MULTIMODAL COMPOSING IN SUPPORT OF DISCIPLINARY LITERACY: A SEARCH FOR CONTEXT IN ELA AND HISTORY CLASSROOMS

A dissertation submitted to the Kent State University College of Education, Health and Human Services in partial fulfillment of requirements for the degree of Doctor of Philosophy

By

Elizabeth A. Walsh-Moorman

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A dissertation written by

Elizabeth A. Walsh-Moorman

B.S., Kent State University, 1994

M.A., University of Michigan, 1996

Ph.D., Kent State University, 2018

Approved by

___________________________, Co-director, Doctoral Dissertation Committee
William Kist

___________________________, Co-director, Doctoral Dissertation Committee
Kristine E. Pytash

___________________________, Member, Doctoral Dissertation Committee
Tricia Niesz

___________________________, Member, Doctoral Dissertation Committee
Sara Newman

Accepted by

___________________________, Director, School of Teaching, Learning, and
Alexa L. Sandmann Curriculum Studies

___________________________, Dean, College of Education, Health and
James C. Hannon Human Services
This qualitative study explored how student writers adjust to the shifting composing demands in a multitude of composing contexts: in English, in history and across the two disciplines, as well as in various modes, including alphabetically and multimodally.

Naturalistic inquiry case study was applied to explore the participant’s experiences with these shifting composing contexts by addressing the following questions: (a) How does a student’s perception of composing differ across disciplinary contexts, such as in a history class rather than an English class? How does this change when the composing is done in a cross-curricular project that spans both history and ELA? (b) Because new literacies expand the choices students must make through multimodal composing, what relationship can be seen between the authoring choices a student makes while composing multimodally and the literacy demands of various content area classrooms? (c) How does a student who is engaging in cross-curricular inquiry in both English and history perceive the disciplinary demands specific to each content area? (d) How do teachers account for the negotiation students must undergo in order to meet both English and history curricular goals in that cross-curricular project?
Findings suggest that student agency and choice are important factors in helping students address shifting contexts for composing. These factors seem to alleviate the sense of anxiety and ambiguity students perceive when faced with shifting and unfamiliar composing demands. Importantly, multimodal composing supported writer’s agency by offering vast choices and allowing students to use composing in support of inquiry.
DEDICATION

“There are moments we return to, now and always. Family is like water—it has a memory of what it once filled, always trying to get back to the original stream.”

— Colum McCann, Let the Great World Spin

This dissertation is dedicated to my family, who were my constant source of strength, faith and hope through this process—Scott, Katie, Megan, Patrick and Mom, I could not have done this without you!
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CHAPTER I
INTRODUCTION

The news about the literacy abilities of our nation’s secondary students has been the source of much concern among educators and policy makers. Since 2009, the National Assessment of Education Progress has recorded statistically flat scores in reading for 12th graders, and those in the bottom 10th percentile continue to see their average scores decline (Heitlin, 2016). The College Boards have reported a steady decline in scores in critical reading, leaving many to worry that schools are not preparing students for college and workplace readiness (Viadero, 2015). What is even more worrisome is that even as we fail to improve students’ literacy capabilities, the workforce trends have placed greater demand for these same literacy skills (often in fields that have not traditionally required a lot of reading and writing) and require more and more students to pursue education beyond high school (Kirsch, Braun, Yamamoto, Sum, & ETS Policy Information Center, 2007). In 2010, motivated by research that demonstrated gaps such as these, the National Governor’s Association introduced “an integrated model for literacy” that included literacy standards not just for English classrooms, but also for content area classes, including social studies, sciences, and technology (National Governors Association, 2010). Included in the subsequent materials and supporting websites about the new standards was information about key instructional shifts guided by the new standards: (a) regular practice with complex texts in academic language; (b) reading, writing, and speaking grounded in texts, including literary and informational,
and (c) building knowledge through content-rich nonfiction (Common Core State Standards Initiative, 2014).

In a Common-Core driven curriculum, the pressure to improve our students’ ability to make meaning and communicate effectively is not limited to the secondary English teacher alone as the third shift listed above has tremendous implications that span across the disciplines. Reading, writing, speaking, and listening should span the school from K–12 as integral parts of every subject (Common Core State Standards Initiative, 2014). Suddenly, the trite saying that all teachers are writing teachers rings true in a way that is both overt and documented in the standards themselves.

Whereas the idea of reading and writing across the curriculum is not new, the standards were far more explicit, and the work of the ELA classroom has become more entangled with the work going on in classrooms throughout the school. A quick look at the sample testing items for 9th and 10th grade ELA on the Ohio Department of Education’s website makes this point clearly: the constructed response involves a task in which learners are asked to read three sources and then write an argument about whether countries should return antiquities to their country of origin (Ohio Department of Education, 2016). The fact that a task that resembles the work of a social studies classroom appears as a practice item for the ELA test is telling. English has always been viewed as the heart of the reading and writing instruction on the secondary level (Rainey & Moje, 2013). In my experience, educators have often seen English teachers as the reading and writing experts and have relied on transferring what happens in the English classroom to their own disciplines. They have relied on English teachers to teach
students. However, the current reality suggests that more of a holistic approach is needed and the heart of literacy should be seen in the center of all disciplines. In the early 20th century, researchers were coming to understand the unique nature of reading for information (Gray, 1941/1984; Moore, Readence & Rickelman, 1983). By the end of that century, literacy experts were looking for ways to support literacy practices across the discipline (Ogle, 1986; Palincsar & Brown, 1984; Vacca, 2002). Today, the Common Core Standards have integrated those practices to the very heart of the discipline studies.

At the same time that we navigate these cross-disciplinary shifts, what we understand about the central tasks of literacy—reading and writing—is being challenged by new modes and possibilities. Studies of literacy practices in schools have historically focused on the use of traditional, printed texts. Recently, researchers have acknowledged the need to study new literacy tools, sometimes referred to as information and communication technologies (ICTs), such as phones, computers, and other digital devices (Coiro, Knobel, Lankshear, & Leu, 2008). In a 2012 report, the Pew Research Center of teens and technology, 97% of teens reported having Internet access, and 81% of them reported using social media. At a time when schools are struggling to improve the literacy skills of our nation’s teens, these same teens are immersed in literacy-rich social practices that academics have not fully studied or understood.

Literacy can be defined as using language and symbols to fully engage in civic, academic, and social life, and literacy practice is a powerful way to consider the link between those skills and the social world in which we live (Barton & Hamilton, 2000). Literacy practices, therefore, are the use of those skills in everyday life. Although the
study of literacy practices as integral to understanding literacy as a whole is not a new idea, viewing new literacies in a social framework may help to inform the current problems we are facing as we strive to improve our student’s reading and writing ability. What the New London Group (1996) called a “pedagogy of multi-literacies” was truly a clarion call for educators to study these new digital texts in a more serious way. The authors were not simply suggesting that schools expand the use of digital texts; they wanted educators to explore the affordances these new digital formats allowed (and that were becoming a part of the online social practices of their students) so that teachers could better utilize them in support of student learning. Early studies tended to focus on how these multimodal, digital texts could support traditional work in the English classroom (Selfe, 2009), but the New London Group’s call for action spoke of a need for teachers to focus on a set of skills that can be adapted to new, digital environments as they emerged. The flexibility in environment that this digital reality has created has led the push for an understanding of “both literacy and technology as social practice” (Hull, 2003, p. 547). In the years since the clarion cry was sounded by the New London Group, educators have sought to understand the relationship between new literacy practices and the traditional practices so that educators can adapt their understanding of reading and writing to these new skills.

Reading and writing has always been an integral part of academic learning. Edmund Burke Huey’s book *The Psychology and Pedagogy of Reading*, first published in 1908, had some notions of reading that have been disproven, but Huey’s belief that thinking is vitally linked to reading proved to be a prescient idea that helped to shape
later cognitive theories of reading (Walczyk, Tcholakian, Igou, & Dixon, 2014). In *Democracy and Education*, Dewey (1916) wrote:

Mind as a concrete thing is precisely the power to understand things in terms of the use made of them; a socialized mind is the power to understand them in terms of the use to which they are turned in joint or shared situations. And mind in this sense is the method of social control. (Dewey, 1916, p. 38)

Progressives such as Dewey believed texts were introduced in the classroom as a means by which the students could compare its content with their own experiences and knowledge. In the end, a student was to think independently from a text (Dewey, 1910). Literacy experts have long viewed reading as a mode of inquiry, seeing real danger in overt instruction that robs students of the freedom to process information they receive through the act of reading (Stauffer, 1967). Likewise, because writing is cognitive, connective, active, and available for review through changing and editing (unlike talking), it made many theorists consider the importance of writing as an essential part of learning. Writing as a product is information and knowledge, but as a process it includes many other sub-processes like planning, monitoring, drafting, revising, and editing (Emig, 1977). Therefore, a classroom that values inquiry and learning allows students to “explore their own inquiry questions using reading, writing, and other sign systems as tools and toys for learning” (Harste & Carey, 2003, p. 11). New literacy practices have expanded those sign systems available to support new learning.

