularly susceptible to performance goals because, as they get older, school becomes more focused on grades and performance in relationship to others. As they are encouraged to compete with others, they become adept at comparing themselves to others and "their capacity to understand their own performance increases" (Wigfield, 2004, p. 62). In addition, they "have lower perceptions of their competence for different school subjects than do elementary-school-age children" (Wigfield, 2004, p. 60), and "their beliefs about competence, intrinsic motivation, and valuing different achievement activities become more consistent or stable" (p. 61). Therefore, adolescents who saw themselves as competent and able to improve when they were younger now see themselves as less competent and not as able to improve.

The third construct related positively to both competence beliefs and achievement goals is intrinsic motivation. Intrinsic motivation most commonly refers to the desire to

engage in an activity because one is interested in and finds enjoyable the activity itself and does not require incentive outside the activity to remain engaged in it (Alderman, 2004; Artelt, 2005). This does not mean that the activity itself cannot serve a purpose for it to be intrinsically motivating; for instance, students could be seeking information that might help them with a project, but the process of seeking information would be just as rewarding, if not more so, to the intrinsically motivated students as the product.

In discussing intrinsic motivation, authors often include interest as part of the definition, but interest is also a motivational construct related to intrinsic motivation. Researchers distinguish between two types of interest: personal, or individual, and situational (Guthrie & Knowles, 2001). Personal or individual interest develops over time and is independent of a specific situation or context while situational interest is specific to a particular context and is often short-lived. Both personal and situational interest have been linked to increases in reading comprehension (Guthrie & Knowles, 2001). This is because students who are interested in reading read: "Individuals high in intrinsic motivation are likely to read more frequently and report higher amounts of reading than other students" (Guthrie & Wigfield, 2005, p. 190). In fact, Guthrie, Wigfield, and Perencevich (2004) found that "it is the intrinsic aspects of motivation that relate most strongly to amount of reading" (p. 262). Intrinsically motivated readers are curious, involved in their reading ("they concentrate without much effort and attend to details that bring to light the full meanings of the author" (Guthrie, Wigfield, & Perencevich, 2004, p. 56)), seek challenging texts, and "see themselves as independent learners who are in control of their reading" (p. 57).

The motivation research suggests that for students to become lifelong readers, they need to have the desire and interest to read, and they need to set learning goals that they believe they can achieve through their own effort. To help foster students' motivation to read, the National Research Council (2004) recommends that teachers create an environment where "students have some autonomy in selecting tasks and methods, and in which they can construct meaning, engage in sense-making on their own, and play an active role in learning" (p. 173). As Alderman (2004) explains, "The more students determine their actions, the more intrinsic their motivation" (p. 248). Overwhelmingly, in the motivation research, it is agreed that greater autonomy is needed to increase students' motivation (Alderman, 2004; Guthrie, Wigfield, & Perencevich, 2004; Gottfried, Fleming, & Gottfried, 2001). To be autonomous, students need to have choice (Gottfried, Fleming, & Gottfried, 2001), and their choices should be influenced by their interests (Artelt, 2005; Guthrie, Wigfield, & Perencevich, 2004; Gottfried, Fleming, & Gottfried, 2001).

Research has, in fact, been conducted on adolescents' reading interests. In their article "'Just Plain Reading': A Survey of What Makes Students Want to Read in Middle School Classrooms," Ivey and Broaddus (2001) learned that many students are "motivated by finding good materials to read and having choice in the selection of these reading materials" (p. 361). These materials include choices based on personal interest and on real-life issues (p. 354). Furthermore, these choices for narrative fiction include, almost exclusively, young adult literature (YAL) (Davila & Patrick, 2010). As Brown and Mitchell (2014) explain, "Young adult literature is written *about* teenagers, *for*

teenagers, and within contexts that mirror the world of teenagers…they see their lives reflected in the characters, settings, plots, conflicts, and themes, and they find issues nested in familiar contexts that are pertinent to their daily lives" (p. 6). Because adolescents choose to read young adult literature, and because "as research and classroom experience have demonstrated, YAL engages and motivates adolescents to become lifelong readers" (Brown & Mitchell, 2014, p. 7), we must include young adult literature in our secondary classrooms to foster students' motivation to read.

Background

When I had the opportunity to revise curriculum for Basic English during the summer between my first and second years of teaching high school English, I knew I wanted to incorporate young adult literature in the course. My English education classes at the University of Northern Iowa as well as student teaching at a middle school in Des Moines had convinced me of the importance of young adult literature for students. Additionally, I had spent the last year reading young adult literature out loud to my students and silently during sustained silent reading in my classes, so I personally understood the draw of this literature. I also understood the wealth of texts from which to choose which made the task of selecting just a few titles nearly impossible.

In my school district, curriculum was revised every seven years. Though excited to be engaged in the process of curriculum redesign, I was overwhelmed with the responsibility of setting up the class for the next seven years. Who would the students be? Who would the teacher be if I was moved to a different class? What texts should I

choose knowing that the Basic English teacher would not have a budget for new texts until the next curriculum revision?

Given complete freedom of choice, I was overwhelmed by possibilities and so sought guidance from the more experienced teachers. First I consulted with the other teachers in my department. Because they were teaching the grade-level English classes, they felt more compelled to use the classics. They suggested that I talk to the school librarian. She referred me to a few online sources, and from there I sought out other teachers' webpages and blogs. After choosing a textbook and writing resource book, my budget allowed for two sets of whole-class novels. I decided, instead, to purchase one set of whole-class novels and 6 sets of novels for literature circles. In the end, based on librarians' and teachers' suggestions, and reading many book summaries, I chose seven young adult novels to incorporate in the Basic English curriculum.

When I was selecting the texts for my classroom, I had in mind the type of student who usually took Basic English: one who most likely read below grade level and was reluctant to read; and the curriculum objectives, which included examining novels in terms of literary elements. I wanted the texts to be readable for my students and meet my purposes of lending themselves to discussions of the literary elements. I also tried to include a variety of protagonists (in terms of age, gender, ethnicity), genres, and topics. My assumption was that using young adult novels, since they are written specifically for young adults, would engage my students in ways classic literature had not. However, with the new curriculum in place, even with these texts specifically chosen to appeal to my students, some students still seemed uninterested in reading the texts.

As a teacher I understand that many factors contribute to students' engagement with texts, including instructional practices, the classroom environment, and the texts themselves. As I think about my process of text selection for my Basic English class, though, I was naïve in my belief that *any* young adult text would suffice. I did have criteria, of course, but these criteria clearly fell short. Questions about how to engage students with texts, specifically related to types of texts to teach, have fueled my interest in conducting the study that follows.

Overview

My dissertation seeks to explore what features of young adult narrative fiction texts make them interesting to their intended audience. Using textual analysis, including qualitative content analysis and literary analysis, and grounded in socio-cognitive theory and transactional theory, I examined texts from the International Reading Association's Young Adults' Choices Reading List (Young Adults' Choices, 2015) to identify and define textual features that build secondary students' engagement with texts by appealing to their situational interest. The purpose of my study was to develop a list of criteria of interesting texts for secondary English teachers to consult when choosing books for their students. To that end, my study explores the following questions:

A. What features of young adult narrative fiction texts make them interesting to their intended audience?

   1. What literary features do texts enjoyed by young adult readers have in common?

2. How might traditional literary analysis and analysis using socio-cognitive descriptions of interesting texts work together to create a more robust model of interesting texts?

Interest is important to study because it correlates with student learning. In a series of studies conducted by Hidi and colleagues (Hidi & Anderson, 1992) with fourth through seventh grade students, and in a study conducted by Wade, Buxton, and Kelly (1999) with college students, interesting information in texts was recalled more frequently than other information. Using literary texts as opposed to informational texts with college students, Schraw (1997) found that interest correlated with interpretation: "As interest increased, interpretations became more sophisticated" (p. 448). Based on these and other studies, if students' interest in texts is activated, they will be more likely to recall information from nonfictional texts and better able to interpret fictional texts.

This study adds to existing research on interesting texts. Though scholars have indicated some textual features that lead to interest (coherence, vividness, and life themes), their studies have primarily considered nonfiction texts (see Schraw & Lehman, 2001). Coherence, vividness, and life themes apply to fiction as well as to nonfiction, but other features must also be considered, such as genre and thematic complexity. Identifying and defining textual features that lead to situational interest also has practical significance. Teachers wanting to engage students with texts will now have research-based guidance to determine which texts are likely to be of interest to the majority of students.

Organization of the Dissertation

In the next chapter, Chapter Two, I explore literature relevant to my study. In particular, I discuss the two theoretical perspectives that ground my work; define engagement; explore the few other studies that combine socio-cognitive theory and transactional theory; define interest; review research on preferences; and review research on young adult literature.

Chapter Three presents the methods I employed for my study. It includes a description of my background and role as a researcher; the procedures I used to select my target texts for analysis; and my analyses, including qualitative content analysis and literary analysis.

In Chapter Four I present the findings of my study. First I discuss my findings from trending the 2002-2012 Young Adults' Choices List. Then I share my findings to my first sub-question, What literary features do texts enjoyed by young adult readers have in common? The final section focuses on my second sub-question: How might traditional literary analysis and analysis using socio-cognitive descriptions of interesting texts work together to create a more robust model of interesting texts?

The final chapter, Chapter Five, is my conclusion. The first section of the chapter is a summary of my study followed by my working list of interesting text criteria for narrative fiction. Then I present a discussion of my findings; suggestions for future research; limitations of my dissertation research; and, finally, implications of my study for research and practice.

Chapter Two: Literature Review

The literature presented in this chapter was integral to the conceptualization of my study, one that seeks to answer the overall question, What features of young adult narrative fiction texts make them interesting to their intended audience? In the first section I describe the two theoretical perspectives that ground my work, socio-cognitive theory and transactional theory. Then I define engagement from a socio-cognitive theory perspective and from a transactional theory perspective, showing how the two perspectives' discussions of engagement are related and useful for my study. The next section explores the few previous studies that include a discussion of both theories. In the section on interest I focus on the construct from a socio-cognitive perspective, discussing definitions as well as the impact of interest on student learning. Then I review research on student preferences and, finally, on young adult literature.

Theoretical Perspectives

The two theoretical perspectives that ground my work are socio-cognitive theory and transactional theory. Socio-cognitive theory is a learning theory that seeks to explain people's motivation for behavior, and transactional theory is a literary theory that seeks to explain the nature of literature and the encounter between reader and text. In the sections that follow, I describe socio-cognitive theory and socio-cognitivists' view of the text, transactional theory and Rosenblatt's view of the text, and how the combination of these theories inform my study.

Socio-Cognitive Theory

Socio-cognitive theory encompasses those theories concerned with how human behavior and/or learning is affected by what one thinks about him/herself and the task, and by the environment in which one completes the task.

Over the last 30 years, social cognitive theories have dominated the field [motivation]. For example, theoretical perspectives have focused on the motivational significance of individuals' beliefs about their abilities, self-efficacy, and expectancies for success; attributions and beliefs about intelligence; and sense of control over outcomes on students' effort, persistence, and subsequent performance. Similarly, theorists have generated a rich and extensive literature on why students choose to achieve specific outcomes, focusing on constructs such as goals, standards for performance, values, interest, and orientations toward learning and performance. (Wentzel & Wigfield, 2009, p. 1)

Four main theories make up socio-cognitive theory: social cognitive theory, including self-efficacy; expectancy-value theory, including task-value beliefs; attribution theory; and goal theory.

Social cognitive theory. Social cognitive theory, as conceptualized by Bandura (1989), is a learning theory that stresses the interaction between a person, his or her behavior, and the environment. In his Triadic Model of Reciprocal Causation, Bandura illustrates the "three-way interplay of influences": a person, which includes his or her characteristics; behavior; and the environment, which includes social interactions

(Bandura, 1986). Bandura explains that in social cognitive theory, people are not just products of their environment but are also producers of their environment.

Self-efficacy. As producers of their environment, people have control of their actions, but their actions are strongly influenced by their beliefs about their abilities to act, in other words by their self-efficacy (Alderman, 2004). Bandura (1986) explains, "Among the types of thoughts that affect action, none is more central or pervasive than people's judgments of their capabilities" (p. 21). Self-efficacy, then, greatly influences people's behavior which, in turn, influences the outcome of the behavior. As an example, students are given a reading assignment in their 9th grade English class to be completed by the next day. A student who believes she has the ability to read the text will most likely anticipate the outcome of completing the text by the next day and will engage in the act of reading (high self-efficacy). On the other hand, a student who believes she will have difficulty reading the text will most likely anticipate the outcome of not completing the text by the next day and so may not even engage in the act of reading (low self-efficacy).

Sources of self-efficacy judgments include enactive attainment, vicarious experience, verbal persuasion, and physiological state (Bandura, 1986). Enactive attainment means personal experience of success. People who experience repeated success typically have higher self-efficacy, while experiencing failure results in lower self-efficacy. Similarly, seeing others experience success can raise one's self-efficacy if others appear to have similar abilities. Verbal persuasion can be used to convince another that he has the ability to complete a task. However, Bandura cautions that falsely

persuading someone of an ability is likely to result in a failed performance and consequent lower self-efficacy. Finally, people have the tendency to "read their somatic arousal in stressful or taxing situations as ominous signs of vulnerability to dysfunction" (Bandura, 1986, p. 401); in other words, if people react with sweaty palms or increased heart rate before or during a task, they tend to anticipate failure, resulting in lower self-efficacy.

Expectancy-value theory. Expectancy-value theory posits that a person's motivation for a task is determined by both the expectation to succeed and the value of the task for that person. Eccles (1983) argues that people's expectation to succeed is influenced by their self-concept of ability (defined as "the assessment of one's own competency to perform specific tasks" (p. 82) and, therefore, very similar to self-efficacy) and their perception of task difficulty, both of which are influenced by people's attributions (which will be discussed in a later section); their perceptions of others' expectations and others' (primarily parents' and teachers') actual expectations.

Task-value beliefs. To determine the value of a task, a person may consider four types of value: attainment value, intrinsic or interest value, utility value (Eccles, 1983), and cost (Eccles, Wigfield, & Schiefele, 1998). Attainment value refers to "the importance of doing well on the task…including perceptions of the task's ability to confirm salient and valued characteristics of the self (e.g., masculinity, femininity, competence), to provide a challenge, and to offer a forum for fulfilling achievement, power, and social needs" (Eccles, 1983, p. 89). Intrinsic or interest value is the enjoyment one experiences from engaging in the task, while utility value is the usefulness

of the task for achieving some future goal. Eccles (1983) explains that interest value and utility value are similar to intrinsic and extrinsic motivation, respectively. Finally, cost refers to what must be given up to complete the task.

Eccles explains that task value beliefs and expectation to succeed interact to influence behavior: "People are most likely to do things at which they think they can succeed and that have high value for them" (Bembenutty, 2008, p. 533). Consider the example from the previous section: students are given a reading assignment in their 9th grade English class to be completed by the next day. A student's decision to complete the assignment is influenced by his expectation to succeed and by the value he places on the task. If he believes he has the ability to read the text (self-concept), the text will not be too difficult to read (based on his attributions and others' expectations), and the task has value (because he wants to do well, because he is interested in reading, because reading this text will help him achieve another goal, and/or because he would not be sacrificing something more important to allow time for reading), he is likely to complete the task.

Attribution theory. Like the other theories within socio-cognitive theory, attribution theory aims to explain "behavior in achievement-related contexts" (Weiner, 1986, pp. 159-160), but does so by focusing on the causes one attributes to the outcome of a task and how those attributions influence behavior (Alderman, 2004). As explained in expectancy-value theory, attributions influence an individual's self-concept of ability and perception of task difficulty. This is because when people search for causes to explain the outcome of an event, they typically rely on "explanations of high or low

ability and high or low effort as determining success or failure" (Weiner, 1986, p. 79).

For example, if a student fails a test, she may attribute the failure to not knowing the

content because she did not study (low effort); the test was difficult, but she would have

been able to pass it had she studied (high ability). The student's attribution indicates that

she is able (self-concept of ability) but she should have studied for the test (perception of

task difficulty).

Furthermore, causes can be explained as being located in three dimensions:

internal-external, stable-unstable, and controllable-uncontrollable (Weiner, 1986). In our

example from the previous paragraph, the student's effort could be perceived as internal

(something that originates with her), unstable (something that changes), and controllable.

These dimensions influence both expectancy and affect, which "are presumed to

determine action" (Weiner, 1986, p. 164). Since the student attributes lack of effort to

her failure on the test, and she perceives effort as internal, unstable, and controllable; she

may feel guilty for not studying, low self-esteem for failing, but hopeful that she will

succeed if she studies next time. Because she has control over the amount of effort she

expends, she may have an expectancy of future success. Therefore, she will study for the

next test in an effort to pass it. Attribution theory posits that if the student had attributed

her failure on the test to something else (i.e. the test was too difficult for her), the

outcome would likely be different (i.e. she would not study for the next test).

Goal theory. Achievement goal theory focuses on the "underlying purpose for

achieving a goal" (Alderman, 2004, p. 86) in an effort to explain "students' adaptive

[mastery-oriented] and maladaptive [helpless] responses to achievement challenges"

(Senko, Hulleman, & Harackiewicz, 2011, p. 27). Though recent research introduces the idea of multiple goals, goal theory generally emphasizes two types: "mastery goals, which focus on acquiring and developing competence, and performance goals, which focus instead on demonstrating one's competence and outperforming others" (Senko, Hulleman, & Harackiewicz, 2011, p. 27). Research has consistently shown favorable results for students focusing on mastery goals, inconsistent results for students focusing on performance goals, and, recently, inconclusive results related to multiple goals (Senko, Hulleman, & Harackiewicz, 2011). Because Dweck's two-goal model was "clearly influential as it paved the way for the three-goal and four-goal models currently in favor today" (Maehr & Zusho, 2009, p. 87), I focus on the research of Dweck and Leggett (1988) to further explain achievement goal theory.

As achievement goal theorists, Dweck and Leggett (1988) present a model to show how adaptive (mastery-oriented response) and maladaptive (helpless response) patterns emerge from having different goals (performance goals and learning or mastery goals). Students with performance goals tend to focus on their ability and how it compares to others. If they fail, they will most likely react negatively, either experiencing a "depressed affect" or adopting a "self-protective posture, devaluing the task and expressing boredom" (p. 261). These cognitive stances and affective responses often result in "maladaptive learning behaviors" (p. 262). On the other hand, students with learning (mastery) goals focus on the "effectiveness of [their] learning and mastery strategies" (p. 261). If they fail, they will most likely react with increased effort and engagement, which then "promote[s] adaptive challenge seeking, persistence, and

sustained performance in the face of difficulty" (p. 262). In this two-goal model, performance goals most likely lead to maladaptive responses because of the focus on ability, and learning goals most likely lead to adaptive responses because of the focus on mastery.

To explain why some students favor performance goals and other students favor learning goals, Dweck and Leggett (1988) found that a "consistent predictor of children's goal orientation is their…implicit conception about the nature of ability" (p. 262). Children who believe intelligence is increasable (incremental theory of intelligence) tend to focus on learning goals and those who believe intelligence is fixed (entity theory of intelligence) tend to focus on performance goals. These conceptions of intelligence that predict goal type seem to relate to Weiner's (1986) dimensions: in the incremental theory, intelligence could be seen as internal, unstable, and controllable, so failure would lead to increased effort (mastery-oriented response); whereas, in the entity theory, intelligence could be seen as external, stable, and uncontrollable, so failure would lead to decreased effort (helpless response).

Summary. Social cognitive theory, expectancy-value theory, attribution theory, and goal theory all fit within socio-cognitive theory. Each theory attempts to explain people's motivation for behavior by considering people's beliefs about themselves and the task, and by considering the environment in which the task is performed. These four main theories are interconnected, but each has a slightly different focus for explaining people's responses to tasks. Social cognitive theory and, specifically, self-efficacy focuses on the importance of people's judgments of their abilities in determining their

behavior; expectancy-value theory posits that a person's motivation for a task is determined by both the expectation to succeed, which is influenced by judgments of ability (social cognitive theory/self-efficacy), and the value of the task for that person; attribution theory focuses on the causes one attributes to the outcome of a task, which affects both expectation to succeed and task value (expectancy-value theory), and how those attributions influence behavior; and achievement goal theory attempts to explain why some students react positively and others react negatively to challenges. Two main ideas from socio-cognitive theory influence my study. The first is the overall idea that to understand people's behavior, we must consider their beliefs about themselves and the task, and we must consider their environment. The second is the importance of interest in determining the value of a task.

Text-based interest. Because interest helps determine what and how well people learn (Schraw & Lehman, 2001), it is a construct researched by socio-cognitivists. Of the studies that focus on interest, those that explore text-based interest are of particular relevance to my study. Text-based interest, defined as situational stimuli that may lead to interest, refers primarily to properties of a text that make it interesting to read (Schraw, Bruning, & Svoboda, 1995).

The studies that have been conducted to determine what properties of texts make them interesting to most readers are generally quantitative studies in which participants complete interest questionnaires, read a passage, and recall information either freely or via a test (Schraw, 1997; Schraw, Bruning, & Svoboda, 1995; Wade, Buxton, & Kelly, 1999). Though findings of at least one study revealed both reader-based characteristics

(i.e. importance/value, readers' connections) and text-based characteristics (Wade, Buxton, & Kelly, 1999), the majority of studies focused on text-based characteristics of interest (Schraw & Lehman, 2001), such as vividness, coherence, and life themes. These studies address people's beliefs about themselves and the task, situated in a controlled environment, to determine characteristics of texts that make them interesting to read. Because quantitative studies are generalizable, and because the majority of findings focus on text-based characteristics of interest, these studies suggest that texts can be inherently interesting.

Transactional Theory

Transactional theory is grounded in literary theory. In its broadest terms, literary theory refers to studying approaches to texts. Literary theorists attempt to answer two key questions: What is literature? and What is interpretation? (Leitch, 2001; Rosenblatt, 2003). To determine the nature of literature, theorists examine the language of texts and their relationship to and/or representation of the author, audience, and/or culture (Leitch, 2001). To explain interpretation, theorists describe the "encounter between the reader and the text" (Leitch, 2001, p. 2). Theorists' explanations of the nature of literature and the encounter between reader and text mark them as, for example, deconstructionists, poststructuralists, feminists, or reader response theorists.

Rosenblatt's (1965/1995) transactional theory was a response to the "traditional view of the text as an entity embodying a determinate message or meaning" (2003, p. 79). Instead of the text holding the meaning and the reader trying to find it, in transactional theory the meaning comes out of the transaction between the reader and the text: "The

reader responds to the verbal stimuli derived from the text, but at the same time he must draw selectively on the resources of his own fund of experience and sensibility to provide and organize the substance of his response. Out of this the new experience, the literary work, is formed" (Rosenblatt, 1978/1994, p. 43). To Rosenblatt, then, both the reader and the text are significant when defining literature and interpretation.

In describing transactional theory, Rosenblatt (1978/1994) elaborates on "two streams of response" (p. 48) that make up the reading process: producing the literary work and responding to the literary work being produced. Her descriptions of these streams of response emphasize the importance she places on both the reader and the text. She explains that in producing and responding to the literary work, readers build up "the work under the guidance of the text" (p. 69). They respond to the words on the page out of their own experiences and understandings, forming expectations of the text and then confirming, reworking, and/or discarding their expectations. It is in this transaction with the text that readers create the literary work, a process that Rosenblatt (1978/1994) refers to as evocation.

During the evocation of the literary work, readers must choose a stance from which to read the text. Rosenblatt (1965/1995; 1978/1994) distinguishes between two approaches to text: efferent and aesthetic. Readers approaching a text efferently read to take information away from the text. The focus is on the end result of reading. In contrast, readers who approach a text aesthetically read to experience the text. They "'live through' what is being created during the reading" (Rosenblatt, 1965/1995, p. 33). Rosenblatt (1965/1995) explains, "The transaction with any text stirs up both referential

and affective aspects of consciousness, and the proportion of attention given to these will determine where the reading will fall on a continuum from predominately efferent to predominately aesthetic" (p. 33). In other words, the text contains elements of the aesthetic and non-aesthetic that encourage which approach(es) to use, but the reader ultimately chooses the approach(es). Rosenblatt's description of stances further illustrates the importance of both reader and text to the meaning making process.

Though emphasizing the reader and the text, Rosenblatt does not leave out the importance of context. She explains that while texts provide cues as to which stance to adopt, readers are also influenced by their "'socio-physical' setting [or] nonverbal situation" (1978/1994, p. 78). For example, needing to read something in an emergency situation demands an efferent approach; those who choose to read poetry often do so out of a desire for an aesthetic experience; school reading, no matter the text, is often efferent because of test and teacher expectations. Outside of specific contexts, readers and texts are socially influenced. Rosenblatt (1965/1995) explains that "just as the personality and concerns of the reader are largely socially patterned, so the literary work, like language itself, is a social product" (p. 28). The transaction between reader and text remains the focus of Rosenblatt's theory, but because reader and text do not exist in a vacuum, context cannot be ignored. Furthermore, once a reader has transacted with a text, it is important to exchange his/her experience with others and, perhaps, change his/her interpretation of the text as a result. Ultimately, "The transactional concept can only reinforce interest in the dynamics of the relationship between the author, the text, the reader, and their cultural environments" (Rosenblatt, 1978/1994, p. 174).

Summary. Transactional theory is a literary theory that emphasizes the importance of both the reader and the text in explaining the nature of literature and interpretation. Rosenblatt describes that the literary work is formed in the transaction between reader and text, and interpretation is based on the reader's description of his/her particular transaction with the text. Because reader and text do not exist in a vacuum, context must be considered, as well. Rosenblatt's emphasis on both reader and text and her discussions of stance are particularly relevant to my study.

The text. Rosenblatt's transactional theory clearly weights the reader and the text equally. She describes the text as a "necessary, but not sufficient, condition for any literary work of art" (1978/1994, p. 83). The text, a "series of signs interpretable as linguistic symbols," is distinguished from the "poem," which "presupposes a reader actively involved with a text and refers to what he makes of his responses to the particular set of verbal symbols" (p. 12). Therefore, the transaction between the reader and text results in the poem or literary work of art. The purpose of the text, then, is to serve as both stimulus and regulator. It stimulates the reader's reactions and regulates the reader's attention: "Recognizing the essential role of the text as the stimulus to the creativity of the reader has as its corollary recognition both of the openness of the text, on the one hand, and on the other, its constraining function as a guide or check" (p. 88). With these roles, the text allows for multiple interpretations but requires the interpretations to be grounded in the text.

As stimulus and regulator, the text provides clues "as to what stance the reader should adopt" (1978/1994, p. 81). For instance, the way words are arranged on the page

to indicate poetry or plays encourage an aesthetic response. Rosenblatt argues that the

aesthetic stance is essential in the creation of a poem from a text. She discusses the

application of literary terms to texts to illustrate the importance of stance. For instance,

she explains that analyzing a narrative text for plot could result in an itemized list if one

read the novel purely efferently. However, "plot" implies that the reader will be able to

relate the events, not just list them, requiring "understandings and awarenesses and

responses" (p. 91). With an aesthetic approach the reader calls upon, for example, his/her

understanding of fiction, story, plot; awarenesses of the events in the story and how

they're related; and responds to these events as they unfold. Thus, an aesthetic approach

is required.

      In transactional theory, then, the text consists of words on the page that stimulate

and guide the reader to creation of the poem. During this process the text and the context

also guide the reader toward which stance to adopt. Rosenblatt presents stance as a

continuum but stresses the importance of the aesthetic approach for experiencing the

literary text. Even the application of literary terms is more honest when the aesthetic

approach is activated. However, the reader's interpretation must be grounded in the text.

Theories Combined

      At first glance, socio-cognitive theory and transactional theory may not seem to

be related. Socio-cognitive theory is a learning theory that explains people's motivation

for behavior, while transactional theory is a literary theory that explains the nature of

literature and the encounter between reader and text. Socio-cognitive theory is made up

of many theorists who have different foci for explaining people's motivations; transactional theory is Rosenblatt's explanation of the encounter between reader and text.

However, even though the two theories attempt to explain different processes, they use similar concepts to do so. Socio-cognitive theory stresses the importance of considering the person, the task, and the environment when explaining people's motivation for behavior; transactional theory likewise emphasizes the reader, the text, and the context to explain the encounter between reader and text. If reading literature were the task, the factors under study would be the same for both theories. Both would look at what is happening with the reader; Socio-cognitivists would explore the reader's beliefs about herself and her ability to read the text; Rosenblatt would explore the reader's experience of the text including stance and what is being evoked as he transacts with the text. Both would consider the text (task). Socio-cognitivists would consider the reader's approach to the text (value and/or goal for reading); and some would determine if the text were interesting (text-based interest). Rosenblatt would determine what cues the text gives to encourage the reader's evocation of the literary work, including what stance the cues encourage the reader to adopt, and would apply literary terms to assist her interpretation of the text[1]. Finally, both would consider the context (environment). Socio-cognitivists would examine the social situation in which the reader reads the text – her interactions with others, her beliefs of others' expectations, and others' actual

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[1] The reader is still responsible for his interpretation, but the interpretation must be grounded in the text. I suggest that Rosenblatt would apply literary terms to assist her interpretation of the text because her reading counts as one of multiple readings; applying literary terms, according to Rosenblatt, requires both reader and text and assists with interpretation.

expectations. Rosenblatt would consider the social context in which the text was created, the text was read, and the text was discussed. Because the theorists are coming from different perspectives, their approaches to reader, text, and context will be different. However, they seem to be closely related and could, in fact, support each other.

One way the two theories support each other, and the key reason I need both for my study, is in their discussions of the text. Reading the socio-cognitivists' studies of interesting texts led to my research question; but because of my background in literature, studying texts without considering character, plot, setting, and other literary devices seemed incomplete. Transactional theory complements socio-cognitive theory because both use similar concepts to explain their approaches. In addition, Rosenblatt's equal emphasis on reader and text in her description of the encounter between the two aligns with my approach to literary theory. Therefore, both perspectives are necessary for a more complete analysis of features of texts that lead to situational interest.

Engagement

While my study focuses specifically on interest as it relates to texts, this inquiry fits within the broader context of engagement research. The two theories that guide my work, socio-cognitive theory and transactional theory, strongly influence my understanding of what is meant by the term engagement. In this section I first discuss (literacy) engagement from a socio-cognitive theory perspective. Then I use a socio-cognitive lens to discuss (literary) engagement from a transactional theory perspective, showing how the two perspectives' discussions of engagement are related and useful for my study.

Socio-Cognitive Theory Perspective

To define literacy engagement from a socio-cognitive perspective, I rely on the research of John Guthrie and colleagues. Through his work at the National Reading Research Center, Guthrie (1996) developed a definition of literacy engagement that includes motivation, conceptual understanding, cognitive strategies, and social interaction. Guthrie explains, "Literacy engagement is important because it links traditional notions of cognitive competence to learners' personal/motivational needs, to the social milieu in which these needs may be fulfilled, and to the potential of literacy as an avenue for gaining knowledge" (pp. 435-436). Including motivation, conceptual understanding, cognitive strategies, and social interaction as important to the definition of literacy engagement was significant in shifting perspectives in literacy from "viewing literacy as the self-regulation of a cognitive system to seeing literacy as the self-determination of a person with purposes," from the "individual person in the center . . . [to] the individual in a social setting," and from "an emphasis on language processes that emphasize narrative to a focus on knowing" (Guthrie, 1996, p. 435). By including all four of these aspects, Guthrie's definition of literacy engagement emerges from social cognitive theory which assumes an interaction between "behavior, cognition and other personal factors, and environmental influences" (Bandura, 1989, p. 2).

Relying on some form of the above definition, Guthrie and colleagues have explicated each of the four aspects in their work, differentiating between motivation, conceptual knowledge, strategies, and social interaction, and showing the relationships between all four aspects (Guthrie, 1996; Guthrie & Wigfield, 2000; Guthrie, Wigfield, &

Perencevich, 2004). These four aspects are discussed separately below, though the explanations interrelate.

Motivation. According to Guthrie and Wigfield (2000), "Motivation is crucial to engagement because motivation is what activates behavior" (p. 406). Guthrie and colleagues define motivation as "reasons for reading" (Guthrie, 1996, p. 433; Guthrie & Anderson, 1999, p. 21; Guthrie, Van Meter et al., 1996, p. 309). These motivations or reasons for reading are "internalized goals that lead to literacy choices and comprehension strategies" (Guthrie, Van Meter et al., 1996, p. 309), and these goals can be intrinsic and extrinsic. Intrinsic motivation most commonly refers to the desire to engage in an activity because one is interested in and finds enjoyable the activity itself and does not require incentive outside the activity to remain engaged in it. Intrinsic motivators include but are not limited to involvement, curiosity, challenge (Guthrie, 2004; Wigfield & Tonks, 2004), and interest (Guthrie & Humenick, 2004; Guthrie & Knowles, 2001; Guthrie & Wigfield, 2000).

In contrast to intrinsic motivation, extrinsic motivation refers to the desire to engage in an activity for reasons external to the learner. Extrinsic motivators include but are not limited to recognition, grades (Guthrie, 1996; Guthrie, 2004; Wigfield & Tonks, 2004), competition (Guthrie, 1996; Wigfield & Tonks, 2004), and rewards (Guthrie, 1996; Guthrie & Humenick, 2004). While some extrinsically motivated students may perform well in school, it is the intrinsically motivated students who are more likely to be engaged and learning: "Intrinsic motivation relates to long-term engagement in activities, as well as deeper learning" (Wigfield & Tonks, 2004, p. 254). Intrinsically motivated

students are not limited by focusing only on the information that will appear on the test; instead, they pursue ideas and topics more fully, engaging completely with them.

Motivation seems to be the most important aspect of literacy engagement, as this answers the why of reading. Students read because they are motivated to read. However, those motivated to read for extrinsic reasons – grades, rewards, competition, recognition – may not be engaged in their reading. Instead, students' intrinsic reasons for reading – curiosity, involvement, challenge, interest – should be encouraged because intrinsic motivation leads to engaged reading, which includes the other aspects of engagement.

Conceptual knowledge. Conceptual knowledge refers to "students' understanding of a discipline in terms of its structures, functions, and their relations" (Guthrie, McGough, Bennett, & Rice, 1996, p. 169). When students read within a discipline, they develop concepts about topics within the discipline, adding new information to what they already understand about the topics. As students learn more about the discipline, "their understanding is increasingly organized around fundamental principles" (Guthrie & Anderson, 1999, p. 27). Students with high levels of conceptual knowledge understand the interrelationships of these principles to explain phenomena and events within the discipline (Guthrie, 1996; Guthrie & Anderson, 1999; Guthrie & Scafiddi, 2004). These students would be able to answer higher-level questions and solve more complex problems than students with lower levels of conceptual knowledge. It makes sense that students reading for involvement, curiosity, interest, and challenge (intrinsic motivation) would also have the motivation to access and use the strategies they need to develop their conceptual knowledge.

Strategies. To develop their conceptual knowledge, students need to use cognitive strategies (Guthrie, 1996). A strategy is "defined as a plan of action . . . [and] can be applied to different situations" (Guthrie & Anderson, 1999, p. 31). As Guthrie and Toboado explain (2004), "Strategic readers are deliberate in their use of strategies (e.g., questioning) as a tool to improve their understanding of text. To be accomplished in the use of strategies, such as questioning, students need to be capable of performing strategies, be aware of how strategies will help them in different circumstances, and be motivated to use the strategies" (p. 274). This motivation should be intrinsic for reasons explained in previous sections. These intrinsically motivated students developing their conceptual knowledge rely on strategies such as using prior knowledge, searching for information, comprehending, and questioning when reading (Guthrie & Taboada, 2004). One way to encourage strategy use is to give students an opportunity for social interaction.

Social interaction. Social interaction is essential to the definition of literacy engagement because engaged readers often talk about what they read, and because talking about what they read increases their engagement. Social interaction in learning situations contributes to students' motivation, conceptual knowledge (Guthrie, Wigfield, & Perencevich, 2004) and strategy use (Swan, 2003). Research shows that students engaged in social interaction around reading read more frequently, which is associated with higher achievement (Guthrie, 1996; Guthrie & Wigfield, 2000; Guthrie, Wigfield, & Perencevich, 2004). Therefore, students should be encouraged to interact with their peers about what they are reading to help them become engaged readers.

Summary. Engagement from a socio-cognitive perspective includes motivation, conceptual knowledge, strategies, and social interaction. It is the interaction of these four aspects that leads to engaged readers. Students who read for involvement, curiosity, challenge, and interest use strategies, such as prior knowledge, searching for information, questioning, and comprehending, to develop their conceptual knowledge, or understanding of fundamental principles within a discipline. These students talk about what they read because they are engaged, and they become more engaged with reading as they interact with others. These same aspects of engagement are included in the next section, the transactional theory perspective of engagement.

Transactional Theory Perspective

Though Rosenblatt does not specifically define engagement when she explains transactional theory, I realized that she is talking about engaged reading when I viewed her work through Guthrie and colleagues' definition of engagement. Therefore, I am using a socio-cognitive lens to discuss engagement from a transactional theory perspective.

Engaged reading can occur anywhere on Rosenblatt's (1965/1995; 1978/1994) efferent/aesthetic continuum, but since Rosenblatt indicates that it is more efficacious to read literary fiction aesthetically, that is what I am taking up here to discuss engagement from the transactional theory perspective. Though Guthrie and Wigfield (1997) indicate that Rosenblatt's inclusion of affect in her discussion of aesthetic reading "does not relate to motivational goals or purpose for engaging in reading" (p. 4), some of their ideas about the aspects of engagement (motivation, conceptual knowledge, strategies, and social

interaction) can be traced back to Rosenblatt's discussion of aesthetic reading. For instance, aesthetic readers are personally involved in the text, responding to the text emotionally and out of "their own curiosity about life and literature" (Rosenblatt, 1965/1995, p. 63). According to Guthrie and colleagues, curiosity is an intrinsic motivator, and, therefore, a motivational goal for reading and responding to texts. Furthermore, aesthetic readers seek to understand the text, to be aware of the "sensations it symbolizes, the systems or categories out of which it springs, the modes of feeling or practical situations with which it is associated, the actions it may imply" (p. 106). Here Rosenblatt is talking about what Guthrie and colleagues call conceptual knowledge, another aspect of engaged reading. Background information is also important to readers' experiences of texts, helping them to make sense of what they are reading and to question the text as well as their own experiences (Rosenblatt, 1965/1995). This discussion of using background information is similar to Guthrie and colleagues' presentation of strategies, another aspect of their definition of engagement. In addition, Rosenblatt (1965/1995) mentions the importance of the social aspect of reading, indicating that for a well-developed understanding of the text, readers must discuss their responses to the text with other readers, clarifying their own perceptions of the text against other readers' perceptions. This process of understanding a text through clarification and refinement of his/her perceptions should be fueled by a student's interest if it is to have value for that student (Rosenblatt, 1965/1995; 1978/1994). Finally, then, aesthetic readers are interested, which is another intrinsic motivator stressed by Rosenblatt and by Guthrie and colleagues as influential to engagement.

Summary. In using a socio-cognitive lens to discuss engagement from a transactional theory perspective, I show that Rosenblatt, writing before Guthrie and colleagues, alludes to many of the same aspects of engagement found in Guthrie and colleagues' discussion. As a literary theorist, Rosenblatt is clearly concerned with the what (is literature) and the how (do texts and readers interact), but as an educator she is also concerned with the why (do readers read). Therefore, in her explanation of readers' transactions with texts, Rosenblatt (1965/1995; 1978/1994) indicates the importance of all four aspects of engaging with texts – motivation, conceptual knowledge, strategies, and social interaction.

Engagement Studies that Combine Socio-Cognitive Theory and Transactional Theory

Taken together, transactional theory and socio-cognitive theory enrich our understanding of engagement. However, my search for studies that focus on adolescents' engagement with texts uncovered only one study grounded in both theories. Bean, Valerio, Senior, and White (1999) situate their work within an engagement perspective, citing Guthrie and Wigfield; and within literature response theory, citing Rosenblatt. They studied students' written responses to a multicultural novel, concluding that students were engaged in the novel because the "frequency of interpretive and personal reactions outpaced simple descriptive statements" and because they showed a sense of agency in their responses (p. 37). Bean et al.'s study uniquely combines socio-cognitive theory and transactional theory by viewing the way readers responded to the text (transactional) as indicative of their engagement with the text (socio-cognitive). The

authors do combine the two theories to study adolescents' engagement with a text, but their study focuses on the students and does not include an analysis of the text.

The studies that do consider features of the text that may contribute to student engagement typically do not mention transactional theory or any other literary theory. These studies focus on interest, specifically situational interest, referencing Hidi and colleagues' conceptualization of interest as a motivational state (Schallert & Reed, 1997; Schiefele, 1996; Schraw, 1997; Schraw & Lehman, 2001; Wade, Buxton, & Kelly, 1999). Hidi, Renninger, and Krapp (2004) posit interest as having "both cognitive and affective components" (p. 95), placing themselves broadly within the field of psychology. Furthermore, by stating that "other individuals, the organization of the environment, and a person's own efforts . . . can support interest development," Hidi and Renninger (2006) place their work specifically within socio-cognitive theory (p. 112). They make no mention of literary theory.

Not all researchers writing about situational interest ignore literary theory. Schallert and Reed (1997) reference Rosenblatt when discussing why students might prefer narratives. They suggest that students are more interested in narratives because of the potential for transacting with the text, where the "interaction between reader and author through the vehicle of text is dynamic and recursive" (p. 74). Schraw (1997) also references Rosenblatt, stating that his finding that interest of a literary text was related to written responses was "consistent with the claims of reader response theorists" (p. 449). These researchers have read Rosenblatt and cite her to corroborate their findings, but transactional theory does not ground their work.

The literature shows that socio-cognitive theory and transactional theory have been combined as theoretical perspectives to study engagement, but rarely. Because the combination has proven to be useful but uncommon, it has much potential for contributing to literacy research. In my study both perspectives inform my view of engaging with texts and, therefore, my analyses of the texts.

Interest

Both the socio-cognitivists and transactional theorist focus on interest as important for students' engagement with texts. Interest for Rosenblatt (1978/1994) "embodies both intellectual and emotive elements" (p. 54) and encompasses the "reader's need to live through to some resolution of the tensions, questions, curiosity or conflicts aroused by the text" (pp. 54-55). It is interest that keeps the reader engaged in the process of evoking the literary work. For the socio-cognitivists, interest is a "fascination with a topic or a subject matter" (Guthrie & Anderson, 1999, p. 23). Students who are interested in, or fascinated by, a topic are intrinsically motivated to read about that topic. While Rosenblatt mentions interest, the construct is explored more thoroughly by the socio-cognitivists. Therefore, it is this research that I take up in this section.

To explain students' interest in a topic, researchers distinguish between personal interest and situational interest (Guthrie & Knowles, 2001; Wigfield & Tonks, 2004). Guthrie and colleagues mention both personal and situational interest but refer the reader to Hidi and colleagues, and Schiefele (Guthrie & Anderson, 1999; Guthrie & Knowles, 2001; Wigfield, 1997; Wigfield & Tonks, 2004) for a more complete discussion of interest.

Hidi, Renninger, and Krapp (2004) distinguish interest from other intrinsic motivators because it is specific to content or activities (not universal across content or activities), "exists in a particular relation between a person and content" (not in either person or content), and includes "both cognitive and affective components" (p. 95). In her 1990 review of research on interest, Hidi explains that researchers tend to focus either on individual differences in people's interests (personal, individual interest) or on the affect of interest in a specific situation across individuals (situational interest). Because individuals experience interest in both ways, both have the potential to influence students' motivation and, therefore, need to be understood.

Personal or individual interest is "conceived of as a relatively enduring preference for certain topics, subject areas, or activities" (Schiefele, 1991, p. 302). Hidi (1990) explains that "personal, individual interest develops slowly over time and tends to have long-lasting effects on a person's knowledge and values" (p. 551). It refers to both a predisposition and a psychological state (Hidi, 2006; Hidi, Renninger, & Krapp, 2004; Schiefele, 1992). As a predisposition, interest shows itself in an individual's reengagement with content or activities over time (Hidi, 2006; Hidi, Renninger, & Krapp, 2004). For example, a person interested in literature will seek out literature to read. As a psychological state, interest shows itself in an individual's "heightened attention, concentration, and positive affect" (Renninger & Hidi, 2002, p. 177). For example, a person may enjoy the experience of reading a particular piece of literature. A predisposition towards a topic or activity triggers a psychological state of interest, but a

psychological state of interest can also be triggered by situational interest (Hidi, 2006; Renninger & Hidi, 2002).

Whereas personal interest focuses on the person and his or her disposition, situational interest focuses on the environment. Situational interest is defined as "an emotional state brought about by situational stimuli" (Schiefele, 1991, p. 302); It "tends to be evoked more suddenly by something in the environment and may have only a short term effect, marginally influencing an individual's knowledge and values" (Hidi, 1990, p. 551). As mentioned in the previous paragraph, situational stimuli can trigger a psychological state of interest; since it is "most often generated by something in the immediate environment, . . . it need not be necessarily connected to . . . long-standing [personal] interest" (Hidi & Anderson, 1992, p. 220). Situational interest could lead to personal interest, though (Guthrie, Hoa, Wigfield, Tonks, & Perencevich, 2006; Hidi, 2006). For example, if a person has a positive experience reading a particular piece of literature, he or she may choose to read another piece of literature. After experiencing a psychological state of interest in this situation, over a series of situations he or she may develop personal interest in reading literature.

Situational stimuli that may lead to interest include text-based interest, task-based interest, and knowledge-based interest (Schraw & Lehman, 2001). Text-based interest refers primarily to properties of a text that make it interesting to read (Schraw, Bruning, & Svoboda, 1995). Research on text-based interest has focused on seductiveness ("the extent that highly interesting but unimportant text segments (i.e., *seductive details*) distract readers from more important text segments"), vividness ("text segments that

stand out because they create suspense, surprise, or are otherwise engaging"), and

coherence ("factors that affect the reader's ability to organize the main ideas in a text")

(Schraw & Lehman, 2001, p. 31). Task-based interest relates to influencing students'

situational interest through changing the task or changing the text (Schraw & Lehman,

2001). For instance, Tsai, Kunter, Ludtke, Trautwein, and Ryan (2008) found that

students with greater autonomy for a task had more interest in that task. Finally,

knowledge-based interest refers to the influence of prior knowledge on a person's

situational interest (Schraw & Lehman, 2001). Studies have found that adequate prior

knowledge relates positively to situational interest (Alexander, Jetton, & Kulikowich,

1995; Tsai et al., 2008).

From the socio-cognitive perspective, then, interest is an intrinsic motivator that

refers to "a fascination with a topic or a subject matter" (Guthrie & Anderson, 1999, p.

23) and can be both personal and situational. Personal interest involves both a

predisposition for and a psychological state of involvement with a topic, subject matter,

or activity. Situational interest results from a reaction to stimuli in the environment,

which includes text-based interest, task-based interest, and knowledge-based interest. As

will be demonstrated in the next section, both personal and situational interest impact

student learning.

Impact on Learning

Research shows a strong correlation between interest and learning (Hidi, 1990;

Hidi, 2006; Hidi, Renninger, & Krapp, 2004; Renninger & Hidi, 2002; Schiefele, 1991;

Schraw & Lehman, 2001). In various studies he has conducted with university and high school students, Schiefele (1991) found that personal interest affects comprehension:

> On the basis of the results of Studies 1 and 2 it seems justified to assume that high-interest subjects, as compared with low-interest subjects, engage in a more intensive and meaning-oriented processing of a text. They produce more inferences, recall a greater number of main ideas important for an adequate understanding of the text, and (consequently) are better at answering complex questions and applying their acquired text knowledge to new situations. (pp. 306-307);

learners' uses of strategies, correlating "most strongly with use of elaboration and information-seeking strategies" (p. 311); and quality of the learning experience: "topic interest was significantly correlated with involvement, enjoyment, concentration, and activation" (p. 313). A later study (Schiefele, 1996), also conducted with high school students, confirms the importance of personal interest to gaining meaning from text but finds that the "quality of experience seems to be an epiphenomenon of interest and most likely does not have a causal role in the process of text learning" (p. 13). Renninger (1992) also found that personal interest influenced comprehension: "Students were more likely to recall more points, recall information from more paragraphs, recall more topic sentences, write more sentences, provide more detailed information about topics read, have no errors on their written recall, and provide additional topic-relevant information on passages of interest than on those of noninterest" (p. 381). Personal interest, then, is important for students' comprehension and strategy use.

Situational interest also correlates with student learning. In a series of studies conducted by Hidi and colleagues (Hidi & Anderson, 1992) with fourth through seventh grade students, and in a study conducted by Wade, Buxton, and Kelly (1999) with college students, interesting information in texts was recalled more frequently than other information. Using literary texts as opposed to informational texts with college students, Schraw (1997) found that interest correlated with interpretation: "As interest increased, interpretations became more sophisticated" (p. 448). Based on these studies, if students' situational interest is activated, they will be more likely to recall information from nonfictional texts and better able to interpret fictional texts.

As an intrinsic motivator, interest correlates with comprehension, recall, and strategy use, therefore increasing overall engagement with texts. Clearly both personal and situational interest are important for student learning. Students personally interested in reading use strategies and have higher comprehension. Students influenced by situational stimuli when reading texts benefit from greater recall or more sophisticated interpretations. Since situational interest can lead to personal interest, and since both affect engagement, situational interest should be encouraged in classrooms.

Preferences

In addition to studying interest, researchers have studied readers' preferences. The purpose of preference studies is to identify "topics, subject matter, and genres that appear to have the greatest appeal" (Sebesta & Monson, 2003, p. 838). Most preference studies include surveying participants, having students choose between listed topics (Diaz-Rubin, 1996; Nippold, Duthie, & Larsen, 2005) or having students list titles or

topics (Sturm, 2003). Studies also include why students chose the particular texts/topic, and what influenced their choices (Nippold, Duthie, & Larsen, 2005; Williams, 2008).

      In their review of literature, Davila and Patrick (2010) found that secondary students prefer stories that include "adventure, humor, and horror" (p. 201). Additionally, in their study Nippold, Duthie, and Larsen (2005) found that adolescents prefer reading magazines, novels, and comics. Of importance across students studied was having choice in reading materials, including the option of reading novels written specifically for young adults (Davila & Patrick, 2010; Ivey & Broaddus, 2001). In fact, when students had the opportunity to list the names of texts that they enjoyed reading, they frequently listed texts that are considered young adult literature (Davila & Patrick, 2010; Ivey & Broaddus, 2001). Unfortunately, when comparing student preferences with reading materials offered in middle school classrooms, Ivey and Broaddus (2001) found that students were unlikely to have the option of choosing their favorites to read in class. Nippold, Duthie, and Larsen (2005) conclude their study with a suggestion that students should be encouraged to read their preferred materials, which include reading young adult literature.

Young Adult Literature

Since many adolescents prefer young adult literature, leading to the inclusion of young adult texts in my study, this section focuses on relevant information about this literature. The subsections that follow include a discussion of definitions of young adult literature, a brief history of this literature, and its benefits for young adults.

Definitions

Young adult literature is defined loosely as literature written for young adults (Christenbury, 2000; Galda, Sipe, Liang, & Cullinan, 2013) and "can also include books that . . . adolescents enjoy and have made their own" (Galda, Sipe, Liang, & Cullinan, 2013, p. 8). Donelson and Nilsen (2005) define young adult literature as "anything that readers between the approximate ages of 12 and 18 choose to read (as opposed to what they may be coerced to read for class assignments)" (p. 1). Chris Crowe (1998), former editor of the *English Journal*, writes, "I define literature for young adults as all genres of literature published since 1967 that are written for and marketed to young adults" (121). Crowe chose 1967 as the starting point of young adult literature because that is the year *The Outsiders* by S. E. Hinton (considered by many to be the beginning of realistic young adult fiction – see Cart, 2011) was published. The editors of *Classics of Young Adult Literature*, Charles Frey and Lucy Rollin (2004), do not include a specific date in their definition, but they believe young adult literature is "written or published with an audience of young readers [age thirteen to twenty] in mind"; they would also include literature "young readers choose to read" in their definition (p. 2). Commonalities across

these definitions indicate that young adult literature is that written for young adults that they choose to read.

A Brief History

The earliest young adult literature featured young protagonists making "morally right" decisions and being portrayed as examples for their peers and the adults in their lives (Marcus, 2008; Stevenson, 2011). As "religion loosened its hold on education and reading," pleasure reading became an option, and William Taylor Adams (pseudonym Oliver Optic) provided this type of reading for young readers in the 1850s (Frey & Rollin, 2004, p. 3). Optic's novels were written primarily for boys, "fiction that freely blended moral sentiment and raucous adventure" (Marcus, 2008, p. 37). Following the success of Optic's novels, Horatio Alger, Jr. published his first novel, *Ragged Dick*, in 1868 (Cart, 2011). Alger typically wrote about poor young boys who, through honesty, hard work, and a little bit of luck, were able to rise above poverty. At the same time Louisa May Alcott wrote and published *Little Women* for girls (Marcus, 2008).

Domestic and dime novels followed the novels by Alcott and Alger. Dime novels, described as offering action and excitement, were "often set in the Old West where lawlessness ruled and rough brave men shot it out in saloons, though by the end of the century their most popular stories concerned hard-boiled private detectives" (Frey & Rollin, 2004, p. 3). By 1900, formula fiction, primarily developed by Edward Stratemeyer, dominated literature for young adults (Cart, 2011). To meet the demand for his novels, Stratemeyer developed a syndicate system in which he provided plot and character outlines to anonymous authors who would then write the stories. His series

included Tom Swift, the Bobbsey Twins, the Hardy Boys, and Nancy Drew, which "supplied what teens wanted to read: short novels about teenage protagonists enjoying independence, action, and adventure, in an easy-to-read style and a predictable format" (Frey & Rollin, 2004, p. 4).

Though Stratemeyer's series, and other authors' novels published before Stratemeyer's, were obviously written for a young audience, it was not until the early 1930s that "junior" or "juvenile" were terms used to label young adult literature (Donelson & Nilsen, 2005, p. 67). Novels that fell into this category in the 1940s and 1950s included "genre fiction – romance, adventure, sports, science fiction, cars, and careers" (Cart, 2001, p. 96). It was not until the 1960s and "the appearance of hard-edged realism" that young adult literature began to resemble the young adult literature of the early twenty-first century (Cart, 2001, p. 96).