Importantly, the context of the discipline classroom may, however, change the literacy practice, as meaning making is dependent on context (Collin, 2014; Gee, 2000).
Therefore, studies of new literacies in practice must pay careful attention to the context in which they are being studied. Using a social media site that students use for personal enjoyment in a classroom, for example, changes the context and may change the way a student practices literacy within that medium. Likewise, using that same social media in support of history learning may differ from when it is used in support of the work of an English classroom. Literacy is always domain specific in that “all literacy is enacted in a specific context, for a specific purpose and with a specific audience” (Moje, 2015, p. 256).

What emerges is a complex set of pressures on literacy teachers in the 21st century: rapidly shifting literacy practices that have potential in the classroom and have shaped students’ literacy in ways we often cannot see, a mandate to see literacy as integral to all disciplinary work in a more sophisticated and complex way, and a lack of full understanding of how these new practices relate to the traditional reading and writing practices that have been studied for decades. From a student’s perspective, making sense of the various demands of teachers, disciplines, technology, and contexts must require complex negotiation. Surely literacy has always been a complicated and laudable ideal, but defining that goal in today’s contexts requires a conflation of many factors. Understanding the relationship between ELA and other disciplines is more essential than ever (as evidenced by the practice state tests referenced earlier) but also challenging in school environments that encourage cross-disciplinary, project-based learning. Supporting student literacy practices has always been central to the ELA classroom, but students have always fallen between the cracks. Understanding reading and writing as
related processes has improved, but not eliminated, the problem of meeting the needs of struggling learners. Now, new literacy practices have exponentially broadened the ways a student can create meaning from a text or compose meaningful ideas. Likewise, helping students negotiate the contexts of disciplinary work as a way to guide that meaning-making may challenge some of the old notions since most of the early work on composition especially was concerned about writing within the writing or ELA classroom. As I set out to conduct this research study, I cannot help but frame it within this complex reality, in part because it is a reality that I have lived for 20 years in my role as an English teacher, department chair, mentor teacher, and literacy coach in the school setting. This study is an attempt to study one context, two teachers, and a small group of students. It is not intended to answer the questions that have emerged with the advent of the digital age, but it is my hope that applying these questions to this context may help us to bring clarity that offers a chance to reflect on what it means to support literacy in this changing world.

**Statement of the Problems**

The following section articulates the learning and literacy problems that the study attempts to address.

**Problem 1**

Writing as a process and writing to learn are seen as critical to inquiry learning. However, much of that writing pedagogy has been developed as a result of studies of ELA and composition classrooms. A more careful study is needed to explore how a
learner might use both writing process and writing to learn as ways to meet disciplinary and cross-curricular demands that move the writing context beyond the ELA classroom.

The notion of writing as a cognitive process was first introduced by Flower and Hayes in the 1970s, and this has far-reaching consequences in writing pedagogy. In this cognitive model for writing, writing can be seen as a series of sub-goals aimed at a higher goal, and advanced writers return to the higher-level goals “to review and consolidate what has just been learned through exploring” (Flower & Hayes, 1981, p. 382). Gaining mastery in writing involves developing the ability to reassess these sub-goals in light of the larger purpose. By the 1980s, researchers began challenging traditional notions of how reading and writing relate. They questioned models that saw reading as decoding and writing as encoding messages, instead studying reading as a complex meaning-making system with underlying processes all building to a goal (Tierney & Pearson, 1983). Early studies of digital composing focused on how computers can support writing as a social practice by facilitating communities in writing classrooms and helping to support cognitive process, such as planning and revision (Corbett, 1990).

While even early research into reading viewed reading as sets of interrelated skills that differed with task and text (Gray, 1939), there was not the same distinction for writing. This meant that while educators understood that reading was intricately linked to content area achievement (Moore et al., 1983), little was known about the connection between content area demands and the act of composing. As researchers delved into content area literacy, some began to note that a lack of purposeful instruction of content area literacy is a likely reason test scores remain flat and students’ perception of writing
is largely one-dimensional and reflects the demands of different English assignments but does not connect writing to content area learning (Vacca, 2002). Moving to a disciplinary approach to writing means looking closely at the writing processes and demands of experts in the field. By studying the writing process and products of scientists, Yore, Hand, and Prain (2002), for example, demonstrated that science distinguishes itself through the use of empirical studies, logical arguments, rhetoric, plausible reading, and skepticism, and scientists noted informing and persuading as the main purpose of their scientific writing. What is still not fully understood, however, is how the work of the English classroom is accessed by learners in a way that can prepare students for this type of science-focused task.

**Problem 2**

Constructing meaning in a multitude of classroom contexts through composing is important to inquiry-based and project-based learning. However, not enough is known about how students make sense of the expanded choices allowed in multimodal composing and whether the choices learners make reflect the disciplinary demands as composing contexts shift from one discipline to another.

Constructivism is the focus on the learning processes rather than the behaviors of a learner (Perry, 1999), making it a strong complement to a process-approach to reading and writing. Constructivism is a theory that suggests people learn to construct what others say according to concepts and conceptual relationships that have helped them organize their own experiences (von Glasersfeld, 1989, 1996). Inquiry-based learning (called enquiry-based learning in the United Kingdom) is a pedagogy in which learning is
guided by students’ questions to which they research answers, allowing for greater student agency (Center for Excellence in Enquiry-Based Learning, 2012). It includes a spectrum of approaches, including problem-based learning, research, and small project learning. Inquiry is not new to literacy classrooms; standard pedagogical approaches, such as seminars and research frameworks, have emphasized the need for students to ask questions to drive their own learning (Adler, 1983; Levitov, 2016; Polite, Adams, & Mid Atlantic Lab for Student Success, 1986).

Disciplinary literacy is an instructional approach to the teaching of reading and writing in subject area classes that emphasizes the “specialized knowledge and abilities possessed by those who create, communicate and use knowledge within the disciplines” (Shanahan & Shanahan, 2012, p. 7). This approach to content-area knowledge is concerned with what it means to think or communicate within that field, establishing that by teaching the mindsets and practices of the discipline, the students will be able to learn the content. This reverses traditional content-area pedagogy, which posits that as students learn the content they develop the mindsets and practices in those disciplinary fields (Moje, 2007). Modern writing pedagogy views writing as a process of personal discovery (Elbow, 1973/1998; Macrorie, 1968; Moffett, 1968/1983). The formal and regimented instruction of the past often hindered that discovery, placing too much influence on structure and precision and not enough on the quality of thinking (Macrorie, 1951). Today’s new literacy pedagogy rejects the notion of literacy as a set of isolated skills in favor of a metalanguage that allows students to adopt a mindset that favors inquiry over structure and empowers them to make choices specific to their learning
goals (New London Group, 1996). While on the surface, constructivist learning and new literacy pedagogy seem to relate and complement one another, it is not entirely clear how much emphasis the student places on disciplinary literacy demands when making those choices while authoring.

**Problem 3**

It is not entirely clear how the learner’s writing choices as demonstrated through the writing process change when the classroom context becomes cross-curricular with literacy demands specific to each discipline integrated into a singular composition.

**Problem 4**

Within that cross-curricular context, not enough is known about the adjustments teachers make when asking students to meet the demands of separate disciplinary classroom in that singular composition.

Elizabeth Moje (2015) offered a heuristic model for content knowledge that emphasizes the teacher’s role in engineering a need for students to practice inquiry on their own. In this model, the teacher engages in a consideration of classroom practices in relation to discipline literacy practices, then elicits what a student knows about content knowledge and engineers a reason for them to gain more knowledge. Students are led through a close examination of the literacy practices in the discipline field and then evaluate those practices, determining when and how those practices were useful in the process, and allowing students to question the practices that they found problematic. Such a framework attempts to move to the core of all disciplines: “Members of the discipline ask questions or frame problems; work with data of some type; read and write
a range of texts; record, analyze and synthesize data; and communicate their findings” (Moje, 2015, p. 261).

Cognitive theories of writing are premised on the notion that writing “represents a unique mode of learning” (Emig, 1977, p. 7) that is different from talking, listening, and reading. Writing is not just a form of verbal communication placed on paper; it is a process with unique and distinct stages. Flower (1979) recognized that an early stage of writing involves a concept she called “writer-based prose.” In such a stage of composing, the writer is unable to consider the perspectives of his or her reader. In short, the writer is unable to determine if enough information has been relayed for the reader to understand the thought being communicated in the writing. Falling short of the “goal of autonomy, Writer-Based prose is writing whose meaning is still to an important degree in the writer’s head” (Flower, 1979, p. 30).

Relating these two central ideas, disciplinary literacy and cognitive process, can mean identifying specific needs within the writing process when the content area instruction is being driven by literacy-based instruction. That is, it is clear that Moje’s (2015) heuristic can be deployed by setting up a literacy task that employs the stages of her heuristic; however, it is important to note that while going through that disciplinary task the learner is simultaneously moving through a nonlinear, discursive, and recursive writing process.

For example, in his study of multimodal reading, Michael Manderino (2013) noted that the use of multimodal texts was tremendously supportive of historical inquiry, but he cautioned that the digital nature of those texts were sufficiently complicated and required
discipline-specific reading strategies to support the use of those texts in the inquiry process. It is not too far of a reach to suggest the same may be true of digital composing: Discipline-specific strategies may be needed in order for multimodal composing to support historical thinking. Importantly, the writing demands in a history classroom grounds the effectiveness of persuasion in the use of historical evidence as a key component for success (Monte-Sano, 2010). This type of argumentation requires students to engage in a complex set of inter-related disciplinary tasks that can be scaffolded in ways that help students manage those tasks in support of the purpose of their writing (De La Paz et al., 2014). This suggests that while Moje’s (2015) heuristic sets out a framework for educators, that framework will look different in a history class than in an English class. By placing reading and writing in two disciplines at once through the use of cross-curricular inquiry, an already complex task is made even more so.

**Purpose of This Study**

Having defined the problems above, this study, therefore, is designed with several inter-related purposes in mind. Using a layered case study approach (Merriam, 1998) that investigates learners’ compositions in two disciplinary contexts the study is set up to search for evidence that a learner’s composition choices, whether in traditional or multimodal contexts, reflect what is already known about the writing process as well as the curricular demands of the classroom. Additionally, the study explored how blurring the disciplinary distinctions by creating a cross-disciplinary context for student composing affected both the learner’s understandings of that context and the teacher’s expectations. Therefore, the study was designed to incorporate multiple types of
composing in both discipline-specific and cross-curricular settings, allowing for a comprehensive look at composing within a variety of disciplinary contexts.

Additionally, disciplinary literacy suggests that a learner adapts reading and writing skills to the context of the discipline and to meet the demands specific to that discipline. New literacies have expanded the choices learners can make in the act of meaning-making, and it is not clear how these additional choices relate to disciplinary literacy. This study explores whether a multimodal composition, with its expanded choices and different affordances, reflects a learner’s understanding of the discipline-specific literacy demands in a way similar to traditional writing assignments.

Finally, this study analyzes how a student’s perceptions of composing a multimodal assignment for ELA and history classes relates to his or her understanding of what is important in both of those disciplines. By means of comparison, this study also analyzes the usefulness the teacher finds in a cross-curricular, multimodal assignment in achieving their discipline-specific learning goals. It is important to see how those two perceptions (student and teacher) relate to one another and offers insight into the challenges and benefits of using composing as means of inquiry in the classroom.

**Research Questions**

To frame the research study, I have designed these four research questions:

1. How does a student’s perception of composing differ across disciplinary contexts, such as in a history class rather than an English class? How does this change when the composing is done in a cross-curricular project that spans both history and ELA?
2. Because new literacies expand the choices students must make through multimodal composing, what relationship can be seen between the authoring choices a student makes while composing multimodally and the literacy demands of various content area classrooms?

3. How does a student who is engaging in cross-curricular inquiry in both English and history perceive the disciplinary demands specific to each content area?

4. How do teachers account for the negotiation students must undergo in order to meet both English and history curricular goals in that cross-curricular project?

**Key Terms**

Throughout this dissertation, I use some key terms that have been defined for the purpose of clarity and intent. These include:

**Composition**: The act of creating for the means of communicating. Traditionally in the classroom, this has meant composing using alphabetic texts, but for purposes of this study can be used to include the composing of visual and audio texts.

**Content area reading and writing**: The reading and writing associated with a content area course that “reflects not only the concepts and ideas important to (subjects such as English, social studies, science, math), but also the text structures used by those practicing in the field” (“What is Content Area,” 2008). This differs from disciplinary literacy because it is not focused on the practices of those within the field, but on the educational setting in which the students learn.
**Disciplinary literacy:** An instructional approach to the teaching of reading and writing in subject area classes that emphasizes the “specialized knowledge and abilities possessed by those who create, communicate and use knowledge within the disciplines” (Shanahan & Shanahan, 2012, p. 7).

**Mode:** The way something is presented. For instance, a composition can be presented orally (as a speech), alphabetically (as an essay), or visually (as a video or dramatic presentation).

**Multimodal composition:** Using multiple modes to communicate a cohesive idea. For instance, a PowerPoint might include sound, movie links, and alphabetic text.

**New literacies:** A broad term meant to encompass competing academic and theoretical perspectives on digital literacies. It can include the study of these new literacies as social practices, but also is concerned with the psycholinguistic and cognitive processes students undergo as they attempt to create meaning from multimodal texts.

**Subject area** (also called content area): The domain of knowledge or skills in an academic program. In American secondary schools, these typically are: English Language Arts, science, social studies, modern world languages, visual and performing arts, as well as some specialized courses, such as engineering or technology.

**Assumptions**

This case study rests on several assumptions that must be acknowledged before moving forward. First, as mentioned before, is the assumption that content knowledge acquisition is integral to the act of composing in disciplinary classrooms. As our understanding of reading and writing has been shaped by the idea that both involve steps
that are nonlinear and recursive, the distinction between reading and writing can be blurred. Therefore, educators should focus much more on the meaning-making that must be engaged in both, an especially effective framework for multimodal composing, where reading and writing are less distinct, with tasks often involving both at once. Importantly, while creating a composition (either alphabetic or visual), the learner is often also engaged in acquiring knowledge through the act of reading texts that are used to inform their composition.

Related is the idea that meaning making of visual texts is as demanding of a cognitive task as meaning making alphabetic texts through the act of reading and writing. It is clear that given the prominence of written text over visual or multimodal texts in the school curriculum as it stands today, this assumption is not universal. We have a long history of privileging some texts over others that can be traced way before the introduction of digital literacy tools, but “affective aspects of human beings and practices are not discrete from other cognitive activities” (Kress & Van Leeuwen, 1996, p. 40).

That is, rules and form can be applied to visual texts just as much as they can be applied to alphabetic texts. These rules and forms become the mechanism by which students begin to make meaning from all texts. Therefore, just as reading and writing are cognitively challenging processes that involve understanding rules and context, so, too, is visual literacy, but this understanding is not universally acknowledged in schools.

Another important assumption is the centrality of inquiry to learning. As the following chapters review the theoretical framework that shapes this study, I simply state that an underlying assumption is that inquiry is a goal that can be achieved in many ways
in the classroom but should be central to the composing and reading processes. This means that careful studies of questions as they are asked, answered, and encouraged in the classroom become indicators of learning as it is happening.

Finally, there is the assumption that ELA classrooms have different literacy demands than those in a history class. While the role of English classrooms has often included a support of the reading, research, and reading skills students engage in their other content area classrooms, there are distinct demands in this disciplinary field. This is an important assertion for me to make, one that I make passionately in part because I am concerned that cross-curricular work between English classrooms and other fields, such as programs that declare a STEM (science, technology, engineering and math focus) focus, sometimes assumes the job of an English teacher is one of support of reading and writing important to the partnering disciplinary classroom. Viewing English as having distinct literacy demands acknowledges the importance of what happens within the ELA classroom and means that any cross-curricular work should include attention to the curricular demands of the English classroom and acquisition of skills central to those demands.

**A Statement of Significance**

When looking at literacy standards in K–12 curriculum as content, instructional and assessment methods, and requirements for teacher certification, one can clearly see that these are socially constructed ideas that reflect the values and society of the time and influence later notions of literacy (Myers, 1996; Monaghan & Saul, 1987; D. P. Resnick & Resnick, 1977). As one educator wrote, “with changed standards come changed
estimates of the adequacy of a population’s literacy” (D. P. Resnick & Resnick, 1977, p. 370). Perhaps this time of Common Core implementation feels so pressurized precisely because of the change it has ushered.

Early in my research on disciplinary literacy, I read an article by Emily Rainey and Elizabeth Moje (2013) called “Building insider knowledge: Teaching students to read, write and think within ELA and across the disciplines.” I found this article impactful, because it spoke to the question so many ELA educators had about their role in today’s classroom. What, for example, is the role of an English classroom in an age when end of course state tests in the discipline require students to make an argument about antiquities in foreign countries? What is the relationship between the work of this discipline and the others in our schools? In setting the stage for their article, Rainey and Moje (2012) suggested that “too few people are learning deep, sophisticated and critical literary practices” (p. 72) and suggested that English teachers have a special role in developing those skills. I found this both affirming and challenging. As disciplines, literature and rhetoric are steeped in textual practices. Yet, Rainey and Moje were suggesting that simply focusing on those practices is not enough.

In order for students to be able to practice the literacy of each of the disciplines, he or she must understand what is expected within each discipline. This may be somewhat difficult in English because ELA literacy practices seem so transcendent: It is not unusual for students to engage in both literary and informative literacies in an English classroom. In the study of literature and rhetoric, disciplinary literacy demands focus on the craft of writing, and this is why what happens in ELA classrooms can support the
work of others, because in order to meet this discipline-specific goal students “need to learn the practice and value of close reading” (Rainey & Moje, 2013, p. 76). Learning the practice and value of close reading is a skill that can be used in all other disciplines: By helping students attend to the text, teachers of ELA can truly support literacy across the disciplines. However, it is clear that this can only happen when teachers make it overtly known the differences between close reading in one field versus another. In history, for example, a student’s close reading will focus on elements very different than an English classroom.