The start of young adult literature "in modern form" is argued by many to be S. E. Hinton's *The Outsiders*, which was published in 1967 (Christenbury, 2000, p. 153). Hinton was one of the first authors to write a realistic novel for young adults, which portrayed real and difficult situations for characters. According to Richard Beach and James Marshall (1991) in *Teaching Literature in the Secondary School*, the characters in *The Outsiders* are "realistically portrayed, with all of their flaws made visible" (p. 340). Ponyboy, the protagonist, is not only from a low socioeconomic class ("instead of from a safe, serene, middle-class world"), but he is in a gang (Beach & Marshall, 1991, p. 340). The story includes the death of Ponyboy's friend, but there is a hopeful ending for the protagonist. Hinton's novel acknowledged that "many young people lived lives far

removed from the happy-go-lucky images shown in television commercials and sitcoms"
(Donelson & Nilsen, 2005, p. 118). Therefore, young adult literature changed from being
moralistic to being realistic, and this current young adult literature acknowledges the
reality of adolescents by portraying young people as they really are.

Benefits for Young Adults

Because young adult literature is written specifically for young adults, young
adult literature is particularly relevant to teens. Beach and Marshall (1991) explain,

> During early adolescence (12-15), students going through a landslide of physical
> and emotional changes can, through their reading of novels, get a close-up
> glimpse of other young adults going through the same experiences. Living
> through such characters allows students to see successes and failures and ways of
> coping with both. This vicarious experience can provide both enjoyment and
> information about the complexities of their own lives. (p. 331)

Because students do share the experiences they read about in young adult literature, it can
"bridge the gap between school and students' lives and affirm students, helping to make
them feel less invisible, ignored, or 'marginalized'" (Santoli & Wagner, 2004, p. 68).
Furthermore, adolescents can read about many real life issues in young adult literature,
such as sexuality, family problems, drug and alcohol addiction, abuse, surviving middle
school and high school, suicide, depression, teen pregnancy, and many others. If
adolescents are not personally experiencing that which they are reading, they will
vicariously experience it, thereby gaining empathy for others in similar situations. In his
article "Lessons and Lives: Why Young Adult Literature Matters," Gary Salvner (2001)

shares anecdotes of students who have connected personally to various young adult novels, and he concludes that literature has the power to change people (p. 7). Young adult literature has the power to change young adults because "contemporary young adult literature reflects the complexity of the society out of which it is produced; its themes are of importance to young adults, and the issues with which the characters wrestle are of significance in our ever-changing world" (Stover, 1996, p. 6). Thus, young adults are able to connect with and live vicariously through young adult literature because it relates directly to them, and this literature can have a profound impact on them because of the issues presented.

Young adult literature is valuable not only as stories that adolescents can connect to, but also as literature. It is just as varied as adult literature in terms of genres. Adolescents can find books written for them in the areas of romance, fantasy, science fiction, adventure, mystery, and many others. Young adult literature also varies in genres of writing, such as short stories, plays, poems, novels written in verse form, and graphic novels. Young adult literature "deals with many universal themes, including the eternal questions Who am I? and Where do I fit in?" (Santoli & Wagner, 2004, p. 68). Furthermore, the writing quality of most young adult literature equals or exceeds that of adult literature: "YA literature . . . can be judged using the same literary standards we would apply to any piece of writing" (Christenbury, 2000, p. 154).

Though there are many reasons to include young adult literature in middle school and high school classrooms, most importantly, young adult literature keeps students reading (Christenbury, 2000; Santoli & Wagner, 2004). In "It's the THAT, Teacher,"

Ted Hipple (1997) explains the THAT to be more important than the WHAT of reading (p. 15). He believes THAT it is more important to produce lifelong readers than it is to be concerned about WHAT they are reading. He maintains that since young adults will read young adult literature, this is what they should be encouraged to read.

Because many adolescents choose to read young adult literature and since students choose texts based on their interests (Davila & Patrick, 2010; Poerschke, 2005), young adult literature has the potential to influence students' situational interest. It is for these reasons that I rely on young adult texts to determine features that lead to situational interest for secondary students (see the next chapter for a thorough explanation of my text selection process and a description of the texts included in my study).

Conclusion

The theoretical perspectives that guide my work are socio-cognitive theory and transactional theory. Both socio-cognitive theory and transactional theory stress that people have a role in interacting with and producing their environment, but the theories approach this from different foci. Socio-cognitive theory analyzes "human motivation, thought, and action" (Bandura, 1986, p. xi), while transactional theory analyzes literature and interpretation (Leitch, 2001; Rosenblatt, 2003). Despite their different foci, both theories are concerned with attributes of the reader and attributes of the text that lead to engaged reading (Guthrie, 2004; Guthrie & Wigfield, 2000; Rosenblatt 1965/1995; 1978/1994).

Within the discussion of engaged reading, my study focuses on interest, specifically text-based interest. Research on text-based interest suggests that the

properties of texts that make them interesting to most readers are vividness, coherence,

and life themes (Schraw & Lehman, 2001). However, these socio-cognitive researchers

of text-based interest tend to either completely leave out literary theorists, including

Rosenblatt, or give them cursory attention. Rosenblatt (1978/1994), too, is concerned

with interest, the "reader's need to live through to some resolution of the tensions,

questions, curiosity or conflicts aroused by the text" (pp. 54-55). And literary theorists

like Rosenblatt focus on other features of texts, such as plot, character, theme, that add to

and/or further explain the socio-cognitivists' properties of text that make them

interesting. Therefore, both theoretical perspectives are necessary to my study focused

on features of young adult fiction texts that make them interesting to their intended

audience. The methods I used to conduct this study are described in the next chapter.

Chapter Three: Methods

The purpose of this study is to develop a list of criteria for secondary English teachers to consult when choosing texts for their students. Teachers wanting to engage their students with texts think about issues such as their instructional practices, the classroom environment they create, and the texts they choose for their students. Typically, however, secondary English teachers have limited options from which to choose to use as whole-class texts. As they examine the departmental closet of books, how do they know which texts are most likely to engage their students? One possibility is to choose a text that is most likely to be of interest to the majority of their students. To that end, my research study addresses the following questions:

A. What features of young adult narrative fiction texts make them interesting to their intended audience?

    1. What literary features do texts enjoyed by young adult readers have in common?

    2. How might traditional literary analysis and analysis using socio-cognitive descriptions of interesting texts work together to create a more robust model of interesting texts?

Grounded in the theoretical perspectives of socio-cognitive theory and transactional theory, this study used textual analysis, including qualitative content analysis and literary analysis, to examine texts from the International Reading Association's Young Adults' Choices Reading List for the purpose of identifying and

defining textual features that build secondary students' engagement with texts by appealing to their situational interest.

To describe the methods I employed for this dissertation study, I include the following sections in this chapter: Background and Role of Researcher, in which I introduce myself and explain how I influenced the research process; Sampling Procedures to Select Target Texts, in which I describe my process of text selection and the texts that became my data; and Analyses in which I describe the text content analysis and literary analysis I used.

Background and Role of Researcher

"We are pleading, rather, for empirical studies to be planned (if one really wishes to undertake them) and, in that sense, to be conducted in an 'orderly' manner, so that explicit assumptions (not necessarily derived from major theories) form the starting point for all data-collection and that they can be transformed into transparent research operations. Innovations arise by combining or modifying elements of already existing theories. If one seeks to make new assumptions (discoveries) on the basis of observations, then that presupposes that there are assumptions" (Titscher, Meyer, Wodak, & Vetter, 2000, p. 13).

The purpose of this section is to highlight characteristics about myself, as a researcher, teacher, and reader, that I believe influenced how I conducted my study, from conceptualization to conclusions. I focus most heavily on what I brought to the reading and analyses of the texts. I aim to make my assumptions explicit, as it is defined in the above quote, wanting my research process to be transparent so that others can implement and critique it from their own perspectives with their own assumptions made explicit.

Information about me that influences who I am as a researcher, teacher, and reader includes my status as a white, middle-class, educated, married woman in my 30s. I am the first person in my immediate family (by which I mean my husband and children

as well as my parents and siblings) to pursue education beyond a bachelor's degree, but others in my extended family have (my uncle has a Ph.D., my Aunt has a M.A., one of my cousins just completed his Ph.D.). Education, which includes learning at school, at home, on the job, via a religious institution, is important to me; but I particularly value reading for both information and entertainment.

Researcher

Though I did conduct research before becoming a Ph.D. student, engaging in action research during student teaching and textual analysis for my master's thesis (Nichols, 2007), my understanding of the purposes for and methods of conducting research grew exponentially during my education at the University of Minnesota. Through coursework and participation in various research projects, I understand that both quantitative and qualitative research are beneficial, as different methods are needed to answer different types of questions (Cohen, Manion, & Morrison, 2000).

As a pragmatist (Dillon, O'Brien, & Heilman, 2004) who leans toward qualitative research, I care about finding the best method to answer the research question. I believe the researcher heavily influences the research process. And I rely on rich description for evidence. For this study, my analyses of texts are most informed by literature on literary devices/literary analysis and literature on interesting texts/content analysis. Literature on reading preferences also informs my analyses.

Teacher

As a high school English teacher, I became addicted to young adult literature. We had fifteen minutes of sustained silent reading (SSR) in my 9th grade English classes, and

to model SSR, I read what my students were reading. Though I had little control over which texts to choose for my "regular" 9th grade English classes, the curriculum for Basic English (for students not yet ready for 9th grade English – mostly freshmen and sophomores) was left up to me. With the opportunity to revise/develop curriculum the summer after my first year of teaching, I chose young adult novels to form the basis of my curriculum for Basic English. To choose these texts, which would be included in the curriculum for the next seven years, I relied on suggestions from other teachers and librarians. My assumption was that young adult texts, since they are written specifically for young adults, would engage my students in ways classic literature had not. However, some of my students still seemed uninterested in reading these young adult texts that I chose in an effort to engage them. Questions about how to engage students with texts, specifically related to types of texts to teach, have fueled my interest in conducting this study.

Reader

I have always been a reader. My mom read to me, modeled reading, and took me to the library regularly. My dad also modeled reading, though my observations of him reading occurred after I left elementary school, I think because he worked late when I was younger. I spent time late at night and on the weekends through high school getting lost in books I chose to read. Once I started college, through teaching, and today, I read for fun over holidays and listen to books on tape for fun while I drive and when I work out.

Until recently, I most enjoyed reading contemporary realistic fiction. Now I also enjoy fantasy and science fiction. Though I do read adult novels, young adult fiction still makes up the bulk of my reading material. While I appreciate much about the craft of writing and reading a "well-written" novel, it is most important to me to connect to the characters. If I have difficulty connecting to the characters, I have difficulty enjoying the book. When I approach fiction, I am quite comfortable suspending my disbelief and connecting to characters very different from me.

Overall, I approached each text in my study as a researcher, thinking about how to analyze the texts and why young adults would choose each text as one of their favorites; as a teacher, thinking about how to teach the text; as an informed reader, familiar with socio-cognitive ideas of reading and transactional ideas of reading, and with ideas of how texts work (narrative fiction – literary devices, etc.); and as someone who reads for fun and expects to enjoy reading.

Sampling Procedures to Select Target Texts

To address the question *What features of young adult narrative fiction texts make them interesting to their intended audience?* my data are narrative fiction texts from the Young Adults' Choices Reading List (2015). These lists (one list per year since 1987) are chosen by approximately 4,500 students in grades 7 through 12 from five regions across the United States. Since students choose texts based upon their interests (Davila & Patrick, 2010; Poerschke, 2005), the Young Adults' Choices Reading List provides the perfect fit for exploring textual features that lead to situational interest.

To gather more information about the Young Adults' Choices Reading List than what is available on the International Reading Association's website, I interviewed a former team leader and current committee member, Aimee Rogers (personal communication, December 8, 2010). She explained that each region has one or two team leaders in charge of contacting teachers and librarians who work with 7th-12th graders to agree to distribute books and ballots to students. The young adult books students review are sent to the International Reading Association by multiple United States publishing companies, and then five copies of each title are forwarded to each region and shared among the participants across schools and libraries. The goal is for at least ten students in each region to read each title.

The students participating vary by site according to who is distributing the titles and how. Some teachers have all of their students read the books and others run a voluntary reading program before or after school. Librarians may have the books and ballots available for interested readers to read on their own or may include the books in their book clubs.

After students read the books, they are given a ballot (see Appendix A) that asks them to check one of the following: "I really enjoyed the book!"; "The book was OK."; or "I disliked the book." The ballot also includes a space for optional comments (sample ballot provided by the Executive Division of the International Reading Association; Mary Cash, personal communication, March 31, 2010). The tallies from each region are sent to the Young Adults' Choices committee, and the chair and co-chair determine the Reading List for that year based upon "a complicated formula of number of votes and the ratings"

(Aimee Rogers, personal communication, August 28, 2011). Each book must be read by

at least 50 students to be considered for inclusion on the Reading List (Aimee Rogers,

personal communication, January 24, 2011).

Text Selection

To select a purposeful sample (Patton, 2002) of narrative fiction texts from the

Young Adults' Choices Reading List, I identified trends across all texts included on the

2002 through 2012 lists. In analyzing the Best Books for Young Adults lists from 1997 to

2006, Koelling (2007) notes, "It [teen literature] keeps closer pace with trends in teen life

and provides an ever-clearer reflection of the needs, interests, and overall characteristics

of its intended readership" (p. 75). Because of this assessment of literature for teens, I

focused on texts from the most recent decade (2002-2012) of the Young Adults' Choices

Reading List.

Process of trending the Young Adults' Choices List 2002-2012. Starting with

the 2012 list, for each year I first distinguished between nonfiction and fiction, and then

between narrative fiction and non-narrative fiction (books of poetry or short stories or, in

one case, a fictional encyclopedia). I did this by reading the summary for each book

provided on the list; looking up each book in the *Horn Book Guide* and reading that

summary/review; and then, for those books not found in the *Horn Book Guide*, looking

them up in the *School Library Journal* or another online resource (e.g. the author's

website) that included a summary/review of the book. During my initial categorization of

the books, I noted which books I had previously read as my knowledge of those books

influenced how I was categorizing them – I was relying on my background knowledge as well as on the summaries.

Once I had determined which books were narrative fiction, I relied on the summaries to categorize them by genre (contemporary realistic, historical, fantasy, science fiction) and format (traditional, graphic novel, free verse, illustrated novel, journal, letter). I also noted whether the protagonist was male or female, if the novel included multiple perspectives, was part of a series, and/or was a retelling (typically of a fairy tale or play). Finally, I noted any details about the characters (for instance, the ethnicity, abilities, type of family, and/or non-human characteristics), themes, and topics.

During this process of categorization, I went back through the initial lists more than once as my categories developed. For the first two lists (I started with 2012 and worked backwards), the categories included genre, format, sex of the protagonist, information about the characters, themes, and topics. After working through the third list (2010), I realized I needed to go back and add more details related to characters, particularly their ethnicity and ability. This is also when I noted which novels included multiple perspectives, and which novels belonged to series. During my categorization of the 2009 narrative fiction texts, I noticed a few of the novels were retellings of fairy tales or plays. Therefore, I worked back through the lists to note the retellings. By the 2008 list, my categories were established. My findings from trending the 2002-2012 Young Adults' Choices Reading List are described in the next chapter.

My texts. By categorizing each list from 2002 to 2012, it became clear that the texts from the most recent list (2012) are similar in genre, types of characters, topics, and

themes to the texts on the 2002 to 2011 lists, and, therefore, are representative of the last decade of texts that appear on the Young Adults' Choices Reading List. Focusing on the most recent list for my texts gave me a "fresh" reading of all texts in my study as I had not previously read any of the texts on the 2012 list.

As a final step in text selection, I relied on the *Horn Book Guide* to determine the quality of narrative fiction texts on the 2012 list (Horn Book, 2014). The *Horn Book Guide* is a reference resource published by the *Horn Book Magazine*, one of the most distinguished journals in the field of children's and young adult literature, and so worth considering for reviews of texts, particularly as they relate to quality of writing. Knowing that middle and high school English teachers are unlikely to include texts in their curriculum that are not considered of high quality, only texts given a one or two rating by the *Horn Book Guide* were included in my sample. Therefore, my sample of narrative fiction texts includes all eight texts from the 2012 Young Adults' Choices Reading List that were rated as a one or two in the *Horn Book Guide*:

> *Ashfall* by Mike Mullin (2) – science fiction, male protagonist, survival, traditional
>
> *Between* by Jessica Warman (2) – fantasy, female, already dead, traditional
>
> *Exposed* by Kimberly Marcus (2) – contemporary realistic, female, rape, narrative in free verse
>
> *Flip* by Martyn Bedford (2) – fantasy, male, switching bodies, traditional
>
> *The Near Witch* by Victoria Schwab (2) – fantasy, female, mystery – missing children, traditional

Small as an Elephant by Jennifer Richard Jacobson (2) – contemporary realistic,

male, abandoned by mother, traditional

The Throne of Fire by Rick Riordan (2) – fantasy, multiple perspectives,

mythology, second book of series, traditional

What Happened to Goodbye by Sarah Dessen (2) – contemporary realistic,

female, divorce, traditional

This sample is representative of the lists in genre, as it includes four fantasy, three

contemporary realistic, and one science fiction. It also includes one novel of alternate

format (free verse); and one novel that is both part of a series and written with multiple

perspectives. Protagonists included are four female and three male; the multiple

perspectives novel switches between one male and one female; and one protagonist is a

ghost. Topics vary and include survival, rape, divorce, abandonment, switching bodies,

solving mysteries. Themes, as well as topics and characters, will be discussed in detail in

the next chapter.

Analyses

To analyze these eight narrative fiction texts from the 2012 Young Adults'

Choices Reading List to determine textual features of interest, I employed qualitative

content analysis and literary analysis. Both analyses were necessary because socio-

cognitive theory, a learning theory, provides the descriptions of interesting texts used as

my initial coding categories for content analysis; and transactional theory, a literary

theory, suggests literary analysis to look at the specific features of narrative fiction.

Together, these analyses provide a thorough look at textual features of narrative fiction

texts that have the potential to lead to situational interest.

Content Analysis

Content analysis is a flexible research method that can be qualitative, quantitative, or both (Hsieh & Shannon, 2005; White & Marsh, 2006). It involves a "systematic reading of a body of texts, images, and symbolic matter" (Krippendorff, 2004, p. 3). I am more interested in qualitative content analysis as it "goes beyond merely counting words to examining language intensely for the purpose of classifying large amounts of text into an efficient number of categories that represent similar meanings" (Hsieh & Shannon, 2005, p. 1278).

Though many articles utilizing qualitative content analysis do not explain their methods (Beach et al. 2009; Harvey & Dowd, 1993; Knight, 2005; Trousdale, 1990), Hsieh and Shannon (2005) describe directed content analysis as an approach in which researchers use "existing theory or prior research" to identify "key concepts or variables as initial coding categories" (p. 1281). To create my initial coding categories, I examined prior research on interesting texts.

A series of studies have been conducted to determine what properties of texts make them interesting to most readers. The majority of these studies have utilized nonfiction texts (Schraw & Lehman, 2001), but one study used a literary text (Schraw, 1997). Schraw (1997) found that the same properties that applied to nonfiction texts also applied to literary texts. The findings of these studies of both nonfiction and fiction suggest that the criteria can be used to determine whether a text is likely to be of interest to a majority of readers (assuming the text is developmentally appropriate and within the

reader's range of ability). These criteria comprised my initial coding categories for qualitative content analysis:

Coherence: well organized and easy to follow (Schraw and Lehman, 2001); information included fits into the text's overall structure (Wade, Buxton, & Kelly, 1999); clarity (Schraw, Bruning, & Svoboda, 1995; Wade, 1992) ; "A principle demanding that the parts of any composition be so arranged that the meaning of the whole may be immediately clear and intelligible" (Harmon & Holman, 2009, p. 109).

Vividness: "text segments that stand out because they create suspense, surprise, or are otherwise engaging" (Schraw & Lehman, 2001, p. 31); active voice, imagery, concrete examples, "vivid or unusual words" (Wade, Buxton, & Kelly, 1999, p. 199); "words that arouse vivid imagery and … say the unexpected" (Schallert & Reed, 1997, p. 73)

Life themes: death, danger, sex, power (Schallert & Reed, 1997); death, danger, chaos, destruction, disease, injury, power, money, sex, and romance (Wade, 1992)

Literary Analysis

Literary analysis focuses on the literary structures in texts, such as plot, setting, characterization, theme, style, tone, and point of view (Galda, Ash, & Cullinan, 2000; Gates & Mark, 2006; Wickens, 2009). Those conducting literary analyses of children's and young adult literature (Chance, 1999; Koss, 2008; May, 1995) suggest using Lukens'

definitions of literary terms since her definitions are widely accepted, and she thoroughly

explains each term:

Character – "each of the living beings in a story" (Lukens, 2007, p. 76)

Flat – not fully developed; or round – fully developed

Dynamic – changes throughout the story; or static – does not change

Plot – sequence of events

Narrative order – chronological; alternating past and present; flashbacks

Types of conflict – person-against-self; person-against-person; person-against society; person-against-nature

Types of plot – progressive – climax followed by resolution; episodic – incidents linked together by characters or theme

Theme – main idea

Setting – the time and place

Types of settings – integral – character, plot, or theme influenced by time and place; backdrop – time and place are not specific (could be any forest or any street)

Functions of setting – clarifies conflict; as antagonist; illuminates character; affects mood; as symbol

Point of View – "who sees and tells about the action" (p. 169)

First-person – narrator is "I"

Omniscient - 3rd person; narrator is all-knowing

Limited omniscient – 3rd person; all-knowing about one or a few characters but not all

Objective (dramatic) – 3rd person – view through a camera (not inside any character's mind)

Style – choice and arrangement of words

Devices of style – connotation; imagery; figurative language; hyperbole; understatement; allusion; symbol; puns and wordplay

Devices of sound – onomatopoeia; alliteration; assonance; consonance; rhythm

Tone – "the author's *attitude* toward story and readers" as portrayed through word choice (Lukens, 2007, p. 212)

Lukens' (2007) definitions of literary devices were applied to the texts in my study to determine commonalities across texts. My assumption was that if the majority of texts included a certain type of element, this could be an important property of narrative fiction texts that lead to interest. I also assumed that analyzing for literary devices would help clarify the definitions for coherence, vividness, and life themes described in the content analysis section above.

Analysis Protocol

Focusing on the interesting text criteria and literary terms, as well as research about the role of the author and preferences of young adults, I developed an analysis protocol that guided my analysis of each text (see Appendix B; also, see Appendix C for my Analysis Protocol Development Chart).

Procedures and Data Sources

For each text I developed three documents: the analysis protocol, which included notes that pertained to my reading as a reader and my reading as a researcher (see Appendix D); my memo, which included questions and explanations related to my processes (see Appendix E); and the write-up, which included my overall thoughts as an informal essay of both my reading as a reader and my reading as a researcher (see Appendix F). These documents will be further discussed as I explain my specific

procedures of reading as a reader and reading as a researcher in the sections that follow.

First, though, I have included summaries of my sample of narrative fiction texts.

Text summaries. To provide context for the excerpts from my analysis

documents that I include as evidence of my procedures for reading as a reader and

reading as a researcher, see the summaries of my eight target texts below. I have listed

them in the order in which I analyzed them (i.e. *Exposed* was the first text that I analyzed

and *The Near Witch* was the last).

Exposed by Kimberly Marcus: Liz's life is turned upside down when her best

friend Kate accuses her brother of rape. Who should Liz believe? Liz's family rallies

around her brother, but, as difficult as it is to think of her brother as a rapist, she can't

imagine that her best friend would lie to her. Liz learns more about herself and about the

importance of perspective as she struggles through this difficult situation.

Flip by Martyn Bedford: Alex wakes up one day in a body that isn't his

surrounded by people he doesn't know. These people believe that he is Philip, and he

cannot convince them otherwise. While learning to live in Philip's body, Alex seeks

answers that can explain how and why he became Philip; and whether he can get back

into his own body.

Ashfall by Mike Mullin: Home alone one weekend in Cedar Falls, IA, Alex

experiences the eruption of the supervolcano. He sets out to reunite with his family who

has traveled to visit his aunt and uncle in Illinois. During his journey Alex encounters

humanity at its worst and best as all try to survive this natural disaster.

Between by Jessica Warman: Liz, popular and rich, realizes she must be dead when she sees her body floating face down next to her father's boat. Moments later she meets the ghost of Alex, an unpopular boy from school who died months earlier. Together they solve the mysteries surrounding Liz's death and learn the dangers of judging people without knowing them.

What Happened to Goodbye by Sarah Dessen: Mclean has moved to yet another new town with her dad; she doesn't want to live with her mom because she blames her mom for her parents' divorce. While Mclean has formed a plan for reinventing herself in this new town, she can't help but be herself (whoever that is) when she's around neighbor and love interest Dave. In the context of her relationships with Dave and with her parents, Mclean starts to figure out and be comfortable with her identity.

The Throne of Fire by Rick Riordan: Carter and Sadie, brother and sister magicians, must save the world! They need to find three scrolls that have been scattered across the Earth as reading from these scrolls will wake the Egyptian God Ra, their only hope in defeating the Forces of Chaos. Carter's and Sadie's quest is fraught with danger as they battle gods and magicians who don't want them to succeed in waking Ra.

Small as an Elephant by Jennifer Richard Jacobson: On a camping trip with his mother during his summer vacation, 11-year-old Jack wakes up in his tent to find that his mother has disappeared. As he determines his next steps, which include searching for his mother and then trying to get home on his own, he remembers other instances of being left by his mother. Throughout his journey Jack struggles between knowing he needs help but also wanting to protect his mentally ill mother.

The Near Witch by Victoria Schwab: In the town of Near everyone knows everyone else, and the two witches who live there are tolerated. Then a stranger, another witch, comes to town; the children of Near start disappearing without a trace; and everything changes. Lexi, more like her dead father than like the rest of the town, befriends the stranger. Together they search for the missing children, both to protect Lexi's little sister from becoming the next victim and to exonerate the witches of Near.

Reading as a reader. For each text I began with my reading as a reader. This meant that I captured my responses to the text while reading, like a think-aloud but either writing in the margins of the texts or typing in a word document (see Appendix D). The theoretical perspectives that guide my study also guided my reading as a reader. From the transactional theory perspective, I took notes related to where I was on the efferent/aesthetic continuum. From the socio-cognitive theory perspective, I took notes when applicable about my motivations, conceptual knowledge, strategies, and interest. For example, during my first reading of *Between*, I wrote,

> I have read to p. 45 and am taking notes in the margins. The first chapter introduces me to the location and narrator. She's made some choices I'm not a fan of – drinking and drugs (p. 2) – but has lost her mother (p. 4) and so I feel sorry for her. I'm in from the first chapter – the narrator is someone I want to know more about, and at the end of the first chapter I find out she's dead. How did this happen and why is she still around if she's dead? (notes, April 1, 2013)

Being "in" for me means having an aesthetic response to the text. I am not only reading for information (efferent) but also reading because I care about the narrator and what

happened to her (aesthetic). The following notes taken during my first reading of *The Throne of Fire* illustrate comments related to the strategies I was using and my conceptual knowledge related to the content of the book:

> I've read to p. 209. At this point I understand that if you've descended from the pharaohs, you can be a magician. And gods can inhabit your body. Or maybe they can share your body; but they can inhabit anyone's body (including those not descended from pharaohs)? I'm finding out more about how the dreams work, in terms of providing information/vision into the Duat; and about how the teleporting works, which makes sense for fast travel anywhere. I feel that I'm missing something by way of background knowledge in not having read the first book and in not knowing much, if anything, about Egyptian mythology. (notes, December 21, 2013)

Reading each text as a reader first allowed me to become familiar with the overall story and see how everything fit together before reading as a researcher where I took everything apart. Capturing my response as a reader in writing helped me and will help my readers to see how I influence the analysis.

Reading as a researcher. After my initial reading of a text, I read with the interesting text criteria and literary terms in mind. The specific procedures I used were guided by Hsieh and Shannon (2005), Krippendorff (2004), and White and Marsh (2006). As Hsieh and Shannon (2005) suggest, previous research related to interesting texts and the literary terms with their definitions provided my initial coding categories. As I approached my data (narrative fiction texts), I marked "key phrases and text segments

that correspond[ed] to [the initial coding categories], [noted] others that seem[ed] important but [were] unexpected, [saw] similarities in expressing the same concept, and [continued] iteratively to compare the categories and constructs that emerge[d] through this process with other data and re-reading of the same documents" (White & Marsh, 2006, p. 37). Coding and analysis occurred simultaneously in that the categories I noted in the first text influenced my reading of the second text, and so on. However, I looked at each text as its own case (Merriam, 2009). For example, as I stated in my memo:

> At this point I have read *Exposed* as a reader with notes and have started the
> analysis. I have also read *Flip* as a reader with notes but have not started the
> analysis. While reading *Flip* I did some comparing with *Exposed* – I will not
> delete these notes but am noting here that those notes aren't important since the
> intention is not to compare but to read each book as a reader for that book. The
> ultimate goal is to get beyond my reading of the novels to see what's engaging for
> students, but I may see disconnect (for example, I may find the book didactic, but
> I know students chose the book as one they liked so what else is going on that
> makes the book interesting?) between my reading and what I would expect; this
> can be a point of interest to pursue in terms of the ultimate goal of my study –
> What makes a text interesting to its intended audience? (notes, December 2,
> 2012)

Therefore, the reading and analysis of each text stood alone in the sense that I tried not to think about liking one novel more than another or comparing the characterization of the protagonist of one text to another. Instead, each novel was analyzed for itself as a case;

and then the cases were compared for similarities in interesting text criteria and literary

terms across cases (Merriam, 2009). But I did think about the meaning of, for example,

vividness in one text compared to vividness in another text. I wanted to be consistent in

my use of the categories so that, in the end, I was comparing the same thing across texts

when, for example, I looked at vividness. Notes from my memo illustrate this process:

> Going through *Exposed*. I've noticed that plot and setting are related for this text,
>
> but setting doesn't seem to matter that much; Style and Vividness are related; and
>
> Coherence is part of plot but also could stand alone/might have other
>
> characteristics – I NEED TO THINK ABOUT THIS FURTHER. (notes, January
>
> 2, 2013)
>
> I am analyzing *Ashfall*! Style and Vividness still seem the same – need to keep
>
> thinking about this. So far, coherence relates to plot and character. (notes, June
>
> 6, 2013)
>
> After finishing analysis of *Near Witch* - I've been thinking a bit about my use of
>
> Vividness to indicate suspense (Plot). The interesting text criteria refer to "text
>
> segments that stand out because they create suspense, surprise, or are otherwise
>
> engaging" (Schraw & Lehman, 2001, p. 31). What are meant by "text segments"?
>
> If text segments are on the level of language, then I think Vividness relates to
>
> Style but not Plot. If text segments are on the level of events then Vividness can
>
> relate to Plot, too. (notes, February 4, 2014)

As shown above, with each reading of each text, the categories were further explained

and defined with exemplars from the texts included to illustrate each category. This was

a constant comparative approach of re-reading and re-coding until I was satisfied with my categories (Glaser & Strauss, 1967).

 My outside reader. Because I wanted my study to be credible and reliable (Cohen, Manion, & Morrison, 2000), my analytic process included more than just me and the texts. A former colleague of mine, Sara Maday Johnson, read all eight texts and my write-ups of the analysis of each text as a credibility check (Merriam, 2009). She provided feedback after reading the texts and my write-ups, sometimes influencing my process and, overall, validating my readings of the texts.

 Sara is a former high school English teacher and voracious reader. She has a B.S. in English Education and a M.A. in Counseling. She currently works as a supervisor of academic advisors of graduate students. Sara and I met in 2006 when we were both attending workshops for teachers of college writing. She has heard much about my process of working through the Ph.D. program and knows more than most about my dissertation study. When I first mentioned that I would be reading young adult novels for my dissertation, Sara said she would love to read them with me. Little did she know at the time what an essential role she would play in my study.

 The role of my reader became clear to me during my pilot study and analysis of the first novel for my dissertation study. As I stated in my memo during my pilot study:

> I think I've figured out one way that my outside reader will be helpful – reading
> my notes in each category to see if my interpretations make sense. Clearly, I'm
> interpreting the text in certain ways to even include the various quotes/ideas in
> each category. Does another reader agree with what I'm doing? If not, what

happens? I'm assuming we discuss this and come to some kind of agreement of

the meaning of the category and what kind of information belongs. Then it's

interpretation, again, to discuss the significance of that category – what it affords

the author and reader. (notes, February 13, 2012)

After the pilot study, I had an idea of my reader's role, but this was further defined with

the help of one of my advisors, Lee Galda. Lee read the first novel of my dissertation

study, *Exposed*, and shared her reading of the novel with me. During that conversation,

we compared our reactions to the text, having a discussion that would be the envy of any

book club lover and English literature teacher. She also read all of my notes on the text

so that she could see my process. She commented on my categories of analysis,

indicating that my process was logical and the textual examples were illustrative of the

categories. She also helped me to see the value of the write-up as another document to

analyze. It was during this conversation that Lee and I determined that Sara would give

me feedback on my write-up of each text – where she agreed with my analysis, where she

disagreed, and what she would add to it.

Sara and I began our discussion of the novels after I had completed analysis of

both *Exposed* and *Flip*. Though Sara moved out of state upon completion of her M.A.,

my receipt of the 2012 Robert Schreiner Reading Fellowship, awarded by the Literacy

Program Area in the Curriculum and Instruction Department of the College of Education

and Human Development at the University of Minnesota, provided me with the necessary

funds to visit Sara and talk to her in person about the two novels. We started with

Exposed: first, Sara and I discussed her reading of the novel so that I could capture a bit

about her perceptions and think about how they were similar to/ different from mine. I

took notes and voice-recorded our conversation. Then I handed her a copy of my write-

up for *Exposed* and she read through that. I anticipated that she would read it through

and then we would discuss it, but she commented on it as she was reading, so I started the

voice-recording part way through this process. Her comments often related to further

explanations of what she thought of the novel, but she also commented on parts of the

write-up that she agreed with and suggested things that I might want to think about

further. I typed these conversations at the end of my write-up document for the novel

(see Appendix F), referring to my notes and the voice recording as I typed. We followed

the same process for *Flip*, and I voice-recorded both conversations – Sara's perceptions

of the novel and then Sara's response to reading my write-up of the novel. I also typed

these conversations at the end of my write-up document for the novel. Notes from my

memo illustrate Sara's influence on my thinking about both my process and my analysis:

> After meeting with Sara over the weekend, I realized that I should record my
>
> assumptions/ perceptions/ relevant identity before reading each book (at least,
>
> anything that's different from what I already recorded for the pilot study) and then
>
> each subsequent book. I did this a little bit at the beginning of my notes as a
>
> reader for both *Exposed* and *Flip*, but I'll go back to write a few relevant notes. I
>
> don't think I did this for *Ashfall*, so I'll go back and record notes for this book,
>
> too. For the remaining books, I plan to do this before I begin reading (or, as is the
>
> case with *Between*, which I've started, I'll do this before I continue reading)…

Something I want to keep thinking about, and that Sara and I discussed: ARE

STYLE AND VIVIDNESS THE SAME? Vividness might be broader than

style… (notes, March 22, 2013)

Because Sara and I did not have the opportunity to discuss the remaining novels

in person, we followed a slightly different process. Sara and I still discussed the novels

before she read my notes. We had phone conversations, and I took notes during the

conversations. I typed these notes at the end of the write-up document of each novel.

After our phone conversations, I emailed my write-ups to Sara and she typed comments

in response directly on the document for *Ashfall* and in the body of the email for the

remaining novels (see Appendix F). I copied Sara's comments from the body of the

email to the write-up so that this document for each novel includes Sara's thoughts before

reading the write-up and after reading the write-up.

As with the first two novels, Sara's comments on the remaining novels influenced

both my process and my analysis. For example, from my memo,

I went over the notes that Sara sent me. I had asked her to look across the first

three novel write-ups and let me know if I was being inconsistent in how I was

writing about the texts. The comments that she made speak more to intentional

differences (ways I meant to be different in writing about the novels/ways that I

saw as different), so that's positive for me…

One thing she did mention that I want to keep thinking about – what am I

meaning by tone? Sara sees more in the tone of the novels than I do (she pointed

out tone in *Flip* both in our conversation of her response and when she responded in writing to the write-up). (notes, September 18, 2013)

Sara's comments made me feel comfortable that my write-up documents were doing what they needed to do for each novel; and she gave me something to think about in terms of my analysis of tone. Another example of Sara's influence in my study comes from her feedback during my analysis of the last novel:

> After reviewing setting in Lukens (2007), I realize that the setting in *The Near Witch* is integral. I also started thinking about the other novels that I've analyzed and am going back through to see how I described setting for each one. I looked at *Ashfall* first because that's one that I think should be integral – I wrote that it's backdrop, so I added a note in the margin to indicate that I'm changing my mind. – I NEED TO MENTION THIS TO SARA TO SEE IF SHE AGREES/DISAGREES. After skimming through the rest of my write-ups, I think *Ashfall* is the only change. I spent a bit more time looking through my notes for *Small as an Elephant* because the author did spend some time describing the various locations. But I still think the setting wasn't integral to Jack's struggles. I just decided I needed to add Style/Vividness (because the two are conflated) to Setting as I write up *The Near Witch* because the author uses lots of description for the moor. Should this have been the case with *Ashfall*, too? I just checked my analysis notes for *Ashfall*, and I don't think I need to add Style to Setting. The author did use some description for the changed sunrise and the ash-covered fields, but I don't think enough to warrant adding Style to Setting. MAYBE I

SHOULD BRIEFLY REVIEW THE NOVEL, THOUGH? – Sara did say that she

could picture everything, so maybe my dislike of the book stopped me from being

able to do the same (**influence of my reader**). I WILL GO BACK TO THE

BOOK TO SEE IF I SHOULD ADD STYLE TO SETTING FOR *ASHFALL*. I'll

add anything I find to my notes in the margin of the write-up. (notes, February 2,

2014)

Even though I did not remember the descriptions of the setting in *Ashfall* being

particularly stylistic, because Sara had mentioned that she could still picture events from

the novel after reading it, I skimmed the novel (not just my notes) to check my previous

conclusions.

Overall, our process was useful. Having Sara's perceptions of the novels before

she read my notes showed, primarily, the differences between our readings. Sara's

responses to my analysis indicate that a reader who has a different reading than I of a text

understands and agrees with my analysis of the text, providing credibility to my study.

Additionally, she helped me think further about my process and analysis, strengthening

my methods and validating my findings.

Conclusion

To answer the primary research question *What features of young adult narrative*

fiction texts make them interesting to their intended audience?, I designed a study relying

on textual analysis including qualitative content analysis and literary analysis. This study

is grounded in socio-cognitive theory and transactional theory; and uses texts from the

Young Adults' Choices List, texts that students in grades seven through twelve indicated they enjoyed reading.

      The first step of my study was to select texts from the International Reading Association's Young Adults' Choices List. To that end I trended the narrative fiction texts from the last decade of the List and found that the 2012 list is representative of the last decade of texts. The texts that served as the data for my study are the eight narrative fiction texts from the 2012 Young Adults' Choices that were also rated as high in writing quality by the *Horn Book Guide*.

      During analysis I read each text at least twice: the first time as a reader, tracking my responses to the text and strategies I was using while reading; the second time as a researcher, applying content analysis and literary analysis. My analysis of each text is captured on three documents: the analysis protocol that I developed, my memo about my process, and the write-up of my analysis. For purposes of credibility, my outside reader Sarah Maday Johnson read each text and my write-up of each text. She provided feedback that strengthened my process and my analysis and, ultimately, my findings, which are discussed in the next chapter.

Chapter Four: Findings

As I seek to answer the overall question of my study, *What features of young adult narrative fiction texts make them interesting to their intended audience?,* in this chapter I present my findings related to my two sub-questions as well as to my trending of the Young Adults' Choices List. Trends from the List provide a surface description of features across these texts that young adults indicated they like reading. To that end, the first section of this chapter includes my findings from trending the 2002-2012 Young Adults' Choices List. In the second section I share my findings to my first sub-question, What literary features do texts enjoyed by young adult readers have in common?, which are based on my literary analysis of the eight target texts. The final section focuses on my second sub-question: How might traditional literary analysis and analysis using socio-cognitive descriptions of interesting texts work together to create a more robust model of interesting texts? The section presents my findings based on both qualitative content analysis and literary analysis of the eight target texts.

Trends Across the 2002-2012 Young Adults' Choices List

As described in Chapter 3, my process of text selection included trending the Young Adults' Choices narrative fiction texts to determine the characteristics of the novels on the List. The following section illustrates my findings by genre, format, series and popular authors, characters, point-of-view: multiple perspectives, and topics and themes. Trending at this level of detail reveals both the meaningful, subtle changes from year to year but perhaps even more powerfully the consistency across years.

Genre

According to the numbers, contemporary realistic fiction was the most popular

genre and fantasy was the second most popular genre until 2011 and 2012 when fantasy

becomes more popular than contemporary realistic fiction (see Table 4.1). This finding

related to genre holds with Koss and Teale's (2009) finding that contemporary realistic

fiction was the most popular genre of fiction in young adult literature as of the 2009

publication of their article. Historical fiction was more present on the earlier lists; after

2005, historical fiction hardly appears. On the other hand, science fiction has risen

slightly in popularity, with anywhere from zero to three on the earlier lists and between

four and six on more recent lists.

Table 4.1: Young Adults' Choices by Genre (*number of narrative fiction texts on that

list out of a total of 30 texts)

	Contemporary Realistic	Fantasy	Science	Historical
2012 (29)*	8	15	6	0
2011 (28)*	10	13	4	1
2010 (27)*	14	9	4	0
2009 (28)*	17	10	1	0
2008 (28)*	17	9	1	1
2007 (29)*	20	6	3	0
2006 (26)*	20	5	0	1
2005 (28)*	13	10	0	5

2004 (29)*	16	7	1	5
2003 (26)*	14	6	2	4
2002 (28)*	12	9	1	6

Format

Since 2002, the most popular formats other than traditional include novel in free verse and journal, both present on the 2002 list (see Table 4.2). In 2007 the illustrated novel was introduced to the list. The 2009 list includes one epistolary novel and one illustrated free verse novel. The first graphic novel appears on the 2011 list; one also appears on the 2012 list. The lists are showing more variety in formats as the years progress. (Recent variety/experimentation in formats noted by Cart, 2011; Galda, Cullinan, & Sipe, 2010; Galda, Sipe, Liang, & Cullinan, 2013; Koelling, 2007; Koss & Teale, 2009.)

Table 4.2: Young Adults' Choices by Format (*number of narrative fiction texts on that list out of a total of 30 texts)

	Traditional	Novel in Free Verse	Journal	Epistolary Novel	Illustrated Novel	Graphic Novel	Illustrated Novel in Free Verse
2012 (29)*	25	3	0	0	0	1	0
2011	25	0	1	0	1	1	0

(28)*							
2010 (27)*	25	1	0	0	1	0	0
2009 (28)*	25	0	0	1	1	0	1
2008 (28)*	24	2	2	0	0	0	0
2007 (29)*	24	2	1	0	2	0	0
2006 (26)*	21	3	2	0	0	0	0
2005 (28)*	28	0	0	0	0	0	0
2004 (29)*	28	0	1	0	0	0	0
2003 (26)*	22	2	2	0	0	0	0
2002 (28)*	23	1	4	0	0	0	0

Series and Popular Authors

Series novels appear on every list from 2002 to 2012, between three and eight per list. Ten authors of series novels appear more than once on the lists. In addition, 28 non-series authors appear on the lists more than once. The authors who appear most often are Meg Cabot (5 times, twice on the 2004 list), Alex Flinn (4 times), Neal Shusterman (4 times), and Scott Westerfeld (4 times).

Characters

Characters tend to be European American (also found by Koss and Teale, 2009) though a handful of texts on the List over the last ten years include Mexican Americans (6) and a few more include African Americans (18). One text (on the 2008 list) includes a Japanese American and Chinese American as star-crossed lovers; one text (on the 2007 list) includes a Serbian American; one text (on the 2004 list) includes a Guatemalan; one text (on the 2003 list) includes a Native American; and one text (on the 2002 list) includes a Chinese American. It is also more common for the protagonist to be female, with most lists including twice as many female as male protagonists; however, there are almost equal numbers of male and female protagonists on the 2009, 2007, and 2005 lists. Characters with disabilities seldom appear (also found by Koss and Teale, 2009); most commonly, novels on these lists include characters with mental illness (9). A few novels do address physical disabilities, including Downs Syndrome (1), autism (1), blindness (1), and cerebral palsy (2). Since 2002 fantastical characters have included witches and wizards, vampires, ghosts, and other mystical creatures.

Point-of-View: Multiple Perspectives

Though the summaries often did not provide enough information for me to determine the point-of-view of each novel, they did mention if the authors used multiple perspectives. The only list that does not include at least one narrative told with multiple perspectives is the 2003 list (see Table 4.3). Otherwise, the lists range from one to five. Clearly, with the second highest number of multiple perspectives novels occurring in 2002, and at least one on each list other than in 2003, their presence is consistent.

Table 4.3: Young Adults' Choices by Point of View: Multiple Perspectives (*number of narrative fiction texts on that list out of a total of 30 texts)

	Multiple Perspectives
2012 (29)*	2
2011 (28)*	3
2010 (27)*	2
2009 (28)*	5
2008 (28)*	3
2007 (29)*	2
2006 (26)*	3
2005 (28)*	1
2004 (29)*	1
2003 (26)*	0
2002 (28)*	4

Topics and Themes

In terms of topics and themes, fantasy novels across the lists focus on fighting evil. Many also include romance; and the characters often struggle with their identities. Contemporary realistic novels are the most varied, including topics such as dealing with rape, gangs, divorce, abuse, suicide to navigating family and friend relationships and dating. Common themes include coming-of-age and identity. Science fiction novels tend to focus on survival. Topics include genetic engineering, rebellion, children ruling the world. The few historical fiction novels from the lists vary in time period, with four covering Nazi Germany; three focusing on Civil Rights; and others dealing with the French Revolution, the Civil War, and specific events such as the 1911 Triangle Shirt Waist Factory fire. Also included is a series of novels, each portraying the life of a famous female in history (Anastasia, Princess Elizabeth, Queen Anne). Finally, one retelling appears in 2005 (a fantasy of a Scandinavian fairy tale), 2009 (a fantasy of *Beauty and the Beast*), 2010 (a fantasy of "The Wild Swans"), and 2012 (a contemporary realistic of *Cyrano de Begerac*).

Conclusion

Trending a recent decade of the Young Adults' Choices List helped me not only purposefully select the texts for my study but also provide a surface description of features that are common across books that young adults indicated they like reading. Overall, the most popular genres are fantasy and contemporary realistic fiction; formats are becoming more varied but traditional is far and away the most common; series novels are popular; characters tend to be European American and of able mind and body; stories

told from the perspective of more than one person occur on every list; and themes often

focus on identity. The next two sections provide a deeper look at some of these features

by addressing the two research sub-questions of my study.

1. **What literary features do texts enjoyed by young adult readers have in**

common?

The following table (Table 4.4) provides an overview of commonalities across

texts as my findings relate to those of two relevant studies: Chance (1999, A portrait of

popularity: An analysis of characteristics of novels from Young Adults' Choices for

1997) for character, plot, point-of-view, theme, and tone; and Diaz-Rubin (1996, Reading

interests of high school students), who found that the most frequently listed topics of

interest to high school students included movies, adventure, horror, mysteries, sports,

murder, crime, humorous, love, fantasy (p. 172).

Table 4.4: Eight Novels Compared to Findings from Related Preference Studies (Chance,

1999; Diaz-Rubin, 1996)

	Protagonist – round	Protagonist-dynamic	Progressive action	First person	Self-aware theme*	Serious tone	Topic(s)
Ashfall	Yes	No	Yes	Yes	No	Yes	Adventure, love
Between	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Identity and…	Yes	Mystery, sports, murder, crime, love
Exposed	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Finding oneself	Yes	Crime, love

					and…		
Flip	Yes	Yes	Yes	No – 3rd person limited	Identity and…	Yes	Murder, love, fantasy
Near Witch	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	No	Yes	Mystery, murder, crime, love, fantasy
Small… Elephant	Yes	Yes	Yes	No – 3rd person limited	Becoming self-aware and…	Yes	Adventure, crime
Throne of Fire	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes (two narrators)	No	Yes	Adventure, love, crime, fantasy
What… Goodbye	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Identity and…	Yes	Love, sports

*I'm saying that identity and finding oneself are close enough to a self-aware theme to call them the same thing. Also, I have identified relationships as a theme for all eight novels.

These findings are further discussed in the following subsections: Character, Point-of-View, Plot, Setting, Style, Tone, and Theme.

Character

Character as a literary feature is concerned with whether the protagonists are round (multifaceted) or flat (one-dimensional) and whether they are dynamic (change

throughout the novel) or static (stay the same) (Lukens, 2007). As indicated in Table 4.4, all eight novels include round protagonists, and all but one novel (*Ashfall*) include dynamic protagonists. To share my examples from each novel, I have grouped them according to the degree the protagonists appear to be dynamic. The subheadings are labeled as follows: Round and dynamic; Round and subtly dynamic; and Round but not dynamic.

Round and dynamic. The majority of novels (five) include protagonists who are both round and dynamic. "Dynamic" as opposed to "subtly dynamic" means that the changes the characters made were obvious throughout the novel.

Exposed. Liz is round and dynamic. The author portrays Liz's interest in photography and other school-related activities, her love for and frustration with her best friend, her love for and confusion about her brother, and her complicated relationships with her parents. Liz is also dynamic, being shown at the beginning of the novel as a confident photographer, sure of her place in her world; in the middle of the novel as unsure, barely photographing, friendless, and unable to talk with her parents; and at the end of the novel as someone beginning again, taking pictures with a new perspective.

Flip. As a character Alex is round and dynamic. Readers learn that before the flip Alex has asthma, plays clarinet and chess, has one best friend, does not have a girlfriend, picks on his little brother, does well in school. During the flip he does enough to get by in school, does not like Philip's friends – too much into sports and not academics, misses his family, feels bad about having picked on his little brother, wants to treat Philip's family well, has a temper and gets into physical fights, is more confident as

Philip. And after the flip he has a new appreciation for life, family, his body, the little

things.

Between. Liz, the main character in the novel and a ghost, is both round and

dynamic. In the first chapter the reader learns that Liz is staying on her parents' boat

with some of her friends to celebrate her birthday; she and her friends have been drinking

and doing drugs; she lost her mother when she was younger; and she's dead. She's also

very concerned about fashion and believes that "'everyone likes me'" (p. 23). As the

novel progresses, Liz visits her memories and sees herself change from a healthy,

relatively happy teen to a troubled, anorexic teen. She initially agreed with Josie not to

confess hitting Alex with her car, but keeping such a secret was killing her so she was

prepared to confess. Liz also changes in her treatment of Alex. She realizes that his life

situation was more complicated than she thought and starts to treat him with kindness.

She begins to accept differences and rely less on appearances.

What Happened to Goodbye. As the protagonist, Mclean is both round and

dynamic. She's struggling with who she is which has been complicated for her by her

parents' divorce. She elected to live with her dad because she blames her mom for the

divorce, and she and her dad move around a lot. In each new place Mclean reinvents

herself, choosing a variation of her middle name (Elizabeth) and an identity to go with it.

She chooses not to get too attached to anyone, knowing she'll be moving on and not

wanting to get hurt in the process. Mclean has convinced herself that this detached way

of life is the safest and best way. However, in her recent move with the relationships she

forms (mostly with Dave and Riley and Deb but also with Opal and Heather), she begins

to question whether the safest way is the best way. In the end, she has a better understanding of herself and of her parents, and she sees the value in "real" friendships/relationships.

Small as an Elephant. Jack, the protagonist, is a round character. He loves elephants; loves his mom and doesn't want to disappoint her but is also mad at her for leaving him; has to take care of himself when his mom randomly leaves; young in some ways (only 11, wants to swim and see Lydia on his vacation) and old in other ways (knows how to take care of himself, wants to protect his mom). He doesn't want to steal but believes that he has to in his situation. He is also dynamic. Through his journey he comes to understand that his mom would never forget him or intentionally leave him but that she sometimes isn't enough of a parent because of her illness. He also understands that his mom left his grandmother during a time when she was on the edge of being manic, so what she told him about his grandmother might not necessarily be true.

Round and subtly dynamic. Two novels feature protagonists who are round and subtly dynamic. This means that the characters do change from the beginning of the novel to the end, but the change was less obvious than for those in the previous subsection.

The Throne of Fire. As the narrators, Carter and Sadie are the protagonists of the story. They are brother and sister who come from a family of magicians and have chosen to use their magic to save the world. They are both round characters and are also somewhat dynamic. Carter worries too much, works to keep things together, but can also be brave and stupid. Sadie can be reckless, doesn't like feeling controlled, and can be

bossy; but she'll also do what she can to save/protect the ones she loves. While various facets of these two characters are revealed throughout the novel, less obvious is how each changes as the story progresses. Carter is the more dynamic of the two, particularly in how he feels about the decisions his dad has made. He had resented his dad for not saving his mom and for leaving Carter and Sadie alone; but when Carter was in the position of having to make difficult decisions, he understood his dad's sacrifice for a greater good. Sadie notes changes in her relationships with her mortal friends, feeling separate from them and having them tell her that she's more grown up since she learned to be a magician. While this change is noted in one instance of the book when Sadie is spending time with her London friends, the change that I noticed was that Sadie was less aware of facts/trivia related to the Egyptian gods and magic at the beginning of the novel compared to the end of the novel. This information helps her to be more effective in battle.

   The Near Witch. As the protagonist, Lexi is round. She loves her family and tries to do what her dad would have wanted her to do, but she defies her uncle. She is intrigued by witches even as the people of her village fear them. She rebels against the expectations for girls of her age in her village; she likes to be moving, doing "manly" things like tracking and cutting wood. Lexi is also a dynamic character (though I had to think about this a bit). In the first part of the book she lies to her mother about where she's been, but then she realizes her mother is on her side and is trying to help her. She has little interest in marriage to a "village boy" (p. 8); she is intrigued by Cole, though, and becomes romantically involved with him. Also, she seems to have more

understanding for Otto as the story progresses – she sees him not just as her mean uncle who stops her from doing what she wants, but also as a man trying to protect his family and burdened by worry.

Round but not dynamic. Only one novel includes a protagonist who does not change.

Ashfall. Alex is round but not dynamic. In the first few pages of the novel the reader finds out that Alex fights with his mom about "poor study habits, my video games, my underwear on the bathroom floor" (p. 2). He is almost sixteen and a geek - the bookcase in his bedroom is "filled with computer games, history books, and sci-fi novels" (p. 3). He knows taekwondo and plays online games. As the novel progresses the reader learns that Alex misses his family. He also cares about others: at the school gym he wants to protect his stuff but also doesn't want a little girl to go hungry; he feels guilty for eating when others don't have food; and he leaves food and water for the woman and her kids that he and Darla meet on their journey to his uncle's house. These details and actions make him a round character, but he does not appear to change across the novel. Instead he is a consistent character, using his past experiences of taekwondo and camping, for instance, to survive a natural disaster.

Conclusion. Protagonists across all eight novels are round, and protagonists across seven of eight novels are dynamic. Round, dynamic characters are often easier for readers to connect with because they more closely resemble living, breathing human beings. Alex of *Ashfall*, the one protagonist who was not dynamic, was more difficult for

me to connect to; but it seemed more important to the story that he survive than that he change.

Point-of-View

Point-of-view refers to whose perspective the reader is encouraged to follow in the story. It includes first person (I), omniscient (he/she, all-knowing), limited omniscient (he/she, often limited to one person), and objective (also called dramatic – he/she, "the writer does not enter the minds of any of the characters" (Lukens, 2007, p. 178)). The eight novels in my study fall into one of three types of point-of-view: First person – one perspective; First person – multiple perspectives; and Limited omniscient.

First person – one perspective. As can be seen in Table 4.4, the majority of novels in my study (five) are told from the first person (one perspective) point-of-view.

Exposed. The key characters in *Exposed* are Liz, Kate, and Mike. As the narrator, Liz is the protagonist; the reader learns about Kate, her best friend, and Mike, her older brother, from Liz's descriptions of her interactions with them and her memories of previous interactions with them. Ultimately, the reader is likely to identify most with Liz because the story is told from her point-of-view.

Ashfall. The narration of *Ashfall* is first-person from the perspective of Alex. I meet the "I" on the first page and know his name is Alex on the second page. With first-person narration, I am encouraged to see everything from Alex's perspective.

Between. The point-of-view of *Between* is first person ("I" on p. 1) from the perspective of Elizabeth Valchar (p. 3). As a ghost, Liz can look in on other people's conversations which gives the reader more information than one usually has with first

person narration. However, the reader only sees what Liz sees – the conversations she looks in on and the memories she accesses, as well as her personal experiences as a ghost. In seeing things from Liz's perspective, the reader discovers with Liz the answers to her many questions about her situation.

What Happened to Goodbye. The point-of-view in *What Happened to Goodbye* is first person from the perspective of Mclean. The reader is encouraged to identify with Mclean and trust her story as "truth" (Lukens, 2007, p. 171), which I did.

The Near Witch. The point-of-view of *The Near Witch* is first person from the perspective of Lexi, a sixteen-year-old who would rather wear pants than the dresses expected of her (pp. 6-7). First person narration encourages the reader to identify with Lexi since the reader experiences the story as she experiences it. Readers rely on her interpretation of events, given her background knowledge and personal experiences in Near.

First person – multiple perspectives. One novel of the eight in my study includes first person narration told from more than one perspective.

The Throne of Fire. The point-of-view of *The Throne of Fire* is first person with the perspective shifting between Carter and Sadie every two chapters; Carter begins the story and Sadie ends it. This allows the readers an inside view of both characters, and sometimes two perspectives of the same event, as they tell their story together.

Limited omniscient. Two novels are told from the limited omniscient point-of-view.

Flip. *Flip* is written from the limited omniscient point-of-view as the reader sees everything through Alex's eyes and knows Alex's thoughts but from a "they" instead of "I" perspective. Limited omniscient allows the reader to be "inside as well as alongside the character" (Lukens, 2007, p. 176). Limited omniscient seems similar to first person in terms of telling the story through one person's eyes, but, generally, it serves to put more distance between the protagonist and the reader. Here I think limited omniscient works to highlight the confusion of Alex-as-Philip-as-Flip-as-Alex ("he" could be any of them – more difficult with "I" to seem like multiple people).

Small as an Elephant. The point-of-view of *Small as an Elephant* is third person limited from Jack's perspective. While Jack is not the narrator, readers only know what Jack knows and see what Jack sees. Third person allows the author to comment on Jack from an outside perspective: "The day his life turned completely upside down, he was caught unaware" (p. 1); limiting the details to Jack's perspective gives the author more control in sharing information, often encouraging the reader to ask questions that are not answered until Jack encounters the answers or remembers situations that provide insight for the reader.

Conclusion. Point-of-view across novels includes first person and limited omniscient. Though the two differ, both intentionally limit the reader's perspective to the narrator(s). This encourages the reader to identify with the protagonist(s); it can also

create suspense as the reader sees characters and events through the narrator(s) and so often must wait to make discoveries when the narrator(s) does (do).

Plot

Simplistically, plot refers to what happens in a story and the order in which this action happens. Specifically, this subsection includes a discussion of type of plot, narrative order, and type of major conflict. Plot can be progressive (suspense building to a climax that then ends with denouement) or episodic (episodes linked by character or theme) (Lukens, 2007). Narrative order includes chronological, alternating past and present, and flashbacks (where the "writer disrupts normal time sequence to recount some episode out of the character's past" (Lukens, 2007, p. 102)). And type of major conflict might be person-against-self, person-against-person, person-against-society, and/or person-against-nature. In addition, suspense, "the emotional pull that keeps us [the reader] wanting to read on" (Lukens, 2007, p. 112), is discussed in the subsection that follows. This first of the two main subsections is titled Type of plot and narrative order and suspense, followed by Type of major conflict.

Type of plot and narrative order and suspense. As shown in Table 4.4, all eight novels are progressive in plot, meaning each chapter builds upon the previous chapter. In addition, seven of the eight novels have a chronological narrative order, and two of these novels also include flashbacks. In the remaining novel, *Between*, the narrative order alternates between present and past. Suspense is part of the title of the heading to this subsection because it is something I specifically noticed that all eight authors included despite their slight differences in narrative order. Examples from each

novel are discussed in the sections that follow, grouped according to narrative order: Chronological with flashbacks; Chronological; and Alternating.

Chronological with flashbacks. Two of the eight novels have a chronological narrative order and also include flashbacks: *Exposed* and *What Happened to Goodbye*.

Exposed. The plot of *Exposed* is progressive, chronological, and includes flashbacks. After Saturday Night Slumber, Kate seems to be avoiding Liz. Then she (and the reader) finds out through a mutual friend that Kate and Mike had sex that night; only Kate claims that it was rape. Marcus keeps the reader in suspense throughout the novel and this is a prime example: though the slumber party fight happened on page 18, details of why don't occur until page 62 and then 75. Suspense is still created, though, as now Liz must decide if she believes her best friend or her brother: "She had no bruises/that I could see./No cuts, no swollen eyes.//I saw no scratches,/next morning, on Mike./So which one's telling lies?" (p. 81).

The flashbacks help the reader understand Liz's relationships with Kate and with Mike. For instance, "Best-Friends Collage" (p. 35) captures a friendship that started before Kate and Liz were six years old. Her memory of Halloween when she was six and Mike "helped her conquer her fear" (p. 137) portrays a caring older brother, helping his sister even when his friends made fun of him, and highlights for the reader how difficult it is for her to believe that he raped Kate: "How can *this* boy be *that* guy?" (p. 137).

What Happened to Goodbye. The plot is progressive; narrative order is chronological with flashbacks. The story begins with Mclean and her dad at a restaurant – the next in a series that her dad is taking over for his job. Then Mclean gives the reader

some history – a brief explanation of her dad's job and what led the two of them to travel

the way that they do (her parents' divorce and her mom's marriage to the DB coach).

Mclean introduces herself to the restaurant manager as Liz and tries to avoid her mom's

phone calls. She goes to the neighbor's party and meets people who will become her

friends; she also meets Dave, her neighbor who saves her from the cops, and introduces

herself as Mclean. Dave becomes Mclean's love interest, which builds suspense for

readers interested in romance.

The flashbacks throughout the novel provide information about Mclean's past –

who she was and what her relationships with her parents were before the divorce and

during her previous moves – to help the reader understand Mclean's current conflicts

with herself and her mother. They seem to be strategically placed so that the reader

doesn't have the complete picture all at once but is instead encouraged to keep reading to

see how the past and present come together.

Chronological. Of the eight novels, five are chronological and do not include

flashbacks.

Flip. The plot is progressive and the order of the narrative is chronological. The

reader discovers with Alex what is happening to him – that he is somehow trapped in

Philip's body; that he and Philip were born in the same hospital on the same day; that his

body is in a coma; that he's a psychic evacuee. This creates suspense to encourage the

reader to continue reading for the next piece of information that Alex will discover. He

does have remembrances of life as Alex, but these don't seem significant enough to call

flashbacks. They're not a change in the story but just pieces of information about who

Alex was and what he was doing before his soul entered Philip's body. (ex. "The last thing he remembered was leaving David's" (p. 2)).

Ashfall. Plot in this novel is progressive with a chronological narrative order. At the beginning of the novel, Alex is telling the reader something that happened to him in the past: "I was home alone on that Friday evening" (p.1). In the first few pages, there are a few lines that remind the reader the events of that night already happened: "If I'd known I might never get to argue with her [Alex's mother], maybe I would have replied" (p. 2). However, the reader is not given any additional, specific information so it's like the reader discovers with Alex what is happening as he tells his story. In a few instances Alex shares information about his past, but it's more of just describing who he is than an actual flashback. For instance, when he tells the reader about taekwondo, he says, "I didn't work at it until sixth grade, which I remember as the year of the bully" (p. 3). This builds suspense as the reader waits to see what will happen next.

The Throne of Fire. The plot is progressive and the narrative order is chronological interspersed with memories and dreams. The story begins with Carter introducing himself and the purpose of the recording that he and Sadie have created. Suspense is built from the first page when Carter says he and Sadie "didn't cause those deaths" (p. 1). As a reader, I want to know what deaths he's talking about, and I need to keep reading to find out. Then they jump right into the first part of their quest – to break into the Brooklyn Museum for an Egyptian artifact (p. 2). Riordan creates suspense throughout the story by inserting just enough information to keep the reader wanting to find out more. For instance, mystery around Walt begins on page eight and continues

throughout the novel: Sadie and Carter find Walt and Jaz (trainees) in conversation but Walt and Jaz don't want to tell them what's going on (pp. 8-9); Carter "wondered what they'd been talking about earlier" (p. 13); Carter talks to Walt and knows something's up but Walt doesn't say (pp. 96); Bes knows what's up with Walt, but Sadie and Carter still don't know (pp. 147-149); "'Walt's bloody secret'" is still a secret (p. 218); Walt tells Sadie his relatives are cursed (p. 255); Walt is dying because of the curse (p. 276); Sadie and Carter decide they'll try to get Menshikov to tell them the cure for Walt's condition (pp. 322-323); Menshikov knows the cure but won't tell them unless they join Apophis (p. 405).

While events occur chronologically, Carter and Sadie share memories (I wouldn't call them flashbacks because it's more of an "I remember when" rather than bringing us back to the time/event – ex. p. 9). The memories generally remind/catch the reader up to what happened in the previous book (I assume). Also added are dreams/soul travel (ex. p. 69) which provide glimpses into magic/the gods that further explain the plot, giving Carter and Sadie information to help them determine what to do next on their quest.

Small as an Elephant. The plot is progressive – the reader travels with Jack from the campsite, through various towns, to the end of his journey, where he runs into his grandmother and meets Lydia; and the narrative order is chronological with some memories interspersed throughout, which serve to provide more information about why Jack has been left by his mother and is traveling on his own. For example, Jack remembers "once, when he was about seven" (p. 44) his mom flipped out at the train

station, and DSS took him to his grandmother's while his mom was in the hospital (pp. 44-48).

Jacobson built suspense into the plot by incorporating a little bit of information at a time about Jack's situation to keep the reader guessing and reading to find out more. For instance, as an eleven-year-old boy, Jack's first inclination when his mother is missing is not to tell another adult: "Any other kid would tell the ranger that his mother was missing…But Jack wasn't any kid. And his mom wasn't just any mom" (p. 19). At this point, I was wondering what's different about Jack and his mom that he thinks he has to do things on his own. The story of Jack's mom comes through in pieces and is not really clear until near the end of the novel.

The Near Witch. The plot is progressive; narrative order is chronological with Lexi recalling things about her father and telling stories that capture life in Near when the Near Witch lived there. The progressive plot and chronological narration keep the reader in the action with Lexi. The recollections about her father and the stories about the Near Witch serve to provide background information about Lexi's life and about why life is the way it is in Near.

Schwab employs suspense throughout the novel, providing partial explanations to keep the reader guessing. For instance, Lexi thinks she sees a figure (p. 4) and then finds out she did (p. 10) but he's a stranger. She thinks she knows who might be hiding him (p. 10) and so goes to the Thorne sisters' to find out (p. 21). She finally talks to the stranger (p. 51) but doesn't find out anything about him. He turns up near the houses of the missing children (p. 80); and a conversation that he has with the sisters that Lexi

overhears (pp. 118-120) suggests that he knows something about what happened to them. Lexi (and the reader) finally finds out who Cole is and how he knows what might be happening to the children (pp. 135-146). Suspense related to the Near Witch follows a similar pattern of brief mentions and partial explanations until all is put right (p. 275).

Alternating. Only one novel has a narrative order that is not chronological but, instead, alternates between present and past.

Between. The plot is progressive, and narrative order alternates between present (Liz and Alex as ghosts following her family and friends and her case to see what comes to light about how she died) and past (the ghosts going into their memories to help them figure out what led up to Liz's death). The present narration is chronological, with Liz discovering her dead body and then following her family and friends as they discover her body, have her funeral, and start the school year without her. The memories, though, are not chronological. Alex takes Liz to the cafeteria when they were both alive; Liz has memories about being with her mother, who died when she was nine; Liz remembers separate times with Josie and with Richie at different points in her relationship with each. The apparent random order of these memories aligns with my experience of how memories work – a present experience might spark a thought that takes me to a specific event in the past. But the order also creates suspense, giving enough information to keep the reader interested but not giving too much information so that the reader needs to read to the end to find out what really happened. For instance, in the memory in the cafeteria, Josie makes a comment about sharing genetics with Liz, but Liz tells Alex that they're stepsisters and doesn't explain why Josie would say they share genetics (p. 21). Then Liz

has a memory of her mother's funeral and the rumors about her dad and Josie's mom

having an affair (p. 68). As a reader, I understand on page 68 why Josie might think she

and Liz are half-sisters (p. 21), but I don't know if they really are until the very end of the

novel (p. 451).

Type of major conflict. Four types of conflict commonly found in literature are

person-against-person, person-against-self, person-against-society, and person-against-

nature (Lukens, 2007). Each novel in my study includes more than one type of conflict.

Six of the novels include person-against-person, six include person-against-self, three

include person-against-society, and two include person-against-nature. Examples of

major conflicts from each novel are covered below.

Exposed. Major conflicts in *Exposed* are person-against-person and person-

against-self. Best friends Liz and Kate have an argument that inadvertently leads to the

situation that ends their friendship. Though they occasionally interact after this

argument, it serves as the beginning of the end of their friendship. Liz's conflict with

herself relates to whom she should believe about what happened between Kate and Mike

– her best friend or her brother?

Flip. The nature of the story makes it difficult to characterize in terms of type of

conflict. I would say the major conflict is person-against-self as Alex must figure out

how to live in Philip's body/who he should be and how to get back to his own body/who

he should become. It's also person-against-person with Alex's soul and Philip's soul

fighting each other for their respective bodies; and Alex fighting Rob for the right and

support to try to get back to his own body. Particularly the person-against-self conflict is developed to such an extent that the reader wants to know what happens to Alex.

What Happened to Goodbye. Person-against-self is the major type of conflict that drives the plot: Who is Mclean and who will she become? Mclean lets the reader know that she takes on different identities in the different places she lives. In her current environment, though, she's finding the need to be herself, but she doesn't really know who that is. She struggles with her parents' divorce and with her relationship with her mom (person-against-person), which both influence how she views herself. In the end, Mclean makes peace with her mom and with the person she's becoming.

The Throne of Fire. The major conflicts are person-against-person (magicians and gods against magicians and gods) and person-against-self (mostly Sadie). Carter and Sadie's journey is fraught with danger as they battle gods and magicians who don't want them to succeed in waking Ra. Plot is also person-against-self, particularly with Sadie and her struggle over which boy she likes and whether they like her as more than a friend.

Between. In addition to person-against-self and person-against-person, conflict in *Between* also includes person-against-society. In terms of person-against-self, Liz is conflicted throughout the novel. She wants to be a better person but struggles with how. She also must come to terms with her role in what happened to Alex and with being able to let go of life among the living. Liz and Alex (as ghosts) start out with a very antagonistic relationship, with each focused on wanting the other to understand his/her perspective. Also, it turns out that even though Liz and Josie seemed to be best friends,

they were in conflict since Josie wanted Richie, wanted Liz's dad, convinced Liz not to confess that she killed Alex, and, in the end, killed Liz.

Person-against-society is portrayed in the ways Liz and Alex experience and understand social class. They both see how their town treats wealthy kids differently – smoking is allowed for them on school grounds, and Richie only gets community service for possessing drugs and a gun. Through their relationship with each other, Liz comes to understand that she was spoiled and shouldn't have treated Alex badly just because his family didn't have money, and Alex sees that he should have asked out the girl from work even if she was rich and he wasn't.

Small as an Elephant. The main conflicts in the novel are person-against-self and person-against-society. Throughout the novel Jack struggles with wanting to blame his mother for abandoning him but also not wanting to blame her because he knows she doesn't have control of her actions when she's spinning. He loves his mother and wants to live with her but also knows that "his mom did her best but that sometimes her best wasn't enough" (p. 259). Jack believes that if he reports that his mother left him, she'll go to jail and he won't get to see her anymore; it is because of this that he doesn't turn himself in when he knows that everyone is looking for him. But he also sometimes wants to turn himself in because he's tired of being on his own and taking care of himself. Ultimately, these conflicts are resolved for Jack when he finds out that his grandmother will move to his hometown to take care of him while his mother will go to a hospital instead of to jail; and he'll still get to see his mother and live with her, again, when she leaves the hospital.

The Near Witch. Major conflicts in *The Near Witch* include person-against-society and person-against-nature. In the town of Near, witches are tolerated but not welcomed. The villagers don't want to accept witches, but Lexi, following in her father's footsteps, visits the Thorne sisters and wants to see them welcomed in town. For person-against-nature, Lexi and Cole must confront and defeat the Near Witch who has nature at her command. She primarily uses the wind but also the moor to embody her so she can protect her "garden" of the children of Near.

Ashfall. The conflict in *Ashfall* is primarily person-against-nature. Alex must travel via skis/foot from Cedar Falls, IA to Warren, IL to find his family in the aftermath of the eruption of the supervolcano at Yellowstone. The constant ash hinders his travel – it's difficult to walk through and breath in; and food becomes scarce because of it. Also, the ash changes the weather, making it cold during the summer months and adding another layer of difficulty as Alex must find shelter from the cold. Conflict in this story is also person-against-person, as Alex must fight the three men who break into his neighbors' house; and he fights Target both in the woods and at Darla's house. Also, Alex and Darla have an antagonistic relationship at first, since Darla does not want to take care of him but her mother wants her to. The conflicts – both person-against-person and person-against-nature – encourage the reader to care about what happens to Alex and to Darla.

Conclusion. All eight novels are progressive in plot; and seven of the eight novels have a chronological narrative order which is generally easy for the reader to follow. The eighth novel, *Between*, does follow chronological order for the events in the

present. In addition, authors of all eight novels create suspense through their chosen

narrative order, whether it includes flashbacks, memories, or alternates between present

and past. Related to suspense, authors of all eight novels developed the conflicts in their

narratives. Developed (rather than undeveloped) conflicts encourage readers to care

about the "outcome of the story" (Lukens, 2007, p. 126). While all four major types of

conflicts are represented in these novels, the most popular are person-against-person (in

six of eight novels) and person-against-self (also in six of eight novels).

Setting

Setting refers to the time and place in which the story occurs. It is either

backdrop (the specific time and place do not play an essential role in the story) or integral

(time and place play an essential role in that the story would not be the same in another

location and/or at a different time) (Lukens, 2007).

Backdrop. Of the eight novels in my study, six include a setting that serves as a

backdrop to the plot.

Exposed. Time and place are not integral to the story being told in *Exposed*.

Instead, time (present day) and place (primarily school, Liz's home, and a few other

locations near Liz's home) are peripheral to what's happening and to whom. The novel

begins with Liz in photography class, which introduces the narrator to the reader; and

then Liz in the dark room, introducing her best friend Kate via a picture Liz is

developing. Then the reader moves with Liz through the hallways of school to where she

surprises Kate, showing readers the established friendship between the two; and then to

the pizza place where Liz and Kate and their friends hang out, and where Liz and Kate

make plans to hang out the next night for "Saturday Night Slumber" (p. 9) at Liz's house. At Saturday Night Slumber Liz and Kate get in a fight that inadvertently leads to the situation that ends their friendship.

Flip. In this novel the setting serves as a backdrop to the plot. For instance, the beginning of the novel opens in Philip's bedroom. The description of the room is thorough, but the point is that Alex doesn't recognize it as his room. It cues the reader to know that something isn't quite right from the moment Alex wakes up. Likewise, the crags are described as a backdrop to Alex's contemplation of suicide. The reader sees with Alex how far he would fall if he jumped. This description also illustrates the beauty of the setting juxtaposed with the ugliness of possible death. The setting functions to illuminate character. For example, the descriptions of Philip's home provide background for Philip and Alex's home provide background for him.

Between. The setting of *Between* serves as a backdrop, something made clear to me when I was on page 120 and realized I hadn't been keeping track of setting. The ghosts move around, but the location doesn't matter nearly as much as what's happening. Liz and Alex move most often between the boat and Liz's house, but they also spend time at Richie's house and at school. And they spend a little bit of time at Alex's house, at the cemetery, as well as various locations in which their memories take place. The setting does serve to illuminate characters. For example, the time Liz and Alex spend in the cafeteria highlights their different social circles.

What Happened to Goodbye. The setting of the novel is definitely backdrop. Mclean moves most often from the restaurant to her rental home to school; she

occasionally is seen in Dave's driveway and at a nearby bakery (where Dave works). In all of these places, Mclean is either thinking through who she is/who she wants to be or learning how to be in relationship with others. As such, the story could be the same in another time (present day) and place.

The Throne of Fire. Throughout the novel the action moves from Brooklyn to London to St. Petersburg to Alexandria to the Duat and back to Brooklyn. The significance of each place relates to what part of their mission Carter and Sadie are fulfilling. For instance, the first part of the Book of Ra is in Brooklyn, the second is in St. Petersburg, and the third is in a catacomb in Egypt. Once they have the book, Carter and Sadie have to travel through the Duat to wake Ra. Setting does serve to clarify conflict, at times, particularly when Sadie and Carter visit various places in their dreams to see what other magicians and gods are up to. It occasionally illuminates character, as well, like with Sadie and Carter being drained by Chaos in the Duat but choosing to hold on/push through.

Small as an Elephant. The story begins with Jack finding himself all alone at the campground where he and his mother were spending his summer vacation. The setting serves as a backdrop to plot: the events of the story could have happened in multiple locations. The key element of the setting seems to be that Jack has to travel a significant distance on foot to get home from the campground that he and his mom drove to and where she left him. In this sense, setting functions as an antagonist because of the distance Jack must travel on his own.

Integral. Two novels include a setting that is integral to the plot.

Ashfall. Alex must travel via skis/foot from Cedar Falls, IA to Warren, IL to find his family in the aftermath of the eruption of the supervolcano at Yellowstone. The importance of setting in this novel includes both time and place. The time is futuristic (Alex's parents remember 9/11 (p. 1) as a past event, though it is unclear exactly how long ago) to allow for the possibility of the eruption of the supervolcano. In terms of place, it's important to the plot that Alex lives in an area affected by the supervolcano (so that he experiences the ash and needs to find his family) and that where he travels is mostly rural (because he must fend for himself against nature).

The Near Witch. Schwab's rich description, particularly through personification of nature, shows how time and place influence the plot and characters and theme. Specifically, the setting functions as an antagonist and to illuminate character. In the first two chapters readers learn that the town of Near has an invisible boundary around it, and that no strangers come to Near. This adds to the suspense of Cole's visit to the area and his frequent presence on the outskirts of town, seeming to honor the invisible boundary. The moor functions as an antagonist since the Near Witch uses her control of the moor to steal the town's children and then to keep them in her "garden." When Lexi is searching for the children, she notices of the witch's woods, "The forest swallows the world beyond, gnaws at the light and the warmth" (p. 225). The Near Witch can only come out at night – that is when the children go missing, and that is why Lexi and Cole must find her bones during the day. In addition, the setting illuminates character. Lexi is the only person in town willing to visit the sisters' cottage because the others are afraid of witches

and choose to ignore the sisters. Also, it is on the moor that Cole reveals his connection to the wind and his status as witch to Lexi. Ultimately, *The Near Witch* is not *The Near Witch* without the town of Near and the moor that surrounds it.

Conclusion. In the majority of novels (six), the setting is backdrop. The remaining two, *Ashfall* and *The Near Witch*, have integral settings. What's important about type of setting is that the author's purpose is clear which relates to the setting's function(s). Across both types of settings represented in the eight novels of my study, the function mainly serves either to illuminate character or as an antagonist.

Style

Style refers to how an author uses language – what words an author uses and how he/she puts them together. Style includes both devices of style (such as imagery, figurative language, allusion, word play) and devices of sound (such as onomatopoeia, alliteration, assonance, rhythm) (Lukens, 2007). In my study I found that the use of devices of style and sound vary across novels, but the authors of all eight novels do employ imagery and figurative language. Additionally, two authors include multiple devices of style and sound. Examples from all eight novels are discussed in the subsections that follow.

Devices of style: Imagery and figurative language. All eight novels use imagery and figurative language, but these are the main stylistic devices for six of the eight.

Flip. Bedford uses mostly imagery and simile to help the reader visualize and understand the person or situation. For instance, to describe Philip's mother, "If they

ever genetically engineered a giraffe crossed with a human, Alex thought, it would look something like this" (p. 5). Near the end of the novel, Bedford uses a simile to compare Alex's body and Flip's soul waiting for rescue to stranded minors with their air supply running out (p. 230).

Ashfall. Throughout the novel, Mullin uses description to help convey what life is like in the post-volcanic world: "The pre-Friday world of school, cell phones, and refrigerators dissolved into this post-Friday world of ash, darkness, and hunger" (p. 1); instead of a sunrise, "There was a little brightening on the eastern horizon of the black, monotone sky" (p. 104); "I felt as if we were being hollowed out from the inside, so our skin might soon collapse" (p. 370) – describing their hunger at the camp. He also uses a bit of figurative language, including simile: "A wall of heat slammed into me, like opening the oven with my face too close" (p. 8); and metaphor : "The Grim Reaper had visited me again, had even poked me with his scythe, but Darla had dragged me by the hair from his dark kingdom" (p. 248).

Between. In terms of style, Warman uses mostly imagery and figurative language. As an example for imagery, Liz says about Joe Wright (the detective), "He's holding a tiny spiral notepad and a pen. It seems like an impossibly small tool for solving the mystery of how I ended up dead" (p. 55). Figurative language in *Between* includes both simile: Liz describes her phone "like my umbilical cord to the outside world" (p. 36); and personification: "where winter comes early and almost always overstays its welcome" (p. 449).

What Happened to Goodbye. Dessen mostly employs imagery and figurative language, primarily simile, to help the reader further understand the characters and their relationships. For instance, Mclean sees student groups at her new school "as intricately divided as genuses in the animal kingdom" (p. 61). When Mclean meets Dave's parents for the first time, she notices, "Standing together, he [Brian] and Anne looked like a matched set of rumpled academics in their thick glasses, he with his helmet, she with her NPR tote bag" (p. 78). To describe her reality of living with divorced parents, Mclean notes, "It was like when you ripped a piece of paper into two: no matter how you tried, the seams never fit exactly right again" (p. 165).

The Throne of Fire. In terms of style, Riordan uses imagery and figurative language to describe the setting and characters. In one of her soul travel dreams, Sadie visits the Hall of Ages and sees its "vast space lit by glowing orbs of energy and floating hieroglyphic symbols. It looked as if someone had detonated a few kilos of children's cereal in zero gravity" (p. 41). Carter describes their enemy Menshikov's voice "like a heavy smoker talking through the blades of a fan" (p. 164). When Sadie and Walt come upon a valley after travelling through the deserts of Egypt, Sadie describes the transition: "After so long in the desert, my eyes hurt from looking at all the colors, like when you come out of a dark cinema into a bright afternoon" (p. 255).

Small as an Elephant. Jacobson uses primarily imagery and figurative language to help the reader further understand Jack. For instance, personification is used to describe some of Jack's emotions. When he didn't find his mother at a bar, he couldn't move on "until disappointment let go of his chest" (p. 78). One particular memory of

spending time with his mother "caused his heart to form a fist" (p. 192). Simile and metaphor illustrate Jack's relationship with his mother: Jack imagined his mom telling him she would never leave him "'Like an elephant'" (p. 32) since elephants do not leave their young; and "It was as if thinking about the fight [with his mother] was searing the edges of his heart" (pp. 185-186).

Devices of style and sound. In addition to including imagery and figurative language, authors of two of the novels in my study employ multiple devices of style and sound.

Exposed. Marcus certainly uses vivid language throughout *Exposed*. Because it is written in free verse, the language of the novel must be carefully chosen, expressing ideas in few words. Marcus has filled her novel with figurative language: "The straight line to my squiggle,/my forever-best friend" (p. 2); metaphors: "There's a lump in my throat/the size of Cape Cod Bay" (p. 23); similes: "Even if no one says it/the word rape/hums soft and constant/like water running/through the pipes in our walls" (p. 173); alliteration: "Friday's fleeing feet" (p. 3); onomatopoeia: "hum" and "swish" are involved in developing film (p. 2); word play: "My mother has pinned/all her hopes on me./And I can't pull out/the pins" (p. 119); imagery: "…and I want to tell my brother/he should study/the look on Mom's face,/the way her jaw muscles just went slack/and tightened again in a split second's time" (p. 33). The devices used portray the characters, events, and ideas succinctly and meaningfully.

The Near Witch. Schwab uses devices of style and of sound throughout the novel. She uses lots of figurative language – personification, similes, and metaphors – as

well as imagery; and onomatopoeia and rhythm and alliteration. As I've mentioned in

the previous sections related to character and setting, nature is personified: "the wind is

breathing against the glass" (p. 3); "The sun is bleeding, too, right into the horizon, and

the whole world has turned a sickly red" (p. 270). Likewise, imagery is primarily used to

illustrate nature: "The wind beats in my ears with my pulse" (p. 77); description of the

setting sun - "the golden circle skimming the wild grass" (p. 269). Similes and

metaphors are used to describe people and ideas: Lexi about Wren – "She really is like a

bird"…"she chirps" (p. 11); Lexi compares Magda's movement to those of a leaf (p. 25);

"My father used to say that change is like a garden. It doesn't come up overnight, unless

you are a witch" (p. 277).

In addition to devices of style, Schwab uses devices of sound sprinkled

throughout the novel. I noticed onomatopoeia on the first page: "match hisses," "A

whistle. A crack" (p. 1). I also noticed alliteration early in the novel: "moonlit moor" (p.

6); and late in the novel: "frustration and fatigue and fear" (p. 222). Schwab combines

rhythm with onomatopoeia: "The old house lets out little clicks and thuds as the heat

from the day seeps out" (p. 132); and with alliteration: "between blue-gray shadows on a

blue-gray ground, watching the blue-white circle in the blue-black sky" (p. 134). This

poetic language is pleasing to read and creates "heightened meaning" (Lukens, 2007, p.

207).

Conclusion. As Lukens (2007) explains, a good story is more than a plot

summary; it's "words…selected and arranged in a manner that…ties it all together with

some significance" (p. 207). Though they do so to varying degrees, the authors of all

eight novels are intentional about their language, employing stylistic devices such as imagery and figurative language. In addition, the authors of *Exposed* and *The Near Witch* include devices of sound to "heighten meaning" in their stories (Lukens, 2007, p. 207).

Tone

Tone refers to the attitude conveyed in the writing. It reveals how the author feels about the subject matter and the readers (Lukens, 2007). Examples of overall tone include serious, lighthearted, sarcastic, and humorous. As can be seen in Table 4.4, all eight novels analyzed for my study are serious in tone. This means that the authors take their subjects and their readers seriously; it also encourages readers to take the content of each novel seriously. In addition to being serious in tone, authors of three of the eight novels employ an obvious second tone: sarcasm. Examples from these three novels follow.

Between. Alex uses sarcasm with Liz to express his dislike of her. He appears after she realizes that she is looking at her body floating face down in the water. She doesn't want to believe she's dead, and his response is "'The sight of your corpse floating in the water isn't proof enough for you?'" (p. 16). She wants comfort but he only has harsh words for her. Likewise, he uses sarcasm to express derision for Richie, indicating that maybe Liz shouldn't have thought so highly of Richie since he wasn't there for her to protect her from death (p. 146). When they both visit one of Liz's memories where she's hanging out with her friends, Alex comments, "'Oh, right…You're nothing like spoiled brats'" (p. 276). However, as the ghosts of Liz and Alex get to know each other better, Alex loses his sarcasm. In fact, Alex apologizes to Liz after they have an argument,

saying, "'We've been getting along so well'" (p. 342). By the end of their time together after Alex and Liz have a better understanding of the other's life, Alex is no longer sarcastic with Liz.

What Happened to Goodbye. Generally, the tone is serious, indicating that Dessen sees divorce and identity struggles as serious topics important to discuss with her readers. However, the serious tone is punctuated by Mclean's use of sarcasm, often when she's talking about her mom and in conversations with Dave. For instance, she compares her mom to Teflon; Mclean just wants space but her mom keeps calling and trying to talk with her. With her mom Mclean's sarcasm portrays her current feelings of dislike; with Dave it adds a playful feeling to the relationship. As an example, Mclean describes Dave's commitment to watching a documentary about cells with his parents as "fascinating" (p. 219).

The Throne of Fire. The overall tone is serious – after all, Sadie and Carter "need to tell this story quickly, or we're all going to die" (p. 1). However, the narrators, particularly Sadie, insert lots of sarcasm in their storytelling. For instance, Sadie describes Vladimir as *"an evil ice cream vendor"* (p. 42) because of how he looks. Carter is also occasionally sarcastic. After examining how the odds were stacked against him, Carter comments, "On the plus side I had a cranky sister…and a griffin with a personality disorder" (p. 88). The sarcasm serves to interrupt some of the tension that builds in the reader as Sadie and Carter fight for their lives and the lives of their friends.

Conclusion. As stated previously, tone reveals how the author feels about the subject matter and the readers (Lukens, 2007). The fact that all eight novels are serious

in tone suggests the authors' earnestness in their approach to their subject matter and readers. In addition to being serious in tone, three of the eight novels include a second tone of sarcasm which is used to illustrate the characters' feelings and to interrupt the seriousness.

Theme

Theme refers to the overall message(s) of a story. It is the "idea that holds the story together" or the "central meaning of a piece of writing" (Lukens, 2007, p. 131). Common themes in young adult literature include identity, family, friendships, coming of age, abuse, illness. While multiple themes are present in all eight novels included in my study, the most common themes across novels focus on relationships, identity, and perspective. As can be seen in Table 4.5, all eight novels include a relationship theme; five of the eight focus on identity; and three of the five that focus on identity also include perspective as a theme. The following subsections portray examples of these themes from the novels: Relationships; Relationships and identity; and Relationships, identity, and perspective.

Table 4.5: Common Themes Across the Eight Novels

	Relationships	Identity (see Table 4.4: Self-aware)	Perspective
Ashfall	Yes	No	No
Between	Yes	Yes	Yes
Exposed	Yes	Yes	Yes
Flip	Yes	Yes	No

Near Witch	Yes	No	No
Small…Elephant	Yes	Yes	Yes
Throne of Fire	Yes	No	No
What…Goodbye	Yes	Yes	No

Relationships. All eight novels explore relationships with family and friends and/or romantic partners. Overall, relationships with others are portrayed as complicated but important.
This subsection includes discussion of the three novels that focus on relationships but not on the other two common themes: *Ashfall*, *The Throne of Fire*, and *The Near Witch*.

Ashfall. Throughout *Ashfall* Mullin focuses on relationships – between Alex and his family members, and Alex and Darla. The overall idea related to relationships seems to be that people don't know what they have until it's gone.

From the first chapter, Alex describes his relationship with his mom – they fight often, but she's the one he wants when things fall apart; his sister - "An hour ago I'd been looking forward to an entire weekend without her. Now I wanted nothing more than to see her again" (p. 14); and his dad - "Dad responded with his usual benign lack of interest" (p. 2). Once the supervolcano happens, Alex is on a journey to find his family. The way he talks about them throughout his journey, though, leaves me wondering about his relationship with his dad. He mentions positive aspects of his relationship with his mom, indicating that he knows she loves him; and positive aspects of his relationship

with his sister, for instance when he saved her from the bully. But positive aspects of his relationship with his dad seem to be missing.

The relationship between Alex and Darla becomes an important part of the novel as soon as they meet, since Darla becomes Alex's travel companion on his search to find his family. The reader follows them from their initial meeting when Darla is resentful of having to take care of Alex, to Alex's uncle's house where Alex explains that Darla saved his life multiple times and he'd die for her. Alex's romantic relationship with Darla and his desire to find his family motivate him to continue his journey in the midst of the natural disaster.

The Throne of Fire. From the beginning of the novel, readers know that Carter and Sadie are siblings. The first chapter includes many interactions between the two that illustrate their relationship as siblings: on the first page, Sadie hits Carter when he says something that she thinks will scare the audience; then they argue about their mission, each blaming the other for things that are going wrong. Their interactions show that they can work together, but they also tease each other mercilessly. They do love each other, though: Sadie doesn't want anyone other than her to hurt her brother, and when she learns his secret name she is impressed by him and would never use that information against him; likewise, Carter is beside himself when he can't find Sadie buried in the sand, and the birthday gift he gives her is clearly from his heart.

Also from the beginning of the novel, Sadie's and Carter's romances are important to the story. In the first chapter Carter informs the reader that Sadie has a crush on Walt and that Carter is in love with Zia. When Sadie takes over the narration in

chapter three, she tells the reader that she had a crush on Anubis. Through the rest of the novel, Sadie struggles with her feelings for both Walt and Anubis; she doesn't know if they like her, and she doesn't know which one she likes better. Carter also struggles with his feelings for Zia; he becomes convinced that she is part of his destiny, and that she will be an important part of them saving the world. In this story Sadie's romances add intrigue and suspense – who will she pick? And Carter's romance provides further suspense for their journey – what role will Zia play in the next book as Carter and Sadie continue their quest to defeat Chaos?

The Near Witch. Throughout the novel Schwab illustrates Lexi's relationships with her sister Wren, her father, and her mother. The novel begins with an interaction between Lexi and Wren, illustrating that Lexi cares for and about Wren. She admits, "I cannot deny my sister anything" (p. 2). They play games together, laugh together, and Lexi teases Wren. Lexi has to protect Wren; and, in fact, her main motivation for wanting to find out who is taking the children is Wren's safety. This relationship reveals facets of Lexi's character, furthers the plot, and highlights the possibilities of love between siblings.

From the beginning of the novel, it is clear that Lexi thinks highly of her father. She tells the reader that he read to her; she wears his boots and knife; she proudly identifies as his daughter; and he taught her his trade. As with aspects of the plot, Schwab shares bits of information about Lexi's father so that the reader doesn't really know what happened to him until pages 195 to 200. The bits of information often share what Lexi has learned from her father. She misses him and struggles through life without

him; her uncle cannot replace him, her mother is mostly a shell of her former self, and her

sister cannot remember him. This relationship illustrates one teenager's loss of a parent

and shows how this loss also influenced Lexi's relationship with her mother.

Lexi misses the way her mother was before her father died. As her parent, Lexi

expects her mother to see through lies and be more engaged in Lexi's activities, but

"ghosts ask fewer questions" (p. 35). Lexi does see glimpses of the mother she knew

when her mother helps her get away from the house to look for the children. Though her

mother has changed since her father died, Lexi has an ally in her mother.

In addition to her relationships with family members, Lexi forms a romantic

relationship with Cole. This relationship, which intrigues and excites Lexi, is juxtaposed

with her relationship with Tyler. Tyler wants a romantic relationship with Lexi, but she

is mostly annoyed by his attempts to move their relationship beyond friendship. In

contrast, Lexi seeks opportunities to spend time with Cole and is excited rather than

annoyed by physical contact with him. Lexi's romance with Cole reveals more about

both characters and moves the plot forward.

Relationships and identity. In addition to writing about relationships, authors of

five of the eight novels included in my study explore identity. This subsection portrays

examples from the two novels that focus on relationship and identity but not on

perspective: *Flip* and *What Happened to Goodbye*.

Flip. Bedford explores relationships with family members through the unique

opportunity Alex has to experience life in another family as an inside member. Living

inside Philip's body, Alex learns what life is like for Philip in his family and compares

this to life in his own family. Even though he likes some things better about Philip's family, he longs to be in his own home with the people he knows and loves.

Because of his experience living as another person, Alex has a stronger sense of self. When he lived in Philip's body, he started to miss his life – his family, friends, lack of social status at school, clarinet-playing, even his asthma. As Alex, body and soul, he appreciates each moment – his brain sending messages to and receiving messages from his body, his wheezing, his family, his best friend. Alex as fully himself chooses to live life to the fullest.

What Happened to Goodbye. The two themes that function together throughout the text are identity and relationships. Mclean is figuring out who she is, and she does so in the context of her relationship with her mom, her dad, and Dave.

Mclean's parents are divorced, and this change in her life seems to be the impetus for her identity struggle. Her mom leaves her dad for another man and is also pregnant at the time, so Mclean believes her mom is replacing them with a new family. Mclean decides to live with her dad, whose job requires them to move frequently; in each new place, Mclean changes her name and creates an identity to go with that new name. Because of the divorce, she believes that it's safer and better to keep relationships at the surface level. Also, she blames her mom for the divorce and doesn't want to talk to her mom, but her mom keeps insisting that they spend time together; conversely, she believes her dad was treated wrongly with her mom leaving him and so feels the need to take care of him and protect him.

Even though Mclean has decided to be Liz for her recent move, she introduces herself to Dave with her given name. From the beginning of their relationship, Mclean feels something different with Dave. She doesn't want to get involved with him because she has decided to live her life apart, not getting too close to anyone. But they keep spending time together and she finds herself wanting to get closer to him. She realizes with Dave, and with her other friends, in this new place she is Mclean but not the same Mclean as before her parents' divorce: "I still felt unformed, like a cake half baked with edges crisp, but still mushy in the middle" (p. 122). Her relationship with Dave brings to the surface her desire to find who she is and where she belongs.

Being in relationship with Dave and learning of his struggles with family and with other relationships helps Mclean to rethink her relationship with her mom. She is able to see that her mom hasn't replaced her with a new family – it's just a different family than what Mclean had before. And since she realizes that home is "wherever the people who loved you were" (p. 364), and she knows her mom loves her, she still belongs with her dad and with her mom. She also belongs with Dave as they both wish to continue dating, seeing where things go. In the end, Mclean is comfortable being herself, not knowing exactly who that is but believing that she'll know when she needs to know.

Relationships, identity, and perspective. Closely related to identity, perspective is about characters learning to see people and situations differently. The remaining three novels include all three themes.

Exposed. The end of the novel clearly portrays Marcus' focus on perspective: "I used to be so confident/about who people were, who I was-/…I realized/I no longer see

things/in crisp black-and-white contrasts-/"(p. 237); and identity: "…I remember/the words of Annie Leibovitz:/*When you trust your point of view,/that's when you start taking pictures*.//This girl/is starting now" (p. 255). These changes occur for Liz through her relationships with her best friend and with her family members.

Liz and Kate are best friends but do disagree about some important ideas related to how each sees the other living her life. Liz loves her brother and had a close relationship with him before he went to college, but then she believes he might have raped her best friend. Liz loves her parents but believes that her mom is not quite pleased with her. As her family deals with the charge against Mike, Liz feels unable to talk to her parents. As Liz and Kate deal with the charge against Mike, they cannot be friends anymore. And Liz is no longer sure how to feel about her brother. Liz eventually has to choose to believe either her best friend or her brother. Even though she sides with her best friend, their relationship cannot be salvaged. Through this experience, though, Liz understands that situations in life include more than one perspective which opens her up to more possibilities in her own life.

Between. Though many themes appear in the novel, the three most prevalent are relationships, perspective, and identity. Key relationships include those between Liz and her parents (dad, mom, stepmom), Liz and Josie (best friend and stepsister), and Liz and Alex. Overall, relationships are an important part of the story; they're also shown to be complicated in every instance. Liz's mom was anorexic and encouraged her to be careful about what she ate; and Liz saw her die at nine years old. Her dad loved her, spoiled her, and also worked all the time and had an affair. Nicole made their house a home but also

had an affair with Liz's dad when Liz's mom was alive. Liz sees Josie as her best friend and was so excited when Josie became her sister. But Josie was the one to encourage Liz not to tell anyone that they ran into Alex. She was always jealous of Liz and ended up killing her (she was a bit crazy). Through these family relationships, the author shows the dangers of anorexia, the way secrets can be self-destructive, and the imperfection of families.

Liz and Alex have a complicated relationship from the beginning of the story. Liz has just found out she's dead and Alex shows up and seems to dislike her. At the end of the novel, the reader finds out that she killed him and he hasn't forgiven her, so that explains his attitude. But she doesn't know this; instead, she is reminded via his memories how poorly she and her friends treated Alex and how difficult that was for him. Because of her treatment of him before she killed him, he saw her as a rich, spoiled bitch; and she saw him as a nobody. As they spend time together as ghosts and in each other's memories, they both realize life is more complicated and people can't be seen as one dimensional. They both realize the importance of perspective; and they have the added benefit of being able to see their own past situations from the outside (as ghosts) to give them this perspective. For instance, in seeing some of Liz's memories, Alex says to Liz about her and her friends, "'I assumed you had such simple, perfect lives. Everything seemed so easy for you'" (p. 147). And when Liz sees Alex's memory of not asking out the rich girl at work, she realizes, "Everything I was, and everything I represented – it wasn't just that he disliked me and my friends, I realize. It was so much more complicated than that" (p. 187).

With Alex's perspective, Liz starts to question who/how she was: "What kind of person was I, anyway? …there's a part of me that really, really doesn't want to know" (p. 18). She knows that she's dead, and she has a few memories, but she doesn't know who she was. In her search to find out what happened to her, she's also searching for "who I am…and…what happened to make me that way" (p. 59). As she remembers more and more, she realizes that losing her mom at age nine and then having her dad give her everything in an attempt to make up for losing her mom made her shallow. But she loves her dad. She also wanted to confess that she was the one who hit Alex but Josie stops her. In the end, Liz realizes a person's character is never all good or bad.

Small as an Elephant. From Jack's perspective we learn about his complicated relationship with his mother, a result of her struggle with mental illness. Jack loves his mother and knows that she loves him, but he also knows that she's not a "normal" mother, which sometimes makes things quite difficult for him. He's upset that she left him at the campground, but he's familiar with her leaving him during her "spinning times" (pp. 130-131). The result is that Jack knows how to take care of himself/has to take care of himself, and he also believes he has to protect himself and his mom. But he really wants someone to be taking care of him (after all, he is only 11). Any thoughts Jack has about wanting a "normal" childhood make him feel like he's betraying his mother because he knows she doesn't have control of herself.

Because of his mom's struggle with mental illness, Jack also has a complicated relationship with his grandmother. He has a few fond memories of spending time with her, but his mother told him that she's crazy and wants to take him away from his mother.

Therefore, he doesn't want to see his grandmother and has negative thoughts of what it means that she's looking for him after his mother leaves him at the campsite. His perspective of his grandmother shifts when he realizes that his mother took him away from his grandmother during one of her pre-spinning times; he had been too young at the time to recognize the pattern of her illness but now he knows what to look for. From his current perspective, he sees that maybe his grandmother isn't really crazy. In fact, maybe his grandmother is the only other person who can really understand life with his mother.

Conclusion. All eight novels explore relationships with family and friends and/or romantic partners. Overall, relationships with others are portrayed as complicated but important. In addition to writing about relationships, authors of five of the eight novels include identity as a theme. In these novels exploring identity ranges from characters explicitly asking themselves who they are and who they want to be, to characters making discoveries about themselves as they face difficult circumstances. The remaining three novels add perspective to relationships and identity. Closely related to identity, perspective is about characters learning to see people and situations differently. Perspective in these novels involves characters learning to see from others' points of view.

2. **How might traditional literary analysis and analysis using socio-cognitive descriptions of interesting texts work together to create a more robust model of interesting texts?**

One of the assumptions with which I began my study was that the literary devices would better explain/describe the interesting text criteria. This came about because in the

process of conceptualizing the study, I applied the interesting text criteria (vividness, coherence, and life themes) to one text and found the criteria descriptions to be somewhat vague (Nichols-Besel, 2011). I also thought it might be beneficial to include other criteria, like character, when talking about narrative fiction. During my pilot analysis, which included both qualitative content analysis using the interesting text criteria and literary analysis, I found that vividness was basically the same as/better described by style. And coherence folded neatly into plot. As I began to analyze the eight novels for my study, I allowed for the possibility that these categories were not the same, that vividness might not be the same as style and that coherence might not be related to/only to plot. Through analysis of the novels, I found multiple overlaps between the interesting text criteria and the literary devices. However, in this section I focus on the most common overlaps. As shown in the following subsections, vividness can be described by style or as part of plot; life themes more accurately becomes part of theme or plot, depending on how the life themes are addressed in the text; and coherence can interact with many of the literary devices.

Vividness

As stated in my analysis protocol, vividness includes "text segments that stand out because they create suspense, surprise, or are otherwise engaging" (Schraw & Lehman, 2001, p. 31); active voice, imagery, concrete examples, "vivid or unusual words" (Wade, Buxton, & Kelly, 1999, p. 199); "words that arouse vivid imagery and … say the unexpected" (Schallert & Reed, 1997, p. 73). Style includes devices of style: example(s) – connotation/ imagery/ figurative language/ hyperbole/ understatement/ allusion/

symbol/ puns and word play; and devices of sound: example(s) – onomatopoeia/ alliteration/ assonance/ consonance/ rhythm (Lukens, 2007). Already, based on their descriptions, the examples listed for style further explain some of the descriptions for vividness: "words that arouse vivid imagery" can be explained by imagery, figurative language, onomatopoeia, and so on. As I analyzed the novels, I was open to the possibility that vividness might encompass more than/other than style, and, in this sense, starting with the third novel I analyzed, I recorded moments of suspense as both vividness and plot (which is further explained in the second subsection).

Vividness and style. Other than categorizing moments of suspense as both vividness and plot, I did not find any text segments or words that fit the description of vividness but did not fit the description of style. To illustrate from my analysis notes: *Exposed*: vividness - Kate's account of what happened is told in a run-on way with some paragraphs instead of verse form (pp. 127-129)-SEEMS TO CLEARLY PORTRAY THE EVENT, THINGS MOVING TOO QUICKLY, MIKE FORCING KATE – COVERING HER FACE WITH A PILLOW SO SHE COULDN'T BREATH, PAIN – ALSO STYLE (notes, January 2, 2013)

Ashfall: descriptive – "The pre-Friday world of school, cell phones, and refrigerators dissolved into this post-Friday world of ash, darkness, and hunger" (p. 1) – ALSO VIVIDNESS (notes, June 5, 2013)

What Happened to Goodbye - From my memo: I started analyzing *What Happened to Goodbye*, and I've noticed that, while still thinking about what might qualify as vividness but not as style, I'm assuming that what qualifies as style also qualifies as vividness.

This has held for the previous four novels, and I'm assuming it will continue to hold. (notes, August 7, 2013)

As my memo indicates in the example above, after analyzing the first couple of novels I understood that style and vividness are the same. Therefore, in my analysis notes, I stopped writing ALSO VIVIDNESS when taking notes related to style. I found that style does, in fact, help further define the interesting text criteria vividness.

Vividness and plot. Because Schraw and Lehman (2001) include "text segments that stand out because they create suspense, surprise, or are otherwise engaging" (p. 31) in their description of vividness, and plot also includes suspense, I realized that vividness could relate not only to style but also to plot. For instance, in *Ashfall*, many of the chapters end with dramatic statements, such as "Then the explosion's started" (p. 18); "There was no dawn the next day" (p. 25); "In the morning, I woke to the sound of breaking glass" (p. 110), to build suspense and encourage the reader to keep reading. In *Between* the way the conflicts played out with the present/past narration served to create suspense, particularly as those that were resolved did not resolve until near the end of the novel, as with the rumors about the affair and the paternity test (p. 451). And in *Flip* the reader discovers with Alex what is happening to him – that he is somehow trapped in Philip's body; that he and Philip were born in the same hospital on the same day; that his body is in a comma; that he's a psychic evacuee. This creates suspense to encourage the reader to continue reading for the next piece of information that Alex will discover. In fact, as I discussed in the Plot section earlier in this chapter, all eight novels include suspense; therefore, vividness relates to plot across novels.

Life Themes

Life themes as an interesting text criteria includes death, danger, sex, power (Schallert & Reed, 1997) [and] chaos, destruction, disease, injury, money, and romance (Wade, 1992). The assumption in the literature seemed to be that any of these ideas included in the text added to the interest of the text. However, as I looked for these ideas in each text, I wondered if other factors matter. For instance, if a character mentioned that his mom died, does that inclusion of death automatically make the text interesting? Or does the reader need to be given details of the death of the mom to make it interesting? As I analyzed the novels I found that sometimes life themes overlapped with theme; and sometimes life themes were events that happened, which overlaps with plot.

Life themes and theme. Based on titles alone, I was anticipating that life themes and theme would be related. However, from the list of life themes, not many correspond to common themes as described by Lukens (2007): finding themselves/ searching for answers or secrets/ finding identity and hiding self/ dealing with loss/ friendship/ family/ coming of age/ bullying/ moving/ relationships/ abuse/ illness or mental issue. There is some overlap, though. Most commonly, the life theme romance corresponds with themes that focus on romantic relationships. For example, after analysis of *Between* I noted that one life theme that is also a theme is romance – the relationship between Richie and Liz. Richie is the only person Liz has really ever kissed. They met as toddlers, started dating in middle school, and were still dating when Liz died. Liz was a virgin and was saving herself for Richie. Though Richie was a drug dealer, and he thought Liz was cheating on him, Liz never regrets having Richie in her life. Romance as life theme and theme also

occurs in *What Happened to Goodbye*, *The Throne of Fire*, and *The Near Witch* (romance in these three novels is discussed in the Theme section earlier in this chapter).