In contemplating the article, I considered many things all at once. First, I found tremendous pride in their articulation of what ELA can bring to a student’s literacy, but also the demands it places on the ELA teachers. In order to understand and compare the reading and writing demands of the English classrooms, students need to know how they differ from other fields, such as history. This requires a partnership between disciplines that schools often find difficult to forge. With limited time and department-wide structures, there are real barriers to helping students understand how each discipline functions. Second, Rainey and Moje (2013) were discussing reading. What about the role of writing? I kept wondering how composing is different in English than other disciplines, and how writing collaboration across disciplines might help students develop a keener understanding of those differences.

I turned to the Common Core State Standards for some guidance, and found the definition of informational/explanatory texts helpful. The standards state that such writing conveys information accurately to “increase reader’s knowledge of a subject, to
help readers better understand a procedure or process, or to provide readers with an enhanced conception of a concept” (National Governor’s Association, 2010, p. 23). I began to consider the role of an ELA classroom in meeting this goal as well. Again, just as teachers are uniquely situated in the teaching of texts because working with texts is the very essence of our discipline, writing is something that is central to our discipline. Harnessing the power of the writing process is important in an English classroom, but I suspect there are important ways that we can help students engage in that process in a manner that helps them to see the differences between the demands in an English classroom and those in other disciplines. This, again, requires a conversation between our discipline and the others. Such conversations are only beginning, and I felt like there is a real need for careful study that explores the relationship between ELA and other disciplines.

Perhaps one reason this change seems so monumental could be that it comes at a time when how we perceive the written text has changed so much. In 2009, the International Reading Association (which has since renamed itself the International Literacy Association to acknowledge how literacy has evolved) approved a position paper that recognized the role of technology in literacy practice. Internet and technologies require new social skills, including online collaboration, for effective use. In the statement, the IRA called these new literacies central to full civic life, recognized the rapidly changing nature of the literacies as the technology changed, and stated the need for educators to understand that literacy practices are often multimodal, multi-faceted and require multiple lenses for the users (International Reading
Association, 2009). In addition, the IRA impelled teachers to explore new instructional modes that prepare students for the literacy practices of today and beyond. Therefore, embedded in the position is an understanding that literacy classrooms, in particular English Language Arts classrooms, have an important role in helping students understand the power of technology to facilitate effective communication and collaboration, and that such practices require careful and purposeful practice as part of a student’s education.

For English teachers, the change has come so quickly, and it must seem that all that we thought we knew about what it means to be an English teacher is in flux. I, for one, never thought that teaching writing could also mean guiding students as they create a short video in support of their reading of Elie Wiesel’s Night (2006). I never considered how social media could be used to establish an authentic audience for an assignment about a Yeats poem. I didn’t think that reading could include looking at how a photograph of 9/11 demonstrates the same fear as Colum McCann’s Let the Great World Spin (2009).

Through my studies, though, I have come to realize that the field of English has always been inherently multimodal, and that struggles to define “what counts” as academic literacy has driven some of the best changes in the field.

The multimodal foundation for the discipline is central because the roots of the discipline can be traced to Aristotle and his work Rhetoric. Composition studies have adapted Aristotle’s ideas of purpose and audience from its original mode (speech) to writing. While Aristotle was talking about public oration, his notion that the genres of rhetoric correspond with the types of hearers inextricably links the audience to message (Aristotle, 2010). Aristotle’s ideas were modified and shaped to help guide theologians
in the early church as they developed a distinct mode of speaking: the sermon. St.
Augustine put a Christian perspective on the discussion of rhetoric, advising of the
importance of eloquence in defense of the truth, for eloquence will win over the audience
and defeat competing false ideas (Augustine, 397). Augustine furthered the notion of
voice and audience by suggesting that the orator must adapt his speech in whatever ways
necessary to help those listening understand the truth, commenting that the orator must
anticipate the questions of his audience and offer his arguments in multiple ways.
Whereas these men were studying the act of public speaking, they both drew distinctions
and connections between public speaking and dialectic, or dialogue. Rhetoric was not
fixed or in isolation, and it is clear that both men understood the importance of drawing
on the literacy practices of the day. For Aristotle, that meant harnessing the beauty of the
language in use of metaphors, for instance. For Augustine, that meant considering what
the audience might need to be able to better understand the message.

Just as the field has always been multimodal, it has nearly always struggled with
the dominance of some forms of texts over others. By the 18th century and Hugh Blair’s
(1783) *Lecture on Rhetoric and Belle Lettres*, the dominance of the written mode is
already seen in his defense of the study of classic literature and poetry as a means of
better morality and citizenship. University schools were largely influenced by Blair’s
ideas, and the early canon and a very narrow definition of academic writing guided a very
specific set of standards for the preparation of university students (Wendell, 1918). What
was once broadly defined by Aristotle by categories of speech (deliberative, forensic, and
epideictic) became a series of rules for composing and a list of appropriate works for
study in preparation for university studies and while in those programs. Therefore, it was not just alphabetic text that mattered; it was only a narrow selection of those texts that were deemed worthy of critical study.

The National Council of Teachers of English (NCTE) was founded in part over tension and discord over that reality. In the case of NCTE, which was founded in 1911, a group of educators came together in protest of the overly stringent college entrance requirements of the time period. On its website the organization quotes the resolution drafted by Andrew Hosic that was passed at the first meeting, in which a call was placed that the National Education Association “create a representative body, which could reflect and render effective the will of the various local associations and individual teachers, and by securing concert of action, greatly improve the conditions surrounding English work” (“NCTE’s History”). Thus this important voice of educators, responsible for the publication of key literacy journals, including *English Journal, Voices in the Middle*, and *College Composition and English* (which are recognized as important professional resources for teachers of English Language Arts), is rooted in a call for a broader and more progressive understanding of what matters in the field of English Language Arts and how literacy should be defined. Despite the forward-looking nature of NCTE, by 1913 teachers of speech seceded from the organization, allowing for the continued privileging of written text over aural compositions (such as music, oral speeches, movies). Cynthia Selfe (2009) said that this separation, which had begun with the belle lettres movement, had far-reaching curriculum effects. “Writing and reading,
for example, became separated from speech in educational contexts and became largely silent practices” (p. 623).

When placing the current conversation in context of the history of the field of English Language Arts, I see that this is an important time, but we are not in unchartered waters. As a field, ELA has adapted and changed to meet the changing needs of society. This study is rooted in that history. It is my hope that it joins in a conversation I believe is both crucial and inevitable: what it means to teach literacy today. For Aristotle, St. Augustine, Janet Emig, or Emily Rainey and Elizabeth Moje, that conversation was both important and fluid. I have tried to identify some of the loudest concerns I hear voiced in the conversation: the need for disciplinary literacy instruction that improves our students’ readiness for the complex world of the future, the prominence of technology in shaping the literacy practices in and out of school, and the relationship English Language Arts has to the other disciplines that shape our students’ education and prepares them for their future. This study tries to give voice to those who are the subject of this conversation, both teachers and students, to help bring light to the changes as they happen.
CHAPTER II
REVIEW OF LITERATURE

The purpose of this chapter is to establish the theoretical framework that informs this study. First, I look at the over-arching ideas of semiotics and social constructivism, theoretical lenses that inform the pedagogical discussions. Then, I provide an overview of representative research in the fields of disciplinary literacy, multimodal composing, and new literacy.

Literacy as a Social Construct

Understanding literacy is much more than understanding the cognitive process that is engaged by a learner. The following section explores the social constructs that shape literacy practices.

Social Constructivism

While constructivism is a learning theory that is grounded in a belief that we construct our own learning of the world around us (Brooks & Brooks, 1999), there are two theories of constructivism: cognitive and social. Both theories are rooted in the belief that learning is a personal process of creating constructs to make meaning through different contexts, and since it is a personal process, it cannot be shared but rather we test the degree to which our constructs are compatible (Savery & Duffy, 1996).

Cognitive constructivism is grounded in the work of John Dewey. In his work *How We Think*, Dewey (1933/1998) stated that tradition, instruction, and experience all contribute to our learning, and people often engage in reflective thought by grounding new learning in what is already known. New learning occurs when an experience is
problematic and a learner must reconcile existing understandings with the experience (Dewey, 1916, 1938). Dewey’s theory, in turn, was a strong complement to the work of Jean Piaget, who theorized that learning happens when an experience cannot be easily assimilated into existing schema, and the learner must make an accommodation (Piaget, 1977; von Glasersfeld, 1989). Cognitive constructivism, therefore, is the focus on the learning processes rather than the behaviors of a learner (Perry, 1999).