The life theme of sex also corresponds with themes that focus on romantic relationships. This is true in *Between*, where sex is discussed though Richie and Liz did not have sex; it is also true in *Ashfall*. Alex's relationship with Darla is the one place in the novel where theme and life theme connect, as sex enters the relationship. Alex's body responds to Darla soon after they meet. He likes Darla but believes she sees him as a helpless kid. After her mother dies, Alex takes care of her, and she admits her feelings for him. Alex and Darla both admit they are virgins and then fool around, but Alex will not have sex with Darla because he does not want to get her pregnant; they decide they need to find condoms.

Life themes and plot. After seeing so few connections between life themes and theme, I made the following observation:

From my memo: I've…determined that what belongs in the LIFE THEMES category also belongs in PLOT. I'll have to see if this pans out. (notes, June 20, 2013)

I made this observation during my analysis of *Ashfall*, the third novel I analyzed. To illustrate from my analysis notes:

-death – Alex kills Target with a rock (p. 214) – ALSO PLOT

-danger – Alex falls into a stream during a blizzard (p. 243)

-death – the little girl Alex and Darla were trying to help (pp. 287-288)

-sex – Alex and Darla both admit they're virgins and then fool around (pp. 299-300)

-death – farmer killed by his pigs (pp. 307-308)

-death – Darla killed a pig (p. 309) – ALL OF THESE COULD ALSO BE PLOT (notes, June 20, 2013)

But this is also true of *Flip*, the second novel I analyzed:

-talk of breasts (p. 45)

-kissing two girls in the same day (p. 56)

-talk of murder (p. 173, 178), suicide (p. 177) (notes, January 22, 2013)

As can be seen, these ideas from *Flip* illustrate the life themes of sex and death, but they are also part of the plot or "sequence of events involving character in conflict" (Lukens, 2007, p. 357). For this novel, these events do not align with theme.

In *Between* there are four instances of death (two involve Liz's body) in the novel, and all three dead bodies are more related to plot than to theme. In the first chapter, Liz sees her own body floating by the side of her family's boat. The main mystery of the novel is what happened to Liz? In the second chapter, Liz meets another ghost who had been hit by a car (p. 14). Another mystery is why Liz and Alex are together as ghosts. Liz's mom's death serves to explain Liz's character, but it's also connected to plot in that it could explain why Liz was wasting away. Finally, Josie killing Liz solves the mystery of how and why Liz died. Similarly, across novels many of the segments of text that I identified as life themes that did not correspond with theme also corresponded with plot.

Coherence

As an interesting text criteria, coherence is described as follows: well organized and easy to follow (Schraw and Lehman, 2001); information included fits into the text's overall structure (Wade, Buxton, & Kelly, 1999); clarity (Schraw, Bruning, & Svoboda, 1995; Wade, 1992); "A principle demanding that the parts of any composition be so arranged that the meaning of the whole may be immediately clear and intelligible" (Harmon & Holman, 2009, p. 109). Coherence is not addressed in descriptions of the literary devices (Lukens, 2007), but during my pilot analysis (content and literary analyses of *The Dark Light* by Mette Newth (1995)) I linked coherence to plot: Coherence: first chapter – I'm in the present with the girl – "It was impossible to understand that she was going to die" (p. 4). Second chapter – introduced right away to Tora and Endre and know that they're not at the hospital – "But from the mountains edge it was quiet" (p. 13); clear I'm going to hear about the past – "they had discovered one late-summer day in the year they both turned seven" (p. 17). HERE IT LOOKS LIKE BY COHERENCE I MEAN CLEAR INDICATION OF WHERE I AM IN THE STORY – PRESENT OR PAST – CONNECTED TO PLOT (notes, January 31, 2012)

During analysis of *Exposed*, the first novel I analyzed for my study, I found the plot to be coherent, but I also found the style to be coherent. After completing analysis of my third novel, I wrote the following memo: The biggest question I have right now is how coherence interacts with all the literary elements, something I'll be paying attention to as I continue to analyze texts (notes, May 5, 2013). My belief after completing analysis of all eight novels is that coherence can interact with all literary devices

(discussed further in Chapter 5), but I have limited this section to literary devices for which I can provide examples from at least half of the novels. My findings related to how coherence interacts with plot, style, and character in the eight novels of my study follow.

Coherence and plot. As I noted during my pilot study, in a coherent plot the author provides clear indication of where the reader is in the story in terms of present or past. In addition, I found that coherence relates to apparent discrepancies being explained/resolved as the story progresses. Examples from the five novels that follow illustrate coherent plot.

Exposed. The clear indications of when Liz is in the present and when she is having a flashback speak to the novel's coherence. The novel begins in present tense: "I am the first one here" (p. 1). The first flashback, which happens on page eleven, is indicated by the past tense of the verb in the second line and by the mention of a previous birthday: "My brother, Mike,/bought me my first camera-/a gift for my twelfth birthday." The novel continues in this way, with the verb tense in the first or second line indicating right away for the reader if Liz is in the present or thinking about the past.

Flip. One reason I wanted to keep reading *Flip* is because of the coherent plot. Each piece fits together to create a coherent whole, systematically dismantling my skepticism soon after it started to take hold. For example, quite early in the novel I wondered why Alex didn't just google himself to find out what happened to him. Then I read that he self-reflectively realizes he could have googled himself anytime but he wasn't ready to find out what happened to him (p. 73). Also, Alex and I had been

wondering why he lost six months of his life. Then Alex thinks about something his mom mentioned during his visit to his house – that she and his dad "sat with their son on the six-month anniversary, discussing whether to give up" (p. 112). He speculates that he overheard and his soul jumped ship. Smaller events are also coherent, such as near the beginning of the novel, even though he doesn't know Philip's life and doesn't necessarily have an obligation to stay at school, he has to stay one day because a teacher took his phone and he can't get it back until the end of the day. These events help create a believable fantasy.

What Happened to Goodbye. Dessen clearly indicates when Mclean is thinking of the past, which speaks to the novel's coherence. For instance, Mclean's first foray into the past begins with, "Whenever my dad and I moved to a new town…" (p. 4). She also provides time stamps: "Three years ago…" (p. 8) or "in my old life" (p. 7). As a reader, it's easy to distinguish between present events and past, making the story clear.

The Throne of Fire. Memories and dreams are interspersed throughout the novel, but Riordan clearly indicates where the reader is in the text (coherence). For instance, signal words are used to show that Carter is recounting a dream that he had: "what I saw during the night terrified me" (p. 68) – "our trip to the Brooklyn Museum…" (p. 69); and then back to the present of the story – "Fast-forward past breakfast…" (p. 74). Likewise, Sadie is in the present with Bes (p. 191) and then wakes up as a chicken (soul travel) at the beginning of a new chapter (p. 192) – her soul visits Jaz after a break in the text (p. 194) and then "suddenly I was on a royal barge, floating down the Nile" (p. 198); these changes are clearly indicated in the text, making the story easy to follow.

The Near Witch. Overall, the plot is coherent. Schwab provides clear indications of when Lexi is remembering her father, as all that relates to him is past tense: "I remember the first time he took me to see the sisters" (p. 23); "he used to say" (p. 25). The complete story of the Near Witch, spread throughout the novel, follows chronological order (making it easy to follow while creating suspense), with Lexi beginning the story a couple of times (for Wren and for Cole). When she finally ends the story (for Cole), she acknowledges that there may be other endings. She asks the sisters to tell her "'The real ending'" of the story of the Near Witch (p. 161), which clarifies the discrepancy between the alternate endings. In addition, when Lexi is charged with finding the Near Witch's bones, she realizes that the Council might know: the three hunters who killed and buried the Near Witch became the Council (pp. 165-166); they may have passed down the information of where the witch was buried from Council to Council.

Coherence and style. Style is coherent when the use of language represents the content or parallels the content. Consistency in style also shows coherence. Examples from four novels illustrate coherent style.

Exposed. One particularly vivid event is when Kate tells Liz what happened with Mike. This is the one place in the novel where Marcus includes paragraphs, with run-on sentences and run-on words ("ithurtsobad" (p. 128)). The shift in format and the run-on style mirror the content of what Kate is saying, the specifics of Mike forcing himself on her and things moving too quickly and Kate feeling like she has no control. Because in this event the pieces fit together to create the whole, it is also an example of coherence.

Another example of coherence that also characterizes style and vividness in *Exposed* is "Family Pride" (p. 57). This chapter has two verses – the first shows Liz's perspective of how her dad sees her and the second shows how her mom sees her. The two parts align perfectly: "Dad's always been proud of me./Whether I was playing a potato/in the Fabulous Food Groups play,/" contrasted with "Mom's proud of me, too./Though I know she wished I were the apple,/" (p. 57). Marcus focuses on three key events that parallel Liz's dad's pride and her mom's tempered pride in just six lines each.

Flip. I noticed one example of style that I would also label as coherent. When Alex searches websites to see if there is anyone else out there like him, the psychic evacuee website that he finds is presented in a different voice (and font) than the rest of the text (pp. 125-129). This makes sense because it would be different than Alex's voice; so it's coherent but as a stylistic choice.

What Happened to Goodbye. Two extended metaphors illustrate the connecting of ideas (coherence) that tie together Mclean's search for identity. Both food and basketball are used to describe facets of Mclean's life: food shows who Mclean's parents are and how they function (Mclean's mom and the "Cream Ofs" soup (p. 16), and Mclean's dad and the status of the food at the restaurant determining how long they will stay) in relation to her; and Mclean's feelings about basketball, which change throughout the novel, mirror what she's finding out about herself and who she is (likes basketball when the family was together, wouldn't touch a basketball during the years living with her dad before Lakeview, played a pick-up game with Dave, shot a basket on the last page).

Small as an Elephant. After looking across the similes and metaphors and personification that Jacobson used in the novel, I did see coherence to them. For instance, a few of them at various points in the novel relate to Jack's heart/chest: "until disappointment let go of his chest" (p. 78); "It was as if thinking about the fight was searing the edges of his heart" (pp. 185-186); "this memory caused his heart to form a fist" (p. 192); Jack "felt his heart madly searching for a way to exit his body" (p. 243). In addition, the references to elephants throughout the novel come together in the metaphor that compares Jack's journey and the people he met along the way to a "true herd" of elephants who help one another (p. 274).

Coherence and character. Like with style, consistency shows coherence of character. And like with plot, apparent discrepancies being explained/resolved show coherence of character. These criteria help make the characters believable, which is a concept that repeatedly arose when I was analyzing the novels. Examples from the six novels that follow exemplify coherence and character.

Flip. Something that struck me about characterization in *Flip* was how Bedford painted Alex-as-Philip-as-Flip-as-Alex to be a character I could believe in. It seems quite complicated to write a person inside another person's body, but Alex was real to me because of his coherence. For instance, Philip was taking German in school, but Alex did not know German and so he could not understand anything that was happening in Philip's German class (p. 24). Alex does not know how to ice skate, even though Philip had lessons (pp. 134-137). Given that it's Alex's soul/mind inside Philip's body, it made sense that he would not be able to do physical things Philip could do. When Alex entered

Philip's body, he brought his personality, memories of life as Alex, and memory of

Alex's abilities with him. He did not have memories of things like German, ice skating,

or playing cricket. He did have a different body, though, so he can do some things as

Philip that he could not do as Alex. For example, Alex plays Frisbee well and Rob

explains that it is because he is relaxed: "'you're so busy enjoying yourself in Flip's body

you've forgotten it isn't yours'" (p. 145).

Ashfall. Since the reader is told at the beginning of the novel that Alex has

extensive experience with taekwondo, it makes sense that he would be capable of fighting

the three guys who break into his neighbors' house; fighting the small guy and Target;

and using taekwondo to protect himself at the camp.

Between. Even as Liz changes, she still maintains some of her ideas: After

everything, Liz still believes Caroline had to buy an expensive dress for homecoming

because "my friends…do *not* buy formal dresses at the *mall*" (p. 352). Though Liz has

seen through Alex's eyes and her own memories that she's a bit spoiled, the fact that she

doesn't entirely change rings true and speaks to cohesion in character.

What Happened to Goodbye. Mclean, as well as other characters in the novel, is

coherent. For instance, even though Mclean has decided that it's not the right time/too

risky to be in relationship with Dave, it makes sense that she invites him to the basketball

game out of panic. She's going to spend time with her mom, whom she doesn't get along

with, and her stepdad and half siblings, whom she doesn't really know. Dave being there

will be a buffer, and he wants to go to the game so it sort of just happens.

Small as an Elephant. One idea that ties the novel together (coherence) and speaks to a characteristic of Jack's is his fascination with elephants. The novel begins with the sentence, "Elephants can sense danger" (p. 1). Then the reader learns on page five that Jack is "an expert on all things elephant." He believes his fight with his mother about an elephant might have influenced her leaving him at the campsite. Though "he could never explain to other kids why elephants mattered so much to him" (p. 145), it's his knowledge of elephants and his desire to see Lydia that convince Sylvie to help him escape Searsport, Maine. Jack's belief that seeing Lydia will somehow make everything better gives him hope to continue his journey. And, ultimately, it's the elephant that reunites Jack with his grandmother.

The Throne of Fire. Though it was a little unsettling to shift perspective from Carter to Sadie every other chapter (in the sense that sometimes I had to remind myself which character I was reading), I did find the characters to be coherent. Sadie seemed a little more feisty and sarcastic than Carter, and this was maintained throughout her chapters. The only time it seemed to me that a character acted out of character was when Carter said that he would prefer to save Zia than to find the Book of Ra. Since he was clearly being set up as a hero, it didn't seem true that he would go for the romance over saving the world; but it ended up that saving Zia related to saving the world, so this action was actually in character.

Conclusion

My findings indicate that the literary devices and the interesting text criteria (vividness, coherence, and life themes) do, in fact, work together to more completely

describe features of interesting texts. Vividness is further defined by style; and by plot for text segments that create suspense. Life themes relate to theme, most commonly when romantic relationships are involved; and to plot in many instances. Finally, in at least half of the novels coherence interacts with plot and/or style and/or character.

Conclusions

To answer the overall question of my study, *What features of young adult narrative fiction texts make them interesting to their intended audience?,* I conducted literary analyses and qualitative content analyses of eight young adult narrative fiction texts from the 2012 Young Adults' Choices List. In this chapter I presented my findings related to these textual analyses as well as to my trending of a recent decade of the Young Adults' Choices List. The conclusions I share here focus on commonalities that I believe are most relevant to answering my overall research question.

Trends from the List provide a surface description of features across these texts that young adults indicated they like reading. Across the 2002 to 2012 lists, commonalities exist in genre, format, characters, and topics and themes. Trends reveal the most popular genres are fantasy and contemporary realistic fiction; traditional is the most common format; characters tend to be European American and of able mind and body; and themes often focus on identity.

Literary analyses of my eight target texts do show similarities across literary devices: character, point-of-view, plot, setting, style, tone, and theme. However, the commonalities that occur most significantly across all eight novels are character, plot, style, tone, and theme. In terms of character, protagonists are predominately round and

dynamic. *Ashfall* is the only novel that has a round protagonist who is not also dynamic. All eight novels are progressive in plot, and seven of the eight novels have a chronological narrative order. In addition, authors of all eight novels create suspense and develop conflicts in their narratives. For style, the authors across novels are intentional about their language, employing stylistic devices such as imagery and figurative language. The tone of all eight novels is serious. Finally, the most common themes explore relationships with family and friends and/or romantic partners and are focused on identity.

Literary analysis combined with qualitative content analysis using the interesting text criteria (vividness, coherence, and life themes) reveal that the literary devices and the interesting text criteria do work together to create a more detailed description of features of interesting texts. Based on my analyses, the literary devices style and plot and theme are needed to more fully describe the interesting text criteria vividness and life themes. Vividness is further defined by style but also relates to plot for text segments that create suspense; and life themes relate to theme or to plot. Coherence, on the other hand, is an interesting text criterion that is not directly addressed by the literary devices. My findings show that in at least half of the target texts, plot and/or style and/or character are coherent. The significance of this finding, as well as a discussion of my other findings and what they mean for my overall research question, will be presented in the next chapter.

Chapter Five: Conclusion

When I first conceptualized this study, my goal was to create a list of criteria secondary English teachers could use to help select whole-class texts that would likely be of interest to their students. My dissertation is the first step on this journey that has become my research agenda. In this, my final chapter of the dissertation, I present a discussion of my findings and my plans for continued study of features that make texts interesting to their intended audience. The first section of this chapter is a summary of my study followed by my working list of interesting text criteria for narrative fiction. Then I present a discussion of my findings, suggestions for future research, limitations of my dissertation research, and, finally, implications for research and practice.

Summary of My Study

To answer my overall research question, *What features of young adult narrative fiction texts make them interesting to their intended audience?,* I relied on textual analysis framed by both transactional theory and socio-cognitive theory. These theories informed my approach to the texts as both a reader and a researcher. To choose my texts for analysis I consulted the International Reading Association's Young Adults' Choices List because these are books that secondary students indicated they enjoyed reading. A thorough text selection process led me to eight target texts that are representative (in terms of genre, format, characters, topics and themes) of the narrative fiction texts that appear on the 2002 to 2012 Young Adults' Choices List. My analyses of these texts, including literary analysis and qualitative content analysis, were guided by two research subquestions:

1. What literary features do texts enjoyed by young adult readers have in common?

2. How might traditional literary analysis and analysis using socio-cognitive descriptions of interesting texts work together to create a more robust model of interesting texts?

These questions serve as headings that guide my discussion of key findings and their meanings. First, though, I present my working list of interesting text criteria for narrative fiction, the culmination of the present study.

Working List of Interesting Text Criteria for Narrative Fiction

Character – Are the protagonists round and dynamic?

   Definition of character: "each of the living beings in a story" (Lukens, 2007, p. 76)

       Flat – not fully developed; or round – fully developed

       Dynamic – changes throughout the story; or static – does not change

Plot – Is the plot progressive and is the narrative order chronological? Do the authors include suspense and develop conflict?

   Definition of plot: sequence of events

       Types of plot – progressive – climax followed by resolution; episodic – incidents linked together by characters or theme

       Narrative order – chronological; alternating past and present; flashbacks

       Types of conflict – person-against-self; person-against-person; person-against society; person-against-nature

Suspense – "the emotional pull that keeps us wanting to read on" (Lukens, 2007, p. 112)

Style (Vividness) – Are stylistic devices used?

Definition of style: choice and arrangement of words

Devices of style – connotation; imagery; figurative language; hyperbole; understatement; allusion; symbol; puns and wordplay

Devices of sound – onomatopoeia; alliteration; assonance; consonance; rhythm

Vividness - "text segments that stand out because they create suspense, surprise, or are otherwise engaging" (Schraw & Lehman, 2001, p. 31); active voice, imagery, concrete examples, "vivid or unusual words" (Wade, Buxton, & Kelly, 1999, p. 199); "words that arouse vivid imagery and … say the unexpected" (Schallert & Reed, 1997, p. 73)

Tone – Is the tone serious?

Definition of tone: "the author's *attitude* toward story and readers" as portrayed through word choice (Lukens, 2007, p. 212)

Examples of tone – serious/lighthearted/sarcastic/humorous

Theme – Are relationships (family, friends, and/or romance) explored in the novel? Identity is also an important theme in young adult literature but not necessary for interesting texts.

Definition of theme: main idea

Common thematic ideas - finding themselves/ searching for answers or secrets/ finding identity and hiding self/ dealing with loss/ friendship/ family/ coming of age/ bullying/ moving/ relationships/ abuse/ illness or mental issue

Coherence – Are character and plot and style coherent?

Definition of coherence: well organized and easy to follow (Schraw and Lehman, 2001); information included fits into the text's overall structure (Wade, Buxton, & Kelly, 1999); clarity (Schraw, Bruning, & Svoboda, 1995; Wade, 1992) ; "A principle demanding that the parts of any composition be so arranged that the meaning of the whole may be immediately clear and intelligible" (Harmon & Holman, 2009, p. 109).

Coherence and character – consistent; apparent discrepancies explained/resolved

Coherence and plot - the author provides clear indication of where the reader is in the story in terms of present or past; apparent discrepancies explained/resolved as the story progresses

Coherence and style – consistent; the use of language represents the content or parallels the content.

Discussion

My working list of interesting text criteria is based on my findings and answers my overall research question, *What features of young adult narrative fiction texts make them interesting to their intended audience?* In this discussion section I present my

rationale for and the significance of the criteria on my working list. This discussion occurs in two main subsections, the headings of which are the two research subquestions that guided my study.

1. **What literary features do texts enjoyed by young adult readers have in common**?

The results of my literary analysis show commonalties across literary devices, particularly for character, plot, style, tone, and theme. In this section I first describe why setting and point-of-view did not make the list; then I discuss the five literary features that did make the list.

Setting and point-of-view. As indicated in Chapter Four, through literary analysis I found similarities across novels for all literary devices: character, point-of-view, plot, setting, style, tone, and theme. However, neither setting nor point-of-view was similar enough for me to include on my list of interesting text criteria. Setting included both backdrop and integral; what's important for setting is that it's appropriate for the story and that the author's purpose is clear. This seems particular to each individual story and can be true of either integral or backdrop. Point-of-view also was not consistent enough across novels to include on my working list. Point-of-view for the eight novels in my study included first person from one perspective, first person from multiple perspectives, and limited omniscient. It's true that these types limit the perspective of the reader to one or a few narrators, but they're still different enough that I cannot say a certain point-of-view is a feature of interesting texts.

Character. To select a representative sample of texts, I intentionally included novels with both male and female protagonists. My eight target texts (one which includes both a male and female protagonist) comprise five female and four male protagonists. I was not surprised to find that all nine protagonists were round; I expected the protagonists to be dynamic, as well. After all, round, dynamic characters are often easier for readers to connect with because they more closely resemble living, breathing human beings. As the only protagonist who was not dynamic, Alex of *Ashfall* was a difficult character for me as a reader to connect with and, therefore, care about. I did understand him, though, as he was given multiple characteristics to round him out. Ultimately, for narrative fiction it seems important that the characters be round and dynamic to appeal to readers' situational interest.

Plot. My findings suggest that to appeal to the situational interest of the intended audience, narrative fiction young adult novels should be progressive in plot and chronological in narrative order, should include suspense, and should develop conflict. The creation of suspense looked different across novels, but the authors of all eight novels kept me wanting to find out what happens next. For instance, suspense in *What Happened to Goodbye* was created through the use of flashbacks, strategically placed so that the reader doesn't have the complete picture all at once but is instead encouraged to keep reading to see how the past and present come together. In *The Near Witch*, brief mentions and partial explanations of Lexi's search for the missing children and of the story of the Near Witch convince the reader to read for more information to solve the mystery. However the authors create suspense, of importance seems to be in the balance

of information – providing enough that the reader can piece together the story but leaving enough so the reader wants to keep reading. Related to suspense, authors of all eight novels developed the conflicts in their narratives. Developed (rather than undeveloped) conflicts encourage readers to care about the "outcome of the story" (Lukens, 2007, p. 126). While all four major types of conflicts were represented in these novels, the most popular were person-against-person (in six of eight novels) and person-against-self (also in six of eight novels).

Style. Given that the writing quality of most young adult literature equals or exceeds that of adult literature (Christenbury, 2000), I would have been surprised if the authors of my eight target texts had not employed stylistic devices to craft their stories. Furthermore, my reliance on the *Horn Book Guide* to weed out texts that are not considered of high quality practically guaranteed that the novels would be stylistic. Of surprise to me was the varying degree to which the authors employed stylistic devices.

As I stated in Chapter Four, two novels, *Exposed* and *The Near Witch*, included devices of both style and sound. These novels were beautifully written; throughout my analysis of both novels I couldn't help but be drawn to the language. In contrast, while Mullin (author of *Ashfall*) did include imagery and figurative language, I did not find his use of language to be particularly noticeable. In fact, at times it was distracting. For instance, Mullin repeats Alex reporting his feelings of terror and boredom (p. 34), worry and boredom (p. 41), boredom and terror (p. 42); which became redundant for me. Also, at points in the story it seems that Mullin includes more detail than necessary; because of this, during analysis I created a miscellaneous category that I labeled "lots of detail" but

that seems to relate closely to style, albeit in a negative way. A few examples include the description of restroom facilities at the school (pp. 78-79); butchering the rabbit (pp. 153-156); Darla using a truck engine and bicycle to recharge a battery (pp. 168-171). As I was reading these passages, I was wondering why I needed so much information – it didn't seem to be important for the story and so served to detract from it. In the remaining five novels I noticed moments of beautiful language and moments where the language wasn't particularly distinct; style in these novels was neither amazing nor annoying. Ultimately, my findings suggest that style, particularly the use of imagery and figurative language, should be considered as a criterion of interesting texts for narrative fiction.

Tone. The fact that all eight novels in my study are serious in tone suggests the authors' earnestness in their approach to their subject matter and readers. It also suggests that a serious tone is a criterion of interesting texts for narrative fiction. Other tones, such as sarcasm and humor, were also present in some of these novels, but their use was not consistent enough to consider them for the interesting text criteria.

Theme. The teen years are known to be a time of struggling through issues related to identity, so it's no surprise that young adult literature tackles this theme. After all, one facet of literature is that readers can see themselves between the pages (Galda, Sipe, Liang, & Cullinan, 2013). In my study five of eight novels include a theme focused on identity. Given findings from previous studies (Chance, 1999; Koss & Teale, 2009), I anticipated this theme would be a bit more prevalent, but it's still present in the majority

of my target texts. My findings suggest that identity is an important theme in young adult

narrative fiction but not necessary as an interesting text criterion.

Relationships, on the other hand, are important across the eight target texts.

Overall, relationships with others are portrayed as complicated but important. All eight

novels examine relationships with family members; seven of the eight novels explore

friendship; and six include romantic relationships. Based on my findings, a theme

focused on relationships is a criterion of interesting texts for narrative fiction.

Whether focusing on identity or relationships or both, authors of four of eight

novels used a didactic approach (see Table 5.1). For example, in *Exposed*, the author

seemed to emphasize the idea at the end of the novel that going through difficulty makes

one stronger: "I used to be so confident/about who people were, who I was-/…I realized/I

no longer see things/in crisp black-and-white contrasts-/"(p. 237) and "…I remember/the

words of Annie Leibovitz:/*When you trust your point of view,/that's when you start

taking pictures*.//This girl/is starting now" (p. 255). This emphasis – these words in

italics on the last page of the novel - made the lesson a bit didactic. Likewise, in *What

Happened to Goodbye*, one piece of the identity theme seemed a bit didactic: "Wiping the

surface clean doesn't make anything any neater…It's only when you really dig down

deep…that you can see who you really are" (pp. 360-361). Here the author is telling the

reader what conclusions to draw. I was a bit surprised by the presence of didacticism in

these novels that young adults indicated they enjoyed reading, but its presence suggests

that didacticism is not a significant detracting factor for the intended audience.

Table 5.1: Common Themes, Including Whether Didacticism is Present

	Relationships	Identity	Perspective	Are the themes didactic?
Ashfall	Yes	No	No	Yes
Between	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes
Exposed	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes
Flip	Yes	Yes	No	No
Near Witch	Yes	No	No	No
Small…Elephant	Yes	Yes	Yes	No
Throne of Fire	Yes	No	No	No
What…Goodbye	Yes	Yes	No	Yes

Conclusion

The commonalities across novels for these literary devices – character, plot, style, tone, and theme – indicate their importance to the intended audience. Because my eight target texts are representative (in terms of genre, format, characters, topics and themes) of the narrative fiction texts that appear on the 2002 to 2012 Young Adults' Choices List, my findings speak beyond these eight texts. Additionally, the results of my literary analysis corroborate Chance's (1999) findings. After analyzing twenty-three novels from the 1997 Young Adults' Choices List, she established that all novels had round protagonists and the majority were dynamic; almost all novels were progressive in plot, the majority were chronological in narrative order, and the most common conflicts were

person-against-self and person-against-person; the novels were stylistic, most commonly employing imagery; the tone of the majority of novels was serious; and the most common theme was related to identity. The only difference between my findings from analyzing texts from the 2012 list and Chance's (1999) findings from analyzing texts from the 1997 list was theme – while I did find a focus on identity in five of the eight texts, all eight explored relationships. With such similar findings from analysis of texts that young adults indicated they enjoyed reading across a span of fifteen years, these results are robust for establishing features of narrative fiction that appeal to the intended audience's situational interest.

2. **How might traditional literary analysis and analysis using socio-cognitive descriptions of interesting texts work together to create a more robust model of interesting texts?**

The conceptualization of my study began when I discovered the interesting text research conducted by socio-cognitivists in the 1990s. These studies were primarily quantitative in nature, with researchers creating mostly nonfiction texts for subjects to read in a controlled environment. Their findings suggested that the key criteria of interesting texts included vividness, coherence, and life themes. With my background in literature, I questioned these findings, particularly as they might relate to authentic narrative fiction texts. I decided to test these findings by applying the interesting text criteria as well as literary analysis to narrative fiction. The results of the combined analyses (literary analysis and qualitative content analysis) do create a more robust model of interesting texts, at least for narrative fiction, as described in the sections that follow.

Vividness and life themes. I began my study with the assumption that the literary devices would better explain/describe the interesting text criteria for narrative fiction. Based on my findings, this does, in fact, appear to be the case for vividness and for life themes. The literary device "style" more thoroughly explains the interesting text criteria vividness. And life themes can be explained by "theme" or by "plot" since the interesting text criteria life themes includes descriptors (e.g. death, sex, danger) that could be topics or themes depending upon how they're incorporated in the text. Additionally, vividness appears to relate to plot, specifically suspense, but this relationship does not add to the description of plot as a literary term. Because in the cases of vividness and life themes the literary devices do better describe these criteria, I have included vividness as part of style and have not specifically mentioned life themes on my list of interesting text criteria.

Coherence. While vividness and life themes are more thoroughly described by the literary devices, coherence is not commonly considered in literary analysis. In defining coherence, interesting text researchers seem to be mainly talking about plot. Schraw and Lehman (2001) describe a coherent text as one that is well organized and easy to follow; and Wade, Buxton, and Kelly (1999) posit that the information included fits into the text's overall structure. Therefore, when I began analysis of the texts for my study, I assumed that coherence would relate to plot. I did find that to be the case, but I also found that coherence relates to character and to style. In fact, coherence has proven to be a significant criterion of interesting texts. Style is coherent when the use of language represents or parallels the content. For character and plot coherence means that

apparent discrepancies are explained and/or resolved; and for plot it means the author

provides clear indication of where the reader is in the story in terms of present or past.

Conclusion

I appreciate the work of socio-cognitivists in developing criteria for interesting

texts, particularly as this work sparked my interest in developing interesting text criteria

for narrative fiction. In combining analysis using the interesting text criteria with literary

analysis, I was not surprised to find that vividness and life themes were more thoroughly

described by the literary devices. I found descriptions of both vividness and life themes

to be vague in the interesting text research and hoped the literary devices would prove

useful in clarifying and developing these criteria. Coherence, though, was a different

matter. Initially I was thinking that coherence related to plot in a straightforward manner.

However, my findings show that coherence clearly interacts with more than one literary

device. Coherence helps the reader follow the story and not be unnecessarily distracted

by pieces that don't fit. It was only through the combination of both content analysis

using the interesting text criteria and literary analysis that I was able to develop this list of

interesting text criteria for narrative fiction.

<div align="center">

Suggestions for Future Research

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Future research related to my dissertation study includes both textual analysis and

classroom research. In terms of textual analysis, I think my research would benefit from

conducting the same analyses with more narrative fiction texts from the Young Adults'

Choices List to verify my findings: Should setting and/or point-of-view be included on

my list of interesting text criteria? Is it true that characters should be both round and

dynamic or maybe just round? Is it important for plot to be progressive or is this finding related to the fact that plots of young adult narrative fiction texts tend to be progressive instead of episodic? I'm wondering if my results are more related to total numbers of progressive versus episodic plots than that a progressive plot is truly a criterion of interesting texts. Are there specific devices of style that are important for interesting texts? Though I'm not sure how to study this, how stylistic should the writing be? Similarly to plot, is a serious tone truly an important interesting text criterion or does my finding simply represent the majority of young adult texts' tone? And, if it does represent the majority, does that then make it an interesting text criterion? For theme, I would like to further study the relationships represented in young adult narrative fiction. What and how are these relationships represented? Finally, I would like to further study coherence. After analyzing the eight target texts for my dissertation, I am convinced that coherence interacts with all literary elements. I would like to know if it's important for all the literary elements that make up my interesting text criteria to also be coherent. My findings show that coherence is important for character and plot and style. Further study might show it to be important for other literary devices, as well.

While analysis requires taking texts apart, coherence suggests putting them back together. To that end, I wonder if coherence would be found to be important not just for each literary device but also in the interactions between them? After all, it's the literary devices together that make up the narrative fiction text; maybe coherence is actually about the intricacies of these devices working together.

In addition to analyzing more texts from the Young Adults' Choices List, I would like to apply my interesting text criteria to narrative fiction texts typically studied in secondary classrooms. The purpose of this analysis would be to see if/how many of these interesting text criteria are present in the typical narrative fiction texts. I hypothesize that none of the texts would show all of the criteria. If some do, though, what would that mean for my study?

Even with plans to conduct more textual analyses, I'm ready to try out my working list of interesting text criteria for narrative fiction with teachers and students. My plan is to find secondary teachers willing to use my research-based list of criteria to choose texts for their classes. Teachers' feedback related to the usability and impact of this list will be invaluable to its further development. Additionally, I will spend time in these teachers' classrooms and talk to students about the texts their teachers chose. Ultimately, if the students are not engaged, the list must be revised.

Limitations of My Study

While I was quite thorough in my text selection process, it did result in only eight target texts. In early conceptualizations of my study, I had planned to analyze closer to thirty texts. However, with the analyses that I employed for my study, analyzing thirty texts would have taken much more time than I had to complete my dissertation. Analyzing more texts can only strengthen my findings, which is one reason why I plan to incorporate textual analysis in future studies related to my dissertation.

Though I did go back to re-analyze texts when new ideas emerged during the course of my study, I could have been more thorough in my analysis:

I'm noticing with the *Near Witch* that I'm making more connections (I think) between the interesting text criteria and the literary devices. I think this has happened gradually through the process, and now that I'm on my last novel I'm making the most connections. It COULD be that this novel lends itself to these connections, but I think it's at least partly because I'm more aware of how the interesting text criteria can connect to multiple literary devices. In an ideal world, I'd go back to the first few novels and do further analysis to test whether, for instance, Life Themes connect to Character in multiple novels. I don't really have time for that, but I can be thinking about this as I go back through to pull examples for chapter four. (notes, January 29, 2014)

As I embark on analysis of my next set of texts, I plan to incorporate the ideas that emerged during my dissertation study, as well as the thoroughness in analysis that my dissertation lacks.

Finally, it could certainly be considered a limitation that I did not consult young adult readers during the course of my study. While I did focus on texts that secondary students indicated they enjoyed reading (via the International Reading Association's Young Adults' Choices List), I did not talk to the young adults themselves. Their input will be invaluable for future studies related to my topic.

Implications for Research

The significance of my dissertation study for research is methodological and hopefully will impact the ways in which others conduct and describe textual analysis, specifically qualitative content analysis and literary analysis.

Content Analysis

Many of the studies utilizing qualitative content analysis do not explain their methods. For instance, neither Trousdale (1990) nor Harvey and Dowd (1993) mention their uses of content analysis in their studies, but both are cited in Galda, Ash, and Cullinan's (2000) section on Content Analyses in their chapter on "Children's Literature" in the *Handbook of Reading Research*. Knight (2005) thoroughly explains her methodology for developing categories and questions with which to analyze the treatment of racism in texts, but she only mentions content analysis as her method. She does not reference scholars who describe qualitative content analysis. My findings related to the lack of description of content analysis as a method align with the findings of Beach, Enciso, Harste, Jenkins, Raina, Rogers, Short, Sung, Wilson, and Yenika-Agbaw (2009): "Despite the frequent use of qualitative content analysis as a research method to examine children's literature as text, we found that the procedures for this analysis are often not described in detail in published studies and are discussed only briefly in methodology textbooks" (p. 129). My study addresses this lack of detailed description for qualitative content analysis.

Literary Analysis

As with qualitative content analysis, those conducting literary analyses are unlikely to explicitly discuss their processes. Chance (1999) designed and included in the appendices of her study an instrument for her analysis and briefly described her process, which provided me with enough information for her study to inform my approach. Koss (2008) employed a three-step approach in her literary analysis to help her describe and

define characteristics that make up young adult novels with multiple perspectives.

However, neither Chaudhri and Teale (2013) nor Curwood (2013) provide detail for their

processes of literary analysis. Like Koss (2008) I sought to be transparent in what I mean

by "conducting a literary analysis." Furthermore, I described how qualitative content

analysis and literary analysis can complement each other in a study that relies on textual

analyses.

These descriptions of textual analyses in my dissertation can be guides for

others wanting to apply qualitative content analysis and/or literary analysis to texts.

Additionally, my transparency of my methods might influence others to explicitly

describe their methods of textual analysis, leading to more robust analyses in the field.

Implications for Practice

In addition to implications for research, my dissertation findings do influence

practice. My study confirms previous findings related to common features of young adult

novels and interesting text criteria. Therefore, teachers and librarians and authors can

make informed decisions when choosing or writing texts for reader engagement.

Furthermore, when my working list of interesting text criteria for narrative fiction has

been revised based on teachers' and students' feedback; these same people, the teachers

and librarians and authors who greatly influence young adult readers, will have research-

based guidance to determine which texts are likely to be of interest to the majority of

students.

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Appendix A

OFFICIAL BALLOT For Young Adults' Choices

TITLE:

AUTHOR:

EVALUATION: (CHECK ONE)

   I really enjoyed the book! (2 points)
   The book was OK. (1 point)
   I disliked the book. (0 points)

COMMENTS:

NAME   **GRADE/YEAR**

TEACHER   **DATE**

Appendix B

Analysis Protocol

My Roles

Reading as a reader
  Transactional Theory – efferent/aesthetic
  Socio-Cognitive Theory – motivation/conceptual knowledge/strategy/social interaction; interest
  Stance (both theories – notes added during analysis of second text)
    Socio-Cognitive: "interest promotes deeper engagement with a text via constructivist processes that focus on interpretation and personal reactions" (Schraw, 1997, p. 449);
    motivations for reading include "aesthetic involvement, or enjoyment of experiencing a literary text" (Guthrie, McGough, Bennet, & Rice, 1996, p. 167)
    Transactional: efferent/aesthetic continuum (Rosenblatt, 1965/1995; 1978/1994); "when students respond aesthetically, they are more likely to interpret story events, apply their experiences with literature to life, and generalize, abstract, or create new possibilities as a result of their encounters with literature" (Cox & Many, 1992, p. 116)

Reading as a researcher
  Transactional Theory – Literary Analysis
  Socio-Cognitive Theory – Content Analysis

First time through – reader
Second and any subsequent times through - researcher

Literary Analysis

Data Sheet of Novels from Young Adults' Choices (adapted from Chance, 1999 using Lukens, 2007 and Koss & Teale, 2009)

Book Description

Reference:

Genre:

Writing quality (*Horn Book*):

Format: (added for analysis of first text – *Exposed*) – think about this as part of analysis – maybe part of style

Summary:

Other Notes

Author – Rosenblatt seems to say the poem is more important than the author. Context matters but I'm reading novels by current authors, I believe, so no need to research time/place.
Socio-cognitive – author mentioned as creator of text but not considered as important other than whether author (particularly of textbooks) is making texts interesting.
Foucault agrees that the author is dead but we're still influenced by the author function, which allows us to limit the significance of the author/text.
Purves says we should study the author's life and culture as one aspect of studying literature.

*Lee says to notice author's assumptions/ideologies during my second reading – connected to thematic development (determining author intent is part of interpretation (Probst, 2004, pp. 53-55); "Ideologies may be more or less visible in texts produced for children, which seldom reproduce overt ideology as a thematized component of text, but which will reflect two functions of ideology. The first of these is the social function of defining and sustaining group values (perceptible textually in an assumption that writer and implied reader share a common understanding and value), and the second is the cognitive function of supplying a meaningful organization of the social attitudes and relationships which constitute narrative plots" (McCallum & Stephens, 2011, p. 360);

Literary Devices

Significance of each of these devices to the story: How does this function in the text? Why - What opportunities does it afford the author/reader? (notes on function from Lukens, 2007; also use Galda, Sipe, Liang, and Cullinan, 2013, pp. 14, 28 – added during analysis of first text)

Character:
    Type of protagonist: Example(s) – round/flat; dynamic/static
    -unity of character and action (pp. 78-81); function can vary by genre (pp. 92-94)
Plot:
    Type of plot: Example(s) – progressive/episodic
    Narrative order: Example(s) – chronological/alternating past and present/flashbacks
    Type of major conflict: Example(s) – person-against-self/person-against-person/person-against-society/person-against-nature

-"The elements of a story that deal with rising action are suspense [pp. 111-113], the cliff-hanger [p. 114], foreshadowing [pp. 114-115], sensationalism [p. 116], the climax [pp. 116-118], denouement [pp. 118-119], and inevitability [p. 120]" (p. 111).

-"reliance on coincidence to resolve conflict weakens plot" (p. 122)

-"The most destructive element in the overuse of sentiment is not boredom, but the fact that the young reader, faced with continual sentimentality, will not develop the sensitivity essential to recognize what is truly moving and what is merely a play on feelings" (p. 125).

-lack of conflict – "Inadequately developed conflict…leaves us unconcerned about the outcome of a story " (p. 126)

Point-of-view:

Type of point-of-view: Example(s) – first person/omniscient/limited omniscient/objective (dramatic)

-First-person narration has "great potential for pulling the reader into what appears to be autobiographical truth" (p. 171). "The danger in first-person narration lies in the possibility of 'I' ignoring appropriate limitations, reporting thoughts of others, and predicting" (p. 171).

-"The objective or nearly objective point of view in some stories makes heavier demands on the imagination and understanding of the reader" (p. 178).

Setting:

Type of setting: Example(s) – integral/backdrop

Function of setting: Example(s) – clarifies conflict/as antagonist/illuminates character/affects mood/as symbol

Style:

Devices of style: Example(s) – connotation/ imagery/ figurative language/ hyperbole/ understatement/ allusion/ symbol/ puns and word play

Devices of sound: Example(s) – onomatopoeia/ alliteration/ assonance/ consonance/ rhythm

-"exaggeration or understatement to entertain or heighten feelings…and sound devices to give pleasure and to heighten meaning" (p. 207)

-should be appropriate for the story (p. 207)

Theme:

Common thematic ideas: Example(s) – finding themselves/ searching for answers or secrets/ finding identity and hiding self/ dealing with loss/ friendship/ family/ coming of age/ bullying/ moving/ relationships/ abuse/ illness or mental issue

-"If the information displaces the understanding, then didacticism has won out" (p. 139).

Tone:

Major tone: Example(s) – serious/lighthearted/sarcastic/humorous

-closely related to style and reveal the "attitude of the writer toward both the subject and the reader" (p. 211)

- issues include condescension (pp. 225-226), sentimentality (pp. 226-229), sensationalism (pp. 229-230), didacticism (pp. 230-231)

Content Analysis: Interesting Texts

Significance of each of these categories in the text: How does this function in the text? Why - What opportunities does it afford the author/reader? ("When information is interesting…they read more and therefore understand more" (Swan, 2003, p. 41); "interesting texts increase motivation for reading and comprehension of those texts" (Guthrie & Humenick, 2004, p. 343); interest - spend more time reading and learn more (Guthrie & Wigfield, 2000, p. 412) – added during analysis of second text)

Initial Coding Categories (socio-cognitive theory):
- Coherence: well organized and easy to follow (Schraw and Lehman, 2001); information included fits into the text's overall structure (Wade, Buxton, & Kelly, 1999); clarity (Schraw, Bruning, & Svoboda, 1995; Wade, 1992) ; "A principle demanding that the parts of any composition be so arranged that the meaning of the whole may be immediately clear and intelligible" (Harmon & Holman, 2009, p. 109).
- Vividness: "text segments that stand out because they create suspense, surprise, or are otherwise engaging" (Schraw & Lehman, 2001, p. 31); active voice, imagery, concrete examples, "vivid or unusual words" (Wade, Buxton, & Kelly, 1999, p. 199); "words that arouse vivid imagery and … say the unexpected" (Schallert & Reed, 1997, p. 73).
- Life themes: death, danger, sex, power (Schallert & Reed, 1997); death, danger, chaos, destruction, disease, injury, power, money, sex, and romance (Wade, 1992)

Preference studies most relevant to my study in terms of influencing analysis:
Chance, 1999 – analysis of characteristics from Young Adults' Choices for 1997 – **round protagonists, majority of protagonists are dynamic, progressive in action, first person, becoming self-aware is most common theme, serious in tone**;
Diaz-Rubin, 1996 - findings – most frequently listed topics included **movies, adventure, horror, mysteries, sports, murder, crime, humorous, love, fantasy** (p. 172)

Appendix C

Analysis Protocol Development Chart

Developmental Phase	Explanation and Description of Changes
1. July 14, 2010 – Interesting Text criteria determined from the literature (written exams)	Interesting Text criteria applied to one novel for written exam; found lacking in definitions of criteria and in possible need for more criteria
2. August 23, 2011 – Literary Analysis data sheet included (adapted from Chance, 1999 using Lukens, 2007 and Koss & Teale, 2009) in addition to the Interesting Text criteria (pilot study)	In discussion with Lee Galda, determined the need to add categories and literature to the protocol
3. January 31, 2012 – added information on Author, Stance, and Preference studies to the Literary Analysis and Interesting Text criteria (pilot study)	In discussion with Lee Galda and David O'Brien, determined the need for more than one reading of each text; also Lee suggested focusing on author assumptions instead of research about the author
4. December 2, 2012 – began analysis of first novel with a protocol that included descriptions of my readings of each text (at least two readings) and a reminder to focus on author assumptions during the second reading (analysis)	During analysis of the first text, I realized I needed more information from the literature about how each literary device functions in a text in general.
5. January 13, 2013 – began analysis of the second novel with a protocol that included descriptions of how the literary devices function in a text in general (analysis)	During analysis of the second text, I realized I needed more information from the literature on how the Interesting Text criteria function in a text, in general; and about stance from both the transactional theory and socio-cognitive theory perspectives.
6. January 16, 2013 – during analysis of the second text, I added notes to the protocol for how Interesting Text criteria function in a text, in general; and on stance (analysis)	

Appendix D

Analysis Notes: Analysis Protocols

Analysis of *Exposed*

My Roles

Reading as a reader
 Transactional Theory – efferent/aesthetic
 Socio-Cognitive Theory – motivation/conceptual knowledge/strategy/social
 interaction; interest
 Stance (both theories?)

Reading as a researcher
 Transactional Theory – Literary Analysis
 Socio-Cognitive Theory – Content Analysis

First time through – reader
Second and any subsequent times through - researcher

Literary Analysis

Data Sheet of Novels from Young Adults' Choices (adapted from Chance, 1999 using
Lukens, 2007 and Koss & Teale, 2009)

Book Description

Reference: Marcus, K. (2011). *Exposed*. New York: Ember.

Genre: contemporary realistic

Writing quality (*Horn Book*): 2

Format: free verse

Summary: female, rape, first-person from perspective of friend

*This is the first book I'm analyzing for my study. I'm not sure that it matters which
book I started with, but I chose this book first because I typically enjoy reading
contemporary realistic fiction, so I thought I'd start with something "easier." I also chose
this book because it's shorter and so potentially I could move through it more quickly – I
want to get through two books before my meeting with Lee at the end of November.

Other Notes

Notes on my stance (cite people – I think this comes from both Transactional and Socio-Cognitive) as I'm reading (part of reading as reader)

Reading as a reader
>   Transactional Theory – efferent/aesthetic
>   Socio-Cognitive Theory – motivation/conceptual knowledge/strategy/social interaction; interest
>   Stance (both theories?)

*3/22/13 – relevant information that influences my reading – I have read novels in verse and have generally enjoyed them, so I'm familiar with the format and have a positive view of it

-I READ THE FIRST 50 PAGES OR SO AND JUST TOOK A FEW NOTES ON THE PAGES AND THEN RECORDED THEM HERE
-Told in first person – introduced to protagonist, Elizabeth on the first page – photographer, focused; enjoy the writing/way of sharing the information with me about the character (p. 1)
-"forever-best friend" Kate introduced on 2nd page – dancer (p. 2); would love to have a forever best friend – does this happen in real life?
-Kate worries about body image; she and Elizabeth tease each other (p. 4)
-Liz takes a picture of a woman working in the yard – description of work to be done gels with my experience, looking at all the things to do and being slightly overwhelmed (p. 8)
-"Saturday Night Slumber" – love it – making time for friends that can't be disturbed, even by a boyfriend (p. 9)
-friendship sometimes includes fights/arguments - about what Kate wants to do – history instead of dancing (p. 14); and about Kate's boyfriend as Liz says he does whatever she wants (p. 16) – Liz seems to want the best for Kate, but I think she's being a bit hard on her
-Why doesn't Liz want to miss her brother now that he's at college? (p. 27); they seem close as far as brothers and sisters go (p. 11, 26)
-perfect description to show that their mom misses Mike (p. 33 – "and I want to tell my brother/he should study/the look on Mom's face/the way her jaw muscles just went slack/and tightened again in a split second's time.")
-I can relate – Liz feels bad and wants to apologize to Kate for their fight but isn't sure how; she makes a collage of pictures from the beginning of their friendship (6 or earlier) until recent (pp. 35-36)
-I know from reading summaries of this book that Liz's brother rapes Kate, so I know why Kate is avoiding Liz; but Liz doesn't know so I'm anxiously waiting for when Liz will find out (pp. 34, 37, 39, 44, 45, 46-47)

178

-Liz and her boyfriend seem to have a wonderful relationship, something I never had in high school (pp. 23, 29-30, 43-44) – she really likes him and he tries to cheer her up about her fight with Kate

-my experience of how groups of girls work – two groups of four make up the friendship (pp. 48-49); I feel bad for Liz that she has to ask her other friends about Kate when she and Kate are supposed to be best friends

-passion – Liz loves photography and is good at it (pp. 50-52)

-reminds me of my family – supportive dad and mostly supportive mom who might wish I were a bit different (p. 57)

-missing her best friend ☹ (pp. 53, 61)

-it's complicated – Mike told people he slept with Kate, and Amanda told Liz (p. 62); Kate liked Mike from the time they were little (p. 63); Liz confronts Kate and Kate still won't/can't talk to her (pp. 64-66); then Kate tells Liz what happened (pp. 74-75, 77), but Liz has a hard time believing her because Mike is her brother (p. 76); she doesn't know which person to believe (pp. 81, 82-83, 86, 92-94); Who would I believe?

-I want to keep reading and am distracted by taking notes; but if I don't take notes while I'm reading, it's difficult to capture what I'm thinking/my responses. I'm thinking the format works for me – the language entriques me and the fact that fewer words are used leads me quickly through the text. I want to find out how Liz makes sense of what happened, given that it involves her best friend and her brother. Why would her friend lie? But could her brother really be a rapist? The beginning of the novel set up for me the characters that I am supposed to/do care about – Liz, Kate, and Mike. I'm going through this with Liz, but I'm also questioning her actions. I know that she chares about Kate and about Mike. I know that she's supported by her parents (pp. 40-41, 56-57).

-It looks like Liz believe Mike – that she thinks Kate is using the situation to get back at her because of their fight (p. 95) because Mike doesn't lie (p. 97); she believes him (p. 102) but I understand that he may participate in questionable behavior around girls

-but she's not happy (p. 99); she misses Kate and can't even get excited about taking pictures (p. 100)

-I have to say that I'm relieved Mike was arrested (pp. 105-107). I guess I believed Kate all along. Because I can't imagine why she'd make it up.

-I can understand how Kate is so torn – not wanting Kate to press charges but missing her at the same time (p. 110)

-unfair that Liz's mother expects Liz to fix everything (p. 119)

-Kate finally tells Liz exactly what happened (pp. 126-129) and Liz isn't sure she can believe Mike anymore (p. 130). I'm glad she believes Kate.

-I'm almost crying because Kate tells Liz that she can't be friends anymore – "'Every time I'm with you,/I see him'" (p. 131) – it's an impossible situation

-How difficult, to make sense of your brother also being a rapist (pp. 135, 136-137)

-feeling guilty (pp. 145, 146) but because she didn't believe Kate initially or because it was her brother who raped Kate?

-love the language! - "a smile pasted on my face/with Please-God-Save-Me Glue." (p. 149)

-everything has changed for Liz. She cannot do a self-portrait for her photography class (p. 153) – because of her guilt?
-ostracized at school (p. 156); so difficult to be in high school, to be in life, I guess; people can be mean but we often feel we have to pick a side; but do we really?
-I can't help noticing the language as I read. I guess that's more efferent, but it leads to aesthetic because one of the reasons I enjoy the story is because of how it's told.
-running into Kate's mom (p. 161) – everything has fallen apart ☹; clearly I have attached to the characters since I'm feeling for them as I read
-feels guilty that it happened – "if I'd kept/my big mouth shut/there would have been no fight/no reason for me to go upstairs/and leave her/alone" (p. 163)
-Why is it Liz's father's job to "steer his family/through this storm"? (p. 167)
-Love the language – "I turn to watch the girl walk away/with her portfolio between her legs" (p. 170) – life goes on
-heartbreaking but understandable – Liz has difficulty taking pictures, now. Life isn't and can't be the same (p. 184)
-helpful teacher – they do exist (pp. 186-187)
-relationships are complicated – it's too bad Liz can't talk to her parents, but I understand why (p. 194)
-language – talking to her mom compared to a polar plunge (pp. 195-196)
-unfair comparison – "There's no way the hell of my life/could match up in her eyes/to what my brother's going through" (p. 214) – Liz feels she can't burden her parents because of what Mike's going through, but she needs her parents because of what Mike's going through ☹
-p. 230 – I just want to get to the end to find out what happens. But I don't see how the end could be good. Either way, in terms of the conviction, Liz suffers. She's lost her best friend and has been ostracized by most kids at school. She lost her boyfriend (pp. 210-212). And she doesn't feel like she can talk to her parents. How can all of that be resolved for her? Is that what I want? I think I do. But I don't think it can be resolved no matter what is ruled for Mike.
-So, Liz thinks Mike did it (p. 235)
-coming-of-age – things have changed for Liz – not black-and-white (p. 237)
-Wow. Just finished. Sad and happy. Don't have the words. Liz and Kate changed. I think the last page (pp. 254-255) are really important, but I'm not sure what to say about them right now. I just want to let them soak in.

As a reader, I identified with the characters. I enjoyed the language and the format. I wanted to keep reading to see where things went. I identified with the illustration throughout the novel of how complicated relationships are. I appreciated the ending, where things didn't work out but there was closure. And, somehow, the author ended this story with hope.

I was frustrated by having to stop and record my reactions while reading. It might be more authentic for me to voice record for the next book and then transcribe…

LEE SUGGESTED USING POST-IT NOTES – THAT'S WHAT I'LL DO FOR THE
THIRD BOOK

Reading as a researcher
>   Transactional Theory – Literary Analysis
>   Socio-Cognitive Theory – Content Analysis

Author – Rosenblatt seems to say the poem is more important than the author. Context
matters but I'm reading novels by current authors, I believe, so no need to research
time/place.
Socio-cognitive – author mentioned as creator of text but not considered as important
other than whether author (particularly of textbooks) is making texts interesting.
Foucault agrees that the author is dead but we're still influenced by the author function,
which allows us to limit the significance of the author/text.
Purves says we should study the author's life and culture as one aspect of studying
literature.

*Lee says to notice author's assumptions/ideologies during my second reading –
connected to thematic development
-relationships are complicated
-sex is not straightforward (rape or not rape?); also not wrong (unless it's rape)
-heterosexual relationships
-nuclear family
-loyalty and honesty in friendships
-importance of hobbies/passions (Liz with photography and Kate with dancing)

Literary Devices

Significance of each of these devices to the story: How does this function in the text?
Why - What opportunities does it afford the author/reader?

Character:
>   Type of protagonist: Example(s) – round/flat; dynamic/static
-narrator – Elizabeth Grayson – photographer and focused (p. 1); has a job with/for her
father (p. 7) – after the fight "Why should I always/apologize first?" (p. 20);
passion/excitement about photography (p. 38); "I grab my pride and my lunch and walk
away" (p. 47) – after confronting Kate – ALSO STYLE: IMAGERY and VIVIDNESS;
"I used to take photos a few times a week,/but now my camera fills my afternoons,…I
used to take time to look, to see.//But now time is something to get through,/so I aim and
shoot at everything" (p. 100) – her photography is affected by what's happening with
Kate and with Mike – also "I've lost my talent" – no longer does portraits and "…can't
go back/to my old stuff./It hurts too much" (p. 184); at the beginning of the year, was
looking forward to the self-portrait assignment in photography – now she doesn't want to
do it (p. 153) -   THE SITUATION WITH KATE AND MIKE HAS IMPACTED

HER IDENTITY IN A NEGATIVE WAY AND THESE FEW WORDS SHOW JUST HOW FAR SHE'S FALLEN IN TERMS OF WHAT/HOW SHE THINKS ABOUT HERSELF – ALSO STYLE? AND THEME? – MAYBE A THEME OF IDENTITY/COMING-OF-AGE? – "Good-bye, Photogirl.//Hello, Sister of a Rapist" (p. 156) – Title: "Biological Germs" – how others at school see Liz/how she perceives they see her; self-portrait – bag going on/coming off her head (pp. 188-189) – PERSPECTIVE – POSSIBLY ANOTHER THEME?; photography class – "I no longer like the spotlight" (p. 215) – HAS CHANGED/NEGATIVELY AFFECTED?; "Even though/nothing I can say can help Kate,/and what I do say/might make things worse,/I want to be/in that courtroom/to make up for not being/downstairs" (p. 219) – BLAMES HERSELF; doesn't believe in her photography anymore (pp. 232-233) – CHANGE IN PERSPECTIVE; "I used to be so confident/about who people were, who I was-/…I realized/I no longer see things/in crisp black-and-white contrasts-/"(p. 237) – ALSO THEME: COMING-OF-AGE – STILL HOPEFUL ON THE NEXT PAGE (p. 238) AND I DON'T THINK THIS IDEA COMES ACROSS AS DIDACTIC IN CONTEXT, THOUGH IT SEEMS TO WHEN I TRUNCATE IT HERE; taking joy in photography, again (pp. 244-245); "…I remember/the words of Annie Leibovitz:/*When you trust your point of view,/that's when you start taking pictures.*//This girl/is starting now." (p. 255) – OK, MAYBE A BIT DIDACTIC/HITTING ME OVER THE HEAD – LIZ GOES THROUGH THIS DIFFICULT THING, STRUGGLES THROUGH WHO SHE IS AND WHO SHE CAN COUNT ON, AND COMES OUT BETTER ON THE OTHER SIDE

-Kate is introduced in Liz's photograph – dancer – best friend (p. 2); lacking confidence/self-esteem (p. 4); likes history "'to learn about what makes the world tick'" (p. 13); does not often cry (p. 65); hard-working dancer (p. 123); about the trial: "'As scary as it was,/I said what I needed to say'" (p. 254)

-Mike, Liz's brother – gave her her first camera (p. 11) – "He wrapped it himself/with the sports section of the *Boston Sunday Globe*/and looked down at his feet when he handed it to me."; smells like stale beer – was at a party (p. 24); college student (p. 26); teasing Liz (p. 32); honest as a kid (p. 97); flirts with friend's girlfriend when he's drunk (p. 102)

-NOT INCLUDING THE BOYFRIENDS – NOT IMPORTANT ENOUGH AS CHARACTERS, I DON'T THINK

Plot:
	Type of plot: Example(s) – progressive/episodic
	Narrative order: Example(s) – chronological/alternating past and present/flashbacks
	Type of major conflict: Example(s) – person-against-self/person-against-person/person-against-society/person-against-nature
-Foreshadowing – PLOT DEVICE? – "Saturday Night Slumber./A Kate and Liz tradition./our once-a-month sleepover,/where nothing comes between us" (p. 9) – BECAUSE I'VE ALREADY READ THE BOOK ONCE, I KNOW THIS IS

FORESHADOWING. BUT I DIDN'T KNOW IT THE FIRST TIME I READ THE BOOK. WHERE MIGHT THIS BELONG?

-chronological – start out at photography class (p. 1), then the dark room (p. 2), then after class (p. 3), then out for pizza (p. 5), then work (p. 7), then picture after work (p. 8), then Saturday Night Slumber (p. 9) (working on college portfolio of pictures so must be seniors in high school - p. 10) – ALSO COHERENCE

-flashback – Mike gave Liz a camera for her twelfth birthday (p. 11) – ALSO COHERENCE – transitions from camera shot at the bottom of p. 10 to Mike buying Liz her first camera at the top of p. 11

-chronological – back at Liz's at the slumber party (p. 13), then Liz at home the morning after the slumber party/fight (p. 22)

-Kate seems to be avoiding Liz (pp. 37, 39, 45, 46-47, 58)

-Liz finds out that Mike said that he and Kate had sex – might be why Kate is avoiding Liz (p. 62)

-Liz confronts Kate about Mike (pp. 64-66) – at Kate's house

-Kate tells Liz that Mike raped her (pp. 75-77) – hallway at school – SETTING AND PLOT ARE CONNECTED, OF COURSE, BUT IT DOESN'T SEEM THAT SETTING MATTERS AS MORE THAN A BACKDROP IN THIS NOVEL

-clearly in the past – "because I used those exact words/many times,/joking but not really" (p. 83) – SETS UP "Off-Limits" (pp. 84-85) which shares scenes from the past – ALSO THEMES/FRIENDSHIP – LIZ AND KATE; ALSO COHERENCE

-Mike is arrested – being charged with rape (pp. 105-107) – at their house

-Kate tells Liz the details of that night (pp. 127-129) and tells her they can't be friends anymore (p. 131) – outside of Kate's dance studio (p. 125)

-Liz doesn't really have friends anymore (p. 162) – at school

-Liz and Brian break up (pp. 210-211) – in Brian's car

-the trial (pp. 218-229, 237-241) - courtroom

Point-of-view:
        Type of point-of-view: Example(s) – first person/omniscient/limited
        omniscient/objective (dramatic)
-first person (p. 1)

Setting:
        Type of setting: Example(s) – integral/backdrop
        Function of setting: Example(s) – clarifies conflict/as antagonist/illuminates
        character/affects mood/as symbol
-photography class (p. 1)
-photography dark room (p. 2)
-hallway at school (p. 3) – with Kate
-pizza place (p. 5) – described "plastic-coated, red-checkered tablecloths,/Leaning Tower painted on one wall" – ALSO VIVIDNESS, STYLE: IMAGERY
-Liz's work – island (p. 7)

-Liz's house (p. 9) – says she's going to her room on p. 18 so I know it's her house – with Kate
-Bright Penny Beach (pp. 29-30) – with Brian
-Liz's house – p. 33 – with family
-hallway at school – p. 37 – with Kate
-photography class – p. 38
-hallway at school – p. 39 – with Kate
-"Home" – p. 40 – with mom
-Brian's dad's diner – p. 43
-cafeteria at school – p. 45 – confronting Kate and then with friends
[PROBABLY DON'T NEED TO BE THIS DETAILED ABOUT SETTING…I SUPPOSE IT DEPENDS UPON THE IMPORTANCE OF SETTING TO PLOT, ETC.]
-class at school (p. 50)
-Kate's house – "standing at Kate's door" (p. 64)

Style:
        Devices of style: Example(s) – connotation/ imagery/ figurative language/ hyperbole/ understatement/ allusion/ symbol/ puns and word play
        Devices of sound: Example(s) – onomatopoeia/ alliteration/ assonance/ consonance/ rhythm
-sound in the dark room – "hum"; "swish" (p. 2)
-"The straight line to my squiggle,/my forever-best friend" (p. 2) – figurative –ALSO VIVIDNESS
-"Friday's fleeing feet" (p. 3 – hallway at school) – alliteration – "Sal's serenade" (Sal is the pizza place owner) (p. 6)
-"I lean my bike against an oak/tinted with autumn's promise/and raise my camera to catch a shot/of a wistful woman,/gray hair in a long braid down her back,/patting sweat from her neck/with a green bandana/as she pauses atop her ride-on mower/and stares out across her big yard/at all the grass yet to be mowed" (p. 8) – imagery – ALSO VIVIDNESS
-"'Preparing My Shot' mood,/where everything goes quiet/and I turn in on myself, camera poised,/waiting for the perfect moment/to click" (p. 10) – imagery – ALSO VIVIDNESS
-after the fight – "She left, taking my nasty words with her" (p. 22) – figurative – ALSO VIVIDNESS
"There's a lump in my throat/the size of Cape Cod Bay" (p. 23) – metaphor – ALSO VIVIDNESS
-Liz describing her mom's reaction when Mike says he can't stay: "…and I want to tell my brother/he should study/the look on Mom's face,/the way her jaw muscles just went slack/and tightened again in a split second's time." (p. 33) – imagery – ALSO VIVIDNESS
-"my want hangs/heavy on the line" (p. 34) – figurative language – ALSO VIVIDNESS
-"fingers clutching the patchwork picture of friendship" (p. 37) – alliteration – ALSO VIVIDNESS

-applications for design schools described as "Packets of possibility" (p. 42) – alliteration – ALSO VIVIDNESS

-word play – meaning of easy – "He's [Mike] got his props here,/making it all look so easy.//Trouble is, now his big head/and his big mouth/make Kate/look easy, too" (p. 70) – also VIVIDNESS

-rhyming/rhythm – "Signs" (p. 81) – comparing Kate and Mike – "which one's telling lies"? – THE PARALLELSIM/rhythm and rhyme HERE SEEMS TO SHOW THAT LIZ DOESN'T KNOW WHICH PERSON TO BELIEVE – DID MIKE RAPE KATE OR DID THEY HAVE SEX?

-word play – "and throw the beer in his [Mike's] face.//Then I leave him/brewing" (p. 103)

-word play – "Working with/my manual camera/has become/automatic" (p. 117)

-word play – "My mother has pinned/all her hopes on me./And I can't pull out/the pins" (p. 119)

-word play – "a smile pasted on my face/with Please-God-Save-Me Glue" (p. 149) – Title of this section in "Holding It Together" – I SHOULD PROBABLY LOOK AT THE TITLES MORE AS THEY'RE APTLY NAMING EACH POEM/CHAPTER

-metaphor – "…I wonder/how my father [sailor],/…/will steer his family/through this storm" (p. 167) – ALSO THEME-FAMILY RELATIONSHIPS

-metaphor – title: "Portfolio Day" – "I turn to watch the girl walk away/with her portfolio between her legs" (p. 170)

-simile – "Even if no one says it/the word rape/hums soft and constant/like water running/through the pipes in our walls" (p. 173)

-Title: "Dipping" – metaphor – Liz asking her mom, "'What if he's [Mike's] found guilty?'" (p. 195) like dipping a foot into icy water – ALSO THEME: FAMILY RELATIONSHIPS

Theme:

    Types of theme: Example(s) – explicit/implicit and primary/secondary (LEE AND DAVID SAY TAKE OUT TYPES – OLD IDEA THAT CONFLICTS WITH TRANSACTIONAL THEORY)

    Common thematic ideas: Example(s) – finding themselves/ searching for answers or secrets/ finding identity and hiding self/ dealing with loss/ friendship/ family/ coming of age/ bullying/ moving/ relationships/ abuse/ illness or mental issue

-Friendship – Liz and Kate – best friends (p. 2); teasing each other (p. 3, 4); "Saturday Night Slumber" (p. 9); "It's the same thing we always fight about" (p. 14) – Liz thinks Kate should be a professional dancer but Kate says she doesn't want to do it professionally, and Liz thinks it's because "'You're just scared you can't make it, but you can.'"; fight about Kate's boyfriend – Liz thinks he's too much of a pushover (p. 16) – Liz: "'Take a chance for once!'" Kate: "'Just because he might not be your idea of Prince Charming,/just because I don't want to dance professionally,/just because my plan for my life isn't *your* plan for my life-/that doesn't mean I'm afraid to take a chance'" (p. 17) and then Kate accuses Liz of hiding behind her camera (p. 18) – BIG FIGHT; "I know I've got a big mouth,/but nothing I've said before/ever made her leave" (p. 23) – ALSO

CHARACTER; collage of friendship (pp. 35-36); Friendship with other friends – "We're a foursome/made up of two twosomes,/and although there are three of us in the room,/I'm the one left out" (p. 48) – I WOULD ALSO CALL THIS STYLE: IMAGERY AND VIVIDNESS BECAUSE IT DESCRIBES A GROUP OF GIRLFRIENDS; Kate tells Liz she can't be friends with Liz because of her experience with Mike (pp. 131-132)

-friendship AND brother/sister relationship – Liz tells Kate that she'll tell others that Mike is delusional in regards to him saying he had sex with Kate (p. 66) – IS LIZ CHOOSING/SIDING WITH KATE HERE? – defending Kate (p. 71); Kate to Liz "'You believe Mike'" (p. 92) and Liz to Kate "'Kate, have you told anyone else?'" (p. 93) - WHO DOES LIZ BELIEVE?; Liz: "I believe him" when Mike says he didn't rape Kate (p. 102); Liz: "worrying about my brother,/hating Kate for pressing charges,/and missing my forever-best friend" (p. 110)

-brother/sister relationship – Mike gives Liz her first camera (p. 11); Liz misses talking to Mike (p. 25); Liz thought she and Mike would be close when Mike left for college, but they don't talk much (pp. 26-27); "My brother, even when he annoys me,/is someone I love….My brother/is not/a rapist" (p. 76); Liz tries to figure out if her brother could really be a rapist – tells Mike that Kate told her everything (pp. 135-143) – ALSO PLOT; Liz is angry at Mike – can't believe he can sit on *the* couch (pp. 216-217) – BELIEVES KATE; "I think the jury got it wrong./And this is the tricky part:/I'm glad that they did." (p. 239); strained relationship after the trial (pp. 248-249)

-romantic relationship – Brian tries to help Liz stop worrying about Kate (p. 29); "The Travel Channel says/Tahiti/is the most romantic place on earth.//But I stop believing/when Brian/kisses me on the shore/of Bright Penny Beach" (p. 30) – ALSO STYLE: IMAGERY AND VIVIDNESS – CLEAR DESCRIPTION OF HER FEELINGS FOR HIM ☺; meeting Brian (pp. 31-32); "no finer boy/than my Diner Boy" (p. 44); being/trying to be "normal" with Brian (p. 160); Brian gets into a school far away (pp. 190-191); difficulty with Brian – difficulty being present (pp. 200-201), difficulty being around others leaving Brian to pick up the pieces (pp. 202-208); Liz and Brian break up (pp. 210-211) BECAUSE SHE CAN'T BE HERSELF/DOESN'T KNOW WHO SHE IS AND WHAT TO BELIEVE ABOUT MIKE AND KATE

-family relationships – Liz noticing how Mike's actions affect her mom (p. 33); Liz tells her mom about troubles with Kate (pp. 40-41); Liz's understanding of how her parents feel about her (p. 57); "But my mother,/…/Kate's second-biggest fan,/doesn't lower her voice one bit/when she calls Kate a bitch (p. 111); Liz's mother expects Liz to convince Kate to drop the charges (p. 119); Liz doesn't tell her mom about her troubles at school related to Mike's rape charge (p. 157) – PROTECTING HER MOTHER; ALSO PROTECTING HER FATHER (p. 194) – ALSO CHARACTER-LIZ; Liz can't really talk to her parents – "Mike's future/may be spent behind bars but/right now/everything's clanging shut/in a home on Fairview Terrace" (p. 209) – ALSO STYLE: WORD PLAY AND VIVIDNESS; honest with her mother – she doesn't matter right now compared to

Mike (pp. 213-214); tells her father she thinks Mike did it (p. 235) – THIS LINES UP WITH HOW HER PARENTS ARE PORTRAYED – THAT SHE'S CLOSER TO HER DAD THAN TO HER MOM – ALSO COHERENCE; Liz's family would fall apart if her brother had been found guilty (p. 240); things appear back to normal with her mom (pp. 244-245)

Tone:
     Major tone: Example(s) – serious/lighthearted/sarcastic/humorous
-I'm thinking serious, mostly because of content; moments are lighthearted – like when Kate and Liz are teasing each other; but mostly serious – focused on relationships [WRITTEN AFTER ANALYZING FIRST 50 PAGES]

Content Analysis: Interesting Texts

Significance of each of these categories in the text: How does this function in the text? Why - What opportunities does it afford the author/reader?

Initial Coding Categories (socio-cognitive theory):
- Coherence: well organized and easy to follow (Schraw and Lehman, 2001); information included fits into the text's overall structure (Wade, Buxton, & Kelly, 1999); clarity (Schraw, Bruning, & Svoboda, 1995; Wade, 1992) ; "A principle demanding that the parts of any composition be so arranged that the meaning of the whole may be immediately clear and intelligible" (Harmon & Holman, 2009, p. 109).

-clear indication of time – first few lines on p. 11 let me know I'm in the past – "twelfth birthday"; p. 31 – title – "At the Track Last Spring"
-"Family Pride" (p. 57) – the two parts of this chapter align perfectly – the first part as Liz's dad's view and the second part as Liz's mom's view – play/water/hot dogs – perfect – THIS MIGHT ALSO GO WITH VIVIDNESS AND STYLE BECAUSE IT'S ALSO ABOUT LANGUAGE USE – NEED TO THINK ABOUT THIS FURTHER

- Vividness: "text segments that stand out because they **create suspense, surprise, or are otherwise engaging**" (Schraw & Lehman, 2001, p. 31); active voice, imagery, concrete examples, "vivid or unusual words" (Wade, Buxton, & Kelly, 1999, p. 199); "words that arouse vivid imagery and … say the unexpected" (Schallert & Reed, 1997, p. 73)

-Kate's account of what happened is told in a run-on way with some paragraphs instead of verse form (pp. 127-129)-SEEMS TO CLEARLY PORTRAY THE EVENT, THINGS MOVING TOO QUICKLY, MIKE FORCING KATE – COVERING HER FACE WITH A PILLOW SO SHE COULDN'T BREATH, PAIN – ALSO STYLE

- Life themes: death, danger, sex, power (Schallert & Reed, 1997); death, danger, chaos, destruction, disease, injury, power, money, sex, and romance (Wade, 1992)

-"'doing the wild thing'" (p. 62)
-rape

Analysis of *Ashfall*

My Roles

Reading as a reader
        Transactional Theory – efferent/aesthetic
        Socio-Cognitive Theory – motivation/conceptual knowledge/strategy/social
        interaction; interest
        Stance (both theories – notes added during analysis of second text)
                Socio-Cognitive: "interest promotes deeper engagement with a text via
                constructivist processes that focus on interpretation and personal
                reactions" (Schraw, 1997, p. 449);
                motivations for reading include "aesthetic involvement, or enjoyment of
                experiencing a literary text" (Guthrie, McGough, Bennet, & Rice, 1996, p.
                167)
                Transactional: efferent/aesthetic continuum (Rosenblatt, 1965/1995;
                1978/1994); "when students respond aesthetically, they are more likely to
                interpret story events, apply their experiences with literature to life, and
                generalize, abstract, or create new possibilities as a result of their
                encounters with literature" (Cox & Many, 1992, p. 116)
                [MAYBE STANCE IS NOT A SEPARATE IDEA BUT JUST PART OF
                RESPONDING AS A READER FOR BOTH TRANSACTIONAL
                THEORY AND SOCIO-COGNITIVE THEORY]

Reading as a researcher
        Transactional Theory – Literary Analysis
        Socio-Cognitive Theory – Content Analysis

First time through – reader
Second and any subsequent times through - researcher

Literary Analysis

Data Sheet of Novels from Young Adults' Choices (adapted from Chance, 1999 using
Lukens, 2007 and Koss & Teale, 2009)

Book Description

Reference: Mullin, M. (2010). *Ashfall*. Terre Haute, IN: Tanglewood.

Genre: science fiction

Writing quality (*Horn Book*): 2

Format:

Summary: male protagonist, survival

Reading as a reader
> Transactional Theory – efferent/aesthetic
> Socio-Cognitive Theory – motivation/conceptual knowledge/strategy/social interaction; interest

*3/26/13 – Me as a reader: I enjoy science fiction, something that happened in my adulthood; I don't remember reading much science fiction when I was younger, and I certainly did not choose it for fun. Now, though, I will pick out science fiction for entertainment. I'm not really a science-y person other than having a rudimentary understanding from required courses in high school and college. I was intrigued by the description of this book and the focus on survival during a disaster.

-I have read to p. 163, taking notes in the margins. As a reader, I do not like this book. After having read the back of the book, I may have picked it up on my own; but after starting it, I'm not sure if I would have finished it. Alex is not that interesting to me as a character. I just haven't been able to connect with him so far. The plot is driving the story, and the plot is really boring. A volcano erupted and there's lots of ash in the air. And lots of ash in the air. And noise and lots of ash in the air. Alex meets people and I learn a bit about them and then he leaves them. So now I don't know if I should care about anyone he meets because they might just be around for a chapter or two. Thankfully, I like Darla, so far (I didn't meet her until p. 129!), and I peeked ahead (something I rarely do) to make sure she appears later in the story. I like Darla because she's feisty (p. 136), a hard worker (p. 147), and she can take care of herself and her mom. We'll see how it goes from here…

Reading as a researcher
> Transactional Theory – Literary Analysis
> Socio-Cognitive Theory – Content Analysis

Other Notes

Notes on my stance (cite people – I think this comes from both Transactional and Socio-Cognitive) as I'm reading – part of reading as a reader.

Author – Rosenblatt seems to say the poem is more important than the author. Context matters but I'm reading novels by current authors, I believe, so no need to research time/place.
Socio-cognitive – author mentioned as creator of text but not considered as important other than whether author (particularly of textbooks) is making texts interesting.

Foucault agrees that the author is dead but we're still influenced by the author function, which allows us to limit the significance of the author/text.

Purves says we should study the author's life and culture as one aspect of studying literature.

*Lee says to notice author's assumptions/ideologies during my second reading – connected to thematic development (determining author intent is part of interpretation (Probst, 2004, pp. 53-55); "Ideologies may be more or less visible in texts produced for children, which seldom reproduce overt ideology as a thematized component of text, but which will reflect two functions of ideology. The first of these is the social function of defining and sustaining group values (perceptible textually in an assumption that writer and implied reader share a common understanding and value), and the second is the cognitive function of supplying a meaningful organization of the social attitudes and relationships which constitute narrative plots" (McCallum & Stephens, 2011, p. 360)

-stereotype – NOT SURE WHERE THIS BELONGS –gay couple who live next door to Alex have a fancy master bedroom and a bathroom with "pink marble floor" (p. 21)
-all moms worry (p. 175)

Literary Devices

Significance of each of these devices to the story: How does this function in the text? Why - What opportunities does it afford the author/reader? (notes on function from Lukens, 2007; also use Galda, Sipe, Liang, and Cullinan, 2013, pp. 14, 28 – added during analysis of first text)

Character:
        Type of protagonist: Example(s) – round/flat; dynamic/static
        -unity of character and action (pp. 78-81); function can vary by genre (pp. 92-94)

-Alex – fights with mom about "poor study habits, my video games, my underwear on the bathroom floor" (p. 2); almost sixteen (p. 3); a geek (p. 3); the bookcase in his bedroom "filled with computer games, history books, and sci-fi novels" (p. 3); knows taekwondo (p. 3); plays online games (p. 4); misses his family (p. 23, 56); thanks his neighbors for looking out for him (p. 40); helps Joe dig out the grill (p. 48); wants to protect his stuff but also doesn't want a little girl to go hungry (p. 74) – POSSIBLE THEME – feels guilty for eating when others don't have food (p. 79); couldn't bring himself to break into a house, even though he needed water (p. 97); Alex doesn't want to hurt Darryl (the guy looking for food) (p. 113); persists through the pain of his injury (pp. 125-126); having trouble peeing in front of Darla (p.138); wants to help on the farm – "It seemed like a perfect opportunity to try to pay back some of their generosity" (p. 148); frustrated that he can't work very hard with his injury – "I've never been the biggest guy or the strongest, but I've always made up for it with effort" (p. 150); thinks rabbits are cute (p. 151); Alex thanks Gloria and Darla for taking him in - knows not everyone would have done that – ALSO THEME: PEOPLE IN CRISIS (p. 174); protects Darla from Target (p.

202) – ALSO THEME: ROMANCE, LIFE THEMES: DANGER; Alex is taking care of Darla (pp. 224-228); examines the zippers of backpacks to make sure they'll last (p. 235); feels responsible for Darla (p. 236); Alex uses snowballs to shelter them from the blizzard (p. 253) – ALSO THEME: PEOPLE IN CRISIS; offers the couch to Darla (p. 264); wants to help a little girl who is clearly struggling (p. 280); leaves food and water for the woman and her kids (p. 291) – Darla doesn't want him to and calls him softhearted (p. 292) – she says it dumb but not wrong (p. 298) – ALSO CHARACTER: DARLA AND THEME: PEOPLE IN CRISIS; uncle mentions that Alex has changed – not a sullen kid (pp. 410-411); living with his uncle's rules – "'I miss that feeling of freedom, of being my own man'" (p. 421) – TOO CANNED; promised himself he would find his family – still planning on it (p. 455)

Darla – taking care of Alex but does not to (pp. 129-131); about seeing Alex naked – "'There's nothing there I haven't seen. Who do you think undressed you, anyway? And honestly, I've seen better equipment on goats'" (p. 131); in 4-H – works with animals and not afraid to sew up Alex's side (pp. 132-133) even though she'd never done it before (p. 137); rough with Alex while she's taking care of him (pp. 136-138); rigged up a toilet/tube that runs to the septic system (p. 142) – ALSO DETAILS; works hard – digs corn, takes care of rabbits, chops wood (p. 144); calls Alex "the invalid" (p. 148); knows how to butcher a rabbit and tan the skin (p. 156) – actually, she read about tanning skin and is trying it for the first time (p. 159); rigged up a pump for the well since the original pump broke (p. 164) – INNOVATIVE; does not want to rest (p. 168); uses a truck engine and bicycle to recharge a battery (pp. 168-171) – ALSO DETAIL – DO I REALLY NEED THIS MUCH DETAIL? – used the batteries for the radio (p. 172); loves her mom (p. 205) and can't function after she dies (p. 209); learned to build things/fix them with her dad (pp. 271-272); is resistant to helping the little girl but does because Alex wants her to (pp. 280-281) – ALSO THEME: ROMANCE; gets herself a job and asks for food for pay (pp. 348, 370-371)

Plot:
  Type of plot: Example(s) – progressive/episodic
  Narrative order: Example(s) – chronological/alternating past and present/flashbacks
  Type of major conflict: Example(s) – person-against-self/person-against-person/person-against-society/person-against-nature
  -"The elements of a story that deal with rising action are suspense [pp. 111-113], the cliff-hanger [p. 114], foreshadowing [pp. 114-115], sensationalism [p. 116], the climax [pp. 116-118], denouement [pp. 118-119], and inevitability [p. 120]" (p. 111).
  -"reliance on coincidence to resolve conflict weakens plot" (p. 122)
  -"The most destructive element in the overuse of sentiment is not boredom, but the fact that the young reader, faced with continual sentimentality, will not develop the sensitivity essential to recognize what is truly moving and what is merely a play on feelings" (p. 125).

-lack of conflict – "Inadequately developed conflict…leaves us unconcerned about the outcome of a story " (p. 126)

-I'm made aware on the first page that something happened, and from the back of the book, I know that it's the eruption of the volcano – "I was home alone on that Friday evening. Those who survived know exactly which Friday I mean." – also past tense – tells me he's remembering? – COHERENCE?
-a rumbling sound and the house shook (p. 4); the power went out (p. 5); "Then it happened" (SUSPENSE) – loud noise and the house tilted (p. 5)
-Alex escapes! (p. 9)
-phones don't work (p. 10)
-end of chapter 1 – Alex "took off running" (p. 10) – SUSPENSE – WHERE IS HE GOING AND WHY?
-goes to the fire station to tell them about his house (p. 12)
-end of chapter 2 – "Then the explosions started" (p. 18)
-Alex and his neighbors take cover in their bathroom (interior room) – they don't know what's happening (p. 22)
-the next day – still loud and no light (pp. 27-29); falling ash (p. 31)
-event explained (p. 33) – volcano
-end of chapter 4 – "something changed. There was silence" (p. 35) – THESE CHAPTER ENDINGS COULD ALSO BE STYLISTIC? – THEY END ABRUPTLY WITH NEW INFO
-end of chapter 5 – the explosions start again (p. 40)
-lightening has been added to the thunder (p. 44); and rain with the ash (pp. 44-45)
-the neighbors' house is breaking under the weight of the wet ash (pp. 45-46) – INTERESTING PIECE OF INFORMATION – I WOULDN'T HAVE THOUGHT OF THIS AS A CONSEQUENCE OF LOTS OF ASH AND THEN RAIN
-end of chapter 7 – Alex runs from the house after Darren kills the intruders (p. 52)
-Alex coughs up blood (p. 55) – ALSO SUSPENSE
-getting cold (even though it's August) – Alex thinks the volcano is "messing with the weather" (p. 56)
-decides to head to Warren to find his family (p. 56)
-details about what Alex packs for his trip (pp. 57-58) – IS THIS NECESSARY?
-Alex tries to bike but can't get through the ash – decides to ski (pp. 61-63) – also CHARACTER (problem-solving?)
-end of chapter 11 – as Alex leaves Cedar Falls, he wonders if he'll ever see anyone from there, again (p. 87)
-skiing into the countryside – not seeing anyone (pp. 90-91)
-still thunder and lightning (p. 91)
-ash in the creek (p. 91) – too gross to drink/smells and tastes like sulfur (p. 92) – ALSO DETAILS
-Alex eats the last of his food (p. 109); looks for food at a wrecked gas station (p. 110)
-chooses to go off his chosen path to avoid people (p. 116)

-meets Target (p. 119), who was in state prison (p. 122); when he doesn't agree to be in Target's family, Target attacks him (pp. 122-124); Alex uses his taekwondo moves to get away (pp. 123-124) – also THEME: DANGER

-skis to a barn and collapses (p. 127)

-Darla and Gloria are taking care of Alex (p. 129) – ALSO THEME: PEOPLE IN CRISIS – Gloria wants to take of Alex but Darla does not want to "waste" supplies on him

-Darla's rabbits are sick and it seems to be related to the ash fall – worried about getting sick, too (p. 152)

-Darla builds a smokehouse for the rabbit meat and Alex helps (p. 165) – had never built a smokehouse nor smoked meat but saw a smokehouse once (p. 166) – I WONDER IF SHE'D BE THIS INNOVATIVE UNDER "NORMAL" CIRCUMSTANCES? – MAYBE ALSO THEME: PEOPLE IN CRISIS

-news on the radio about the volcano (pp. 172-174) – disaster relief in California, people leaving Missouri

-Darla and Alex plan to go to town to find out if anyone knows about Illinois and to see if the local doctor knows what's wrong with Darla's rabbits (p. 175)

-make it to town and try to find the veterinarian – the lock was broken off the door and the place was empty (pp. 184-185)

-find out the doctor died trying to shovel ash off the roof (p. 187)

-lots of people staying at the school in town (p. 187) – LIKE IN CEDAR FALLS

-talk to the librarian in town and find out about lung disease from breathing ash – what the rabbits have and humans can get it, too – and about the refugee camp in Galena, IL (pp. 194-195)

-earthquakes from the volcano (p. 196)

-when Darla and Alex get back to the farm, they find a small man raping Darla's mom – ALSO LIFE THEMES: POWER/SEX/DESTRUCTION (p. 200); Alex kills the man – ALSO LIFE THEMES: DEATH (pp. 200-201); Target shows up – he was with the man Alex killed (p. 201)

-barn – Alex and Darla in the loft – Target is setting the barn on fire (pp. 213-214)

-Target had set the house on fire (p. 215); Alex had to think of a way to get supplies and thinks to get Target's backpack (pp. 215-216); he saves a rabbit for Darla (p. 216) – ALSO CHARACTER: ALEX, THEME: ROMANCE

-Alex wants to head to Warren to find his family, but since Darla is going so slowly and focused on her rabbit, he heads them back to Worthington, instead (pp. 223-224)

-Alex plans to leave Darla in Worthington, but he follows her so they continue on the journey to find his family together (pp. 231-235)

-Alex falls into a stream (p. 243) – Darla pulls him out (p. 244) – ALSO CHARACTER: DARLA – PHYSICAL STRENGTH and warms him up with dry clothes and a fire (pp. 246-248)

-Darla finally talks to Alex and finally grieves for her mom (pp. 257-258)

-found a deserted farmhouse to stay in – also found a dead guy who had shot himself (pp. 262-263)

-the snow made the air cleaner to breathe (p. 264) – I NOTICED THAT IT'S BEEN AWHILE SINCE ALEX MENTIONED COVERING HIS MOUTH TO HELP HIM BREATHE…
-ran out of food (p. 303)
-found a pig to butcher (p. 309)
-check out a pharmacy in Bellevue (deserted town) to see if it has condoms (p. 315) – no luck – ALSO THEME: SEX
-cross the Mississippi on a lock (pp. 315-322); find a bunch of wheat on one of the barges (p. 319) – Darla wants to stay there for a while and figure out a way to grind the wheat, but Alex wants to find his family (p. 320) – ALSO THEME: ROMANCE
-Alex is in the punishment hut (p. 381)
-Darla wrecks the fence to the camp so people can escape, blocking direct access to Alex and Darla (pp. 386-387)
-Alex's parents are not at his uncle's house (p. 405) – ALSO SUSPENSE – WHAT HAPPENED TO THEM? – they went back to Iowa to look for Alex (p. 410)

Point-of-view:
    Type of point-of-view: Example(s) – first person/omniscient/limited omniscient/objective (dramatic)
    -First-person narration has "great potential for pulling the reader into what appears to be autobiographical truth" (p. 171). "The danger in first-person narration lies in the possibility of 'I' ignoring appropriate limitations, reporting thoughts of others, and predicting" (p. 171).
    -"The objective or nearly objective point of view in some stories makes heavier demands on the imagination and understanding of the reader" (p. 178).

-first-person (Alex) – p. 1
-second person – p. 34

Setting:
    Type of setting: Example(s) – integral/backdrop
    Function of setting: Example(s) – clarifies conflict/as antagonist/illuminates character/affects mood/as symbol

-time – tells me on the first page that it's in the future ("in the same way my parents remembered 9/11")
-location – Cedar Falls, Iowa (p. 2); Alex's house
-fire station (p. 11)
-neighbors' house (p. 20)
-Alex's house (p. 55)
-Cedar Falls High School (p. 68)
-school-friend Laura's church (p. 83) – Redeemer Baptist – church described – ALSO STYLE?
-Iowan countryside (p. 90)

-farmhouse (p. 97)
-Iowan countryside (p. 105); rainy and cold, particularly for early September
-sleeps in an abandoned car (p. 106)
-sleeps under some pine trees (p. 108)
-"it had taken me six days to travel only about a quarter of the distance to Warren" (p. 109) – NOT SURE EXACTLY WHERE THIS BELONGS, BUT HAS TO DO WITH LOCATION
-Darla's farm (p. 127)
-Worthington (Iowa) (p. 183)
-back at Darla's farm (p. 199)
-back in Worthington – St. Paul school (p. 224)
-Iowan countryside (p. 237); snowing/blizzard (p. 240)
-US 151 heading to Dubuque (p. 274)
-skied around St. Donatus (small town in Iowa) (p. 302)
-Bellevue (p. 314)
-F.E.M.A. camp near Galena (p. 328) – described on pp. 335-356
-walking on a road in Illinois (p. 399)
-Alex's uncle's house (p. 404)
-Alex had spent 8 weeks traveling to his uncle's (p. 410)

Style:
    Devices of style: Example(s) – connotation/ imagery/ figurative language/ hyperbole/ understatement/ allusion/ symbol/ puns and word play
    Devices of sound: Example(s) – onomatopoeia/ alliteration/ assonance/ consonance/ rhythm
    -"exaggeration or understatement to entertain or heighten feelings…and sound devices to give pleasure and to heighten meaning" (p. 207)
    -should be appropriate for the story (p. 207)

-descriptive – "The pre-Friday world of school, cell phones, and refrigerators dissolved into this post-Friday world of ash, darkness, and hunger" (p. 1) – ALSO VIVIDNESS
-vocabulary choices – ALSO VIVIDNESS? – malodorous (p. 2), admonition (p. 3), malevolent (p. 5), detritus (p. 66), porte-cochere (p. 83), frenetic (p. 150), offal bucket (p. 157), ersatz (p. 178), quern (p. 210), abattoir (p. 307), canted (p. 389)
-descriptive – "That whiff of smoke was enough to transform my sit-here-trembling terror into get-the-hell-out-of-here terror" (p. 6) – ALSO VIVIDNESS
-imagery – "A wall of heat slammed into me, like opening the oven with my face too close" (p. 8) – ALSO VIVIDNESS
-descriptive – "I felt like I'd been sparring with a guy twice my size for an hour" (p. 18) – ALSO VIVIDNESS
-figurative language – non-stop thunder "as if Zeus had loaded his bolts into an M60…" (p. 20)
-descriptive – to explain the darkness, tells us about visiting a cave with his dad and sister (p. 29)

-descriptive – "Ask someone to lock you in a box with no light, nobody to talk to, and then have them beat on it with a tree limb to make a hideous booming sound" (p. 34) – ALSO POINT-OF-VIEW – SECOND PERSON [I'll have to watch for this…]
-descriptive – the senses – mentioning hearing the thunder noises, seeing darkness, smelling sulfur (p. 39)
-terror and boredom (p. 34), worry and boredom (p. 41), boredom and terror (p. 42) – repetition – I FIND IT REDUNDANT…MAYBE IT SERVES A PURPOSE?
-figurative language – running in the wet ash like "doing a fast, high-step march" (p. 53)
-descriptive – lots of cars (p. 63)/dead people in cars (p. 64)
-imagery – "My nuts knew where that shotgun was pointing, too; I could feel them trying to climb up into my body for protection" (p. 98)
-descriptive – instead of a sunrise, "There was a little brightening on the eastern horizon of the black, monotone sky" (p. 104)
-metaphor – bare trees – "lonely flagpoles without a nation to claim them" (p. 108)
-alliteration – "Hunger of choice is a painful luxury; hunger of necessity is terrifying torture" (p. 117)
-descriptive – "Two gray-white ghosts, sailing down the rest of the hill on one pair of skiis" (p. 181)
-imagery – "Alone on a vast plain of unforgiving gray ash" (p. 206); "Three fading sparks of life [Darla, Alex, and the rabbit] on an endless, burnt field of ash" (p. 220)
-metaphor – "The Grim Reaper had visited me again, had even poked me with his scythe, but Darla had dragged me by the hair from his dark kingdom" (p. 248)\
-descriptive – "I felt as if we were being hollowed out from the inside, so our skin might soon collapse" (p. 370) – describing their hunger at the camp

Theme:
> Types of theme: Example(s) – explicit/implicit and primary/secondary (LEE AND DAVID SAY TAKE OUT TYPES – OLD IDEA THAT CONFLICTS WITH TRANSACTIONAL THEORY)
> Common thematic ideas: Example(s) – finding themselves/ searching for answers or secrets/ finding identity and hiding self/ dealing with loss/ friendship/ family/ coming of age/ bullying/ moving/ relationships/ abuse/ illness or mental issue
> -"If the information displaces the understanding, then didacticism has won out" (p. 139).

-family – relationship with mom – fight (p. 2), she wants to know why he fights her but then wants to hug him (p. 2); wants to call his mom to come and take care of things (p. 15); goes an extra day without food to annoy his mom (p. 117); misses his mom (p. 178); mom has high expectations for him (p. 256)
relationship with sister – "An hour ago I'd been looking forward to an entire weekend without her. Now I wanted nothing more than to see her again" (p. 14); picked on her but also protected her from a bully (pp. 255-256); she's excited to see that he's alive (p. 404); Rebecca freaks out and Alex comforts her (p. 440)

relationship with dad – "Dad responded with his usual benign lack of interest" (p. 2); "Typical Dad: Even his ski goggles were rose-colored" (p. 62); "his face would glaze over when I tried to talk to him" (p. 256)

-romance/relationship with Darla – Alex likes Darla but believes she sees him as a helpless kid (p. 160); competitive with each other (p. 179); Alex enjoys Darla hugging him while on the skis with him (p. 181); Darla blames Alex for her mother's death and Alex lets her (pp. 208-209); they take care of each other (pp. 234-249); Darla suggests they share the couch – Alex feels uncomfortable getting undressed (ALSO THEME: SEX) – she says she feels safe with him and he tells her how wonderful she is – they kiss (pp. 265-268) – romance in the midst of disaster/death (p. 268); they're dating (p. 273); kissing and say they love each other (p. 298); are not having sex because Alex is worried about her getting pregnant (p. 299) – ALSO CHARACTER: ALEX; sticking together/taking care of each other at the camp (pp. 330-399); Alex feels weird being separated from Darla (p. 372); the captain propositions Darla and Alex kicks him in the nose (p. 379); Darla saves Alex from the punishment hut with a bulldozer (p. 386); Alex is a hothead where Darla is concerned and Darla saves him, once again (pp. 396-398); Darla and Alex feel better sleeping next to each other (p. 434, 438); each thinks the other is strongest (p. 450)

-religion – not a religious guy, though his mom is Lutheran (p. 22); prays while he's huddled in the neighbors' bathtub – prays to God to keep his family safe (p. 23) – ALSO THEME: FAMILY RELATIONSHIPS; school-friend Laura's "church is leaving today" (p. 81) – being called to heaven/Jesus would carry them (p. 85) – Alex believes "God helps those who help themselves" (p. 86); Elroy and Edna (farmhouse) pray for their food before they eat (p. 102); Gloria believes "the good Lord" led Alex to their barn and so she and Darla should take care of him (p. 131) and she says, "'the Lord provides" when Alex told her that Darla butchered a sick rabbit for dinner (p. 156); Gloria prays over their meal (p. 160); Alex says a prayer to God for Darla's mom (p. 219) – ALSO THEME: ROMANCE – the prayer includes internal reference to God's plan and Alex's skepticism (p. 220); Alex felt that the two churches were blessing their journey (p. 302); the Baptists are doing disaster relief at the camp, providing some food (pp. 349-351); mission director tries to get the wheat for the camp residents (pp. 360-362)

-people in crisis – Alex gets himself out of the broken house (p. 6); Joe and Darren take Alex in (p. 9, 40); fire fighters go with Alex to fight the fire at his house (p. 12); Joe holds things together while Darren falls apart (p. 38); three guys break into the neighbors' house to take stuff (p. 49); Alex fights to protect Darren and Joe (p. 50) – ALSO CHARACTER: ALEX; Darren killed the three intruders (p. 51); people had broken into the taekwondo academy and taken most of the weapons (p. 66); organized at the school – community of people fighting the ash (p. 71); principal tells Alex not to let on that he has food so that he'll still have it for his trip (p. 72); farmhouse – man with a shotgun trying to keep him out but woman invites Alex in, feeds him, and covers him with an afghan to sleep (pp. 98-103) – the man gives water to Alex and sends him on his way (p. 103);

another farmhouse – Alex sees the barrel of a rifle poking out of the window and doesn't stop at any more farmhouses (p. 105); Darryl and Mabel looking for food at the gas station where Alex slept – they have two kids with them – Darryl is about to attack Alex for the food he might have but Mabel tells him not to (pp. 112-114); Darla has been taking care of Alex but doesn't really want to – he's taking her resources (p. 170) – she does admit, though, that he's earned some of the food and such because he's been helping at their farm; a man with a rifle is guarding the town of Worthington (p. 184); woman in town guarding her house with a rifle (pp. 185-186); mayor in Worthington rationing water, organizing shelter and work crews for digging corn – some people agree with the government stepping in and some don't (p. 189); the librarian in Worthington is guarding the library with a shotgun (p. 192) – ALSO LIFE THEME: DANGER; the stone that was heavy for Alex the night before is light for him when he sees Target below (p. 214); politicians declared Iowa a disaster area but haven't sent supplied, yet (p. 228); people barter for what they need – drive hard bargains (p. 235); woman frantically guarding her children (p. 278); gangs, some people became cannibals (p. 289); Darla is willing to prostitute herself to save Alex (p. 396-397) – I THINK THE AUTHOR ALSO MIGHT BE COMMENTING ON THE SITUATION AND THAT IT'S NOT "WRONG" TO DO WHAT YOU NEED TO DO IN CRISIS(?); people change (pp. 410-411), including Alex's sister (p. 416) – ALSO THEME: FAMILY; Alex's uncle building greenhouses and thinking about building a mill (pp. 424-428) – BEING RESOURCEFUL WITH WHAT THEY HAVE; town pitched in to save the pigs/meat (p. 448)

-Government - news on the radio about the volcano (pp. 172-174) – disaster relief in California, people leaving Missouri; mayor in Worthington rationing water, organizing shelter and work crews for digging corn – some people agree with the government stepping in and some don't (p. 189); politicians declared Iowa a disaster area but haven't sent supplies, yet (p. 228); the other side of the lock – sign on the fence says "U.S. Army Corps of Engineers" and on another fence says "U.S. Environmental Protection Agency" – Alex was confused by both groups "owning" the same area (p. 322); the highway had been plowed (p. 323); a F.E.M.A truck "saves" Alex and Darla (p. 326) – they're taken to camp and find out it's illegal for them to travel in Illinois (?) (p. 329) – all of their stuff was taken (p. 331), and Darla's bunny was shot (p. 332) – then they were shoved into the gate of the camp (p. 333) – MORE LIKE PRISON – guards kicked Alex when he was too close to the fence (p. 338) – latrine described (pp. 339-340) – food line/hardly any food (pp. 344-346) – ALSO LOTS OF DETAIL; people working at the camp get coffee while Alex and Darla don't even get breakfast (pp. 361-363); wheat is classified info – belongs to Cargill – people around the world are starving (pp. 377-379); punishment huts are for troublemakers to starve to death (p. 396); the camp gets paid by the number of refugees there (p. 399) – MAKES SENSE BUT ALSO SEEMS LIKE A MONEY-MAKING SCHEME…

Tone:
    Major tone: Example(s) – serious/lighthearted/sarcastic/humorous

    -closely related to style and reveal the "attitude of the writer toward both the
    subject and the reader" (p. 211)
    - issues include condescension (pp. 225-226), sentimentality (pp. 226-229),
    sensationalism (pp. 229-230), didacticism (pp. 230-231)

-seems serious from the beginning – introducing a disaster by comparing to 9/11

Content Analysis: Interesting Texts

Significance of each of these categories in the text: How does this function in the text?
Why - What opportunities does it afford the author/reader? ("When information is
interesting…they read more and therefore understand more" (Swan, 2003, p. 41);
"interesting texts increase motivation for reading and comprehension of those texts"
(Guthrie & Humenick, 2004, p. 343); interest - spend more time reading and learn more
(Guthrie & Wigfield, 2000, p. 412) – added during analysis of second text)

Initial Coding Categories (socio-cognitive theory):
- Coherence: well organized and easy to follow (Schraw and Lehman, 2001);
  information included fits into the text's overall structure (Wade, Buxton, &
  Kelly, 1999); clarity (Schraw, Bruning, & Svoboda, 1995; Wade, 1992) ; "A
  principle demanding that the parts of any composition be so arranged that the
  meaning of the whole may be immediately clear and intelligible" (Harmon &
  Holman, 2009, p. 109).
- -telling me about something that happened – describing his room that night – "I suppose
  by now those belts are burnt or buried in ash" (p. 4)
- -"recovery breathing, like I'd use after a hard round of sparring in taekwando" (p. 7)
- -"I'd taken off impulsively, needing to *do* something" (p. 11)
- -Alex fights the three guys who break into the neighbors' house (p. 50) – we know that he
  knows taekwando and so it makes sense that he's using those moves
- -Alex does not want to see Darren again – LACK OF COHERENCE? [I'm not sure about
  this – he likes his neighbors and appreciates that they help him out; then Darren kills the
  guys and Alex leaves and won't go back – the book says it's because of the blood and
  gore (p. 54) – I'm not sure if that's good enough for me.] – ALSO PLOT OR
  CHARACTER OR BOTH?
- -goes to his taekwondo dojang for his training weapons because of what happened at the
  neighbors' house (p. 63) – makes sense
- -fighting the small guy and Target – has taekwondo skills (pp. 200-204)
- -they have to leave the farm because Target might come back (pp. 208-210) – ALSO
  PLOT
- -Alex using taekwondo to protect himself at the camp (pp. 351-353)
  -
  - Vividness: "text segments that stand out because they create suspense, surprise, or
    are otherwise engaging" (Schraw & Lehman, 2001, p. 31); active voice, imagery,
    concrete examples, "vivid or unusual words" (Wade, Buxton, & Kelly, 1999, p.

199); "words that arouse vivid imagery and … say the unexpected" (Schallert & Reed, 1997, p. 73).

- -suspense – Alex trying to get out while the smoke is getting worse and he starts seeing flames (pp. 6-8) – ALSO PLOT? AND STYLE?
- -suspense – don't know why the fires started (Alex's house and others) (p. 19) – ALSO PLOT
- -description of the ash all over Alex (p. 95) – ALSO STYLE?
- -suspense – will Target be back? (p. 204) – ALSO PLOT
- -suspense – abandoned pig farm but something is grunting and shutting the door of the shed when Alex and Darla try to enter (p. 306) – ALSO PLOT
  -
    - Life themes: death, danger, sex, power (Schallert & Reed, 1997); death, danger, chaos, destruction, disease, injury, power, money, sex, and romance (Wade, 1992)

-danger/chaos/destruction – Alex's house being destroyed (p. 5)
-danger – Alex fights the intruder (p. 50)
-death – Darren killed the intruders (p. 51)
-sex – Alex dreams about school-friend Laura wearing black lace (p. 93)
-danger – shotgun pointed at him (p. 98)
-sex – has a hard-on from Darla cleaning the area around his wound (p. 145)
-death – Darla kills the rabbit and butchers it (p. 153)
-sex – Alex enjoys watching Darla "bend over the engine" of the truck (p. 168)
-death/destruction – shotgun blast hit Gloria in the head (p. 205) and she slowly died – bled out (p. 208)
-death – Alex kills Target with a rock (p. 214) – ALSO PLOT
-danger – Alex falls into a stream during a blizzard (p. 243)
-sex – Alex thinks about sex and that he's a virgin (p. 248) – I'M NOT SURE THIS INFORMATION IS NECESSARY
-death – the little girl Alex and Darla were trying to help (pp. 287-288)
-sex – Alex and Darla both admit they're virgins and then fool around (pp. 299-300)
-death – farmer killed by his pigs (pp. 307-308)
-death – Darla killed a pig (p. 309) – ALL OF THESE COULD ALSO BE PLOT
-sex – kissing in their make-shift bed at the camp (p. 342)\
-danger – Darla and Alex escaping from the camp on a bulldozer – getting shot at (pp. 385-394)
-sex – Alex's uncle gives him condoms (WHAT??) and so he and Darla have sex (pp. 436-438)
-danger – Alex's uncle broke his leg (p. 441-452) – described – ALSO LOTS OF DETAIL

Miscellaneous
-NOT SURE WHERE THIS FITS – "Would there be any place for us in this new, post-volcanic world?" (p. 46); "But all that – medicine, doctors, and syringes – belonged to the pre-eruption world, the world that had died almost six weeks before" (p. 288); Alex

talking about the camp – "The volcano had taken our homes, our food…but it hadn't taken our humanity. No, we'd given that up on our own" (p. 344) – MAYBE THEME: PEOPLE IN CRISIS?; "food represented wealth in the post-eruption world" (p. 455) – trading kale for pork

-lots of detail – explains how long it took him to get to the taekwondo academy (p. 65) and what he found when he got there (p. 66); description of the staff/weapon (p. 67); description of restroom facilities at the school (pp. 78-79); eating soup (p. 91, 93); all the ash everywhere on Alex and his clothes (p. 101); skiing on the hills (p. 107); butchering the rabbit (pp. 153- 156) – WHY DO I NEED THIS INFO?; washing clothes in the tub (pp. 167-168) – LIKE BEFORE INDOOR PLUMBING

Analysis of *The Near Witch*

My Roles

Reading as a reader
      Transactional Theory – efferent/aesthetic
      Socio-Cognitive Theory – motivation/conceptual knowledge/strategy/social
      interaction; interest
      Stance (both theories – notes added during analysis of second text)
            Socio-Cognitive: "interest promotes deeper engagement with a text via
            constructivist processes that focus on interpretation and personal
            reactions" (Schraw, 1997, p. 449);
            motivations for reading include "aesthetic involvement, or enjoyment of
            experiencing a literary text" (Guthrie, McGough, Bennet, & Rice, 1996, p.
            167)
            Transactional: efferent/aesthetic continuum (Rosenblatt, 1965/1995;
            1978/1994); "when students respond aesthetically, they are more likely to
            interpret story events, apply their experiences with literature to life, and
            generalize, abstract, or create new possibilities as a result of their
            encounters with literature" (Cox & Many, 1992, p. 116)
            [MAYBE STANCE IS NOT A SEPARATE IDEA BUT JUST PART OF
            RESPONDING AS A READER FOR BOTH TRANSACTIONAL
            THEORY AND SOCIO-COGNITIVE THEORY]

Reading as a researcher
      Transactional Theory – Literary Analysis
      Socio-Cognitive Theory – Content Analysis

First time through – reader
Second and any subsequent times through - researcher

Literary Analysis

Data Sheet of Novels from Young Adults' Choices (adapted from Chance, 1999 using
Lukens, 2007 and Koss & Teale, 2009)

Book Description

Reference: Schwab, V. (2011). *The near witch*. New York: Hyperion.