Russian linguist Lev Vygotsky (1997) is credited with expanding the concept of constructivism to include social constructivism, recognizing social and cultural influences in the construction of meaning. Vygotsky identified a zone of proximal development, or the distance between a learner’s actual development and potential development if engaged in thoughtful problem solving through interaction with a more skilled peer. Understandings occur between individuals who have a common interest and whose communication is based on common assumptions when they share ideas and challenges (Gredler, 1997). Words alone do not convey meaning, but they are merely the code for creating that meaning (von Glasersfeld, 1996). Therefore, social constructivists believe we create new understandings by interacting among people with whom we identify. People are constantly learning from those closest to them, such as family and community (F. Smith, 1975).

Comprehending and learning language, for instance, is a natural process done by children before entering school (F. Smith, 1998; von Glasersfeld, 2010). Socio-linguistics theorize language is learned culture because humans, even infants, are born to learn, constantly seeking, selecting, acquiring, organizing, storing, and retrieving
information (F. Smith, 1975). This is never a passive or an accidental process (F. Smith, 1975) and this natural learning is the way that we come to learn how to communicate. Shirley Brice Heath’s (1983) study of how the literacy practices of poor Black children differed from their White counterparts brought an anthropological view of literacy that both exposed how schools value some cultural practices over others, but also complemented the notion that meaning-making of language is embedded in community experience (Heath, 1983). Studying how students practice literacy is a powerful way to consider the link between those skills and the social world in which we live (Barton & Hamilton, 2000). These ideas complicate the notion of literacy, because now teachers must consider not only the underlying reading and writing processes, but the socio-cultural experiences that are central to make meaning through those processes.

How does our experience (or lack of experience) with the content knowledge and literacy practices contribute to our ability to make meaning within the discipline fields? In addition, many social linguists, such as James Paul Gee, posit that while some literacy practices are learned naturally, those that are far-removed from these vernacular practices need to be taught, but such teaching is best done by helping students to relate the academic learning to what is done naturally (Gee, 2004).

A socio-linguistic approach to literacy, therefore, must include considerations of what is being taught in the classroom and for what goals. Ralph Tyler (1949), whose focus on the planning process has influenced modern curriculum writers for the last 70 years, said, “it is what (the student) does that he learns, not what the teacher does” (p. 63). This focus on the student work within the classroom context is important, and from
that focus emerged the idea that the teacher’s role as one of constructing experiences that allow for such learning. Wiggins and McTighe (1998/2003), whose *Understanding by Design* framework has reframed Tyler’s principles of planning, said that a teacher must design tasks that ask students to “theorize, interpret, use or see in perspective what they are asked to learn,” or the content knowledge being taught will only be learned for the purpose of student recall for testing purposes (p. 100). To achieve that sense of purpose, McTighe and Wiggins (1998/2003) centered their planning framework around questions that find power primarily in the power of purpose they provide for a unit or lesson (Wilhelm, 2007). Therefore, frameworks such as this demands an inquiry-approach to teaching and learning.

**Semiotics**

The acknowledgment that writing is more than translating thoughts into written text and that reading is not simply decoding phonetic sounds is rooted in the idea of semiotics. The complexity of meaning-making is something that has been widely acknowledged in writing classrooms for generations. For example, when compositionist Peter Elbow (1973/1998) warned literacy educators of the danger of emphasizing the structure of language over the ideas in writing, he is implying that these two are not the same: Measuring the quality of writing is not the same thing as measuring the quality of thinking.

According to Kress (1997), “Semiotics is the study of the meaning of systems of signs” (p. 6). Developed by theorists Ferdinand de Saussure and Charles Sanders Peirce, semiotics is a theory that explains how humans can allow ideas to be brought to mind
without the need to experience them. For example, a writer does not have to see a dog when writing that word, yet the string of letters written (D-O-G) will bring to mind the idea of dog as she writes. Kress (1997) explained the definition of a sign as “a combination of meaning and form” (p. 6). In a composition classroom, ideas need to be expressed within a certain form; traditionally, classrooms have limited the form to alphabetic text. This explains how students are able to express ideas that are separate from their own experiences, but it also acknowledges the complexities involved in attributing meaning to signs.

This theory does offer a reason why written texts may not be the easiest or most efficient way for students to express their ideas. Peirce posited there are three types of signs: symbol, icon, and index (Dewey, Monnie, & Cordtz, 2007). An icon can be seen as more visual, because it is a sign that stands for an object by resembling and being similar to the object (a diagram or picture, for instance). An index refers to its object by a fundamental link between the sign and its object (an example: a steering wheel may be used to represent driving because of the link between driving and the use of a steering wheel). This requires familiarity with the link (I need to know a steering wheel in order to understand that sign), but it is more concrete than the last type of sign—symbols. Alphabetic texts are one type of symbol, a sign which indicates their object by law, rule, or convention. Because there is no similarity or underlying link between the symbol and the actual object, the sign user can consider signs in unlimited ways. What traditional notions of literacy failed to recognize is the complex and ambiguous work that goes into reading and writing when one considers the theory of semiotics. If the goal is to teach
writing as a series of rules and reading as the act decoding phonetic sounds, then such concerns are secondary to learning the symbol system. However, when the pedagogy becomes more about helping students create constructs from which their learning can be drawn, then understanding the negotiation that must be made as students construct meaning is important. In turn, this opens up the possibility of allowing for multiple signs in the literacy classroom as a means of helping students clarify their own thinking.

What further complicates this process is the acknowledgment that the sign systems are not universal and are context-driven. This idea is derived from systematic functional linguistics, an approach to linguistics that is premised on the idea that semiotic systems are created in order to achieve a function and are centered in the social pressures that function must fill. Halliday wrote, “It is in the semantic options of the textual component that the language comes to be relevant to its environment” (Halliday, 1977, p. 31). These semantic options are adapted to the environment and are, therefore, not fixed. In comparing the literacy experiences of the mid-1900s to the literacy experiences of the new millennium, Harste and Carey (2003) discussed the regular impact of semiotics on literacy. They noted that the study of semiotics has led educators to learn that various cultures introduce their children to literacy in diverse ways. “Literacy, then, from a semiotic point of view, is the ability to use a variety of sign systems in appropriate contexts” (Harste & Carey, 2003, p. 494). This links the understanding of semiotics to the social practices of the learner.
Literacy and Culture

Literacy as a social practice is not a new idea, and its roots are largely anthropological. In her study of language practices of White and Black children, Heath wrote that “features of the cultural milieu affect the ways in which children learn to use language” and set out to study culture as a set of learned behaviors in which “language habits (are) part of that shared learning,” (Heath, 1983, p. 11). Although ELA classrooms have not necessarily replicated real-world communication practices, it is important for educators to understand the practices that affect a student’s understanding of literacy and what it means to be literate. In short, literacy practices are the cultural ways of utilizing language and its symbols—they are “what people do with literacy” (Barton & Hamilton, 2000). Literacy practices are derived from literacy events, or individual occasions in which language is integral to the participant’s interpretation of an event (Heath, 1982). Literacy practice, therefore, is the trends or collections of those practices. Classroom activities are often designed to be literacy events, but it is important that teachers understand the practices that inform and shape those events. In order for those practices to become authentic and help prepare students for the literacy required outside of the classroom walls, they must mimic aspects of real-world literacy practices.

These practices are constantly evolving. Composition theorist Ken Macrorie remarked in 1968 that television was changing the students because

As the television generation, they are not any longer going to suffer learning in grade school that the White House is where the president lives, in junior high what the President’s name is, and in senior high that the White House is on
Pennsylvania Avenue. Many of them have been there, and to the Pentagon as well. (Macrorie, 1968, p. 686)

The influence of television had expanded a student’s experience and changed the way he or she interacted in the world, broadening the signs students had at their disposal as they learned and communicated about the world around them. Likewise, the literate student of the 21st century must be able to “download, upload, rip, burn, chat, save, blog, Skype, IM, and share” (Mullen & Wedwick, 2008, p. 66) and have at their disposal an abundance of tools and contexts for creating. Semiotics suggests that this reality has meant that students have shifted the way they give meaning to signs, as well as the signs that students may use to communicate. In other words, it becomes a powerful pedagogical tool to bring these other sign systems into a student-centered classroom where a teacher is attempting to help students effectively communicate their own ideas and experiences.

If authentic literacy practice mimics real-world situations, it is important to note the real-world literacy events and practices students encounter. For one, a 2015 Pew Research study on social media found 90% of young adults in America used social media, a 78% increase from 2005. From a semiotic view, this is important because the symbol system online differs from those in alphabetic text because digital texts are often non-linear, fluid, and include image, sound, graphics, animated characters linked in hypermedia (Palmeri, 2012), creating a real disconnect between the social practices of learners outside of the classroom and online and academic practices in traditional literacy instruction. Understanding these digital practices and using them in the school setting is
really no different than what literacy educators have always done: become aware of the folk models which place the practices into the social context in which they reside (Street, 1993).