Genre: fantasy

Writing quality (*Horn Book*): 2

Format:

Summary: female protagonist, mystery – missing children

Reading as a reader
> Transactional Theory – efferent/aesthetic
> Socio-Cognitive Theory – motivation/conceptual knowledge/strategy/social
> interaction; interest

*9/13/13 - Me as a reader: Generally, I would not choose to read a book with witch in the title (mostly from my religious beliefs/backgrounds); however, the description on the back of the book intrigues me because of the mystery involved: What is happening to the children? Will they be returned? It also appears that the wind is a significant part of the story, and I wonder at how that will be portrayed. Wind certainly has power and in this book might be a character. The last paragraph of the description calls the novel "part fairy tale, part love story." I'm almost always up for a love story; not as excited about the fairy tale aspect as fairy tales haven't been as interesting to me since childhood, though some aspects could work. Overall, I'd say I'm quite interested in this story as I approach it.

I've read the first chapter and am totally in. The writing captured me from the beginning – starting with the onomatopoeia, introducing me to a caring older sister, showing instead of telling me that something happened to the girls' father (p. 2). The wind has changed, and I want to know more about that (p. 4); and I'm curious about the boy – why does his form not fully appear? What is he? (p. 4)

I've read to p. 171 – I really want to know what happens. So far, I've been kept in with suspense – I find out in bits and pieces who Lexi's father was and what he was teaching her; Lexi meets Cole but she doesn't find out any details about him until p. 123 when she learns that he believes the fire that destroyed his town was his fault; I care that the children are disappearing because I like little dudes and have one and can imagine the horror of losing her, but I'm even more anxious for the mystery to be solved before Wren disappears because I know more about her as Lexi's little sister; I get pieces of the story of the Near Witch but don't get the "real" ending until the sisters tell Lexi and Cole (p. 165); I'm curious about Lexi's mom – it seems that she know something, wanting to help Lexi in her more lucid moments

I like Lexi. She's tough. She doesn't want to follow the expectations that her society has for women, preferring action. She wants to help with the search; her father taught her his trade and she wants to continue tracking. She also cuts wood and does other things that are mostly reserved for men. She also isn't interested in getting married, but is attracted to the stranger – a witch!

I like the writing. The descriptions of nature/the wind come alive for me; the metaphor of the apple is one example of the beauty of the writing (p. 121)

In terms of strategies, mostly I've been asking myself questions about the characters – who is Cole, why is he in Near, what do the sisters know about what's happening, what are the sisters and Cole hiding from Lexi…

My prediction/hope/wondering about the ending - At this point, a "happily ever after" would be that the children get returned and Cole and Lexi stay together with Lexi pursuing "manly" activities. Also, I'd like Lexi's mom to recover, whatever that would look like.

I finished reading the book a couple of weeks ago. I read this one sporadically even though I really wanted to finish it to find out what happens to Cole and Lexi and the children.

I agree with the idea that sometimes people just need someone to blame (p. 172). It's difficult that Cole feels guilty for something he did accidentally, and I understand his thinking about possibly wanting others to punish him so he wouldn't have to punish himself. It seems that his relationship with Lexi and his part in saving the children healed him (or started the healing) of the pain of the past and his role in the destruction of his village.

Why does Lexi need to find the Near Witch's bones? Why can't the sisters get them using their magic?

It makes sense that Matthew would try to help Lexi even though he doesn't really believe her about the Near Witch being alive. Or maybe he has to believe she is dead because he represents the people who killed her. But, anyway, He would be willing to help because his grandchild is missing. I think I would do anything to find my child if she went missing. (pp. 183-186)

Including me in "us" works for me since I can identify with what Lexi is describing about secrets: "Funny how when we start to tell a secret, we can't stop. Something falls open in us, and the sheer momentum of letting go pushes us on" (p. 186). Also an example of the language/description that appeals to me.

I can feel her pain and loss when Lexi tells the story of her father's death (pp. 195-200). I especially appreciated her description of the story of her father's life, which is "written in my blood and bones and memory instead of on pieces of paper" (p. 195).

Interesting description of nature – Cole saying that being connected to nature/the wind is lonely – that the connection isn't as strong as connections between people (p. 196). And

that interacting with/having control of nature is like music and the tones between the Near Witch and Cole are quite different (p. 202).

I like how this book is making me think – I'm thinking about Matthews motives, Otto's motives, what made Lexi and Cole the way they are. Right not, after writing that sentence about nature, I'm thinking that maybe Lexi needed to gather the Near Witch's bones because she's fully human and so stronger, in some ways, than witches. It's not through power that she could defeat the Near Witch but because of her love for the children, particularly her sister, and how the disappearance of the children was affecting the town. Lexi has the connection to the other people and so has strength because of these (?).

Ok, I like romance. And I can understand why Lexi and Cole like each other. Lexi is bored of the people in her town and Cole is different; Cole responds to Lexi treating him as a person instead of as an outsider, someone not worthy of relationship. They seem to connect very quickly, though. I guess I'm saying the romance worked for me, overall, but I've also questioned it a bit. Cole wants to be with Lexi (p. 260). I guess I can buy that ☺

I like that Lexi punches Tyler in the face ☺ (p. 220).
I'm a bit frustrated with the story around Lexi's mother. Lexi says her mother is "looking more awake than I have seen her in a year" (p. 222). Except that it seems like she says something like this off and on throughout the story. So, in general, since her husband death Lexi's mom is a zombie, but she perks up at opportune moments to help Lexi try to find out where the children have gone. This does not seem to develop at all but instead the same scenarios happen throughout the story.

I'm thrown for a loop (very briefly) when it appears that Cole is somehow involved. Instead, the Near Witch is playing tricks on Lexi (pp. 235-241).

Not Wren! (p. 248) I figured she would be taken, too, but I didn't want her to be.

I like that Lexi doesn't really do it alone. The sisters tell her what needs to be done. Cole helps her throughout. Her mother helps her on occasion. Matthew tells her where the witch is buried, though he also might have told the men what Lexi was up to. And Mrs. Thatcher helps her get past Tyler and the councilmen (p. 256).

It seems a little unlikely that Otto would thank Cole, but he did save Otto's niece (p. 276).

Why doesn't Otto mention Lexi in his speech? Because it's just about witches helping them? (pp. 279-280)

It seems fitting that the novel ends with Lexi's father's voice and her own added to it.

Reading as a researcher
    Transactional Theory – Literary Analysis
    Socio-Cognitive Theory – Content Analysis

Other Notes

Notes on my stance (cite people – I think this comes from both Transactional and Socio-Cognitive) as I'm reading – part of reading as a reader.

Author – Rosenblatt seems to say the poem is more important than the author. Context matters but I'm reading novels by current authors, I believe, so no need to research time/place.
Socio-cognitive – author mentioned as creator of text but not considered as important other than whether author (particularly of textbooks) is making texts interesting.
Foucault agrees that the author is dead but we're still influenced by the author function, which allows us to limit the significance of the author/text.
Purves says we should study the author's life and culture as one aspect of studying literature.

*Lee says to notice author's assumptions/ideologies during my second reading – connected to thematic development (determining author intent is part of interpretation (Probst, 2004, pp. 53-55); "Ideologies may be more or less visible in texts produced for children, which seldom reproduce overt ideology as a thematized component of text, but which will reflect two functions of ideology. The first of these is the social function of defining and sustaining group values (perceptible textually in an assumption that writer and implied reader share a common understanding and value), and the second is the cognitive function of supplying a meaningful organization of the social attitudes and relationships which constitute narrative plots" (McCallum & Stephens, 2011, p. 360);
-gender roles – Lexi doesn't want to do what women in her village do – she wants to be active (cutting wood, exploring with the men) instead of baking in the kitchen and getting ready for marriage (as of p. 58) - CHARACTER
-heterosexual relationships (Lexi and Cole, Tyler and Helena, families include mr. and mrs.) – THEME: ROMANCE
-families include mom, dad, kids; single men are bachelors (Otto, Bo), single women are witches (Near Witch, Magda, Dreska) – THEME: RELATIONSHIPS
-importance of relationship with nature - CHARACTER

Literary Devices

Significance of each of these devices to the story: How does this function in the text? Why - What opportunities does it afford the author/reader? (notes on function from Lukens, 2007; also use Galda, Sipe, Liang, and Cullinan, 2013, pp. 14, 28 – added during analysis of first text)

Character:

        Type of protagonist: Example(s) – round/flat; dynamic/static

        -unity of character and action (pp. 78-81); function can vary by genre (pp. 92-94)

Lexi is the protagonist – the story is written in first person from her perspective (Point-of-View). She is round – she loves her family, tries to do what her dad would have wanted her to do and defies her uncle, is intrigued by witches even as the people of her village fear them, rebels against the expectations for girls of her age in her village, likes to be moving – tracking and cutting wood. Dynamic (though I had to think about this a bit) – in the first part of the book she lies to her mother about where she's been, but then she realizes her mother is on her side and trying to help her; she has little interest in marriage at her age but then falls for Cole; she seems to have more understanding for Otto as the story progresses – sees him as more than her mean uncle who stops her from doing what she wants, as a man trying to protect his family and burdened by worry. Coherence?

I think I also need to talk about the wind/Near Witch/Cole. The wind seems like such an important part of the story, made interesting by personification (Style). But then it seems that the wind is actually acting on behalf of the Near Witch and/or Cole. So then maybe the wind as character is actually not its own character but part of the other two, both witches. Maybe I should talk about witches as character – including the Thorne sisters, the Near Witch, Cole, and the wind as part of the Near Witch and Cole. I would say they're all round – the wind can help or harm/be used by witches to help or harm; the Near Witch is seeking revenge for being murdered for something she didn't do – she was kind to the children and protected Near until they killed her; the sisters want to protect Near but also identify with the Near Witch; Cole is secretive and, in turn, kind but allusive. He is also dynamic in that in the beginning he believes he has to be alone and is haunted by what happened to his village; after he gets to know Lexi, he opens up to her and wants to stay with her – he also learns to use his connection to the wind instead of trying to ignore it. Life Themes (power).

-Lexi (p. 6) - "I cannot deny my sister anything" (p. 2) – ALSO THEME: RELATIONSHIP; sixteen – "marrying age" (p. 7); does not like the idea of marriage to a "village boy" (p. 8); "'I am my father's daughter'" (p. 10); closest friend – Helena (p. 15); Lexi doesn't want things in the village to be "safe and same" (p. 20); felt a gravity pulling her to the stranger, and her father taught her to trust this feeling (p. 23) – ALSO THEME: RELATIONSHIPS; Lexi lies to her mother about where she was when she was visiting the Thorne sisters (p. 35) – ALSO PLOT; likes to be moving (p. 36); knows she can lie to her mother but not as easily to Otto (p. 37); Lexi does not want to be bossed by Master Eli (a Council member) (p. 46); enjoys "being able to simply eat, rather than be delicate about it" when she sees that she's all alone in the kitchen (p. 58) – ALSO AUTHOR ASSUMPTION: GENDER?; wants to know about "the world beyond Near" (p. 87)

-the stranger is "just a boy," not much older than Lexi, but also "not like anyone I have ever seen" (p. 52); he tells Lexi he doesn't have a name, and so she decides to call him Cole (p. 53); Lexi summons a breeze that begins to "bluster" but then "Cole sets his hand

on my arm, and the wind settles a bit" (p. 92); Cece's father saw Cole vanish (pp. 115-116) and Lexi recalls seeing him fading (p. 117); tells Lexi that his village burned down and it was his fault (pp. 122-123) – ALSO THEME: RELATIONSHIPS; as the wind changes, Lexi notices Cole is less there (p. 126) – ALSO PLOT: SUSPENSE; Cole tells Lexi about himself – he's a witch (p. 137) – ALSO THEME: WITCH and, though he never met his father, he was a witch, too; he is connected to the wind (pp. 137-138) – WHERE DOES THE WIND AS CHARACTER END AND HE BEGIN?; his mother got sick and his stepfather thought Cole could save her because he's a witch, but he couldn't (pp. 139-140) and the night his mother died his emotions made the wind blow, knock over torches, and burn his village (p. 140); telling Lexi makes him lose control and form a twister (pp. 141-142); believes it's too dangerous to try to control the wind, so he tries to stay empty so he doesn't affect it (pp. 143-144); painful for him to hear the Near Witch in the wind (p. 202); Cole is learning to control the wind – because he wants to stay with Lexi (pp. 259-260) – ALSO THEME: ROMANCE and THEME: WITCH

-the wind on the moor – described on p. 2; "When I was small, the wind sang me lullabies…" (p. 3), "But tonight it's different…lower and sadder" (p. 4); song children sing – Witch's Rhyme – "is a fearfully addictive tune, so much so that it seems the wind itself has taken to humming it" (p. 16) and game children play while singing this tune "reminds me of the way the wind whips up the fallen leaves" (p. 16) – ALSO STYLE: FIGURATIVE LANGUAGE; the wind sounds sad, and Lexi knows that if she "could lean closer, words would become clear" (p. 39) but her father told her to be careful about how closely she listens to the wind because "*The wind is lonely, love, and always looking for company*" (p. 39); "the wind bristles" (p. 66) – ALSO STYLE: FIGURATIVE LANGUAGE; Lexi asks the wind for help when she and Cole lose the trail (pp. 91-92); Lexi realizes the "slow and steady and pulsing" sound she's hearing is the wind, "beginning to rise and fall, to whip through in short, sharp pulses over the moor" (p. 95) – ALSO STYLE; "The wind is bristling" (p. 126) – ALSO STYLE; "the wind is humming in a far-off way" (p. 134) – ALSO STYLE; Lexi hear musical notes in the wind – THE NEAR WITCH? – "The wind seems to be spilling over the hill, pushing us back" (p. 201)

-the Near Witch – story about her that Lexi's father used to tell (pp. 2-3); witch's rhyme (pp. 16-17); "The Council started out as the three men who faced the Near Witch and cast her out" (p. 20); Lexi's father told her that "after the Near Witch, the people in the village got it into their heads that all witches were bad" (p. 32) – ALSO PLOT: SUSPENSE – WHAT HAPPENED?; Lexi is describing the Near Witch to Cole – she was a moor witch who could "manipulate any of the elements" (p. 92); Lexi continues the story of the Near Witch for Cole – she loved the village and the children, the children liked watching her craft, and then a boy died in her garden and she was banished (p. 151); when the singing in the wind died, the villagers believed the Near Witch was dead (p. 152) – but Magda doesn't believe this ending (p. 152) – ALSO PLOT: SUSPENSE and THEME: WITCH; Lexi asks the sisters to tell her "'The real ending'" of the story of the Near Witch (p. 161); could control all the elements (p. 163) – proof that she's the one taking the children; Magda tells the ending – a boy died in the Near Witch's garden and the three

hunters killed her and buried her on the moors (pp. 164-166); Cole says "'She's controlling…all of it at once…pulling it toward her'" (p. 202); crows seem to symbolize the Near Witch – they're often around when Lexi and Cole are looking for the missing children (p. 228 – have been mentioned throughout the novel); Cole tells Lexi that the forest is listening to the Near Witch (p. 260); the crow Lexi kills is made of moor, just like the Near Witch (p. 264)

-other characters mentioned but then not explained until later – Bo (p. 13), description of him on p. 14; Tyler (p. 16) – childhood friend who wants Lexi to be something more (pp. 63-66)

-Thorne sisters (p. 21) – Lexi thinks they're hiding the stranger; Magda and Dreska – witches (p. 22); people in the village pretend the Thorne sisters are not there – do not welcome witches (pp. 22-23); have not let Lexi in their house since her father died (p. 23) – three years ago (p. 24) – until today (p. 26); Lexi hopes to see the sisters' craft but they "don't make a point of giving demonstrations" (p. 26) – ALSO THEME: WITCHES – they have been around hundreds of years (p. 28); Lexi saw Dreska look at her father with kindness and "has never seen her look that way at anyone ever again" (p. 29) – ALSO THEME: RELATIONSHIPS; Lexi's father said it was important that the Thorne sisters stay – even outside of the village – because it was still their village even if the people were afraid of them (p. 32); their craft – Magda is talking to the patch of bare dirt and tells Lexi she's growing flowers – without seeds (p. 55); give a charm to Lexi to give to Wren (pp. 57, 72); Lexi thinks she can "feel the earth rumble" when Dreska confronts Otto (p. 126)

Plot:
      Type of plot: Example(s) – progressive/episodic
      Narrative order: Example(s) – chronological/alternating past and present/flashbacks
      Type of major conflict: Example(s) – person-against-self/person-against-person/person-against-society/person-against-nature
      -"The elements of a story that deal with rising action are suspense [pp. 111-113], the cliff-hanger [p. 114], foreshadowing [pp. 114-115], sensationalism [p. 116], the climax [pp. 116-118], denouement [pp. 118-119], and inevitability [p. 120]" (p. 111).
      -"reliance on coincidence to resolve conflict weakens plot" (p. 122)
      -"The most destructive element in the overuse of sentiment is not boredom, but the fact that the young reader, faced with continual sentimentality, will not develop the sensitivity essential to recognize what is truly moving and what is merely a play on feelings" (p. 125).
      -lack of conflict – "Inadequately developed conflict…leaves us unconcerned about the outcome of a story " (p. 126)
Plot is progressive; narrative order is chronological with Lexi remembering things about her father and telling stories that capture life in Near with the Near Witch; conflicts are

person-against society (villagers don't want to accept witches but Lexi, following in her father's footsteps, believes they should be accepted in Near) and person-against-nature (the Near Witch with nature at her command – primarily the wind but also using the moor to embody her so she can protect her "garden" of the children of Near). Lots of suspense (Vividness) and some foreshadowing. Also Coherence and Life Themes (danger, power).

-suspense/foreshadowing – Lexi thinks she sees something move outside her bedroom window (p. 3); she spots a figure not quite there (p. 4)
-suspense – "There are no strangers in the town of Near" (p. 4)…"There haven't been since long ago" (p. 5)
-suspense – Lexi wants to wear her father's old boots (p. 7) and wears her father's knife – WHY DOESN'T HER FATHER NEED THESE THINGS? – he is dead (p. 13, 23)
-Otto says there's a stranger in town and Lexi realizes she really did see someone (p. 9)
-suspense – Lexi thinks she knows who is hiding the stranger (p. 10) – WHO?
-Lexi leaves the meeting in town to head to the Thorne sisters' (p. 21), the people she believes are hiding the stranger
-Lexi tells the Thorne sisters that she wants to talk to the stranger (pp. 30-31) but they don't tell her anything; she thinks he's staying in their shed because she sees a dark cloak but can't find him (pp. 32-33)
-suspense/mystery - Lexi hears a sad note on the wind, and then her sister gets out of bed and almost gets the window open, even though she's never been able to lift it (pp. 40-41); and then the next day Edgar is missing! (p. 42) with no sign of a struggle (p. 44)
-Otto has a plan to search for Edgar, but Lexi says they should do the opposite of what he suggests (p. 45); he does not let Lexi join the search (p. 46)
-the men think the stranger took Edgar (p. 47)
-Lexi visits the sisters' shed – and meets the stranger! (pp. 49-50)
-Lexi asks the stranger if he took Edgar and he says, "'Why would I do that?'" (p. 51)
-foreshadowing – Lexi asks Magda if she knows what happened to Edgar and Magda says, "'The ground's like skin, it grows in layers…What's underneath can work its way up, eventually'" (p. 56) – ALSO STYLE: FIGURATIVE LANGUAGE and CHARACTER: THORNE SISTERS and maybe THEME?
-Lexi tells Magda and Dreska that she won't tell others about the stranger and that she doesn't believe he took Edgar but plans to find who did (p. 57)
-Tyler tells Lexi where the men searched for Edgar (pp. 66-67)
-Otto tells Lexi the men are patrolling the village for the night – they're wearing yellow arm bands and have "'orders to shoot on sight'" (p. 71)
-Lexi finds a yellow scarf that Helena knit for her to wear on her arm as she searches for clues of where Edgar might be (pp. 72-73) – ALSO CHARACTER: LEXI – she thinks she might have a better chance finding clues than the men
-Lexi doesn't find traces of Edgar, but she does see a figure in the darkness – she chases but it disappears (pp. 76-77) – suspense – turns out to be Cole (p. 80)
-suspense – everything turns dark – the clouds cover the moon and then stay there even though the wind is blowing and should move them along (p. 78); then Lexi hears the wind humming (p. 79) – ALSO CHARACTER: WIND – or NEAR WITCH?

-Cole shows Lexi what he found – leading away from Edgar's house, "the grass and heather bend ever so slightly, as if someone walked along the tops of them" (p. 83) – suspense – WHAT DOES THIS MEAN?

-Lexi and Cole have lost the trail (pp. 90-91)

-suspense – Lexi finds Edgar's sock near the sisters' house and "the sole of the sock is a crisp white…as though the foot never touched the ground" (p. 93)

-foreshadowing – Cole has asked about the Near Witch, the path of the bent heather has disappeared, Lexi finds a clean sock, Cole "looks sad but not surprised" (p. 94) – HE KNOWS IT'S THE NEAR WITCH?

-Lexi hears people approaching – Tyler and his father (pp. 94-95) – they don't find Lexi and Cole (pp. 96-97)

-suspense – Wren tells Lexi that Ed and Cece are playing a game and she wants them to stop playing (p. 99); Lexi finds out that Cece is missing (p. 100)

-Otto has Tyler stay with Lexi at her house (p. 101)

-Tyler tells Lexi that he and her uncle don't think she's weak, and that they both think she's seen the stranger (pp. 102-103) – ALSO THEME: RELATIONSHIPS

-Lexi's mother asks Tyler to get some logs for the fire, which she doesn't need, and then tells Lexi to "go" (p. 104) – ALSO THEME: RELATIONSHIPS

-mystery – Wren hears the music at night and Lexi almost hears it, believes other children might hear it and go missing, too (pp. 105-106)

-foreshadowing - Lexi overhears Dreska arguing with Master Thomas about something that happened long ago and about "the signs" (p. 107)

-Lexi goes to Cece's house and finds lots of women gathered with Cece's mother, who talks about the window being locked inside and out (pp. 111-112); She asks Mrs. Porter what she remembers and Mrs. Porter hums the broken tune that Cece had been singing and that Wren had been humming when she told Lexi about Ed and Cece asking her to play in the night (pp. 112-113) – suspense

-Lexi explores Cece's window and notes that a child would be unlikely to be able to open it (p. 114); she also sees a similar path to what she and Cole found outside of Edgar's house (p. 114) – suspense

-as she's about to climb out of Cece's window, Lexi overhears men talking about Cole (p. 114) – Cece's dad says he saw him the night before, but Lexi believes that's a lie (p. 115); the men are ready to march to the sisters' to get Cole (116) so Lexi decides to warn him (p. 117)

-mystery/suspense – Lexi overhears Cole and the sisters talking – it sounds like they know something about the missing children (pp. 118-120); Lexi asks him what's going on and tells him the men are coming for him (pp. 120-121)

-mystery - Otto confronts the sisters, asking to see the stranger, and they tell him that "'The Council knows who is taking the children'" but Otto calls their statement "'rubbish'" (p. 125) – WHO *IS* TAKING THE CHILDREN?

-Lexi tells Otto that Cole did not take the children, and Otto tells Lexi that they're going to take him (p. 130)

-Lexi gets a note that says "*Meet me*" and she knows it's from Cole (p. 131)

-Cole tells Lexi he's been moving around but stopped in Near because "'This place it's as if it's possessed. The wind is possessed. By songs. And voices'" (p. 144); says the voice he hears is a woman's voice and believes she's a witch – different/more power than he has (pp. 144-145) – ALSO THEME: WITCH – AND MAYBE WIND IS NOT CHARACTER BUT BELONGS WITH WITCH?

-suspense – everything comes together – the missing children is connected to the Near Witch? (pp. 145-146)

-Lexi and Cole overhear Otto and Bo – and Lexi sees Bo planting evidence – The Council told Bo to do it so everyone would be convinced that Cole was to blame for the missing children (pp. 147-149)

-suspense – the "unnatural darkness" falls, again, and Lexi knows that another child will go missing (p. 154)

-the men were looking for Cole at the sisters' house – made a mess of it when they didn't find him (p. 159)

-Lexi tells the sisters that she knows that they think the Near Witch is taking the children – they hesitate but then Lexi says she needs to know – to save Wren (pp. 162-163) – ALSO THEME: RELATIONSHIPS

-Lexi figures out the mystery – the Near Witch is taking the children to punish the village (p. 267)

-Magda and Dreska liked the Near Witch and believed the boy died because he had a heart condition (pp. 167-168) – ALSO CHARACTER: NEAR WITCH; they tell Lexi that "'to make things right'" they need to find her bones and give her a proper burial (p. 169)

-Lexi plans to look for the bones with Cole that night (p. 173)

-Lexi talks to Matthew, a member of the Council whose grandchild was taken (p. 179) – she convinces him to tell her the end of the story – where the Near Witch is buried (pp. 184-186)

-Lexi tells Cole what happened to her father – even after the Council took away his title of Protector, he still tried to get the people to trust the sisters (pp. 195-198); he died after being pinned down by a landslide (pp. 199-200)

-Lexi and Cole witness what happens when the "world goes black" (p. 203) – they see the forest light up and a child (Lexi thinks it's Wren!) being carried on the wind to the forest (pp. 203-204); then a shape forms out of dirt and weeds and moss – THE NEAR WITCH – she tells Lexi and Cole not to disturb her garden (pp. 206-207)

-Otto and Bo and Tyler have found Lexi and Cole on the moor (p. 208) – Cole uses the wind to protect himself and Lexi (pp. 208-209) – as he and Lexi run back toward the village, the men go into the forest (pp. 209-210)

-Lexi's sees that the bedroom windows are open – but Wren is in bed sleeping (p. 211)

-Lexi finds out that Riley is missing (p. 214)

-Lexi hears the men – and Cole – outside her house (p. 216); Tyler stops Lexi from going to Cole (p. 216); Otto blames Lexi for what the men are doing – saying she should have listened (p. 217); Tyler says he saw Cole lead a child into the forest the night before and Otto agrees (p. 218) – LIES – ALSO THEME: NEEDING SOMEONE TO BLAME

-Cole reminds Lexi about the bones (p. 218)

-suspense – Otto leads Cole away from Near and Bo tells Lexi they "'Won't spill a stranger's blood on Near soil'" (p. 219)

-Bo and Tyler are guarding Lexi's house – she tries to escape from her room but finds that the window has been nailed shut – then her mother helps her escape (p. 222) – ALSO THEME: RELATIONSHIP

-Lexi wants to check on Cole (ALSO THEME: ROMANCE) but she knows now is her chance to find the bones (p. 223)

-Lexi finds child footprints in the woods and they lead her to a clearing in the forest and a mound of branches and leaves (pp. 226-227) – when she looks between the branches, Lexi finds bones of the Near Witch (p. 228)

-Lexi hears two men enter the clearing – Tyler's father and Edgar's father (pp. 229-230) – Edgar's father says something about Cole being gone and that he didn't think that Cole took the children but it "'Doesn't matter'" – they had to make sure (p. 230)

-Lexi is worried about Cole and rushes to the sisters' house – they haven't seen Cole – they tell Lexi to go home and they'll make everything right in the morning (pp. 231-233) – mystery/suspense – WHAT HAPPENED TO COLE?

-Lexi wakes up to the sound of her name on the wind – and Cole waiting for her on the moor (p. 235); the wind removes the nails and opens the window for her, and Lexi leaves her bed and Wren to meet Cole (p. 236) – ALSO THEME: ROMANCE

-the real Cole saves Lexi from the nature Cole made by the Near Witch (pp. 240-241) – ALSO THEME: ROMANCE

-Cole is alive! But hurt (pp. 241-242); he was shot in the shoulder by Bo (pp. 241-243); he survived by showing himself as a witch (pp. 243-244)

-Lexi tells Cole that she found the bones – they plan to get them in the morning (p. 245)

-Lexi wakes up and sees that Wren is missing (pp. 247-249); the men are still blaming Cole (pp. 249-252) – Bo and Tyler stop her from leaving

-Tyler holds on to Lexi at the town meeting and tells her they're going to arrest her at the end of the meeting (p. 253)

-Lexi gets away from Tyler with the help of Mrs. Thatcher (pp. 255-256)

-Lexi tells the sisters what the Council plans – they tell her Cole went to the forest and she should help him get the bones (pp. 257-258)

-Lexi follows Wren's steps to the clearing (p. 261) – ALSO COHERENCE – makes sense because she knows Wren and she knows how to track – her father taught her

-Lexi and Cole gather the Near Witch's bones (pp. 262-265) - suspense – the men are coming; Lexi hears Otto's voice coming from one side and sees smoke coming from the other side (p. 265)

-Lexi sees "freshly tilled" earth in the clearing and remembers the Near Witch talking about her garden – she digs and finds Wren buried in the earth – with a heartbeat (p. 266); she doesn't want to leave Wren, but Cole tells her she has to get the bones to the sisters before dark (p. 267) – as she leaves she sees the wind curl up around Cole and the children (p. 268) – ALSO CHARACTER: COLE and THEME: WITCH

-suspense – Will Lexi make it to the sisters'? (p. 269) – the sun is setting and the Near Witch assembles her bones (pp. 270-271); Lexi fights the Near Witch (pp. 271-273); the sisters' have completed the tomb and the garden (p. 273) – ALSO CHARACTER:

THORNE SISTERS and THEME: WITCH; Cole shows up and he and Lexi get the Near Witch into the tomb (pp. 273-274)
-the men have the children, and Lexi sees that Wren is asleep (p. 275)
-Otto thanks Cole (p. 276) – Cole takes Lexi in his arms and "everything feels right" (p. 276) – ALSO THEME: ROMANCE
-Otto tells the town that the children were found because of the Thorne sisters and Cole (pp. 279-280) – ALSO THEME: WITCH; and that Cole is welcome to stay (p. 280)
-Cole tells Lexi that he wants to stay because of her – and he kisses her (pp. 280-281) – ALSO THEME: ROMANCE
-Lexi hopes the Near Witch has found peace (p. 281)
-the last paragraphs are about the wind – connected the Near Witch (pp. 281-282) – DOES THAT MEAN THE WIND IS THE NEAR WITCH (CHARACTER)? WHAT ABOUT COLE?

Point-of-view:
        Type of point-of-view: Example(s) – first person/omniscient/limited omniscient/objective (dramatic)
        -First-person narration has "great potential for pulling the reader into what appears to be autobiographical truth" (p. 171). "The danger in first-person narration lies in the possibility of 'I' ignoring appropriate limitations, reporting thoughts of others, and predicting" (p. 171).
        -"The objective or nearly objective point of view in some stories makes heavier demands on the imagination and understanding of the reader" (p. 178).
-first person – "I say" (p. 1)

Setting:
        Type of setting: Example(s) – integral/backdrop
        Function of setting: Example(s) – clarifies conflict/as antagonist/illuminates character/affects mood/as symbol
*I think I need to review this because the moor seems significant but it could be any moor…maybe integral? – After reviewing setting in Lukens (2007) I believe the setting is integral to the story. The rich description shows how time and place influence the characters and plot and theme.
It's important to the story that there's an invisible boundary around Near and that strangers do not come to Near; the moor is important as an antagonist – the Near Witch controls the moor and Lexi's father died on the moor; setting illuminates character – Lexi visit the sisters when others don't, Cole's connection to the wind is made known on the moor.

-on the moor in Near "on the outskirts of the village" (p. 2) – Lexi's family's house (p. 4)
-into the village (p. 10)
-Thorne sisters' cottage (p. 23)
-home (p. 34)
-Thorne sisters' cottage (p. 49)

-home (p. 58)
-into the village (p. 73)
-Edgar's house (p. 75)
-away from the village (p. 76) toward the sisters' house (p. 86)
-home (p. 98)
-village (p. 105)
-the sisters' cottage (p. 118)
-home (p. 128)
-out with Cole (p. 134)
-home (p. 155)
-the sisters' (p. 158) – "the air has gone from cool to cold in a matter of days"
-village (p. 175)
-home (p. 187)
-the moor (p. 194)
-home (p. 210)
-the moor (p. 223)
-Lexi enters the witch's woods (p. 224)
-the sisters' cottage (p. 231)
-the moor (p. 236)
-home (p. 245)
-village (p. 253)
-the sisters' (p. 257)
-the witch's woods (p. 258)
-the sisters' (p. 272)
-town square (p. 277)

Style:

> Devices of style: Example(s) – connotation/ imagery/ figurative language/ hyperbole/ understatement/ allusion/ symbol/ puns and word play
> Devices of sound: Example(s) – onomatopoeia/ alliteration/ assonance/ consonance/ rhythm
> -"exaggeration or understatement to entertain or heighten feelings…and sound devices to give pleasure and to heighten meaning" (p. 207)
> -should be appropriate for the story (p. 207)

Style is conflated with Vividness. Schwab uses lots of figurative language – personification, similes and metaphors, as well as imagery; and onomatopoeia and rhythm and alliteration.
*I'M NOTICING LOTS OF PERSONIFICATION OF NATURE – RELATED TO THEME: NATURE and CHARACTER: WIND – I think this is significant in terms of how Style interacts with the other devices in this novel.

-onomatopoeia – "match hisses," sounds – "A whistle. A crack" (p. 1)
-figurative language – "the wind hums against the house" (p. 1)

-figurative language – "the wind is breathing against the glass, a wobbling hum that causes the old wooden frame to groan" (p. 3)

-figurative language – "eyes as dark as river stones" (p. 5)

-alliteration – "moonlit moor" (p. 6)

-figurative language – Lexi about Wren – "She really is like a bird"…"she chirps" (p. 11)

-figurative language – "The clouds overhead are clustering…like a pilgrimage" (p. 12)

-figurative language – Lexi compares Magda's movement to those of a leaf (p. 25)

-figurative language – "Beyond the cottage, the moor takes hold" (p. 25)

- onomatopoeia and figurative language – "The breeze begins to scratch and hiss against the windowpanes" (p. 27)

-alliteration – "congregation of clouds" (p. 27)

-figurative language – Magda tells Lexi, "'Flowers are free-thinking things. They grow where they please" (p. 55)

-figurative language – "The last bit of light is bleeding away, replaced by a rich blue darkness" (p. 66)

-figurative language – "until the quiet becomes heavy, as if everything is holding its breath" (p. 71)

-imagery – "The wind beats in my ears with my pulse" (p. 77) – ALSO CHARACTER: WIND

-figurative language – "The moon is slipping lower, dragging shadows over the world" (p. 91)

-figurative language – "The morning is a stealthy hunter, my father used to say. It sneaks up quiet and quick on the night and overtakes it" (p. 97) – ALSO THEME: RELATIONSHIPS

-figurative language – "Dreska lets out a hiss like water on hot coals" (p. 107)

-Dreska talks to Lexi about the rhymes children used to know (pp. 108-109) and invites Lexi to come with her (p. 110) – ALSO CHARACTER: THORNE SISTERS; Lexi asks if the Near Witch was real and Dreska says, "Of course…Stories are always born from something" (p. 110) – ALSO CHARACTER: NEAR WITCH

-extended metaphor – juggling words and juggling apples (p. 121)

-figurative language – Cole "weighing his words in his mouth like they are trying to crawl back down his throat" (p. 123)

-imagery/onomatopoeia – "The old house lets out little clicks and thuds as the heat from the day seeps out" (p. 132)

-rhythm/alliteration – "between blue-gray shadows on a blue-gray ground, watching the blue-white circle in the blue-black sky" (p. 134)

-figurative language – "A fog has settled over everything. The backs of the hills bristle up from it like sleeping beasts" (p. 158)

-figurative language – "Houses are sparse on the eastern side, as if the villagers lean, like grass, away from Magda and Dreska" (p. 175)

-figurative language – Lexi's father's story is "written in my blood an bones and memory" (p. 195)

-figurative language – "I feel my words trying to crawl back down my throat" (p. 197)

-figurative language – "as sleep slips beneath the covers with me" (p. 213)

-figurative language – "sounds are rising, climbing on top of one another" (p. 216)
-alliteration – "frustration and fatigue and fear" (p. 222)
-figurative language – "The forest swallows the world beyond, gnaws at the light and the warmth" (p. 225)
*I'M NOTICING LOTS OF PERSONIFICATION OF NATURE – RELATED TO THEME: NATURE and CHARACTER: WIND
-imagery – description of the setting sun - "the golden circle skimming the wild grass" (p. 269)
-figurative language – "The sun is bleeding, too, right into the horizon, and the whole world has turned a sickly red" (p. 270)

Theme:
>Types of theme: Example(s) – explicit/implicit and primary/secondary (LEE AND DAVID SAY TAKE OUT TYPES – OLD IDEA THAT CONFLICTS WITH TRANSACTIONAL THEORY)
>Common thematic ideas: Example(s) – finding themselves/ searching for answers or secrets/ finding identity and hiding self/ dealing with loss/ friendship/ family/ coming of age/ bullying/ moving/ relationships/ abuse/ illness or mental issue
>-"If the information displaces the understanding, then didacticism has won out" (p. 139).
Themes include relationships with family members (possibly including loss of a parent); romance (Also Life Themes); fear; needing someone to blame. These last two might be able to be combined, but I need to think about that.

Relationships – family – Lexi reads stories to her sister (pp. 1-3); Lexi and Wren have "morning rituals" (p. 7) of games and laughing (pp. 6-7); Wren hugs Lexi (p. 11); Lexi teases Wren (p. 12); Lexi asks Wren to keep a secret – that Lexi is going to visit the sisters (p. 49); Lexi has to protect Wren (pp. 185, 191); pats her head, thankful that she hasn't gone missing (p. 215)
Lexi's father read to her (p. 2); she wears his boots and knife (pp. 7-8); he taught her his trade (p. 11); he taught her about witches (p. 22); took her to visit the Thorne sisters (p. 22); taught her how to track (p. 23) – "*The grass and the dirt hold secrets*, he'd say. *The wind and the water carry stories and warnings*" (p. 23) – ALSO CHARACTER: WIND; Lexi's father taught her to chop firewood (p. 36); he was the Protector before Otto (p. 37); Lexi asked her father to record his stories in the book she has, and she started writing things she remembered him saying after he died (p. 59); hunter and tracker (p. 85); Lexi feels good about Dreska telling her she's like her father (p. 110) – ALSO CHARACTER: LEXI; Matthew tells Lexi that she looks like her father – like she can challenge the way of the world (p. 184) – ALSO CHARACTER: LEXI; Lexi tries to describe their father to Wren (p. 191); people called Lexi's father "their Protector" (p. 195); he knew how "to walk the line between person and witch" (p. 196)
Otto is Lexi's uncle – glares at her when she wears her father's belt (p. 8); Otto tells Lexi to remove her father's belt but Lexi doesn't listen (pp. 11-12) – ALSO CHARACTER: LEXI; Otto is Protector (p. 21) – ALSO PLOT: SUSPENSE – WHAT DOES THIS

MEAN?; Lexi sees Otto's mask slip, "revealing something tired, tense" (p. 101) – he doesn't want Lexi to leave the house because he believes she'll be safer if she stays there (p. 102); promised Lexi's father that he would protect her and is trying (pp. 128-129) Lexi's mother gives her "The look that says, *My husband is dead…*" and Lexi does what she asks (p. 13); Lexi misses the way her mother was before her father died, but at least she asks fewer questions (p. 35); expects her mother to stop her from leaving, but it doesn't happen (p. 48); briefly sees "the woman my mother used to be" (p. 62) when she tells Lexi she's trying to help her – ALSO PLOT: SUSPENSE – WHAT DOES THIS MEAN?; lies for Lexi when Otto asks Lexi about her day (p. 70) – ALSO PLOT: SUSPENSE – WHY WOULD SHE BE PROTECTING LEXI FROM OTTO?; Otto grabs Lexi's arm to stop her from leaving the house, and Lexi's mom demands that he "'Let her go'" (p. 157); Lexi's mom tells Mrs. Thatcher that Lexi will help find Riley (p. 215)

Lexi's closest friend – Helena (p. 15); Helena saw the stranger, too, and Lexi asks her not to tell her uncle until Lexi has the chance "'To warn him'" (pp. 18-20); thinks Helena wants to attract Tyler (p. 27); feels guilty for not visiting Helena when her brother went missing (p. 180); Helena has changed – "Wherever Helena is, *my* Helena, she's not here" (p. 182)

Romance (also Life Theme) – Lexi thinking about Cole – "I do not like the way my chest tightens when my eyes snag on him" (p. 58); Tyler wants to be more than friends and Lexi doesn't want to (pp. 63-66, 68); hopes the stranger is still in town (p. 67); Cole followed Lexi because "'It's not safe out here. Not at night'" (p. 81) – he wants to help Lexi find Edgar; as they're following the heather trail, Lexi asks Cole questions but he doesn't answer so she tells him about her family (pp. 84-86); Cole's amusement is "a wonderful sound" (p. 91); Lexi knows "if Tyler catches me with Cole, it [the consequences of her being out] will be immeasurable worse" (p. 95); Lexi grabs Cole's hand, "needing assurance that he's still there" (p. 96); Tyler kisses Lexi's hand "knowing I'll endure it in front of my uncle" (p. 100); Cole holds Lexi's hand – "My pulse skips at his touch" (p. 124); Lexi shows herself to her uncle to protect Cole from being caught (pp. 126-127); Lexi is excited and concerned about Cole (p. 131); Cole kisses Lexi (p. 135); he expects her to reject him now that she knows he's a witch, but she doesn't, and he kisses her (pp. 142-143); Cole promises to hide until he and Lexi find the children, and they kiss (pp. 152-153); Lexi tells Cole she needs him (p. 173); after they see the Near Witch, Cole kisses Lexi "as if he can force normalcy and humanity and flesh and blood back into himself" (p. 208); Lexi sees anger and hate in Tyler's eyes – now he knows that Lexi is interested in Cole (p. 217); Cole and Lexi – "he seems to feel what I feel: We are each anxious that the other will blow away" (p. 243); Cole didn't want to die because of Lexi (pp. 244-245) – he kisses her – INTERESTING HOW LEXI'S LACK OF EXCITEMENT FOR TYLER IS JUXTAPOSED WITH HER EXCITEMENT FOR COLE

Witches – "Everyone knows that witches are born, not made" (p. 23); people in Near tell stories about witches – Lexi's father told her "they were made up by the Council to

frighten people" and that "Fear…has the power to make people close their eyes, turn away" (p. 25) – ALSO THEME: RELATIONSHIPS – MAYBE FEAR IS ANOTHER THEME?; Lexi's father told her that "witches were like people…they could be good or bad or foolish or clever" (p. 32); Cole wants to know about the Near Witch – Lexi explains that the town wants to forget witches but that she believes the story of the Near Witch – it's not just a fairy tale (pp. 87-88); Lexi tells Cole that even though he's connected to nature/a witch he's not "'less than human'" (p. 173); Lexi thought her father, though not born a witch, had found a way to be connected to the moor, something she envied about him – Cole said it's very lonely to be connected to the wind (p. 196) – I THINK THIS GOES WITH CHARACTER

Fear - "Fear…has the power to make people close their eyes, turn away" (p. 25); "Fear must be making phantoms" (p. 115); "*Nothing good grows out of fear, my father said. It's a poisonous thing*" (p. 116); "'fear can make people see strange things'" (p. 129); Cole – "'She [his mother] told me people didn't understand witches, and so they feared the'" (p. 138); Magda says, "'The witch deserved respect…what she got was fear'" (p. 170) – ALSO CHARACTER: NEAR WITCH and THEME: WITCHES; "'The Council has always led Near through fear'" – Lexi's father tried to change this and the Council took away his title of Protector and gave it to Otto (pp. 197-198); "'silly fears'" – Mr. Thatcher wouldn't put up the crow that Dreska and Magda made, calling it something for "'silly people with silly fears'" and now Mrs. Thatcher wonders if it could have protected her son Riley (p. 214) – ALSO THEME: WITCH and CHARACTER:SISTERS

Losing a parent? – Lexi has difficulty talking about her father (pp. 195-200); from earlier – Wren doesn't remember him, Lexi's mom is more ghost than how she was when Lexi's father was alive

Something about nature? – "'The wind is a tricky thing. As is the rain and the sun and the moor itself…The wind can creep into a person's lungs'" (p. 139); the Near Witch called out to the trees and the grass and the earth, but they couldn't save her (p. 165) – ALSO CHARACTER: NEAR WITCH – the sisters believe that the Near Witch's body has worked it's way out of the ground (because "'the earth's like the skin, it grow in layers'" (p. 166) – ALSO STYLE: FIGURATIVE LANGUAGE) and is now made of the moor (p. 166) – I THINK THIS GOES WITH CHARACTER

Theme? – people need something to blame (pp. 168, 172) – HAS THIS COME UP ALREADY?; Mrs. Thatcher tells Lexi that the villagers want to see someone pay for the missing children (p. 178); Matthew tells Lexi that he doubted that it mattered that the Near Witch didn't kill the boy (p. 186) – LINKED TO THEME: FEAR? – and Lexi realizes how much danger Cole is in; Matthew supports finding Cole even as he believes the Near Witch is responsible for the missing children (pp. 253-255)

NOT SURE WHERE THIS GOES – "Funny how when we start to tell a secret, we can't stop. Something falls open in us, and the sheer momentum of letting go pushes us on" (p. 186) – STYLE? THEME? – I THINK THIS GOES WITH STYLE, NOT THEME

Change? – "My father used to say that change is like a garden. It doesn't come up overnight, unless you are a witch" (p. 277) – Lexi sees that Near is changing (p. 278) – I THINK THIS GOES WITH STYLE, NOT THEME.

Tone:
> Major tone: Example(s) – serious/lighthearted/sarcastic/humorous
> -closely related to style and reveal the "attitude of the writer toward both the subject and the reader" (p. 211)
> - issues include condescension (pp. 225-226), sentimentality (pp. 226-229), sensationalism (pp. 229-230), didacticism (pp. 230-231)

-serious

Content Analysis: Interesting Texts

Significance of each of these categories in the text: How does this function in the text? Why - What opportunities does it afford the author/reader? ("When information is interesting…they read more and therefore understand more" (Swan, 2003, p. 41); "interesting texts increase motivation for reading and comprehension of those texts" (Guthrie & Humenick, 2004, p. 343); interest - spend more time reading and learn more (Guthrie & Wigfield, 2000, p. 412) – added during analysis of second text)

Initial Coding Categories (socio-cognitive theory):
- Coherence: well organized and easy to follow (Schraw and Lehman, 2001); information included fits into the text's overall structure (Wade, Buxton, & Kelly, 1999); clarity (Schraw, Bruning, & Svoboda, 1995; Wade, 1992) ; "A principle demanding that the parts of any composition be so arranged that the meaning of the whole may be immediately clear and intelligible" (Harmon & Holman, 2009, p. 109).

-in the past – about Lexi's father – "I remember the first time he took me to see the sisters" (p. 23), "he used to say" (p. 25)
-the three hunters who killed and buried the Near Witch became the Council (pp. 165-166); they may have passed down the information of where the witch was buried from Council to Council (p. 179)
-lack of coherence – sleep slips beneath the covers with Lexi but then she can't sleep (p. 213)
-lack of coherence? – why wouldn't her mother and Otto wake her when they saw that Wren was missing?
- Vividness: "text segments that stand out because they create suspense, surprise, or are otherwise engaging" (Schraw & Lehman, 2001, p. 31); active voice, imagery, concrete examples, "vivid or unusual words" (Wade, Buxton, & Kelly, 1999, p.

199); "words that arouse vivid imagery and … say the unexpected" (Schallert & Reed, 1997, p. 73).

- Life themes: death, danger, sex, power (Schallert & Reed, 1997); death, danger, chaos, destruction, disease, injury, power, money, sex, and romance (Wade, 1992)

-danger – missing children; out at night looking for the children; Cole could be caught

-power – the Council, witches, Otto – as Protector; males over females

Appendix E

Dissertation Memo

1/31/2012 (from my pilot study, an analysis of *The Dark Light* by Mette Newth)
This is where I shall record notes on my process – what I'm doing and why. I'm not sure
what will be here and what will be part of my analysis notes as it feels like they're all part
of the same thing. Maybe this is more my stream-of-consciousness writing while the rest
should be applicable to the analysis.

My plan is to first record the book description information and do a bit of research on the
author. Then I will begin reading the text. I think I'll start by doing everything at once –
recording my stance as I'm reading and my reactions to the text, recording what's
influencing me as the reader, coding for literary analysis, and coding for interest. I'll also
be thinking about preferences and narrative.

I'm overwhelmed as I begin this process but also excited to begin.

My assumptions are that I will read the text aesthetically, that the efferent-aesthetic
continuum will be in play during my reading and analysis of the text. As teachers, we
want students to do both types of reading, and Rosenblatt says there's an interplay of
stance while reading, so I assume this to be the case for myself. I assume that I'll make a
connection to the protagonist, as I tend to connect to characters as I read fiction. I
generally don't love historical fiction, though I may occasionally pick it up for fun, so I
might struggle to connect with the story, meaning I may struggle to be IN (flow/aesthetic
reading). I also might be missing some background knowledge – it depends upon how
much the author relies on knowledge of the time and place (1800s in Norway).

Who I am: I think I should note that I'm a white, middle-class, educated, married
woman in my 30s. I'm the first person in my immediate family to pursue education
beyond a bachelor's degree, but others in my extended family have (my uncle has a
Ph.D., my Aunt has a M.A., two of my cousins are pursuing Ph.D.s). I've always been a
reader. My mom read to me, modeled reading, and took me to the library regularly. I
spent time late at night and on the weekends through high school getting lost in books I
chose to read. Once I started college, through teaching, and today, I read for fun over
holidays and listen to books on tape for fun while I work out. I value education,
particularly reading (all kinds of texts but I do privilege print texts, I believe –
PROBABLY NEED TO EXPLORE THIS IDEA FURTHER).

I **approach** this text as a teacher, thinking about how to teach the text; as a researcher –
thinking about how to analyze the texts and why young adults would choose this text as
one of their favorites; as an informed reader, familiar with socio-cognitive ideas of
reading and transactional ideas of reading and how texts work (narrative fiction – literary
devices…); as someone who reads for fun and expects to enjoy reading.

2/13/2012 (from my pilot study)
I think I've figured out one way that my outside reader will be helpful – reading my notes in each category to see if my interpretations make sense. Clearly, I'm interpreting the text in certain ways to even include the various quotes/ideas in each category. Does another reader agree with what I'm doing? If not, what happens? I'm assuming we discuss this and come to some kind of agreement of the meaning of the category and what kind of information belongs. Then it's interpretation, again, to discuss the significance of that category – what it affords the author and reader.

12/2/12
At our meeting last week, Lee and I decided that it makes sense for me to continue with the memo. I'm planning to record notes on what I did and why at the end of every dissertation work session. This will be important for making my methodology explicit. And maybe it will help me find my way through/out of my analysis…

As a result of the pilot analysis and my reading of literature (related to role of the author, what narrative is, etc.), we (Lee, David, and I) decided that I should read each text at least twice – the first time as a reader and the second and subsequent times as a researcher. In terms of the authors of the texts, I don't need to research them but do need to record the assumptions they're making.

My reading as a reader is most informed by what I bring to the text. This includes the information from above (Pilot Memo – my assumptions, who I am, my approach – at least what can be generalized to all novels and not just the pilot novel) as well as my understanding of Transactional Theory and Socio-Cognitive Theory (as they relate to the reader).

My reading as a researcher is most informed by literature on literary devices/literary analysis and literature on interesting texts/content analysis. Literature on reading preferences also informs my reading as a researcher.

I can think of each text as a case – so I'm not looking across texts until I've looked at all 8 texts individually. For each text, I will have my notes as a reader (on post-its – DO I NEED TO COPY THESE AND SEND THEM TO SARA?); my notes as a researcher – both types of analysis; and a write-up/narrative that includes what I found as a reader, what I found as a researcher, and my answers to these questions for the categories/devices: How does this function in the text? Why - What opportunities does it afford the author/reader? IN ORDER TO ANSWER THE QUESTIONS, I NEED TO READ/RE-READ WHAT LITERARY THEORISTS SAY ABOUT HOW THE DEVICES FUNCTION AND WHAT, IF ANYTHING, SOCIO-COGNITIVISTS SAY ABOUT HOW THE CATEGORIES FUNCTION.

Lee and I decided that as my reader Sara will, for each novel, read the book and my notes and give me feedback on my notes. See Pilot Memo 2/13/12 – I think this makes sense. Also, I'm thinking that I don't need to send Sara my reader notes – just my reader write up/narrative – I SHOULD CHECK WITH LEE ON THIS, THOUGH.

Something important for my study is that I have not previously read any of the 8 novels. So, I don't have previous reading experience, background, etc. My reading as a reader of each text is a virgin reading. I PROBABLY NEED TO WRITE MORE ABOUT THIS AT SOME POINT.

One of my assumptions for analysis, and one of the reasons I'm doing this in the first place, is that I believe the literary devices will better explain/describe the interesting text categories. During the pilot analysis I found that Vividness was basically the same as/better described by Style. And Coherence folded neatly into Plot. However, I'm trying to keep an open mind about this as it's something I still need to "prove." Therefore, as I'm taking notes, I'm including comments related to where categories overlap, but I'm also paying attention to where they may not overlap. Specifically, as an example, when I record quotes from the novel under the heading Style, I'll also indicate VIVIDNESS if it fits. But I have a separate category for Vividness that might not relate to Style, and possibly not every quote under Style will also qualify as Vividness.

At this point I have read *Exposed* as a reader with notes and have started the analysis. I have also read *Flip* as a reader with notes but have not started the analysis. While reading *Flip* I did some comparing with *Exposed* – I will not delete these notes but am noting here that those notes aren't important since the intention is not to compare but to read each book as a reader for that book. The ultimate goal is to get beyond my reading of the novels to see what's engaging for students, but I may see disconnect (for example, I may find the book didactic, but I know students chose the book as one they liked so what else is going on that makes the book interesting?) between my reading and what I would expect; this can be a point of interest to pursue in terms of the ultimate goal of my study – What makes a text interesting to its intended audience?