Literacy, therefore, is a social construct that is situated in life experiences. Semiotics and systemic functional linguistics have helped to explain how these experiences shape our use of language: Life experience offers us insight and understandings into the functions and rules of language. These understandings are not universal and are derived from our contexts. Understanding literacy in this way shapes pedagogy, because it requires teachers to explore what practices have already shaped a learner’s understanding of literacy. Because learning and comprehension is naturally required through social interaction, classrooms can be viewed as discourse communities, and teachers must help students see that they belong to that community, valuing prior knowledge while helping to increase the signs and symbols a learner may use to express understanding and create meaning through texts.

**Multimodal Composing**

The following sections explore the relationship between academic understandings of the composing as a process and new forms of digital composing.

**Composing as a Personal Process of Discovery**

Our understanding of writing is tied to a history that has included many modes of composing, and this history has shaped an understanding of the writing process in multimodal compositions. As our understanding of the process of writing has evolved, so have our everyday literacy practices. The influx of digital technologies has offered
options for communicating ideas and information that must be way beyond the scope of early composition theorists. However, the fluidity of what constitutes a composition is nothing new: Aristotle was speaking about public oration, and Augustine was concerned about leveraging the sermon to effectively teach his faith. Yet, we have adapted their ideas about rhetoric into the writing classroom—what they were saying about their own modalities translated into our understanding of writing. Composition as the act of creating something new in writing has been carefully studied, with examination of the cognitive process of a writer and articulation of what makes writing effective. What happens when the author is no longer limited to alphabetic texts? When new literacy practices have shaped students in profoundly different ways? This may mean we have to explore the implications of new literacy practices, but we have been here before, and the history of composition studies suggests it was not an easy or simple task to reconcile the different perspectives. Still, if the English classroom is going to continue to prepare students for the world in which they live and the demands that must be met to live a fully engaged civic and social life, then we must continue to do what we have always done and adapt our curricular and pedagogical approaches to meet those demands and include the new modes of communicating that are developed and are used both inside and outside of the learner’s life in school.

Before we understand how to broaden our notion of composing to include the use of videos, audio, and other nontraditional texts, we must first look what has shaped our understanding of writing and how that understanding has moved beyond the stringent and uniform notions of the 19th century. In an English Journal article on curricular trends
published in 1970, Robert C. Harvey and Robert V. Denby credited two major influences on a more progressive idea of English: The Dartmouth Seminar of 1968, in which 50 leading educators from the U.S. and Britain convened to reconsider the teaching of English, and the Project English, an initiative by NCTE to identify pedagogical shifts in the secondary classroom. “English—by nature human-centered—is well equipped to move away from a narrow, exclusively college preparatory to the more personal” (Harvey & Denby, 1970, p. 1177). This new vision of English centered on the notion that language can help students create a self-concept and meet their own personal potential. The men quoted J. N. Hook, who directed Project English, as having pled for the return of “humaneness, humanness, humanism and humanity” to the English classroom, calling on teachers to move away from the mere assigning and grading of themes (Harvey & Denby, 1970, p. 1178). In seeing writing as a profoundly personal act, educators were free to explore the student’s perspectives, understandings and challenges.

Early adopters of this pedagogical shift saw writing as a process of personal discovery (Elbow, 1973/1998; Macrorie, 1968; Moffett, 1968/1983). The formal and regimented instruction of the past often hindered that discovery, placing too much influence on structure and precision and not enough on the quality of thinking (Macrorie, 1951). These men designed strategies intended to place the writer at the center of the writing class: Peter Elbow (1973/1998) introduced the idea of free-writing that was not corrected by the teacher; Ken Macrorie (1968) advocated for a seminar approach to writing classrooms; James Moffett (1968/1983) spoke of the value of introducing drama and dialogue into the writing classroom. The idea of voice in writing—a nebulous term
that writing teachers often grapple with in their instruction—was central to their arguments for these new approaches because “writing has the advantage of permitting editing. But that’s also its downfall too” (Elbow, 1973/1998, p. 5). Freeing students of the pressure to get the structure of writing down allowed students to explore their own thinking in new ways. This suggests that the men saw value in allowing students to express themselves in oral modes as a way to strengthen their thinking and, therefore, their writing. In fact, the very term voice is borrowed from music, drama, and oration.

It is probably not a coincidence that these reformers came to their insight at a time when the way students communicated and experienced the world was becoming more multimodal. When speaking about his students, Macrorie remarked that students of the television generation, are “not any longer going to suffer learning” that is repetitive and surface level in part because many of them have “been there” (Macrorie, 1968, p. 686). The influence of television had expanded a student’s experience and changed the way he or she interacted in the world. When writing is viewed as a personal act of discovery, this has profound implications in the composition classroom that cannot be ignored. The traditional composition theme had become so removed from that experience that it silenced student voices to the point that it could no longer be recognized as effective communication, but just an academic voice that supplants that of the student’s (Macrorie, 1968).

**Composing as a Process**

Peter Elbow (1973/1998) observed that traditional writing instruction has sequenced the writer’s process as thought first and then writing those thoughts down. His
free-write exercises were intended to reverse that order and allow students to learn what they are thinking through the act of writing. Yet, even though he rejects cognitive theories of writing, his ideas acknowledge that writing involves complex sequencing that is not always linear. James Moffett (1968/1993) called on educators to study writing through the lens of developmental psychology because strict and linear approaches were simply “ignoring the facts of the classroom” (p. 15). By the 1970s, several important researchers were doing just that.

Cognitive theories of writing are premised on the notion that writing “represents a unique mode of learning” (Emig, 1977, p. 7) that is different from talking, listening, and reading. Writing is not just a form of verbal communication placed on paper; it is a process with unique and distinct stages. Flower (1979) recognized that the early stage of writing involves a concept she called “writer-based prose.” In such a stage of composing, the writer is unable to consider the perspectives of his or her reader. In short, the writer is unable to determine if enough information has been relayed for the reader to understand the thought being communicated in the writing. Falling short of the “goal of autonomy, Writer-Based prose is writing whose meaning is still to an important degree in the writer’s head” (Flower, 1979, p. 30). Given the complexities of semiotics, it makes sense that effectively communicating thought to paper becomes the challenging task of any writing assignment. Writing teachers who see writing as a process should not see Writer-Based prose as just a mistake that must be discarded, but rather as a stage that will contain a record of valuable thoughts a writer has on a topic. Secondly, once one has produced Writer-Based prose, one can transform it into Reader-Based prose by taking the
reader’s purpose into account, a process that can be taught and that places value on a
writer’s initial attempts and appropriately defines writing as a process. This does not
mean that the process is linear, but recursive. While writing is goal-oriented, writers are
constantly evaluating what they write in view of those goals. Therefore, writing can be
seen as a series of sub-goals aimed at a higher goal, and advanced writers return to the
higher-level goals “to review and consolidate what has just been learned through
exploring” (Flower & Hayes, 1981, p. 382). Gaining mastery in writing involves
developing the ability to reassess these sub-goals in light of the larger purpose.

Because writing is cognitive, connective, active, and available for review through
changing and editing (unlike talking), it made many theorists consider the importance of
writing as an essential part of learning. Writing as a product is information and
knowledge, but as a process it includes many other sub-processes like planning,
monitoring, drafting, revising, and editing (Emig, 1977). All of these processes are
important skills that develop a student’s abilities in thinking and problem solving.
Therefore, writing is not merely a way to share what is learned; it can be used as a mode
of learning itself. This is one reason that educators view writing as central across
disciplines. Such theories saw significant importance in the use of other modes of
learning, especially dialogue, in the classroom, suggesting that by engaging in other types
of discourse students may be better able to see themselves as writers separate from the
demands and direction of a teacher (Bruffee, 1973). Even when research is focused on
writing alone, the importance of allowing students to practice their thinking and
communicating in other modes is often central to that study. The use of online spaces,
for instance, can help students engage their thinking through different modes. For instance, an online space can support writing if it provides learners with the ability to express, reflect, and share their thoughts and feelings with others, both peers and teachers (Alvarez & Risko, 2010). Even if a teacher’s goal is to strengthen traditional writing, multimodal composing can support that goal.

What is important, however, is that educators acknowledge that multimodal composing utilizes digital tools but still shares the same complexities as alphabetic composition. Like alphabetic composition, multimodal composing allows the students to be discursive and return to the product, a process that is as nonlinear as writing and entails a series of sub-processes that are related to the overall purpose. Like alphabetic composition, multimodal composing is not merely oral speaking; changing modalities presents different challenges and demands on the student. Finally, like alphabetic composition, it is very likely that the social practice of multimodal writing can help students use their composing more effectively by learning to take in the perspective of the audience rather than just the student producer (Palmeri, 2012).

**A Multi-Literacy Pedagogy**

While pedagogy broadened its use of multimodal texts in the last quarter of the 20th century, these were not seen as academic and were not studied seriously. Rather, the goal of the English class remained writing, and the multimodal texts were brought in to support that goal (Selfe, 2009). The incorporation of film, music, and other texts into the classroom was often met with some suspicion. Robert Heilman (1970) saw electronic media as open to question because of the way such content might reduce a student’s
interest in reading due to the more immediate nature of the multimodal texts. While composition teachers continued to make use of oral terms (voice of the writer, tone of an essay, rhythm of sentences), they did so in the service of writing (Selfe, 2009).

As our understanding of language evolved, our pedagogy tended to continue to focus on how to support traditional notions of composition. Social linguistic theory emerged that saw writing and other uses of the language as cultural and driven by social interaction (Everson, 1991). Russian linguist Lev Vygotsky (1997) recognized social and cultural influences in the construction of meaning and identified a zone of proximal development, or the distance between a learner’s actual development and potential development if engaged in thoughtful problem solving through interaction with a more skilled peer. In writing classrooms, these ideas were translated into peer editing (Everson, 1991). Likewise, while speech and writing were linked in Vygotsky’s theories, they were widely used to support new practices, such as freewriting (to allow students to work through the frustrations much as egocentric speech may allow). Vygotsky’s work has immense implications about social literacy practices, but it could be narrowly interpreted merely in support of writing. Computers were seen as a means of facilitating those communities in a writing classroom and helping to support the cognitive process of writing, such as planning and revision (Corbett, 1990).

Classroom practices emerged that were designed to use the other modalities in support of writing. Strategies were employed in composition classes that drew from the visual arts, such as dialogue journals that encouraged students to record thoughts as they create and respond to those thoughts, emphasizing the process of composing is similar to
creation in the arts because it is nonlinear and recursive, with writers needing to continually consider the composition process as they create (Berthoff, Murray, Gere, & Kirby, 1984). Educators drew important parallels between that process and the process of creation so central to visual and performance art, calling for pedagogy of imagination that likens linguistic inventions to art (Berthoff, 1972).

To be sure, there were some who challenged the idea that only written texts held academic value. To these educators, society’s increasing use of multiple media as communication did not negate writing’s importance but developed a need for writers who are able to “draw together” these forms of communication in effective ways (Murray, 1973). Some called for assignments that allowed students to create in these modes because such activities could support student growth (E. Burnett & Thomason, 1974). Others saw the influence visual media, especially television, had as students constructed reality through the vision of beauty depicted on the screen. They called for a new type of literacy—visual literacy—that would allow for a critical approach that “could only be achieved by close examination of individual instances of television discourse with an eye to their specificity, their similarity to and difference from other programs and other visual media” (Shoos, George, & Comprone, 1993). Still others have looked to the ways that language has always incorporated other modes of learning, questioning why the academy has privileged structured written word over emerging genres such as rap music, when we have always understood the power of performance and music in communicating (Smitherman, 1973). Such conversations had deep political implications about power and identity in the classroom. These voices set the stage for a view of literacy that began
to question the assumption that only the written text is worthy of classroom study and clearly set the stage for the vision of the New London Group (1996) and call for teachers to embrace a pedagogy of new literacies. New literacy pedagogy was framed in four ways: situated practice, critical framing, overt instruction, and transformed practice (New London Group, 1996).

Situated practice, which can be reframed as “experiencing” (Cope & Kalantzis, 2009, p. 184) allows the learner to experience the *known*, which are experiences and practices drawn from their own lives which are brought to the learning context, and the *new*, which should be within a zone of intelligibility and safety because of its proximity to lifeworld experiences. The new, however, can be transformative in part because it allows new domains of action and learning to weave with what the learner has already known (Cope & Kalantzis, 2009). Such weaving brings a student back and forth between “what they already knew from their everyday lives at home and the alternative perspectives and more academic skills” (Cazden, 2006, p. 2). This idea is premised on the notion that students already bring vernacular practice from their lives outside of school with them to the classroom, and teachers can use those cultural practices to help bridge the known learning with the new (Gee, 2004). Today, those vernacular practices involve digital literacies that are not seen as academic, such as texting or video game play.

Critical framing allows the learner to ask questions of the socio-cultural contexts and purposes of learning (New London Group, 1996). Such critical framing is increasingly important in a world that is more and more global; which, in turn, transforms
our culture and the way we communicate (Cope & Kalantzis, 2000). One very important question that can drive this pedagogy is an examination of what it means to be literate in this technologically diverse world. It becomes increasingly problematic to consider writing in isolation from the multimodal ensembles in which that writing is embedded; therefore, the very function of writing must be questioned in such contexts web-based applications that are both visually and audio-based (Domingo, Jewitt, & Kress, 2015).

Overt instruction allows the teacher to scaffold the thinking of the learner and allow them to access metalanguage, akin to functional grammar. Metalanguage describes meaning in various forms (New London Group, 1996). The primary purpose of such a metalanguage is to identify and explain differences between texts and relate these to culture and situation in which they work. To do so, teachers must use available designs, the “grammars” of other semiotic systems such as film, photography, or gesture (Cope & Kalantzis, 2000) and scaffold their thinking in ways that provide reflection of purpose and intention. This means that such a pedagogy is not about drills, memorization, or direct transmission of knowledge; rather, it “focuses students on the important features of their experiences and activities within the community of learners” (Cope & Kalantzis, 2000, p. 33).

Finally, a multi-literacy pedagogy allows for transformed practice, in which students recreate learning according to lifeworld experiences that allow learners to apply what is gained from situated practice, critical framing, and overt instruction (New London Group, 1996). This, too, can be reframed, using the term “applying” as part of “Knowledge Processes” (Cope & Kalantzis, 2009, p. 184). Whether applying or
transformed practice, this means that learning is authentic and in relation to the life-world experiences of the learner, and teachers allow learners to engage in “reflective practice” in which they can reflect on what they learn and as a way to meet their own personal goals (New London Group, 1996). Students have access to medium that allow them to apply their learning in ways that can be social and public, such as creating tools and resources for the community. “New forms of communication allow teachers and students to go beyond standardized test preparation and scripted curricula and move schools into using the power of students’ minds and talents to actually do some things,” (Kist, 2013, p. 83).

This has left educators with some pretty broad challenges as they attempt to teach the literacies students will need for academic and social success. One study did demonstrate that time spent in school translated into more effective use of multimodal literacies for academic purposes, demonstrating the important role education can have in developing literacies (Bulger, Mayer, & Metzger, 2014). Still, simply including new, digital contexts into source-based writing did not eliminate the age-old problems of poor source citation and lower-level reporting back rather than construction of new knowledge (Hou, Wang, Lin & Chang, 2015; Sormunen & Lehtio, 2011). Some research has demonstrated the importance of exposure to a vast array of technological tools and literacy contexts (Martin & Lambert, 2015) and the way that this practice has allowed students to seamlessly move between modalities and contexts as they engage in a process of constructing knowledge and composing in non-linear contexts (Turner & Katic, 2009).
All of this has demonstrated the tremendous importance that multimodal literacies should play in the classroom, in part because students need practice engaging in the cognitive processes of meaning-making in these new contexts. The distinction between reading and writing, which has already been blurred, is often further blurred through the fluid environments in which students work. Underlying all of this is a maze of social and cognitive processes that aid the learner as he or she attempts to bring meaning to a text, either alphabetic or multi-modal. This has important consequences on the composing process in the classroom.

Multi-Literacy Pedagogy in the Writing Classroom

With the emergence of technology and access to the Internet in the 1990s, the academic study of composition and rhetoric needed to include the influence of these new medium. This was a difficult and slow process. In a study of major composition journals that spanned 1990-1998, journals such as College Composition and Communication, College English, and Journal of Adult Composition printed only six, four, and six articles about digital or visual texts, respectively (Williams, 2001). While visuals have their grammar/structure and rules and are therefore “equally valid, symbolic and intellectually sophisticated” (Williams, 2001, p. 28), a persistent bias toward verbal rather than visual texts persisted even as possibilities for online creation expanded (Snyder, 1998). As the world has moved into more and more modalities, one is left wondering why our classrooms have been so slow to change.

Perhaps one important reason for this bias could be a misunderstanding of the cognitive demands of these new ways of composing. As discussed earlier, the fluidity of
the online environment challenged old notions of reading as sequential and process-driven (Slatin, 1990). Rejecting the term writing, Slatin wrote that authoring in such an environment is less stable and less permanent, and an author’s rhetorical choices are often more complex in part because online environments allow for “unprecedented amounts of freedom” to represent knowledge (Slatin, 1990, p. 880). Writers using these new medium may be less concerned with the gadgets and possibilities of the technology and more interested in literacy as an “inherently social practice” (Kist, 2005, p. 5). In addition, teachers need to recognize the complex process of meaning-making moving beyond traditional texts (or even, for that matter, digital alphabetic texts). Because visual literacy has largely been subsumed by verbal text, Kress and Van Leeuwen (1996) argued that multimodal composing was a threat to traditional notions of literacy even though “affective aspects of human beings and practices are not discrete from other cognitive activities” (p. 40). Such composing is not without structure and form, and visual grammar is just as complex as oral grammar in part because it is culturally specific and not universal, just like its verbal counterpart. Signs are not arbitrary in any mode; semiotic potential is determined by the resources available for a particular context (Harste & Carey, 2003). Therefore, just as reading and writing are cognitively challenging processes that involve understanding rules and context, so, too, is visual literacy, but this understanding is not universally acknowledged in schools.