12/19/12
The most important thing to do at this point is to finish analyzing *Exposed* and write it up to send to Lee by January 3. To do this, I need to finish working through the text and taking notes. Then I NEED TO READ/RE-READ WHAT LITERARY THEORISTS SAY ABOUT HOW THE DEVICES FUNCTION AND WHAT, IF ANYTHING, SOCIO-COGNITIVISTS SAY ABOUT HOW THE CATEGORIES FUNCTION so that I can write up the narrative about what I found in this text.

I can put aside reading about trends at this point – I'll work on that later.

1/2/13

Going through *Exposed*. Still writing down quotes/parts from the text that I think represent the various categories. I've become more selective in what I'm recording because the style/ideas/categories are consistent throughout the text. Or, at least, I'm seeing them that way. I've noticed that plot and setting are related for this text, but setting doesn't seem to matter that much; Style and Vividness are related; and Coherence is part of plot but also could stand alone/might have other characteristics – I NEED TO THINK ABOUT THIS FURTHER.

I've started adding my interpretations – in all caps – for some of the parts of text I'm including in the categories. Just ideas I'm thinking about related to what the text might mean or how the author is using that part of the text. This should help with the write-up, and I think it's ok to do in my notes as long as I'm distinguishing my ideas from what's in the text. Though these are conflated, of course, since I buy into transactional theory…

1/3/13
Working on Author's Assumptions. I THINK I NEED TO DO A BIT OF READING ON THIS. It feels very much like analysis – my ideas of the author's assumptions based on what I'm reading in the text.

1/8/13
Today I'm working on the write-up for the analysis of *Exposed*. I was dreading this because I thought it would be difficult. Though I'm not convinced that I know what I'm doing, it's not as bad once I've started ☺

I did a bit of reading to prepare me for this, though I think I need to do a bit more. I read the first chapter of Lee's text, my notes on the theoretical perspectives and on engagement (currently chapters 2 and 1 of the diss), and reviewed Lukens' description of literary elements in her book (took notes on Analysis Protocol document).

I started with writing up my reading as a reader. Basically, I wanted to capture my initial approach to the text and a bit of what I was experiencing while reading. I didn't explicitly discuss terminology related to the two theoretical perspectives nor did I discuss stance. I'M THINKING I SHOULD USE THE TERMINOLOGY… In the write-up there are many assumptions that I may need to explore, though I think I'll do this in my more thorough description of myself as a reader that will be included in the methodology section. MAYBE THAT WILL BE ENOUGH, OR MAYBE I'LL NEED TO EXPLORE MY ASSUMPTIONS WITHIN THE WRITE-UP? For instance, it's important for me to connect with the characters; it's also important that contemporary realistic fiction is realistic, which is part of the genre, but I imagine the meaning of "realistic" varies across readers.

1/9/13
Still working on the write-up. Today I'm writing up my reading as a researcher. I decided to focus on the literary devices, combining those that make sense to combine,

and weaving the content analysis throughout. In each section, I plan to write what I see, first, and then discuss what I think it means. Really, I'm breaking it down to put it back together since you can't really separate character from style from plot…

I started with character and point-of-view, writing some from memory, some from my notes, and going back to the book. I used the analysis protocol as well as Lukens (2007) and Galda, Sipe, Liang, and Cullinan (2013) to guide what to write about in terms of identification/description (ex. characters as dynamic or static) and analysis (ex. what it means that characters are dynamic or static).

1/10/13
I just finished Plot and Setting and Coherence, following the same process as I used for Character and Point-of-View. For this section, I weaved "what it means" throughout the section…

I'm focusing on what's there and what it means. Should I be thinking about/trying to find what's not working? What would this look like? One possible example that I'll include in Tone – a bit didactic at the end.

1/13/13
Today I'm working on the analysis of the second novel – *Flip*. To prepare/get back into the book, I read through my notes on my response to the text and I read through my memos related to the diss.

What I'd like to do before I get too far into the analysis:
-read about stance from the socio-cognitivist perspective
-review if/what is said about interesting texts in terms of how the criteria function
-read about author assumptions?
-email Lee – purpose of write-up; if I need to send my notes of reading as a reader to Sara (she'll have them for the first two texts…)

1/14/13
I've read about stance from the socio-cognitive perspective and reviewed stance from the transactional theory perspective. I'm thinking stance is just part of reading as a reader for both theories, but I did take notes on the analysis protocol to remind myself of what I reviewed. This is to help with my reading as a reader.

I also reviewed articles about interesting texts and found that researchers talk about the function of interest as it relates to learning and consider the categories of interesting texts as those that encourage interest, but do not discuss other functions. This is what I remember from when I compiled the categories but wanted to review. I did include a few notes on the analysis protocol related to interest and learning. This is to contribute to my analysis in terms of thinking about the function of the categories – what opportunities they afford the author and reader.

I am currently doing a bit of research about author assumptions and ideologies. I don't want to spend too much time on this but feel I should be better informed than my current state ☺ This is to contribute to my analysis of the text in terms of author role and development of theme. I'm including my notes on the analysis protocol.

1/16/13
I'm continuing the analysis of *Flip*. It's going pretty slowly – different from the novel in verse, which now seems easier…maybe because there were fewer words ☺

I'm not noticing much for style so far. Otherwise, I'm including my questions within the document, such as whether an idea might fit with theme as well as character, or where to record ideas.

1/22/13
Over the last few days, I've been continuing my analysis of *Flip*. I've found that I'm recording quite a few events under the heading Plot when I think they're important but I don't know where else to put them. I've also continued to include questions, in all caps, for items that I've placed in certain categories but I'm not sure that's where they belong, or I think they might also belong somewhere else.

I feel that I'm being pretty thorough – I might not record something from every page, but I find that I do from most pages/sections of the chapters.

This novel isn't particularly impressive to me in terms of style, but neither would I say it's poorly written.

I just went back to record information about Rob because he seems to be a significant character. Earlier today, I went back to trace Alex's relationship with Donna because theirs is a romance, of sorts, that is probably a theme, or at least possibly a life theme.

1/29/13
Finishing analysis of Flip. As I've been reading, sometimes I read a paragraph or a page and record what I've noticed from that page. Other times I read a section and then go back and pick out what I want to record (by record I mean take notes on where the sentence/idea belongs in terms of criteria and/or category). Occasionally, I've realized after reading a couple of chapters that I should go back and find information related to something that now seems significant (such as when I went back to record information about Rob.

Lee indicated that the write-up is another piece of data, so I think I need to be more detailed than I was in the write-up of the first book.

Not that this is important now, but I was talking to Candance about a potential organization of my findings chapters for the dissertation, and I think it might make sense to organize them by significant criteria. We'll see.

2/3/13
Wrote up author assumptions for *Flip*. Still not feeling so confident about this.

2/4/13
So far today I've written up my reading as a reader for *Flip*. I had the same approach as the write-up of *Exposed*, but I tried to include a little more detail, particularly in adding more examples from my notes. I also used the terminology a bit more in terms of Transactional but not the terminology for Socio-Cognitive – NEED TO START DOING THIS.

I'm going to be writing up my reading as a researcher for *Flip*. I plan to use the same approach as I used for *Exposed* but, again, include more detail/explanation.

2/10/13
Lee and I met on Wednesday to go over her notes for *Exposed*. She walked through her reactions and gave me her notes – some of our reactions were similar, like our responses to characters and to style; and she pointed out some things she had noticed that I hadn't, like that Liz started using the names of her classmates instead of her nicknames/categorizations for them (p. 238). Our discussion convinced me that I don't need to take so many notes during my reading as a reader. I can write my reactions on post-it notes and then focus on capturing my response during the write up.

The most helpful was going through my write-up. First, Lee suggested that I think about what my response tells me – How am I reading? What is important to me as a reader? How is this similar to/different from another reader (Sara)?

For reading as a researcher, it makes sense that I'm combining literary devices and categories, but they might not be the same for each text. For example, I combined Plot and Setting and Coherence for *Exposed*, but maybe another combination will make more sense for *Flip*. Also, Lee suggested that COHERENCE COULD RELATE TO CHARACTER – I NEED TO THINK MORE ABOUT THIS AND CONSIDER THIS FOR FUTURE NOVELS. For the write-up of my reading as a researcher, I'm doing interpretation and evaluation. Lee pointed this out and said it's fine but just worth thinking about.

As I continue to think about how the literary devices interact with the categories, I should continue to explore the idea that topic and theme are not the same. The socio-cognitivists actually list topics when they discuss what makes up the Life Themes category; I, of course, think this falls short and believe Theme as discussed from a literary theory perspective sheds light on this category. Lee agrees with me ☺

For my next write-up, Lee suggests that I don't necessarily need to write out the quotes – I can just use page numbers and go back to those pages if/when I need to. Also, it might not be necessary for Sara to read my notes – she could probably just read my write-up and we could have a conversation about that.

I have a lot of work to do, but I know what I'm doing ☺ Lee bolstered my confidence during this meeting by talking about how this work will be a contribution to the field; and by suggesting that coherence, in particular, will be a finding of my dissertation but also something I should research further after the dissertation. Coherence can definitely be expanded beyond how the socio-cognitivists discuss it; I might just be scratching the surface of the meaning by combining it with some of the literary devices… - FUTURE RESEARCH – BEYOND THE DISS

3/14/13
I haven't been keeping up with this memo very well ☹ Since I met with Lee, I finished the write-up for *Flip* and sent it to Lee and Sara. Lee said she would get back to me in the next couple of weeks (maybe I should send a reminder email…), and I meet with Sara this weekend!! Sara and I will discuss the first two novels – how we'll discuss them and then actually discuss them. I plan to voice record our discussions to have the details as I need them. I'll also take notes.

I've also started reading the third novel – *Ashfall*. I'm about a third of the way through and have so far only been taking notes in the margins. I plan to write out a few notes on the document just to remind myself in a little more detail what I've been thinking as a reader, but I won't use as much detail as I did for the first two novels.

3/22/13
After meeting with Sara over the weekend, I realized that I should record my assumptions/ perceptions/ relevant identity before reading each book (at least, anything that's different from what I already recorded for the pilot study and then each subsequent book. I did this a little bit at the beginning of my notes as a reader for both *Exposed* and *Flip*, but I'll go back to write a few relevant notes. I don't think I did this for *Ashfall*, so I'll go back and record notes for this book, too. For the remaining books, I plan to do this before I begin reading (or, as is the case with *Between*, which I've started, I'll do this before I continue reading).

Who I Am (more information about me that may be relevant, in general, to me as a reader and to how I approach texts): I'm generally conservative in my belief system. I believe in the Bible/ truth of scripture. Family for me includes mom, dad, kids. Extended family includes grandparents, aunts and uncles, cousins, nieces and nephews, and now kids of cousins and kids of nieces and nephews. My immediate family includes my husband of almost 6 years and my 1-year-old daughter. Middle class.

How I **approach** texts: I am quite comfortable suspending my disbelief and connecting to characters quite different from me and from my beliefs when reading fiction.

So, Sara and I discussed the first two novels this weekend! Here is the process we used: Sara had read each novel but had not read my notes, yet. We started with *Exposed*: first, Sara and I discussed her reading of the novel so that I could capture a bit about her perceptions and think about how they're similar to/ different from mine. I took notes and voice-recorded our conversation. Then I handed her a copy of my write-up for *Exposed* and she read through that. I anticipated that she would read it through and then we would discuss it, but she commented on it as she was reading, so I started the voice-recording part way through this process. Her comments often related to further explanations of what she thought of the novel, but she also commented on parts of the write-up that she agreed with and suggested things that I might want to think about further. I will write up these conversations at the end of my write-ups for each novel.

We followed the same process for *Flip*, and I voice-recorded both conversations – Sara's perceptions of the novel and then Sara's response to reading my write-up of the novel.

During our conversations, Sara referred to less experienced readers and to the intended audience (she speculated about what they would think). She also talked about teaching the novels and what she would want students to do with them. And, while discussing *Flip*, she compared her reading and the novel to *Exposed*. I will not be including these comments/parts of our conversation in my write-up because they are not relevant at this point in the process. MAYBE THEY WILL COME IN LATER?

For the remaining novels, we plan to have a discussion after each novel. We plan to skype for these discussions.

I'm thinking that having Sara's perceptions before she reads my notes will be helpful in terms of showing, primarily, the differences between our readings and how a different reader than me, reading the same book, sees my analysis. (So far she agrees with my analysis for both novels, so I think this strengthens my analysis – that she has a different reading because she's a different reader, but my analyses of the novels make sense to her.)

Something I want to keep thinking about, and that Sara and I discussed: ARE STYLE AND VIVIDNESS THE SAME? Vividness might be broader than style…

3/27/13
Yesterday I wrote up my reading as a reader of *Ashfall*. I didn't think this went as well as writing up the other two novels (it took me longer to formulate my thoughts and get them on the page), and I believe this is the case for two reasons: 1. I didn't really like this book, and 2. I wrote brief notes in the margins but did not take specific notes while reading. Maybe I don't need to be as specific in my notes as a reader as I was for the

first two novels, but I think I want to write out some notes as I'm reading other than just notes in the margins. I'll try that for the fourth book and see how that goes.

4/4/13

For the fourth book, *Between*, for my reading as a reader, I've been taking notes in the margins and occasionally writing up my notes on the analysis document (as I did for the first two novels, but I'm not writing quite as much).

In preparation for my AERA presentation (and C&I research day), I've started looking across my write-ups of the first two texts to see what they have in common and how they differ. So far I've looked at the overall descriptions to see how they do or do not line up with the preference studies I'm focusing on. I'm focusing on my research questions as I look at these write-ups, so, basically, I'm trying out what I'll be doing in terms of looking across texts once I analyze all eight. I think this first stab will be helpful because I can think about what I've found so far with two texts and keep these ideas in mind as I continue analyzing the remaining texts. Each text is still a case, but I can also be looking across cases to see what I should be continuing to focus on in my analysis of each text. I think this process is akin to narrowing my research, as one does in qualitative studies [FIND SOURCES].

5/5/13

I presented at AERA last week. My research was "well-received," as Sadaf told me after the presentation ☺ My presentation notes (found in the Conferences 2012 folder) show what I reported on across the first two novels. Basically, I looked at the criteria and literary elements the two have in common; and I looked at how the two types of analyses are working together. The biggest question I have right now is how coherence interacts with all the literary elements, something I'll be paying attention to as I continue to analyze texts.

Feedback at AERA – POSSIBLY ADDRESS THE COMMON CORE FOCUS ON TEXT COMPLETXITY – I'll need to look into this, maybe soon? Or maybe I should ask Lee.

I'd like to set a deadline for a draft of the dissertation for November 1. Then I could get feedback so I can work on revisions over Christmas break. And defend in February. That means I need to get going on the analysis.

I wrote up my reading as a reader of *Between today*; the during reading note-taking process worked well, I think. I recorded my notes a couple of times after reading chunks of the text, so I could use the notes in my write-up, and they helped me remember more than just notes in the margins. I think I'll follow this process for the next text.

5/29/13

I received feedback today from Lee regarding my analysis of *Flip* and my process with Sara. Lee said my process of analysis is working so she doesn't need to see any more of my notes; and she approves of the process with Sara.

Also, Lee and David and I worked out a timeline: draft of diss due October 16 and defense in January/early February.

6/5/13
At this point I've read most of *What Happened to Goodbye*, using the same process of recording some notes, in addition to those in the margins, as I'm reading.

I'm finally starting analysis of *Ashfall* today! I've been dragging my feet because I don't love the novel. But I need to get moving as I have a deadline for a complete draft of the dissertation – October 16. The members of my dissertation support group suggested using the first reading of the remaining novels as rewards for completing analysis of *Ashfall*. So, I get to continue reading *What Happened to Goodbye* when I finish analyzing a third of *Ashfall*.

6/6/13
I am analyzing *Ashfall*! I did create a miscellaneous category because, so far, I've found one item that doesn't seem to fit elsewhere. I'm curious to see what happens with this category.

Things That Happened go in Plot – not always sure if the items actually belong in Plot, but that's where I'm putting them. For instance, the fact that it's thundering or the weather is cold – it's stuff that happened, so it's part of the story, but it seems silly to call these plot elements…

Style and Vividness still seem the same – need to keep thinking about this.

So far, coherence relates to plot and character.

I've been noting in all caps commentary on some of the items I'm putting in the categories. For instance, it seems a stylistic choice to repeat words, but I found it redundant/not effective. So I said I found it redundant in all caps. Here I'm making a judgment about something that I don't think is working. I don't remember doing that for the first two books (probably because I liked them and thought they worked). I'm going to keep doing it for this, book, though, and subsequent books.

6/20/13
I created a new theme today – Government – and I've gone back through my notes and moved things that I think belong there. I've also determined that what belongs in the LIFE THEMES category also belongs in PLOT. I'll have to see if this pans out.

So bored of this novel. I'm on p. 326 and moving a bit faster, now, since I'm not running into many new ideas…

7/2/13
I just wrote up my reading of *What Happened to Goodbye*. Because I wrote my reactions in prose a few times during my reading of the novel, I was able to use lots of the text in my write-up. I think this is my favorite process of writing up so far. So, I didn't take as detailed of notes as I did for the first couple of novels, but I took slightly more notes than I did for the third and fourth novels, and in prose form as well as bullet points.

7/3/13
I'm reading through my analysis notes for *Ashfall* in preparation to write them up. So far I've worked through character, plot, and setting. I noted a few instances that I recorded in plot that could also be theme. For setting I noticed that included both location and time – I don't think I included time for the analysis of the first two novels (*Exposed* and *Flip*).

Reading through my notes on coherence – they mostly also relate to plot and character, but also setting. For vividness, I focused on text that created suspense. For the first two novels, I think I focused on smaller "text segments" whereas in these notes I also focused on situations (some of which took more than a page or two of text). These also related mostly to plot and a few to style. For life themes, I think all could also be considered plot; and the sex also relates to the theme of romance/relationship between Alex and Darla.

I'm taking five days off of work ☺ When I come back, I will write this up and move on to the analysis of *Between*. I need to keep the analysis notes at the end of the *Ashfall* write-up document since I added some information as I read through. I'm not sure how I'll write it up, in terms of which categories to combine, but I'll figure that out when I come back to it, using the notes that I added ☺

7/14/13
As I'm working on my write-up of my analysis of *Ashfall*, I'm noticing that it's difficult to group the categories because they all seem related. For instance, character and plot and setting and life themes and coherence and vividness are closely related but that seems like too much to take on in one section. Once again, I'm seeing that what I'm doing is taking things apart to put them together. So, I've grouped the categories by those that I see as being most closely related. I still have one rather large group (Plot and Setting (including post-apocalyptic) and Life Themes and Coherence and Vividness); we'll see how that goes as I write that section. Also, as with the other novels so far, I have little to say about tone.

7/18/13

As I'm working on the write-up of *Ashfall*, I'm reminding myself that I'm focusing on the following questions: How does this function in the text? Why - What opportunities does it afford the author/reader?

Not quite sure how to begin the next section – plot, setting… - Maybe just have the entire section be about plot and weave everything else in.

7/20/13
Well, I was able to reduce the long section for Ashfall. I took out the post-apocalyptic because, actually, Alex talks about post-volcanic, so I just added that in with the text instead of in the title of the section. And coherence didn't really fit since most of what I labeled as coherence and plot was already covered in coherence and character with Alex and the taekwondo.   I think it worked out ok.

7/21/13
I started analyzing *Between* and realized we have the third Alex – *Flip*, *Ashfall*, and now *Between*. Weird.

7/28/13
After finishing analysis of *Between*, I went back and recorded overall notes at the beginning of each category/criteria. I think I did this to a certain extent with *Ashfall* as I was thinking about which sections would go together for the write-up. For *Between*, I see these notes as the first step in thinking about the write-up.

Based on my notes, here's how I'm thinking I'll write up *Between*:
Point-of-View and Character and Coherence
Setting and Plot and Coherence and Vividness and Life Themes
Tone and Style and Vividness
Theme and Life Themes and Author Assumptions

7/31/13
For my write up of my reading of *Small as an Elephant*, I wrote an introductory paragraph and then copied and pasted my notes that I wrote while reading. I think this worked this time because I wrote more prose than bullets that captured what I was thinking while I was reading, both specifically in the story but also overall.

Given that the analysis is taking FOREVER, and given the upcoming deadline, I have decided (with help from the support group) to take a break from the analysis after completing analysis of six (or at least five) novels and jump into the actual writing. This will hopefully allow me to jump into the writing in the middle of August, giving me two months to complete a draft of the dissertation. I still plan to read the other two novels, and then analyze them after I submit the draft. At this point, I don't anticipate finding anything drastically different from what I'm already finding. I think I'll just do, and let David and Lee know what I've done when I submit the draft on October 16!

8/3/13
As I'm writing up *Between*, I'm realizing that I probably could have added didactic to Tone for other novels – I'll need to look for this when I re-read the write-ups.

8/7/13
I started analyzing *What Happened to Goodbye*, and I've noticed that, while still thinking about what might qualify as Vividness but not as style, I'm assuming that what qualifies as style also qualifies as vividness. This has held for the previous four novels, and I'm assuming it will continue to hold.

Plot is what happens. Sometimes, I put things under plot because I don't know where else they go; but sometimes things go in plot in in other places, too. GUESS I NEED TO THINK MORE ABOUT THIS – WHAT PLOT MEANS.

I just took notes for fragments as a stylistic choice – I think I've done that before, but I don't think I've been consistently paying attention to them. What I'm saying is that maybe all of the authors have used fragments, but I don't know that I was paying enough attention to notice if they all did.

I know the analysis is not about what I like, but the style is fabulous, and the theme is/will be, too, with the cooking metaphor and thinking about belonging…

8/17/13
I've finished analyzing *What Happened to Goodbye* and have decided how I will write it up. Putting the categories together for this one seemed fairly easy – maybe typical? I'll have to see how it compares to the other write-ups once I finish.

I've added dialogue to style. Have I done this before? I need to look that up. If it doesn't fit with style, maybe it's vividness only?

8/22/13
As I'm writing up my analysis for *What Happened to Goodbye*, I'm noticing that I rarely recorded anything under the interesting text criteria. Instead, as I recorded notes throughout for the literary terms, I referred to the interesting text criteria where applicable. Overall, it seems that vividness often relates to style and plot (suspense), and life themes relate to themes and plot (and I would say neither of these categories seems to add anything to the already existing literary criteria). Coherence most often relates to plot and character but also relates to style and themes, and I could see it relating to tone and point-of-view and even setting (though I haven't noticed for these three, yet, I don't think). – FINDINGS – WHAT MAKES A TEXT INTERESTING

9/1/13

I wrote my write-up as a reader for *The Throne of Fire*. Really, I used most of what I had written during my reading, consolidating some of it and taking out some of the what I noticed that didn't seem to connect with anything else (like "p. 210 – Not buying that Sadie would dye her hair during a crisis." – I already discussed that I had difficulty buying some of the information, so this didn't seem to add anything, which is why I didn't include it in the write-up; but it's still in my analysis notes for reading as a reader).

Findings – will put the chapter together tomorrow – will draw from this memo for ideas as well as from my AERA presentation. Will analyze across write-ups for the first five novels. Will answer the research questions. One findings chapter?

9/10/13

I've read the chapters on findings and analysis in *Completing your Qualitative Dissertation*, which have helped me start to conceptualize the difference between the findings chapter and the analysis chapter. I'm still thinking about this. I'm also finding some crossover between describing how I came to the findings in the findings chapter and what I think belongs in the methods chapter. I'll have to keep working on this as I go. The most important part right now is to write, even if I'm not sure where the section will go in the end product!

Today I compiled a table to look at similarities across novels in terms of findings from the preference studies that I've been using to describe each novel. Tomorrow I will look at similarities across novels in terms of the categories of analysis.

Sara and I had a phone conversation last Friday about *Ashfall*. She told me her reaction/reading of the novel and I took notes. Then I recorded these notes on my write-up for the novel. We decided that I would email her my write-up and she would respond with comments on the document (which seemed easier than trying to skype and record her responses). *FIND THE EMAIL I SENT AND RECORD IT HERE:

In terms of Ashfall, please read through the document and comment on what you think of what I've written - would you add anything? Do you agree with what I've stated? Do you disagree and why?

I've also attached the write-ups of the first two books we discussed. If you could, please look across the three documents to see if I'm writing roughly the same information in similar ways across the documents or if you notice any discrepancies/problems/concerns.

And let me know when you're ready to discuss Between.

9/11/13

Today I looked through my memo for instances where I talk about the categories of analysis to answer the research question: How might traditional literary analysis and

analysis using socio-cognitive descriptions of interesting texts work together to create a more robust model of interesting texts?

Now I need to talk about the conflation of the terms and what they mean, citing examples from the research as well as from the five texts I've analyzed.

9/15/13
I've finished a very rough draft of chapter four. I know I'm missing things, but I'm not sure what, yet.

*I need to go over the notes that Sara sent me and write up her responses.

9/18/13
I went over the notes that Sara sent me. I had asked her to look across the first three novel write-ups and let me know if I was being inconsistent in how I was writing about the texts. The comments that she made speak more to intentional differences (ways I meant to be different in writing about the novels/ways that I saw as different), so that's positive for me.

One thing she did mention that I want to keep thinking about – what am I meaning by tone? Sara sees more in the tone of the novels than I do (she pointed out tone in Flip both in our conversation of her response and when she responded in writing to the write-up).

9/20/13
On Tuesday of this week Sara and I talked on the phone about her reading of *What Happened to Goodbye.* I will write up those notes on the write-up. I then emailed her the write-up, and she will make comments in response to where she agrees, disagrees, and anything she would add. We will talk about *Between* sometime next week.

11/3/13
Wow. It's disheartening to think that Sara and I were supposed to talk about *Between* in September – we still haven't managed to connect ☹ I did receive her comments on my write-up of *What Happened to Goodbye* – this time in the body of the email she sent instead of directly on the document. I included these comments at the end of my write-up.

Since my last entry I finished drafting chapters 1-4 and submitted them to David and Lee. Lee sent me feedback last week. I looked over the feedback but plan to write it up to guide my revision. Most importantly, though, I need to analyze the last three novels; and talk to Sara about these three plus *Between*.

Today I will finally write up my reading of *The Near Witch*. This feels like it might be more difficult than most of the others because the reading was more spread out and I didn't take very many notes as I was reading. I did enjoy the book, so that helps.

My writing took me longer than I hoped it would (as usual), but I'm finally finished. I went back through the last part of the novel and wrote notes that expanded upon the brief notes I'd added in the margins of the text. Then I slightly revised my notes and added a concluding paragraph to create the write-up.

Now I shall review my analysis notes in this memo to get me back into the mode of analysis so I can start *The Throne of Fire*.

11/8/13
Sara and I finally talked about *Between* on Monday night (11/4). I have the hand-written notes from our phone conversation but still need to type them up on the write-up.

I've been analyzing *The Throne of Fire*. I think it's going ok – it seems that I'm being consistent with my analysis of the other novels in terms of what and where (criteria and lit terms) I'm recording things. I did review my analysis notes to get me back into the mind frame of analysis, and I think that worked ☺ The first part of the book is taking awhile, but that was true of the other books, as well.

11/23/13
I've analyzed through p. 90; just went back through and thought about themes other than relationships and romance. Here's what I'm thinking about and will continue thinking about as I continue analyzing for themes: -WOULD GOOD VS. EVIL BE A THEM? OR MAYBE JUST CONFLICT – PLOT?; -coming-of-age/finding themselves/identity (?) – Carter – his dad made a difficult choice, and "now it was time for me to make the difficult choice" (p. 74) – I'M THINKING SADIE MIGHT FIT HERE, TOO

12/21/13
Almost done analyzing *The Throne of Fire*! I recorded this yesterday: -Sadie about a monster – "It wasn't an attractive foot…Definitely male" (p. 339) under Author Assumptions. It made me think about how gender is represented in this book – Sadie is a strong female character but, without gathering specific evidence, it seems to me that Sadie and Carter still follow some general gender stereotypes: Sadie is into clothes, Carter is nerdy, Carter has/had a close(ish) relationship with his dad and Sadie didn't. I don't think I've really been thinking about how gender is represented in the other books; I do tend to notice strong female characters and stereotypes, in general, and I have commented on relationships/romance in most books. But I haven't seriously noted representations of gender. At this point in my study, this is probably for a **future study** – not for this dissertation ☺

12/26/13
I've finally finished analysis of *The Throne of Fire*. Now I'm going to go through my notes and summarize each literary device and interesting text criteria so that I can determine how I'll write it up (noted with an * in my notes). I won't talk to Sara until I write up the analysis; and I will finish the write-up by the time I'm done working

tomorrow night. Meanwhile, I'll also begin analysis of *Small as an Elephant*. I'm so behind!

This is how I plan to write up *The Throne of Fire*:
Character (includes magic – magicians) and Point-of-View and Coherence (character)
Plot (includes magic) and Setting and Coherence (plot) and Vividness (? - plot) and Life Themes (danger related to plot)
Style and Vividness and Tone and Coherence (style and tone)
Themes (includes magic – naming) and Coherence (Carter and Sadie's relationship) and Life Themes (romance) and Author Assumptions

I didn't look at how I organized my other write-ups as I planned this, but after planning I noticed that I seem to group the same items together. I think that's partly because they naturally align but maybe also because that's something these novels have in common? Also, I'm thinking more about coherence, now, which is probably why I see it across multiple literary devices. Maybe it was more present in the literary devices in the first few novels that I analyzed, but I wasn't thinking about it as much, then, so I didn't write about it. At this point, I don't have time to go back and re-analyze the first few novels; but I could do this, focusing on coherence, for a **future study**, I think.

12/27/13
I'm analyzing *Small as an Elephant*; it seems pretty different from the other novels I've analyzed. Events are happening, but more is about Jack's memories and about how he feels about his situation. It's his perspective, and, even though it's in third person, it sounds like it could be his voice – the voice of an eleven year old. I think that's style, but I haven't found a way to record it in my notes. I DON'T UNDERSTAND WHY THIS IS YAL, BUT I'M NOT SURE IF/WHERE I'LL TALK ABOUT THIS – MAYBE IN MY FINDINGS CHAPTER?

I've analyzed to p. 70 and have deemed one theme as "dealing with mental illness." This is not directly referenced in the book, yet (from my previous reading, I think it may be mentioned at the end of the book), but it's clear that Jack's mom has some kind of mental illness.

12/29/13
Still analyzing *Small as an Elephant*. Not really noticing style, other than that it seems appropriate, in my estimation, as told by an eleven-year-old boy; and nothing annoying ☺. Also, I'm noticing that I'm being careful to capture what's in the book. For instance, I want to say that Jack is scared and sad; instead I record what's in the text that's making me think that, but I don't say that he's scared and sad.

1/4/14
I'm writing up *Throne of Fire* and have decided that Vividness probably does not belong with Plot. The part that I found vivid (the suspense at the beginning) is actually more style than plot, I think.

1/14/14
I talked to Sara about *Throne of Fire* on the phone on Sunday and wrote up those notes. Then I emailed her my write-up and asked her to comment on it sometime this week.

Today I finished analysis of *Small as an Elephant* and then went back and listed Author Assumptions.

1/15/14
Ok, I'm disappointed that I'm not going to finish everything I wanted to by the end of the month. My new goal is to, by the end of January, have analysis completed (including conversations with Sara); revise chapter 3; revise/add to chapter 4. Then I can email David and Lee at the end of the month with a report on my progress and ask them if they'd like the chapters I've revised or if they want to wait until the entire thing is done (which, at this point, will be at the end of February, I think).

Writing up my analysis of Small as an Elephant: I went through and wrote overall notes on my analysis notes. Here's how I think I'll write up this analysis:

Point-of-View and Character (including elephants) and Coherence and Author Assumptions
Setting and Plot and Life Themes and Coherence and Vividness (suspense)
Style and Vividness and Tone and Coherence?
Theme (including elephants) and Author Assumptions and Coherence?

I was thinking that maybe I had related vividness and suspense (plot) in earlier novels, so I looked back through my notes and found that I had. So, today, I went back and added Vividness to Plot in my write-up for *Throne of Fire* (which is not on the draft that I sent to Sara); and I added Vividness to Plot in my list above for *Small as an Elephant*.

1/17/14
For *The Near Witch* I began analysis with the assumption that Style and Vividness were similar; and Suspense (Vividness) related to Plot.

I would like to say that this novel is beautifully written.

1/20/14
Tonight I talked to Sara on the phone about her reaction to *Small as an Elephant*. Instead of writing notes and then typing them later, I typed them as she was talking. This

actually worked pretty well (though it was a little harder for us to understand each other when I put her on speaker so I could type).

1/26/14
Sara sent me her response to my write-up of *Small as an Elephant* today. She included this lovely note – so encouraging!

After reading this, again, I feel so moved by this journey you're on, Kristen. To first take in these books and analyze them, and then to synthesize that information -- I am in awe. I feel blessed to be a small part of your process, and I know you're going to do such a great job with all of this. Keep up the fantastic work!!!

1/29/14
On Monday night I finally finished analysis of *Near Witch*! Now I'm going through my analysis notes and adding an overall summary at the top of each literary device to capture my overall thoughts and connections to other devices and the interesting text criteria. Other than gender, which I added during analysis, I'm also listing Author Assumptions that I think of as I'm going through my analysis notes.

I'm noticing with the *Near Witch* that I'm making more connections (I think) between the interesting text criteria and the literary devices. I think this has happened gradually through the process, and now that I'm on my last novel I'm making the most connections. It COULD be that this novel lends itself to these connections, but I think it's at least partly because I'm more aware of how the interesting text criteria can connect to multiple literary devices. In an ideal world, I'd go back to the first few novels and do further analysis to text whether, for instance, Life Themes connect to Character in multiple novels. I don't really have time for that, but I can be thinking about this as I go back through to pull examples for **chapter four.**

Plan for *Near Witch* write-up:
Point-of-View and Character and Coherence? and Life Themes and Author Assumptions
Setting and Plot and Vividness and Coherence and Life Themes
Tone and Style and Vividness and Coherence?
Theme and Life Themes and Author Assumptions and Coherence?

2/2/14
After reviewing setting in Lukens (2007), I realize that the setting in *The Near Witch* is integral. I also started thinking about the other novels that I've analyzed and am going back through to see how I described setting for each one. I looked at *Ashfall* first because that's one that I think should be integral – I wrote that it's backdrop, so I added a note in the margin to indicate that I'm changing my mind. – I NEED TO MENTION THIS TO SARA TO SEE IF SHE AGREES/DISAGREES. After skimming through the rest of my write-ups, I think *Ashfall* is the only change. I spent a bit more time looking through my notes for *Small as an Elephant* because the author did spend some time describing the various locations. But I still think the setting wasn't integral to Jack's struggles.

I just decided I needed to add Style/Vividness (because the two are conflated) to Setting as I write up *The Near Witch* because the author uses lots of description for the moor. Should this have been the case with *Ashfall*, too? I just checked my analysis notes for *Ashfall*, and I don't think I need to add Style to Setting. The author did use some description for the changed sunrise and the ash-covered fields, but I don't think enough to warrant adding Style to Setting. MAYBE I SHOULD BRIEFLY REVIEW THE NOVEL, THOUGH? – Sara did say that she could picture everything, so maybe my dislike of the book stopped me from being able to do the same (**influence of my reader**). I WILL GO BACK TO THE BOOK TO SEE IF I SHOULD ADD STYLE TO SETTING FOR *ASHFALL*. I'll add anything I find to my notes in the margin of the write-up.

Questions for Lee: format for *Throne of Fire* (transcribed tape recording)?

2/4/2014
I've been thinking a bit about my use of Vividness to indicate suspense (Plot). The interesting text criteria refer to "text segments that stand out because they create suspense, surprise, or are otherwise engaging" (Schraw & Lehman, 2001, p. 31). What are meant by "text segments"? IS THIS SOMETHING I NEED TO RESEARCH? If text segments are on the level of language, then I think Vividness relates to Style but not plot. If text segments are on the level of events then Vividness can relate to Plot, too.

2/13/14
Even though I haven't finished writing up *Near Witch*, I talked to Sara about it tonight. I still need to write the last two sections; but I know Sara read it a while ago, so we had a phone conversation. I typed as she talked.

I also mentioned that I had been re-thinking setting in terms of what was meant by backdrop and integral. Initially, I was thinking that if the story could happen in another time and/or place, then the setting must not be integral. But after re-reading Lukens' description of types of setting, it seems a little more nuanced than that (see notes on 2/2/14). When I talked to Sara about integral setting and *Ashfall*, she said it makes sense; she brought up *Small as an Elephant* and the timing being significant – couldn't be another time in the northeast; also brought up how her upbringing on a farm influenced her reading of *Ashfall* – in the country. SINCE I WAS ON THE FENCE WITH SMALL AS AN ELEPHANT, MAYBE I NEED TO REVISIT FOR SETTING?

2/23/14
I'm finishing up writing about *Near Witch*. I've decided not to write about Coherence in terms of Theme because I don't have anything to say. It's not that Theme isn't coherent, but I don't have "evidence" that it is.

2/26/14

I finished writing up *Near Witch*! Then I went back through *Ashfall* to see if I need to add Style/Vividness to Setting as I did for *Near Witch* (since setting was integral instead of backdrop). I skimmed multiple pages in the beginning, middle, and end of *Ashfall*; and I took some notes in the write-up. After reading the various descriptions of setting, I don't think I need to add Style/Vividness to Setting.

I also went back through my analysis notes for *Small as an Elephant* to see if maybe setting is integral (since Sara mentioned that she thought it had to occur at the time that it did – **influence of my reader**). I'm still not convinced, though, so I'm going to leave the setting as backdrop.

Appendix F

Analysis Write-Ups

Exposed **analysis write-up**

Reading as a reader
>   Transactional Theory – efferent/aesthetic
>   Socio-Cognitive Theory – motivation/conceptual knowledge/strategy/social
>   interaction; interest

 (see Memo 1/8/13 for my process and questions)

*3/22/13 – relevant information that influences my reading – I have read novels in verse and have generally enjoyed them, so I'm familiar with the format and have a positive view of it

In approaching the text as a reader, I was looking forward to reading this story. The summaries I had read intrigued me as did the description on the back of the book. Right away after beginning to read, I connected with the characters (which is what I want to do when I read for fun). The first few pages succinctly introduce me to Liz, photographer with focus, and her friendship with Kate, talented dancer. The friendship at the beginning of the book rings true for me – friends close enough that they spend lots of time together and even have fights like sisters.

I also noticed and love the language Marcus uses in this novel in free verse. For instance, I thought she clearly described in just a few lines how Liz's and Mike's mom misses him: "and I want to tell my brother/he should study/the look on Mom's face/the way her jaw muscles just went slack/and tightened again in a split second's time" (p. 33) when he said he could not stay for dinner. And she often skillfully uses metaphor as in the following description of an art student when her work was found lacking: "I [Liz] turn to watch the girl walk away/with her portfolio between her legs" (p. 170).

The story held together for me because the complicated situation seems realistic:

> Mike told people he slept with Kate, and Amanda told Liz (p. 62); Kate liked
> Mike from the time they were little (p. 63); Liz confronts Kate and Kate still
> won't/can't talk to her (pp. 64-66); then Kate tells Liz what happened (pp. 74-75,
> 77), but Liz has a hard time believing her because Mike is her brother (p. 76); she
> doesn't know which person to believe (pp. 81, 82-83, 86, 92-94); Who would I
> believe? (excerpt from my notes)

And I wanted to keep reading to find how Liz makes sense of what happened, given that it involves her best friend and her brother. Why would her friend lie? But could her brother really be a rapist?

The saddest part of the story for me was when Kate told Liz that they could not be friends anymore because "'Every time I'm with you,/I see him'" (p. 131). What an impossible situation. At this point, I wanted to know what would happen with the conviction of rape, and I had hope that Liz and Kate could resurrect their friendship. However, and I think rightly so, that was not to be:

> p. 230 – I just want to get to the end to find out what happens. But I don't see how the end could be good. Either way, in terms of the conviction, Liz suffers. She's lost her best friend and has been ostracized by most kids at school. She lost her boyfriend (pp. 210-212). And she doesn't feel like she can talk to her parents. How can all of that be resolved for her? Is that what I want? I think I do. But I don't think it can be resolved no matter what is ruled for Mike. (excerpt from my notes)

Marcus does not resolve what, realistically, cannot be resolved, but there is closure, which I appreciated as a reader. And, somehow, she ended this story with hope.

Reading as a researcher
Transactional Theory – Literary Analysis
Socio-Cognitive Theory – Content Analysis

(see Memo 1/9/13 and 1/10/13)

Character and Point-of-View
The key characters in *Exposed* are Liz, Kate, and Mike. As the narrator, Liz is the protagonist; we learn about Kate, her best friend, and Mike, her older brother, from Liz's descriptions of her interactions with them and her memories of previous interactions with them. Liz is round and dynamic – we see her interest in photography, her love for and frustration with her best friend, her love for and confusion about her brother, and her complicated relationships with her parents. We also see her at the beginning of the novel as a confident photographer, sure of her place in her world; in the middle of the novel as unsure, barely photographing, friendless, and unable to talk with her parents; and at the end of the novel as someone beginning again, taking pictures with a new perspective.
Kate is also a round and dynamic character. Through Liz's eyes, we see Kate at the beginning of the novel as a self-conscious dancer, settling for what's comfortable, not making waves. When she accuses Mike of rape, she has taken a risk, stepping out of the role Liz is used to seeing her in and "'saying what [she] needed to say'" (p. 254). At the end of the novel, she seems more confident and even plans to minor in dance in college (p. 247).
Mike is an important character because the conflict of the story revolves around him; he is round and static. We see different facets of him through Liz: "My brother is a track star./My brother is a partier./My brother is a bit of a chauvinist pig./My brother, even when he annoys me,/is someone I love.//…My brother/is not/a rapist" (p. 76). She remembers that when they were younger he bought her a camera for her birthday because

he saw her staring at it; and he held her hand for Halloween so that she would not be scared, even though his friends made fun of him for it; recently, he hit on his best friend's girlfriend when he was drunk. He does not change, though, throughout the story.

Mike does not need to be a dynamic character in the story – the story focuses on the friendship between Liz and Kate, and Mike's role is as the brother and rapist. His role does require him to be round, though, because a key conflict for Liz is who to believe, and if Mike were flat, she would not have this conflict.

The conflict between Liz and Kate matters because both are round characters, but also because both are dynamic. The loss of friendship between Liz and Kate, and the outcome of the trial, would not be as significant if Liz were the only dynamic character. The reader is invested in both because both change throughout the novel.

Ultimately, the reader is likely to identify most with Liz because the story is told from her point-of-view. We see everything through her eyes and are, therefore, encouraged to believe her. And we do believe her because Marcus portrays her as a round, dynamic character.

Plot and Setting and Coherence

The plot of *Exposed* is progressive, chronological, and includes flashbacks. Conflicts include person-against-person and person-against-self. Setting in this novel serves as a backdrop to plot.

We start out with Liz in photography class, being introduced to the narrator; and then Liz in the dark room, being introduced to her best friend Kate via a picture Liz is developing. Then we move with Liz through the hallways of school to where she surprises Kate, showing us the established friendship between the two; and then to the pizza place where Liz and Kate and their friends hang out, and where Liz and Kate make plans to hang out the next night for "Saturday Night Slumber" (p. 9) at Liz's house. At Saturday Night Slumber Liz and Kate get in a fight that inadvertently leads to the situation that ends their friendship. [example of progressive, chronological, coherent, setting as backdrop]

After Saturday Night Slumber, Kate seems to be avoiding Liz. Then she (and we) finds out through a mutual friend that Kate and Mike had sex that night (p. 62); only Kate claims that it was rape (pp. 75-77). Marcus keeps us in suspense throughout the novel and this is a prime example: though the slumber party fight happened on page 18, we wonder with Liz why Kate is avoiding her until we finally get some details on page 62 and then 75. We are still in suspense, though, as now Liz must decide if she believes her best friend or her brother: "She had no bruises/that I could see./No cuts, no swollen eyes.//I saw no scratches,/next morning, on Mike./So which one's telling lies?" (p. 81).

The flashbacks help us understand Liz's relationships with Kate and with Mike. For instance, "Best-Friends Collage" (p. 35) captures a friendship that started before Kate and Liz were six years old. Her memory of Halloween when she was six and Mike "helped her conquer her fear" (p. 137) portrays a caring older brother, helping his sister even when his friends made fun of him, and highlights for the reader how difficult it is for her to believe that he raped Kate: "How can *this* boy be *that* guy?" (p. 137).

The clear indications of when Liz is in the present and when she is having a flashback speak to the novel's coherence. The novel begins in present tense: "I am the first one here" (p. 1). The first flashback, which happens on page eleven, is indicated by the past tense of the verb in the second line and by the mention of a previous birthday: "My brother, Mike,/bought me my first camera-/a gift for my twelfth birthday." The novel continues in this way, with the verb tense in the first or second line indicating right away for the reader if Liz is in the present or thinking about the past.

Marcus uses chapter titles to help indicate present or past, as well as to indicate setting and to indicate for the reader what happens next. "At the Track Last Spring" (p. 31) gives the reader a sense of time and place. "Best-Friends Collage" (p. 35) followed immediately by "Making Amends" (p. 37) clearly portray Liz's actions as she attempts to clear things up with Kate after their Saturday Night Slumber fight.

Style and Vividness and Coherence and Tone

As expected, I am finding that style and vividness go hand-in-hand, and Marcus certainly uses vivid language throughout *Exposed*. Because it is written in free verse, the language of the novel must be carefully chosen, expressing ideas in few words. Marcus has filled her novel with figurative language: "The straight line to my squiggle,/my forever-best friend" (p. 2); metaphors: "There's a lump in my throat/the size of Cape Cod Bay" (p. 23); similes: "Even if no one says it/the word rape/hums soft and constant/like water running/through the pipes in our walls" (p. 173); alliteration: "Friday's fleeing feet" (p. 3); onomatopoeia: "hum" and "swish" are involved in developing film (p. 2); word play: "My mother has pinned/all her hopes on me./And I can't pull out/the pins" (p. 119); imagery: "…and I want to tell my brother/he should study/the look on Mom's face,/the way her jaw muscles just went slack/and tightened again in a split second's time" (p. 33). The devices used portray the characters, events, ideas succinctly and meaningfully.

One particularly vivid event is when Kate tells Liz what happened with Mike. This is the one place in the novel where Marcus includes paragraphs, with run-on sentences and run-on words ("ithurtsobad" (p. 128)). The shift in format and the run-on style mirror the content of what Kate is saying, the specifics of Mike forcing himself on her and things moving too quickly and Kate feeling like she has no control. Because in this event the pieces fit together to create the whole, it is also an example of coherence.

Another example of coherence that also characterizes style and vividness is "Family Pride" (p. 57). This chapter has two verses – the first shows Liz's perspective of how her dad sees her and the second shows how her mom sees her. The two parts align perfectly: "Dad's always been proud of me./Whether I was playing a potato/in the Fabulous Food Groups play,/" contrasted with "Mom's proud of me, too./Though I know she wished I were the apple,/" (p. 57). Marcus focuses on three key events that parallel Liz's dad's pride and her mom's tempered pride in just six lines each.

These important ideas portrayed through Marcus' style are dealt with seriously. The author uses a serious tone, letting the reader know the weight of topics such as rape, friendship, and family relationships. She does get a bit didactic at the end, hitting me over the head with how Liz has changed…

Theme (including author assumptions) and Coherence and Life Themes

Based on the emphasis at the end of the novel, the main theme is related to Liz finding herself/coming of age/learning the importance of perspective and having her own perspective: "I used to be so confident/about who people were, who I was-/…I realized/I no longer see things/in crisp black-and-white contrasts-/"(p. 237) and "…I remember/the words of Annie Leibovitz:/*When you trust your point of view,/that's when you start taking pictures*.//This girl/is starting now" (p. 255). This seems to be related to the idea (possibly author assumption) that going through difficulty makes one stronger and/or trials are important for growth. A bit didactic for me.

The theme that was more interesting to me was related to the difficulty of relationships. Liz and Kate are best friends but do disagree about some important things related to how each sees the other living her life. Liz loves her brother and had a close relationship with him before he went to college, but then she believes he might have raped her best friend. Liz loves her parents but believes that her mom is not quite pleased with her. As her family deals with the charge against Mike, Liz feels unable to talk to her parents. As Liz and Kate deal with the charge against Mike, they cannot be friends anymore. And Liz is no longer sure how to feel about her brother, but he is still her brother. These relationships and difficulties ring true to life and to the novel because the actions are coherent. For example, when Liz is finally able to talk to her family about what she believes to be the truth, that Mike raped Kate, she tells her dad (p. 235), the parent we know she feels closer to because of how their relationship has been presented throughout the book.

Neither the theme of finding oneself nor of the difficulty of relationships occurs on the lists of Life Themes. Rape would qualify, but I see that as more of a topic/impetus for the key themes of the novel. In terms of the lists of Life Themes, the novel does include sex, rape, and romance. Again, these seem to be more topics than themes. Clearly the literary theory Theme is needed to further define the socio-cognitive Life Themes.

Preference studies most relevant to my study in terms of influencing analysis and/or text selection:
Chance, 1999 – analysis of characteristics from Young Adults' Choices for 1997 – **round protagonists, majority of protagonists are dynamic, progressive in action, first person, becoming self-aware is most common theme, serious in tone**;
Diaz-Rubin, 1996 - findings – most frequently listed topics included **movies, adventure, horror, mysteries, sports, murder, crime, humorous, love, fantasy** (p. 172)

Exposed includes round, dynamic protagonists, it's progressive in action, it's written in first person, it's serious in tone, one theme is about finding oneself; and it includes crime (rape) and love (romance).

Sara - Before reading my notes (face-to-face conversation): Sara was unfamiliar with the genre, but it did not meet her expectations of novel in verse as she expected more

lyrical/rhyming poetry – thought it would be more challenging. She said the verse faded away as she was reading, whereas I found it significant throughout. Sara read the novel in one sitting "because it was very interesting"; I asked why and she said she wanted to know more about the characters and where they fit into the society of the school. She felt camaraderie with the narrator – she didn't know and the narrator didn't know what happened and wanted to know. I asked if she uses any reading strategies (SOCIO-COGNITIVE) and she said she is always predicting and always looking for foreshadowing. I asked, "As a reader, what would you say stands out the most for you about this novel?" Sara was intrigued by the photographs, imagining what they would look like; and she was concerned that the narrator would not end up pursuing photography in college (something I didn't even think about). Overall, she liked the novel in a generic way; she found the novel to be like *Speak*.

After reading my notes: Overall, Sara agrees with my analysis of the novel. She suggested another conflict in the novel might be person-again-society with the discussion of/definition of rape (I agree). She also suggested that I might want to rate each category/criteria, saying if it was good or not, explaining how I felt about it (like saying the book had a great theme). I'M NOT SURE ABOUT THIS BUT I CAN THINK ABOUT IT.

Sara indicated that stylistic changes (changing the text) feel like a cheap ploy and are off-putting (responding to my comment of Marcus using paragraphs during the explanation of the rape scene). She did not like Kate (I did!). She thought Liz's relationship with her parents was unfinished – they fell apart during Mike's trial and then didn't really come back (I didn't really think about this but agree with Sara). She also wondered if the author should have added another perspective to the story (I liked that it was just Liz – interesting narration, getting Mike and Kate through her eyes). Sara said the ending of the novel came together fine but not great (I appreciated that the story ended with hope but felt it was a bit didactic at the end, so I think we can agree on the ending being ok).

So, Sara said that she agrees with my analysis, but, based on her comments, I would say that she wasn't in agreement with what I termed as vivid. She agrees that it's stylistic, but she didn't find the style to be overall effective (she said the verse fades away) whereas I did (and Lee did).

Ashfall **analysis write-up**

Reading as a reader
> Transactional Theory – efferent/aesthetic
> Socio-Cognitive Theory – motivation/conceptual knowledge/strategy/social interaction; interest

*3/26/13 – Me as a reader: I enjoy science fiction, something that happened in my adulthood; I don't remember reading much science fiction when I was younger, and I certainly did not choose it for fun. Now, though, I will pick out science fiction for entertainment. I'm not really a science-y person other than having a rudimentary understanding from required courses in high school and college. I was intrigued by the description of this book and the focus on survival during a disaster.

As a reader I was intrigued by descriptions of the book and was looking forward to reading *Ashfall* for its focus on survival during a disaster. However, overall, I did not enjoy the book. Alex is just not that interesting to me as a character. The beginning of the book is used to introduce me to him, but he basically just tells me about himself (first person narration) as opposed to the author showing me what he's like. Alex explains that he fights with his mom, is a geek, thinks his little sister is a brat, knows taekwondo, and plays video games. Nothing happens or is described, though, that makes me care about him.

The story seems to be driven by the plot, not the characters, but the plot is boring to me. The event happens early in the story (p. 5), but I have to wait a bit to find out what it is (p. 33). During this time I am in suspense – I do want to know what happened. After I know a volcano erupted, though, I'm not excited about going with Alex on his journey to find his family. By p. 42, I'm finding the descriptions of the noise and the ash and the dark a bit redundant. I do appreciate some of the descriptions as I have a sense of what Alex is experiencing, but they're repetitive and little else is happening. Alex struggles to get to the next destination, meets people along the way, and then leaves them. I'm not overly interested in the other characters, particularly as they're not in the story for very long. By p. 87, I'm feeling that the story is too contrived, and I'm having difficulty being "in."

I did identify with some ideas in the novel. For instance, Alex wants to find his family because he loves them and misses them (p.23). The story takes place in Iowa, and I love Iowa ☺ The descriptions of people's behavior in a crisis make sense to me – people robbing and stealing or not willing to share because they want to make sure they have enough (lack of food, supplies, etc.). Also, I finally meet Darla on p. 129, and I peeked ahead (something I rarely do) to make sure she appears later in the story so that I know it's worth connecting with her. I like Darla because she's feisty (p. 136), a hard worker (p. 147), innovative (p. 164), and she can take care of herself and her mom.

With Darla in the picture, the story became more interesting to me. Darla fulfills my need to connect to a character; and now there's a chance for romance between Darla and Alex. I'm almost always up for a romance. Also, Alex is a little more interesting in

relationship with Darla. When they first meet, she and her mom take care of him. But after Darla's mom dies, Alex takes care of Darla for a time, making him into someone I can care about as a character. Also, the author does paint a pretty clear picture of life after the disaster – life going back to Little House on the Prairie days, temperature changes, more death and destruction. It just seems to me that the story would be much better if it was much shorter.

On p. 273 I wrote, "I'm mostly in – must be the romance." Darla and Alex seem like an unlikely couple. But they have experienced tragedy together, have saved each other's lives, and are really all that they have until/unless Alex finds his family. They share details of their lives before the disaster with each other, getting to know each other better before becoming romantically involved. This works for me and made me want to keep reading – to see what happens to their relationship and to them. And when Alex wants to try to save the little girl and gives food to the family (p. 291), I like him as a person.

The journey continues. It's very curious that Darla and Alex encounter a plowed road (p. 323) and even more curious that people are being rounded up and put into camps (p. 328). The conditions of the camp are horrible and people aren't allowed to leave (pp. 337-345). Why would this be done? I'm aware of this type of thing happening during war, but I'm not sure why it would be happening during the disaster. I guess to contain people so there's less crime? I might be lacking background knowledge for this…I guess it fits in the story, though, because it's exploring life during a disaster.

By the end of the novel, I wanted to keep reading because I cared enough about Darla and Alex that I wanted to find out what happened to them. But I remained annoyed by the story telling: on p. 400 I wrote, "want to keep reading – like Darla; plot still annoying – too much of a list/telling." The end of the novel is clearly not the end of the story since Alex was not reunited with his parents (pp. 544-456); I kind of want to know how Darla and Alex proceed, but I'm just not sure that I can handle slogging through another novel like this one.

Reading as a researcher
    Transactional Theory – Literary Analysis
    Socio-Cognitive Theory – Content Analysis

    How does this function in the text? Why - What opportunities does it afford the author/reader?

Point-of-View and Character and Coherence
    The narration of *Ashfall* is first-person from the perspective of Alex. I meet the "I" on the first page and know his name is Alex on the second page. With first-person narration, I am encouraged to see everything from Alex's perspective. Second person is used on p. 34 to speak directly to the reader, asking the reader to imagine a situation similar to Alex's, but I didn't notice any other use of second person. The use of second person in this one instance seemed effective in that I could imagine what I was being asked to more completely than I could imagine Alex's situation.

   Mullin uses mostly telling statements (rather than showing) to explain Alex. We know in the first few pages that Alex fights with his mom about "poor study habits, my video games, my underwear on the bathroom floor" (p. 2). He is almost sixteen (p. 3) and a geek (p. 3) - the bookcase in his bedroom is "filled with computer games, history books, and sci-fi novels" (p. 3). He knows taekwondo (p. 3) and plays online games (p. 4). As the novel progresses we know that he misses his family (pp. 23, 56). He's polite insofar as he thanks his neighbors for looking out for him (p. 40), and he thanks Gloria and Darla for taking him in (p. 174). He also cares about others: at the school gym he wants to protect his stuff but also doesn't want a little girl to go hungry (p. 74); he feels guilty for eating when others don't have food (p. 79); he wants to help a little girl who is clearly struggling (p. 280); and he leaves food and water for the woman and her kids that he and Darla meet on their way to his uncle's house (p. 291). These details and actions make him a round character, but I'm not convinced that he's dynamic. We're told that he changes (his uncle mentions that Alex has changed – that he's not the same sullen kid (pp. 410-411)) but I didn't really see it happen across the novel.

   Since we know at the beginning of the novel that Alex has extensive experience with taekwondo (pp. 3, 4), it makes sense that he would be capable of fighting the three guys who break into his neighbors' house (p. 50); fighting the small guy and Target (pp. 200-204); and using taekwondo to protect himself at the camp (pp. 351-353) (COHERENCE). However, it did not make sense to me that Alex does not want to see Darren (his neighbor) again (POSSIBLE LACK OF COHERENCE). He likes his neighbors and appreciates that they help him out; then Darren kills the guys who break into his house and Alex leaves and won't go back – the book says it's because of the blood and gore (p. 54), but not wanting to ever see his neighbors again seems like a strong reaction given the relationship they seem to have.

   Similar to Alex, information about Darla is mostly told (as opposed to shown). Whereas Alex explains himself through his first-person narration, Darla is explained through dialogue and through what Alex notices about her. For instance, through dialogue with her mom we know that Darla resents taking care of Alex, giving him their medicine and liquor for his wounds (pp. 129-131). She tells Alex that she was in 4-H and, because of that experience, is not afraid to sew up Alex's side (pp. 132-133) even though she'd never done it before (p. 137). Gloria explains to Alex that Darla rigged up a toilet/tube that runs to the septic system (p. 142), and she also rigged up a pump for the well since the original pump broke (p. 164) (innovative). Gloria also tells Alex that Darla works hard – digs corn, takes care of rabbits, chops wood (p. 144). When Darla's mom is dying, she tells her she loves her (p. 205) and can't function after she dies (p. 209). At the camp, Darla gets a job fixing machinery (pp. 370-371); this makes sense since we know that Darla fixed lots of machines on the farm (COHERENCE). Darla is also a round character but I'm not sure that she's dynamic, either.

Plot and Setting and Vividness and Life Themes

   Plot in this novel is progressive, with a chronological narrative order. At the beginning of the novel, Alex is telling the reader something that happened to him in the past: "I was home alone on that Friday evening" (p.1). In the first few pages, there are a

few lines that remind the reader the events of that night already happened: "If I'd known I might never get to argue with her [Alex's mother], maybe I would have replied" (p. 2). However, the reader is not given any additional, specific information so it's like the reader discovers with Alex what is happening as he tells his story. In a few instances Alex shares information about his past, but it's more of just describing who he is than an actual flashback [CHARACTER]. For instance, when he tells the reader about taekwondo, he says, "I didn't work at it until sixth grade, which I remember as the year of the bully" (p. 3). This type of narration encourages the reader to connect with Alex and to build suspense waiting to see what will happen next.

The conflict is primarily person-against-nature. Alex must travel via skis/foot (p. 62) from Cedar Falls, IA to Warren, IL to find his family (p. 56) in the aftermath of the eruption of the supervolcano at Yellowstone (p. 32). The importance of setting in this novel is the time, which is futuristic (Alex's parents remember 9/11 (p. 1) as a past event, though we don't know exactly how long ago). Otherwise, the location serves as a backdrop to the plot* – the places where nature happens; and it affects the mood (TONE?) with the ash-filled and then snow-covered fields in the middle of nowhere/Midwest.

The story begins in Cedar Falls, IA where Alex experiences his house crashing and lighting on fire. He's home alone and, when he finds out what happened (the supervolcano), he decides he needs to find his family. Thus begins his journey through the fields and small towns of Iowa in the "post-volcanic world" (p. 46). Suspense is built in as the reader knows from the first page that something dramatic happened, but the explanation isn't given until p. 32 [VIVIDNESS]. Also, many of the chapters end with dramatic statements, such as "Then the explosion's started" (p. 18); "There was no dawn the next day" (p. 25); "In the morning, I woke to the sound of breaking glass" (p. 110). I assume the intent of the dramatic endings is to build suspense and encourage the reader to keep reading. I found them to be a bit overdone, but I often did want to find out what happened next.

Conflict in this story is also person-against-person, as Alex must fight the three men who break into his neighbors' house (p. 50); and Target both in the woods (pp. 123-124) and at Darla's house (p. 200). Also, Alex and Darla have an antagonistic relationship at first, since Darla does not want to take care of him but her mother wants her to (p. 129). The conflicts – both person-against-person and person-against-nature – encourage the reader to care about what happens to Alex and to Darla.

As I took notes on Life Themes while reading *Ashfall*, I noticed that most of the themes relate to events in the story and so can be categorized as part of plot. For instance, Mullin includes many instances of danger - Alex's house being destroyed (p. 5), Alex fighting the intruder (p. 50), Alex falling into a stream during a blizzard (p. 243); death - Darren killed the intruders (p. 51), Darla kills the rabbit and butchers it (p. 153), Alex kills Target with a rock (p. 214); and sex - Alex dreams about school-friend Laura wearing black lace (p. 93), Alex has a hard-on from Darla cleaning the area around his wound (p. 145), Alex and Darla both admit they're virgins and then fool around (pp. 299-300), Alex's uncle gives him condoms and so he and Darla have sex (pp. 436-438). In fact, in *Ashfall* Life Themes are more related to Plot than to Theme.

* After completing analysis of *The Near Witch* and reviewing Lukens' (2007) descriptions of setting (backdrop or integral) I think maybe setting is integral – because of both time and place. It's important to the plot that Alex lives in an area affected by the supervolcano and that where he travels is mostly rural.

Checking for description: "The road was deserted…The only way I could tell I was passing a cornfield was the few hardy stalks still standing upright, coated in gray ash" (p. 90).
"I saw a thin line of trees…most of the leaves were gone…what was left was coated with gray-white ash" (p. 91).
"Two gray-white ghosts, sailing down the rest of the hill on one pair of skis" (p. 181).
"Alone on a vast plain of unforgiving ash" (p. 206).
"We pushed through thick underbrush stripped of its leaves by ashfall and the cold" (p. 245).
"The land had changed around us. The hills were steeper and more wooded…evergreen forest on either side" (p. 296).
"Inside the fence, the snow had churned to a dirty, frozen slush by thousands of feet" (p. 336).

Based on the descriptions of setting that I found by skimming multiple pages of *Ashfall*, I don't think I need to add Style/Vividness to Setting.

Tone and Style and Vividness and Lots of Detail
        The author uses a serious tone to describe life for Alex and others in Iowa following a potentially real natural disaster (pp. 457-460). The style, conflated with vividness, helps create this serious tone. Most commonly, Mullin uses description to help convey what life is like in the post-volcanic world: "The pre-Friday world of school, cell phones, and refrigerators dissolved into this post-Friday world of ash, darkness, and hunger" (p. 1); instead of a sunrise, "There was a little brightening on the eastern horizon of the black, monotone sky" (p. 104); "I felt as if we were being hollowed out from the inside, so our skin might soon collapse" (p. 370) – describing their hunger at the camp. He also uses a bit of imagery – "A wall of heat slammed into me, like opening the oven with my face too close" (p. 8); figurative language – non-stop thunder "as if Zeus had loaded his bolts into an M60…" (p. 20); alliteration – "Hunger of choice is a painful luxury; hunger of necessity is terrifying torture" (p. 117); and metaphor – "The Grim Reaper had visited me again, had even poked me with his scythe, but Darla had dragged me by the hair from his dark kingdom" (p. 248).
        Stylistic devices weren't very noticeable in *Ashfall*. Sometimes when they were, though, they did not serve the desired effect of "heighten[ing] emotions" or "give[ing] pleasure and…heighten[ing] meaning" (Lukens, 2007, p. 207). For instance, the author repeats Alex reporting his feelings of terror and boredom (p. 34), worry and boredom (p. 41), boredom and terror (p. 42); which became redundant for me. Also, at points in the story it seems that Mullin includes more detail than necessary; because of this I created a

miscellaneous category that I labeled "lots of detail" but that seems to relate closely to style, albeit in a negative way. A few examples include the description of restroom facilities at the school (pp. 78-79); butchering the rabbit (pp. 153- 156); Darla using a truck engine and bicycle to recharge a battery (pp. 168-171). As I was reading these passages, I was wondering why I needed so much information – it didn't seem to be important for the story and so served to detract from it.

One final note on style [AND I'M NOT SURE THIS BELONGS BUT WANT TO MENTION IT, ANYWAY]: some of the vocabulary used seems pretty advanced for adolescents: malodorous (p. 2), admonition (p. 3), malevolent (p. 5), detritus (p. 66), porte-cochere (p. 83), frenetic (p. 150), offal bucket (p. 157), ersatz (p. 178), quern (p. 210), abattoir (p. 307), canted (p. 389).

Theme and Life Themes and Author Assumptions

Throughout *Ashfall* Mullin focuses on relationships – between Alex and his family members, Alex and Darla, Darla and her mom. The overall idea related to relationships seems to be that you don't know what you have until it's gone. Also represented through the relationships are Mullin's ideas about family. We see Alex's family –a mom, a dad, and two kids; the neighbors – married men with no children; and Darla's family – a mom and a kid with a dad who died.

From the first chapter, Alex describes his relationship with his mom – they fight often (p. 2), but she's the one he wants when things fall apart (p. 15); his sister - "An hour ago I'd been looking forward to an entire weekend without her. Now I wanted nothing more than to see her again" (p. 14); and his dad - "Dad responded with his usual benign lack of interest" (p. 2). Once the supervolcano happens, Alex is on a journey to find his family. The way he talks about them throughout his journey, though, leaves me wondering about his relationship with his dad. He mentions positive aspects of his relationship with his mom, indicating that he knows she loves him; and positive aspects of his relationship with his sister, for instance when he saved her from the bully (pp. 255-256). But positive aspects of his relationship with his dad seem to be missing.

When Alex meets Darla, we see her interactions with her mom, which consist of her mom wanting to help Alex and Darla arguing about wasting supplies (pp. 129-133). Clearly, though, they support each other as Gloria talks about how talented Darla is (p. 132) and Darla protects her mom (p. 139). When Darla's mom dies, she's inconsolable and can't function (pp. 208-211).

The relationship between Alex and Darla becomes an important part of the novel as soon as they meet, since Darla becomes Alex's travel companion on his search to find his family. We follow them from their initial meeting when Darla is resentful of having to take care of Alex, to Alex's uncle's house where Alex explains that Darla saved his life multiple times and he'd die for her (p. 409). This is also the one place where Theme and Life Theme connect, as sex enters the relationship. Alex's body responds to Darla soon after they meet (p. 145). He likes Darla but believes she sees him as a helpless kid (p. 160). After her mother dies, Alex takes care of her, and she admits her feelings for him (pp. 265-268). Alex and Darla both admit they're virgins and then fool around, but Alex will not have sex with Darla because he doesn't want to get her pregnant (pp. 299-

300). So they decide they need to find condoms (p. 300). Mullin is clearly highlighting the importance of protected sex, but it seems to work with the story and does not come across as didactic (I MAY NEED TO DO MORE WITH THIS…).

Alex and Darla's relationship relates to another theme that I labeled as People in Crisis. At one point they wonder about feeling so good with each other in the midst of the disaster that life has become around them (p. 268). Throughout the novel Mullin shows the reader how people might respond to life after a supervolcano. For instance, though Alex says he's not religious, he prays to God to keep his family safe (p. 23). On his journey, Alex finds people working together to gather food and to keep their shelter ash-free. In particular, in two towns Alex travels through people have gathered at the local high school and have set up work detail so that everyone benefiting from the shelter, food, and water is contributing to the community (author assumption – importance of community). People also react negatively to the crisis. For example, men break into Alex's neighbor's house to take supplies (p. 49). Gangs form and some people become cannibals (p. 289). FEMA workers take advantage of people, herding them into an unsanitary camp and suggesting that Darla prostitute herself for food (p. 379). Many people protect their houses with guns, but some of those same people are willing to help Alex and Darla when they really need it. Overall, the various responses to crisis that Mullin presents ring true and help me think about how I might respond in a crisis and how I'd want to respond.

It seems that Mullin was also trying to create a coming-of-age theme. We are told that Alex is no longer a sullen kid (pp. 410-411). He tells his uncle he's an adult because of what he went through (p. 419). And he explains to Darla, "'During the trip, I was free…I've only been here one day, and already I miss that feeling of freedom, of being my own man'" (p. 421). This feels too canned and also turns him back into that sullen kid, for me. Also, he was trying to find his family. What did he expect? That his parents wouldn't treat him like a kid if he found them? This theme didn't ring true for me, but I think it's trying to be there.

Overall, this story was not of interest to me. It was way too long and repetitive. But the young adults picked it, and it does have many of the criteria that potentially lead to interest…

Preference studies most relevant to my study in terms of influencing analysis and/or text selection:
Chance, 1999 – analysis of characteristics from Young Adults' Choices for 1997 – **round protagonists, majority of protagonists are dynamic, progressive in action, first person, becoming self-aware is most common theme, serious in tone**;
Diaz-Rubin, 1996 - findings – most frequently listed topics included **movies, adventure, horror, mysteries, sports, murder, crime, humorous, love, fantasy** (p. 172)

Ashfall includes a round protagonist (**though not necessarily dynamic**); is progressive in action; is written in first person; **themes focus on relationships and response to crisis**; and is serious in tone. Topics include adventure and love (romance).

Sara - Before reading my notes (phone conversation): Sara said that, in general, she does not like apocalypse books. She did not like that there were no good adults in the novel and wondered how the teenagers could survive on their own with no/limited help from adults. She liked that Alex found his family – she didn't think that he would. She was interested in the story from the beginning, particularly as she could picture everything. And she said the ideas stick with you – related to survival/persistence – many times Darla wanted to stop/quit but Alex didn't let it happen because he had a larger goal of finding his family. She was disturbed by the criminals; she saw that things could happen the way they were presented but the scenarios were too much for young adults to read about. Sara was disappointed that the female character (Darla) started out so strong but then became weak – why does the girl have to be the weak one?

I asked Sara if she liked the book. She said a sign that she likes a book is that she wants to read it again. She will not read *Ashfall* again because she does not want to go through it emotionally again.

After reading my notes: See document below – Sara responded with inserted notes – overall, Sara agrees with my analysis.

Reading as a reader
> Transactional Theory – efferent/aesthetic
> Socio-Cognitive Theory – motivation/conceptual knowledge/strategy/social interaction; interest

As a reader I was intrigued by descriptions of the book and was looking forward to reading *Ashfall* for its focus on survival during a disaster. However, overall, I did not enjoy the book. Alex is just not that interesting to me as a character. The beginning of the book is used to introduce me to him, but he basically just tells me about himself (first person narration) as opposed to the author showing me what he's like. Alex explains that he fights with his mom, is a geek, thinks his little sister is a brat, knows taekwondo, and plays video games. Nothing happens or is described, though, that makes me care about him. [**Sara**: This note is primarily related to the way you reacted to this novel as a reader as opposed to the other analyses.
So, in the other two analyses, you talk about relationships a lot when describing the books and how they progress. There's a good deal about plot and a sense of suspense, but as a reader you seem relationship-driven as a drawing factor.
For "Ashfall", the relationship development doesn't really start until he mets Darla, which you explore below when you talk about looking ahead to see if she makes it.
I wonder if this book missed the mark for you because the only relationship was between Alex and Darla? Just throwing that out there.
Also, the narration style is different in this one. Perhaps the naivety in the voice is more pronounced and possibly more obnoxious? Maybe the voice of this 1st person narrative is boring b/c he's just a boring kid? Do kids like to read about other boring kids? Seems like a waste of time to me…but kids have a lot of time on their hands…. LOL]

The story seems to be driven by the plot, not the characters, but the plot is boring to me. The event happens early in the story (p. 5), but I have to wait a bit to find out what it is (p. 33). During this time I am in suspense – I do want to know what happened. After I know a volcano erupted, though, I'm not excited about going with Alex on his journey to find his family. By p. 42, I'm finding the descriptions of the noise and the ash and the dark a bit redundant. I do appreciate some of the descriptions as I have a sense of what Alex is experiencing, but they're repetitive and little else is happening. Alex struggles to get to the next destination, meets people along the way, and then leaves them. I'm not overly interested in the other characters, particularly as they're not in the story for very long. By p. 87, I'm feeling that the story is too contrived, and I'm having difficulty being "in."

I did identify with some ideas in the novel. For instance, Alex wants to find his family because he loves them and misses them (p.23). The story takes place in Iowa, and I love Iowa ☺ [**Sara**: Hehehe] The descriptions of people's behavior in a crisis make sense to me – people robbing and stealing or not willing to share because they want to make sure they have enough (lack of food, supplies, etc.). Also, I finally meet Darla on p. 129, and I peeked ahead (something I rarely do) to make sure she appears later in the story so that I know it's worth connecting with her. I like Darla because she's feisty (p. 136), a hard worker (p. 147), innovative (p. 164), and she can take care of herself and her mom.

With Darla in the picture, the story became more interesting to me. Darla fulfills my need to connect to a character; and now there's a chance for romance between Darla and Alex. I'm almost always up for a romance. Also, Alex is a little more interesting in relationship with Darla. When they first meet, she and her mom take care of him. But after Darla's mom dies, Alex takes care of Darla for a time, making him into someone I can care about as a character. Also, the author does paint a pretty clear picture of life after the disaster – life going back to Little House on the Prairie days, temperature changes, more death and destruction. It just seems to me that the story would be much better if it was much shorter.

On p. 273 I wrote, "I'm mostly in – must be the romance." Darla and Alex seem like an unlikely couple. But they have experienced tragedy together, have saved each other's lives, and are really all that they have until/unless Alex finds his family. They share details of their lives before the disaster with each other, getting to know each other better before becoming romantically involved. This works for me and made me want to keep reading – to see what happens to their relationship and to them. And when Alex wants to try to save the little girl and gives food to the family (p. 291), I like him as a person.

The journey continues. It's very curious that Darla and Alex encounter a plowed road (p. 323) and even more curious that people are being rounded up and put into camps (p. 328). The conditions of the camp are horrible and people aren't allowed to leave (pp. 337-345). Why would this be done? I'm aware of this type of thing happening during war, but I'm not sure why it would be happening during the disaster. I guess to contain people so there's less crime? I might be lacking background knowledge for this…I guess it fits in the story, though, because it's exploring life during a disaster. [**Sara**: I agree that

this is weird and unnecessary, especially with the tendency of the culture of the Upper Midwest. I wonder if he was just trying to do/say too much? Too preachy? Maybe to harken back to the days when there were Japanese internment camps in MN???]

By the end of the novel, I wanted to keep reading because I cared enough about Darla and Alex that I wanted to find out what happened to them. But I remained annoyed by the story telling: on p. 400 I wrote, "want to keep reading – like Darla; plot still annoying – too much of a list/telling." The end of the novel is clearly not the end of the story since Alex was not reunited with his parents (pp. 544-456); I kind of want to know how Darla and Alex proceed, but I'm just not sure that I can handle slogging through another novel like this one.

Reading as a researcher

Transactional Theory – Literary Analysis
Socio-Cognitive Theory – Content Analysis

How does this function in the text? Why - What opportunities does it afford the author/reader?

Point-of-View and Character and Coherence

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Mullin uses mostly telling statements (rather than showing) to explain Alex. [**Sara**: Once the freaky stuff starts happening, is it realistic to think he will have more feelings other than just to be freaked out? Granted, after the initial craziness, I wish there would've been more….] We know in the first few pages that Alex fights with his mom about "poor study habits, my video games, my underwear on the bathroom floor" (p. 2). He is almost sixteen (p. 3) and a geek (p. 3) - the bookcase in his bedroom is "filled with computer games, history books, and sci-fi novels" (p. 3). He knows taekwondo (p. 3) and plays online games (p. 4). As the novel progresses we know that he misses his family (pp. 23, 56). He's polite insofar as he thanks his neighbors for looking out for him (p. 40), and he thanks Gloria and Darla for taking him in (p. 174). He also cares about others: at the school gym he wants to protect his stuff but also doesn't want a little girl to go hungry (p. 74); he feels guilty for eating when others don't have food (p. 79); he wants to help a little girl who is clearly struggling (p. 280); and he leaves food and water for the woman and her kids that he and Darla meet on their way to his uncle's house (p. 291). These details and actions make him a round character, but I'm not convinced that he's dynamic. [**Sara**: Ditto. Well, that and the physical reaction to Darla – do you think that

was emotionally charged as well? Or just a physical reaction to her presence and overall awesomeness?] We're told that he changes (his uncle mentions that Alex has changed – that he's not the same sullen kid (pp. 410-411)) but I didn't really see it happen across the novel.

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The story begins in Cedar Falls, IA where Alex experiences his house crashing and lighting on fire. He's home alone and, when he finds out what happened (the supervolcano), he decides he needs to find his family. Thus begins his journey through the fields and small towns of Iowa in the "post-volcanic world" (p. 46). Suspense is built in as the reader knows from the first page that something dramatic happened, but the explanation isn't given until p. 32 [VIVIDNESS]. Also, many of the chapters end with dramatic statements, such as "Then the explosion's started" (p. 18); "There was no dawn the next day" (p. 25); "In the morning, I woke to the sound of breaking glass" (p. 110). I assume the intent of the dramatic endings is to build suspense and encourage the reader to keep reading. I found them to be a bit overdone, but I often did want to find out what happened next.

Conflict in this story is also person-against-person, as Alex must fight the three men who break into his neighbors' house (p. 50); and Target both in the woods (pp. 123-124) and at Darla's house (p. 200). Also, Alex and Darla have an antagonistic relationship at first, since Darla does not want to take care of him but her mother wants her to (p. 129). The conflicts – both person-against-person and person-against-nature – encourage the reader to care about what happens to Alex and to Darla. [**Sara**: I would also think "person-against-self" is happening in this novel – not just to Alex but to Darla….]

As I took notes on Life Themes while reading *Ashfall*, I noticed that most of the themes relate to events in the story and so can be categorized as part of plot. For instance, Mullin includes many instances of danger - Alex's house being destroyed (p. 5), Alex fighting the intruder (p. 50), Alex falling into a stream during a blizzard (p. 243); death - Darren killed the intruders (p. 51), Darla kills the rabbit and butchers it (p. 153), Alex kills Target with a rock (p. 214); and sex - Alex dreams about school-friend Laura wearing black lace (p. 93), Alex has a hard-on from Darla cleaning the area around his wound (p. 145), Alex and Darla both admit they're virgins and then fool around (pp. 299-300), Alex's uncle gives him condoms and so he and Darla have sex (pp. 436-438). In fact, in *Ashfall* Life Themes are more related to Plot than to Theme.

Tone and Style and Vividness and Lots of Detail [**Sara**: HAHAHA – I think this means "too darn long". Lol]

The author uses a serious tone to describe life for Alex and others in Iowa following a potentially real natural disaster (pp. 457-460). The style, conflated with

vividness, helps create this serious tone. Most commonly, Mullin uses description to help convey what life is like in the post-volcanic world: "The pre-Friday world of school, cell phones, and refrigerators dissolved into this post-Friday world of ash, darkness, and hunger" (p. 1); instead of a sunrise, "There was a little brightening on the eastern horizon of the black, monotone sky" (p. 104); "I felt as if we were being hollowed out from the inside, so our skin might soon collapse" (p. 370) – describing their hunger at the camp. He also uses a bit of imagery – "A wall of heat slammed into me, like opening the oven with my face too close" (p. 8); figurative language – non-stop thunder "as if Zeus had loaded his bolts into an M60…" (p. 20); alliteration – "Hunger of choice is a painful luxury; hunger of necessity is terrifying torture" (p. 117); and metaphor – "The Grim Reaper had visited me again, had even poked me with his scythe, but Darla had dragged me by the hair from his dark kingdom" (p. 248).

Stylistic devices weren't very noticeable in *Ashfall*. Sometimes when they were, though, they did not serve the desired effect of "heighten[ing] emotions" or "give[ing] pleasure and…heighten[ing] meaning" (Lukens, 2007, p. 207). For instance, the author repeats Alex reporting his feelings of terror and boredom (p. 34), worry and boredom (p. 41), boredom and terror (p. 42); which became redundant for me. Also, at points in the story it seems that Mullin includes more detail than necessary; because of this I created a miscellaneous category that I labeled "lots of detail" but that seems to relate closely to style, albeit in a negative way. A few examples include the description of restroom facilities at the school (pp. 78-79); butchering the rabbit (pp. 153- 156); Darla using a truck engine and bicycle to recharge a battery (pp. 168-171). As I was reading these passages, I was wondering why I needed so much information – it didn't seem to be important for the story and so served to detract from it.

One final note on style [AND I'M NOT SURE THIS BELONGS BUT WANT TO MENTION IT, ANYWAY]: some of the vocabulary used seems pretty advanced for adolescents: malodorous (p. 2), admonition (p. 3), malevolent (p. 5), detritus (p. 66), porte-cochere (p. 83), frenetic (p. 150), offal bucket (p. 157), ersatz (p. 178), quern (p. 210), abattoir (p. 307), canted (p. 389). [**Sara**: ACT / SAT prep novel – marketing strategy. Hahaha]

Theme and Life Themes and Author Assumptions

Throughout *Ashfall* Mullin focuses on relationships – between Alex and his family members, Alex and Darla, Darla and her mom. The overall idea related to relationships seems to be that you don't know what you have until it's gone. Also represented through the relationships are Mullin's ideas about family. We see Alex's family –a mom, a dad, and two kids; the neighbors – married men with no children; and Darla's family – a mom and a kid with a dad who died.

From the first chapter, Alex describes his relationship with his mom – they fight often (p. 2), but she's the one he wants when things fall apart (p. 15); his sister - "An hour ago I'd been looking forward to an entire weekend without her. Now I wanted nothing more than to see her again" (p. 14); and his dad - "Dad responded with his usual benign lack of interest" (p. 2). Once the supervolcano happens, Alex is on a journey to find his family. The way he talks about them throughout his journey, though, leaves me

wondering about his relationship with his dad. He mentions positive aspects of his relationship with his mom, indicating that he knows she loves him; and positive aspects of his relationship with his sister, for instance when he saved her from the bully (pp. 255-256). But positive aspects of his relationship with his dad seem to be missing.

When Alex meets Darla, we see her interactions with her mom, which consist of her mom wanting to help Alex and Darla arguing about wasting supplies (pp. 129-133). Clearly, though, they support each other as Gloria talks about how talented Darla is (p. 132) and Darla protects her mom (p. 139). When Darla's mom dies, she's inconsolable and can't function (pp. 208-211).

The relationship between Alex and Darla becomes an important part of the novel as soon as they meet, since Darla becomes Alex's travel companion on his search to find his family. We follow them from their initial meeting when Darla is resentful of having to take care of Alex, to Alex's uncle's house where Alex explains that Darla saved his life multiple times and he'd die for her (p. 409). This is also the one place where Theme and Life Theme connect, [**Sara**: These "life themes" are intriguing to me.] as sex enters the relationship. Alex's body responds to Darla soon after they meet (p. 145). He likes Darla but believes she sees him as a helpless kid (p. 160). After her mother dies, Alex takes care of her, and she admits her feelings for him (pp. 265-268). Alex and Darla both admit they're virgins and then fool around, but Alex will not have sex with Darla because he doesn't want to get her pregnant (pp. 299-300). So they decide they need to find condoms (p. 300). Mullin is clearly highlighting the importance of protected sex, but it seems to work with the story and does not come across as didactic (I MAY NEED TO DO MORE WITH THIS…).

Alex and Darla's relationship relates to another theme that I labeled as People in Crisis. [**Sara**: Is this life theme present in the other two books as well?]   At one point they wonder about feeling so good with each other in the midst of the disaster that life has become around them (p. 268). Throughout the novel Mullin shows the reader how people might respond to life after a supervolcano. For instance, though Alex says he's not religious, he prays to God to keep his family safe (p. 23). On his journey, Alex finds people working together to gather food and to keep their shelter ash-free. In particular, in two towns Alex travels through people have gathered at the local high school and have set up work detail so that everyone benefiting from the shelter, food, and water is contributing to the community (author assumption – importance of community). People also react negatively to the crisis. For example, men break into Alex's neighbor's house to take supplies (p. 49). Gangs form and some people become cannibals (p. 289). FEMA workers take advantage of people, herding them into an unsanitary camp and suggesting that Darla prostitute herself for food (p. 379). Many people protect their houses with guns, but some of those same people are willing to help Alex and Darla when they really need it. Overall, the various responses to crisis [Sara: This begs the question of what is considered a crisis, but I know that's a completely different dissertation. ☺] that Mullin presents ring true and help me think about how I might respond in a crisis and how I'd want to respond.

It seems that Mullin was also trying to create a coming-of-age theme. We are told that Alex is no longer a sullen kid (pp. 410-411). He tells his uncle he's an adult because

of what he went through (p. 419). And he explains to Darla, "'During the trip, I was free…I've only been here one day, and already I miss that feeling of freedom, of being my own man'" (p. 421). This feels too canned and also turns him back into that sullen kid, for me. Also, he was trying to find his family. What did he expect? That his parents wouldn't treat him like a kid if he found them? This theme didn't ring true for me, but I think it's trying to be there.

Overall, this story was not of interest to me. It was way too long and repetitive. But the young adults picked it, and it does have many of the criteria that potentially lead to interest…

The Near Witch **analysis write-up**

Reading as a reader
>   Transactional Theory – efferent/aesthetic
>   Socio-Cognitive Theory – motivation/conceptual knowledge/strategy/social
>   interaction; interest

*9/13/13 - Me as a reader: Generally, I would not choose to read a book with witch in the title (mostly from my religious beliefs/backgrounds); however, the description on the back of the book intrigues me because of the mystery involved: What is happening to the children? Will they be returned? It also appears that the wind is a significant part of the story, and I wonder at how that will be portrayed. Wind certainly has power and in this book might be a character. The last paragraph of the description calls the novel "part fairy tale, part love story." I'm almost always up for a love story; not as excited about the fairy tale aspect as fairy tales haven't been as interesting to me since childhood, though some aspects could work. Overall, I'd say I'm quite interested in this story as I approach it.

I've read the first chapter and am totally in. The writing captured me from the beginning – starting with the onomatopoeia, introducing me to a caring older sister, showing instead of telling me that something happened to the girls' father (p. 2). The wind has changed, and I want to know more about that (p. 4); and I'm curious about the boy – why does his form not fully appear? What is he? (p. 4)

I've read to p. 171 – I really want to know what happens. So far, I've been kept in with suspense – I find out in bits and pieces who Lexi's father was and what he was teaching her; Lexi meets Cole but she doesn't find out any details about him until p. 123 when she learns that he believes the fire that destroyed his town was his fault; I care that the children are disappearing because I like little dudes and have one and can imagine the horror of losing her, but I'm even more anxious for the mystery to be solved before Wren disappears because I know more about her as Lexi's little sister; I get pieces of the story of the Near Witch but don't get the "real" ending until the sisters tell Lexi and Cole (p. 165); I'm curious about Lexi's mom – it seems that she knows something, wanting to help Lexi in her more lucid moments.

I like Lexi. She's tough. She doesn't want to follow the expectations that her society has for women, preferring action. She wants to help with the search; her father taught her his trade and she wants to continue tracking. She also cuts wood and does other things that are mostly reserved for men. She also isn't interested in getting married, but is attracted to the stranger – a witch! And she punches Tyler in the face ☺ (p. 220).

I like the writing. The descriptions of nature/the wind come alive for me; the metaphor of the apple is one example of the beauty of the writing (p. 121).

In terms of strategies, mostly I've been asking myself questions about the characters – who is Cole, why is he in Near, what do the sisters know about what's happening, what are the sisters and Cole hiding from Lexi…Also, Why does Lexi need to find the Near Witch's bones? Why can't the sisters get them using their magic?

My prediction/hope/wondering about the ending - At this point, a "happily ever after" would be that the children get returned and Cole and Lexi stay together with Lexi pursuing "manly" activities. Also, I'd like Lexi's mom to recover, whatever that would look like.

I finished reading the book a couple of weeks ago. I read this one sporadically even though I really wanted to finish it to find out what happens to Cole and Lexi and the children.

Including me in "us" works for me since I can identify with what Lexi is describing about secrets: "Funny how when we start to tell a secret, we can't stop. Something falls open in us, and the sheer momentum of letting go pushes us on" (p. 186). Also, this is an example of the language/description that appeals to me.

I can feel her pain and loss when Lexi tells the story of her father's death (pp. 195-200). I especially appreciated her description of the story of her father's life, which is "written in my blood and bones and memory instead of on pieces of paper" (p. 195).

Interesting description of nature – Cole saying that being connected to nature/the wind is lonely – that the connection isn't as strong as connections between people (p. 196). And that interacting with/having control of nature is like music and the tones between the Near Witch and Cole are quite different (p. 202).

I like how this book is making me think – I'm thinking about Matthew's motives, Otto's motives, what made Lexi and Cole the way they are. Right now, after writing that sentence about nature, I'm thinking that maybe Lexi needed to gather the Near Witch's bones because she's fully human and so stronger, in some ways, than witches. It's not through power that she could defeat the Near Witch but because of her love for the children, particularly her sister, and how the disappearance of the children was affecting the town. Lexi has the connection to the other people in town and so has strength because of these connections (?).

Ok, I like romance. And I can understand why Lexi and Cole like each other. Lexi is bored of the people in her town and Cole is different; Cole responds to Lexi treating him as a person instead of as an outsider, someone not worthy of relationship. They seem to connect very quickly, though. I guess I'm saying the romance worked for me, overall, but I've also questioned it a bit. Cole wants to be with Lexi (p. 260). I guess I can buy that ☺

I'm a bit frustrated with the story around Lexi's mother. Lexi says her mother is "looking more awake than I have seen her in a year" (p. 222). Except that it seems like she says something like this off and on throughout the story. So, in general, since her husband death Lexi's mom is a zombie, but she perks up at opportune moments to help Lexi try to find out where the children have gone. This does not seem to develop at all but instead the same scenarios with Lexi's mother happen throughout the story.

I like that Lexi doesn't really "fix things" alone. The sisters tell her what needs to be done. Cole helps her throughout. Her mother helps her on occasion. Matthew tells her where the witch is buried, though he also might have told the men what Lexi was up to. And Mrs. Thatcher helps her get past Tyler and the councilmen (p. 256).

It seems fitting that the novel ends with Lexi's father's voice and her own added to it. She has been greatly influenced by her father, learning his trade and wanting to be like him. Throughout the novel it became clear how much she is like him and also is herself.

Overall, I often read this text aesthetically; and the most common strategies I used were questioning and prediction and background knowledge in terms of how stories work. Lexi appealed to me as a character; I wanted to keep reading because of the suspense throughout the novel; and the language appealed to me. I was questioning the romance a bit, and the situation with Lexi's mother annoyed me a bit, but these didn't detract from my enjoyment of the story.

Reading as a researcher
> Transactional Theory – Literary Analysis
> Socio-Cognitive Theory – Content Analysis

How does this function in the text? Why - What opportunities does it afford the author/reader?

Point-of-View and Character and Author Assumptions and Life Themes
> The point-of-view of *The Near Witch* is first person from the perspective of Lexi, a sixteen-year-old who would rather wear pants than the dresses expected of her (pp. 6-7). First person narration encourages the reader to identify with Lexi since we experience the story as she experiences it. We rely on her interpretation of events, given her background knowledge and personal experiences in Near.
> As the protagonist, Lexi is round. She loves her family and tries to do what her dad would have wanted her to do, but she defies her uncle. She is intrigued by witches even as the people of her village fear them. She rebels against the expectations for girls of her age in her village (Author Assumption – defying gender expectations); she likes to be moving, doing "manly" things like tracking and cutting wood. Lexi is also a dynamic character (though I had to think about this a bit). In the first part of the book she lies to her mother about where she's been, but then she realizes her mother is on her side and is trying to help her. She has little interest in marriage to a "village boy" (p. 8); she is

intrigued by Cole, though, and becomes romantically involved with him (Theme: Romance). Also, she seems to have more understanding for Otto as the story progresses – she sees him not just as her mean uncle who stops her from doing what she wants, but also as a man trying to protect his family and burdened by worry.

With Lexi's mentioning of the wind on the first page of the novel, and the multiple appearances of the wind throughout the first chapter, I initially thought of the wind as an important character (particularly because of the personification used in descriptions of the wind – Style). However, also in the first chapter and throughout the novel, the wind is connected to the Near Witch and to Cole. Therefore, I am combining the presence of witches and their interactions with/control of nature, particularly the wind, as a character worth noting. The presence of nature personified stresses the importance Schwab places on human interaction with nature (Author Assumption); and the witches' control of the wind, in particular, shows the power nature has over humans (Life Themes: power).

In the novel witches are feared because of their power and because people do not understand them. Lexi envies the connection witches have to nature, but Cole tells her that being connected to the wind is very lonely (p. 196). The witches present in the novel, the Near Witch, the Thorne sisters, and Cole, are all round characters. The Near Witch is seeking revenge for being murdered for something she didn't do – she was kind to the children and protected Near until the hunters killed her. She uses the wind and nature to enact her revenge against Near. The sisters want to protect Near but also identify with the Near Witch; they're conflicted because the offspring of the people who killed the Near Witch are the ones who are losing their children. Ultimately, they help make things right for both the Near Witch and for Near. Cole is secretive and, in turn, kind but allusive. He is also a dynamic character in that when Lexi first meets him he believes he has to be alone and is haunted by what happened to his village; after he gets to know Lexi, he opens up to her and wants to stay with her. Cole also learns to use his connection to the wind instead of trying to ignore it (Life Themes: power).

Setting and Style/Vividness and Plot and Life Themes and Vividness and Coherence

The setting is integral in *The Near Witch*; Schwab's rich description, particularly through personification of nature (Style/Vividness), shows how time and place influence the plot and characters and theme. Specifically, the setting functions as an antagonist and to illuminate character. In the first two chapters we learn that the town of Near has an invisible boundary around it, and that no strangers come to Near. This adds to the suspense of Cole's visit to the area and his frequent presence on the outskirts of town, seeming to honor the invisible boundary. The moor functions as an antagonist since the Near Witch uses her control of the moor to steal the town's children and then to keep them in her "garden." When Lexi is searching for the children, she notices of the witch's woods: "The forest swallows the world beyond, gnaws at the light and the warmth" (p. 225). The Near Witch can only come out at night – that is when the children go missing, and that is why Lexi and Cole must find her bones during the day. In addition, the setting illuminates character. Lexi is the only person in town willing to visit the sisters' cottage because the others are afraid of witches and choose to ignore the sisters (Theme). Also, it is on the moor that Cole reveals his connection to the wind and his status as witch to

Lexi. Ultimately, *The Near Witch* is not *The Near Witch* without the town of Near and the moor that surrounds it.

The plot is progressive; narrative order is chronological with Lexi recalling things about her father and telling stories that capture life in Near when the Near Witch lived there. The progressive plot and chronological narration keep the reader in the action with Lexi. The recollections about her father and the stories about the Near Witch serve to provide background information about Lexi's life and about why life is the way it is in Near. Conflicts are person-against society (villagers don't want to accept witches but Lexi, following in her father's footsteps, believes they should be accepted in Near) and person-against-nature (Lexi and Cole must confront and defeat the Near Witch (Life Themes: danger) with nature at her command – primarily the wind but also using the moor to embody her so she can protect her "garden" of the children of Near).

Schwab employs suspense (Vividness) throughout the novel, providing partial explanations to keep the reader guessing. For instance, Lexi thinks she sees a figure (p. 4) and then finds out she did (p. 10) but he's a stranger. She thinks she knows who might be hiding him (p. 10) and so goes to the Thorne sisters' to find out (p. 21). She finally talks to the stranger (p. 51) but doesn't find out anything about him. He turns up near the houses of the missing children (p. 80); and a conversation that he has with the sisters' that Lexi overhears (pp. 118-120) suggests that he knows something about what happened to them. Lexi (and the reader) finally finds out who Cole is and how he knows what might be happening to the children (pp. 135-146). Suspense related to the Near Witch follows a similar pattern of brief mentions and partial explanations until all is put right (p. 275).

Overall, the plot is coherent. Schwab provides clear indications of when Lexi is remembering her father, as all that relates to him is past tense: "I remember the first time he took me to see the sisters" (p. 23); "he used to say" (p. 25). The complete story of the Near Witch, spread throughout the novel, follows chronological order (making it easy to follow while creating suspense), with Lexi beginning the story a couple of times (for Wren and for Cole). When she finally ends the story (for Cole), she acknowledges that there may be other endings. She asks the sisters to tell her "'The real ending'" of the story of the Near Witch (p. 161), which clarifies the discrepancy between the alternate endings. In addition, when Lexi is charged with finding the Near Witch's bones, she realizes that the Council might know: the three hunters who killed and buried the Near Witch became the Council (pp. 165-166); they may have passed down the information of where the witch was buried from Council to Council (p. 179).

I did notice two instances (though, I would argue, not overly significant) that indicate a lack of coherence. The first caused some confusion for me because, on p. 213 Lexi tiredly indicates that "sleep slips beneath the covers with me" but then a couple of short paragraphs later she is "waiting for dawn to come." I thought she had fallen into a deep sleep but, apparently, she hadn't been sleeping at all. In the second instance I was surprised by the characters' actions. Lexi wakes up and thinks Wren might be missing (pp. 247-248); she walks into the kitchen and her mother's and Otto's expressions confirm her fears (p. 248). Given how close Lexi and Wren are, and give that her mother has encouraged her to look for the children and Otto knows she's been involved in the

search, it seemed strange to me that they hadn't woken Lexi to tell her that Wren was missing.

Tone and Style and Vividness and Coherence

The Near Witch is serious in tone, aligning with the seriousness of the content – the loss of Lexi's father, Lexi not wanting to live the way others expect her to, the missing children, witches as outcasts, the stranger in town. This tone encourages the reader to also take the content seriously.

Style is conflated with Vividness. Schwab uses devices of style and of sound throughout the novel. She uses lots of figurative language – personification, similes, and metaphors – as well as imagery; and onomatopoeia and rhythm and alliteration. As I've mentioned in the previous sections related to character and setting, nature is personified: "the wind is breathing against the glass" (p. 3); "The sun is bleeding, too, right into the horizon, and the whole world has turned a sickly red" (p. 270). Likewise, imagery is primarily used to illustrate nature: "The wind beats in my ears with my pulse" (p. 77); description of the setting sun - "the golden circle skimming the wild grass" (p. 269). Similes and metaphors are used to describe people and ideas: Lexi about Wren – "She really is like a bird"…"she chirps" (p. 11); Lexi compares Magda's movement to those of a leaf (p. 25); "until the quiet becomes heavy, as if everything is holding its breath" (p. 71); "My father used to say that change is like a garden. It doesn't come up overnight, unless you are a witch" (p. 277).

In addition to devices of style, Schwab uses devices of sound sprinkled throughout the novel. I noticed onomatopoeia on the first page: "match hisses," "A whistle. A crack" (p. 1). I also noticed alliteration early in the novel: "moonlit moor" (p. 6); and late in the novel: "frustration and fatigue and fear" (p. 222). Schwab combines rhythm with onomatopoeia: "The old house lets out little clicks and thuds as the heat from the day seeps out" (p. 132); and with alliteration: "between blue-gray shadows on a blue-gray ground, watching the blue-white circle in the blue-black sky" (p. 134). This poetic language is pleasing to read and creates "heightened meaning" (Lukens, 2007, p. 207). In addition, the style is coherent as can be seen by the fact that this language is consistent throughout the text (the examples I've included here as well as others in my notes show that the style is used throughout the novel).

Theme and Life Themes and Author Assumptions

Themes include relationships with family members (including loss of a parent); romance (also Life Themes); and fear. Throughout the novel Schwab illustrates Lexi's relationships with her sister Wren, her father, and her mother. We also learn about Lexi's relationship with her Uncle Otto (discussed above under the heading Character: Lexi). The novel begins with an interaction between Lexi and Wren, illustrating that Lexi cares for and about Wren. She admits, "I cannot deny my sister anything" (p. 2). They play games together, laugh together (pp. 6-7), and Lexi teases Wren (p. 12). Lexi has to protect Wren (pp. 185, 191); and, in fact, her main motivation for wanting to find out who is taking the children is Wren's safety (p. 162-163). This relationship reveals facets

of Lexi's character, furthers the plot, and highlights the possibility of love between siblings.

From the beginning of the novel, it is clear that Lexi thinks highly of her father. We know that he read to her (p. 2); she wears his boots and knife (pp. 7-8); she proudly identifies as his daughter (p. 10); and he taught her his trade (p. 11). As with aspects of the plot, Schwab shares bits of information about Lexi's father so that we don't really know what happened to him until pp. 195-200. The bits of information often share what Lexi has learned from her father. She misses him and struggles through life without him; her uncle cannot replace him, her mother is mostly a shell of her former self, and her sister cannot remember him. This relationship illustrates one teenager's loss of a parent and shows how this loss also influenced Lexi's relationship with her mother.

Lexi misses the way her mother was before her father died (p. 35). As her parent, Lexi expects her mother to see through lies and be more engaged in Lexi's activities, but "ghosts ask fewer questions" (p. 35). Lexi does see glimpses of the mother she knew, though, when her mother helps her get away from the house to look for the children (pp. 104, 157, 222). Though her mother has changed since her father died, Lexi has an ally in her mother. The relationships with her family members also illustrate the author's assumption about family. Lexi, as well as many of the other children in the village, had/has two parents. The single men (like Otto) are bachelors, and the single women (like Dreska and Magda) are witches. This may be a reflection of the time period, but it shares a definition of family that includes a mom, a dad, and kids.

In addition to her relationships with family members, Lexi forms a romantic relationship with Cole (also Life Theme). This relationship, which intrigues and excites Lexi, is juxtaposed with her relationship with Tyler (also Author Assumption: heterosexual romance). Tyler wants a romantic relationship with Lexi, but she is mostly annoyed by his attempts to move their relationship beyond friendship (pp. 63-66). In contrast, Lexi seeks out opportunities to spend time with Cole and is excited (p. 124) rather than annoyed (p. 100) by physical contact with him. Lexi's romance with Cole reveals more about both characters, moves the plot forward, and adds a personal element to Lexi's (and, therefore, the reader's) experience of the theme focused on fear.

Lexi's father told her that "'Fear…has the power to make people close their eyes, turn away'" (p. 25). In Near people fear witches because they have power and because the people don't understand them. This fear led to the murder of the Near Witch, to the ostracization of witches in Near, and to the people wanting to blame Cole (and even frame him) for the missing children. Even though the people feared them, Magda and Dreska and Cole were trying to help them. The Near Witch had done the same but was blamed and then killed for something she didn't do. Her act of revenge was just that. Once she was rightfully buried, she was no longer a threat to the town. Through her presentation of this theme, Schwab is asking the reader to consider the ill-effects of fear without cause and asking us to try to understand others before making judgments.

Preference studies most relevant to my study in terms of influencing analysis and/or text selection:

Chance, 1999 – analysis of characteristics from Young Adults' Choices for 1997 – **round protagonists, majority of protagonists are dynamic, progressive in action, first person, becoming self-aware is most common theme, serious in tone**;
Diaz-Rubin, 1996 - findings – most frequently listed topics included **movies, adventure, horror, mysteries, sports, murder, crime, humorous, love, fantasy** (p. 172)

The Near Witch includes round and dynamic protagonists; progressive plot; first person narration; **relationships and fear as themes**; and a serious tone. Topics include mystery (what is happening to the children?), murder (the Near Witch), crime (framing Cole), love (romance), and fantasy (witches).

Sara - Before reading my notes (phone conversation): I liked *Near Witch*. It held my attention. The climax was quite fantastic. The author held my attention.

I wasn't sure about it at all when I first picked it up. Then I had to remind myself that it was an award-winning book and kids liked it; and I'm like a kid, so there will be reasons that I'll like it.

I didn't mind the narration – I thought I would, but I didn't. *I asked why she thought she would mind. She said she wasn't prepared for the historical setting because we hadn't been reading anything with the historical setting; and she didn't know what was going on at first.

I read it in about a day because it read fast. I liked the main character. She was feisty. I hated the uncle. I'm sure everybody hated the uncle. But he was just trying to protect her. I got used to the setting rather quickly. It was slightly freaky – that was something I was worried about at the beginning. The little sister was so cute; I could just imagine them bundled in the blankets and the mom making the bread. I could just see it – the author did a nice job with that. I could see the town; and I could see the tall grasses, the wind, I could see all of that, which was cool.

I liked some of the observations that the author made through the narrator's dad – her dad sounded so great. I highlighted a bunch of parts in there. Like, at the end of it he said if you could break through there was good soil down deep. It wasn't heavy. It was good. There were multiple things that I thought were great – talking about her mom and her dad – mostly about her dad. This was a nice way of making her wise without making her seem older than she was.

I kind of thought Tyler's name didn't fit in with everyone else's name – the other names seemed "old" but Tyler seemed out of place.

I liked the old witches. I thought they seemed funny. I liked that they wouldn't tell her things so it was hard for her to figure things out. Nothing seemed convenient – like it does in some books.

The witches' bones being buried – that was creepy.

I don't know if it was one of my favorites but it was up there – with *What Happened to Goodbye* – I liked that the best and *Near Witch* would be the second one. And then maybe *Flip* or *Small as an Elephant*.

I don't know if I would have liked it as a teenager. Maybe. *I asked why she might not have liked it. Sara – didn't used to like historical setting; would have been intrigued by the mystery but probably wouldn't have liked the historical setting.

The imagery was powerful – the description was the most accessible. Maybe I was identifying with the nature; I also liked the mystery. But I really liked the setting and how it was described.

I didn't think she had to fall in love with Cole. I suppose in that time she was coming of age to marry somebody and so everybody thought she would end up with Tyler even though she didn't like him. So maybe she had to fall in love with somebody. But Cole seemed really skinny.

I don't think any of the characters did anything out of character. I didn't see a lot of growth or change in the characters. She was pretty open-minded in the beginning. I don't think the townspeople or her uncle changed much.

I guess I probably just appreciate more simple description that seems more realistic. *I asked if the *Near Witch* had this and Sara said yes. It didn't seem unnecessarily complex.

I thought the author did a nice job with the use of dialogue. I usually skim pretty quickly through dialogue, but I feel like the author put more into the dialogue - the characters were also doing things while they were talking.

I liked it a lot. I always like those stories within a story – where there's an old story and not everyone knows that whole story.

After reading my notes (email response):

I read through your write-up for Near Witch. I thought your discussion of Lexi's mom; I don't think I really even noticed her that much -- just that one time when she let Lexi out despite what Otto wanted.

I liked the description of the Thorne sisters and their round nature as characters, particularly their internal conflict with wanting to protect Near but also being hurt by the judgement and paranoia of the town.

(Was it just me, or did you always think of Grover going "Near" and then "Far" whenever you read the town name? LOL)
http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=iZhEcRrMA-M

I do agree with your change in perspective about the setting. It really kind of highlights the nuances of your work on your dissertation. This is a good, objective choice to show the value of the setting versus just the setting itself. I hope that makes sense; I'm starting to get tired.... (sorry!)

Like I had told you on the phone, I do love how Lexi's wisdom comes from her father -- it doesn't feel false or ill-conceived because it feels like it was part of his legacy that he left her.

I liked your call-out of the single (non-partnered) people in this book. The "typical family unit" seemed like it was under attack by the Near witch...interesting -- I wonder if it was intended?
[My thoughts: I hadn't really thought about this. The Near Witch was after the children, and children in Near came from nuclear families. Maybe not intentional?]

I didn't think that the relationship with Cole and Lexi had to be romantic, did you? I feel like it could have just been a solid friendship...but maybe that's not romantic enough for YA lit. LOL
        [My thoughts: I agree – it didn't need to be a romance, but romance seems

important in YAL…]