It is true that new modes of learning have been created through technology, but this does not have to mean that old ones have become obsolete (Snyder, 1998). Rather, the teacher must find ways to bind one form to another and see them in relationship to
each other. Snyder uses the example of handwriting versus printing: with the advent of printing, teachers developed ways to help students discern which context was appropriate for which form of writing. Therefore, “we need theories of electronic literacies that are dynamic, critical and reflexive” (Snyder, 1998, p. xviii). For example, an outright rejection of hypertext is just as damaging as widespread belief that it is always superior. Instead, hypertext’s potential should be examined (Snyder, 1998).

One reason incorporating new literacies and multimodal composing in high school is so challenging may be the fluidity of classroom space in a digital age, where binaries such as global/local are not enough in our digital world (C. Burnett & Merchant, 2011). This means that high school students, whose world is opening as they mature through experience and connections made both in person and digitally, will use multimodal composing as both a means to produce for the classroom and to connect to others outside of it, all while meeting the demands of the teacher for an assignment. This type of open classroom is new to a writing teacher and has profound implications for understanding of purpose and audience. Determining how to integrate the tools of connection in ways that meet academic demands is challenging. However, writing teachers cannot merely employ those textual practices without noting the contexts in which they are produced—blogging when nobody else is reading the posts does little to integrate a student’s literacy practices into the writing classroom, for instance. Teachers, therefore, need to acknowledge the role of multimodality in meaning making and make explicit instruction on how we convey meaning in those modes. Classrooms must allow for experimentation, and teachers have to be open to unexpected directions (Hobbs, 2013)
and collaboration. This involves a new type of management for teachers, one that allows teachers to help students achieve greater critical understanding for how digital texts position self and others (C. Burnett & Merchant, 2011). As educators preparing students for the demands of the 21st century, teachers find themselves in new and old roles, including design consultants, resource managers, and co-learners while exploring how our assumptions and beliefs must be adjusted in this changing landscape (Lapp, Moss, & Rowsell, 2012).

But calls for change are evident. In a position paper approved in 2005, the National Council of Teachers of English (NCTE) recognizes that “integration of multiple modes of communication can enhance or transform the meaning of the work beyond illustration and decoration” and called on teachers to integrate multiple modes of literacy into their curriculum. The paper linked the current discussion of collaboration through technology to what “teachers of English/Language arts already have,” such as dramatic production. Due to the complexity of multimodal work, the paper goes on to argue that teachers need to make assessment criteria clear, as the difficulty of grading such work may prevent teachers from attempting multimodal literacies. Looking to the classroom/life connection, the statement calls on teachers to explore multimodal literacies in order to keep students from finding school irrelevant, and to help students gain technical and problem-solving skills, which they will need in the real world. Lastly, the position paper discusses “emphereal nature” of information in the digital age, calling on teachers to help students navigate the ethical issues of ownership, plagiarism, and

The shift away from text-only literacy instruction is also evident in the Common Core State Standards (National Governor’s Association, 2010). This has had a profound effect on how teachers teach writing. For instance, the 6th writing standard for 9–10 grade include the statement that students “use technology, including the Internet, to produce, publish, and update individual or shared writing products, taking advantage of technology’s capacity to link to other information and to display information flexibly and dynamically.” This statement is one that built off of the earlier standards, such as the 4th grade writing standard which states

With some guidance and support from adults, use technology, including the Internet, to produce and publish writing as well as to interact and collaborate with others; demonstrate sufficient command of keyboarding skills to type a minimum of one page in a single sitting.

Clearly, teaching writing with all ages and in all stages involves the regular use of technology, the inclusion of collaboration and interactive practices that reflect the digital practices students engage in out of school and will need in both academic and civic life. That is to say, the CCSS have acknowledged the role new literacies must play in our classrooms.

The relationship between these new literacies and discipline work is one that is on-going and important. Surely these cultural changes have shifted the work of the disciplines. In fact, even in penning the fulcrum text on new literacies in 1996, the New
London Group acknowledged the important changes to work and academic life. I take a careful look at the intersection between literacy, both the new and traditional, and discipline work, a term called disciplinary literacy.

**New Literacies**

The following section further explores the view of new literacy practices as social constructs.

**New Literacies as Social Practice**

In 1996, a group of 10 literacy scholars from Great Britain and the United States gathered to create what has become the seminal text in the study of 21st century literacy skills, “A Pedagogy of Multi-literacies” (New London Group, 1996). This manifesto of reform discussed the role of the teacher as designer of learning in a digital world. In this view, the classroom was not a static environment and the ultimate goal is not to teach specific literacy practices, but to give students the skill to engage in new literacies as they emerged; that is, because technologies were emerging, teachers were not teaching a specific skill (such as how to blog), but a set of skills and the ability to adapt those skills to new, digital environments as these emerge. Establishing a semiotic framework, the authors wrote that “meaning-making is an active and dynamic process, and not something governed by static rules” (p. 72). Ultimately, literacy classrooms helped students access a *metalanguage* that “describes meaning in various realms” (p. 77). Essentially, The New London Group’s (1996) writing is a call to action for the creation of new learning spaces centered on youth culture and new media and literacies (Hull, 2003). The call is
critical because “the language arts curriculum must adjust to incorporate evolving definitions of literacy” (Kinzer & Leander, 2003, p. 547).

The conceptualization of these new literacies has been ongoing since 1996, and some scholars have looked at literacies as a set of social practices, whereas others have looked at the cognitive processes of multiple literacies. In the preface to the *Handbook of New Literacies Research*, Coiro et al. (2008) suggested that the study of this field is too new to be tightly defined. The authors drew parallels between this emerging literacy specialization and the rigorous study of reading that consumed the field in much of the 20th century. However, they went on to suggest that the speed with which this has occurred is unprecedented. “No previous technology for literacy has been adopted by so many, in so many places, in such a short period of time, with such profound consequences” (p. 3). This can be seen by the creation of two camps of scholars—new literacy versus New Literacy Studies. While NLS (uppercase) is largely concerned with the social practices of these literacies, it often overlaps with research on the psycholinguistic and cognitive processes in new literacy studies (lowercase), making certain distinctions problematic. Throughout the rest of the study, I use the term new literacy studies (lower case) to indicate a broader view of the field.

New literacy research can be viewed as a push “toward an understanding of both literacy and technology as social practices” (Hull, 2003, p. 547). Some research on social practice and new literacy has set out to look at what practices may be shared among cultures. What emerges is a complex set of practices that demonstrates the often competing influences, including race, socio-economic, religious and school cultures (Hull
& Schultz, 2002). Others have explored how current adolescent literacy practices are natural extensions of past practices designed to help members of a group connect to form a community (Boyd, 2014).

This view of new literacy as social practice has allowed researchers to carefully study specific groups of people. For instance, Elizabeth Moje (2000) studied how marginalized youth valued and used literacy to communicate, form and express personal identities, and make meaning within their world. For these youth, the use of these forms of literacy held more value than traditional, in-school literacy practices. Rebecca Black (2009) studied English Language Learners’ use of fan fiction websites, noting that the new technologies offer ELLs valuable contexts and relationships to practice their emerging language. James Gee’s (2003) controversial study of the practices of video game playing has brought to light the complex literacy practices gamers employ. His work explores how personal identity and social practices are central to learning. He argued that students need time to reflect both on the cultural models and their own practices within those models, including the learning that they do.

This theoretical lens demands that teachers remain aware of the practices that infuse a student’s life outside of school as well as within it. As Lemke (2006) stated: “As a result, in the course of daily life many people make meanings and experience feelings not just in the immediate physical spaces of our ecological environment, but in the virtual semiotic expansion of that life, especially multimedia” (p. 10). Within the pedagogical framework of new literacies, therefore, a teacher is asked to design the classroom in a way that prepares students to effectively communicate within these digital networks,
perhaps by creating classroom networks or asking students to publish to existing networks outside of school, allowing for reflection and refinement and employing the literacy skills needed for full participation in these digital social networks.

Additionally, technologies have transformed the notion of authorship to include both creating and reproducing in ways that juxtapose and combine semiotic systems. Hull (2003) explored how the demands of representation differ from those of traditional literacies, especially looking at how the notion of authorship empowers students to see their worlds as changeable and themselves as agents of change (a new take on Freire’s [2014] *Pedagogy of the Oppressed*). Thus, a scholar of new literacies must be willing to cast a wide lens in his or her study of these emerging literacy demands, using insights from other disciplines (e.g., communication, visual arts, ethnography) to develop pedagogy that is truly transformative.

While offering new ways of exploring and creating, multimedia classrooms also allow for new ways of social interaction by collaborating and facilitating dialogue. The ways technology can be used to enhance collaboration is limited only by an educator’s imagination. Literacy classrooms, with multimedia, Socratic dialogues, scaffolding and coaching, role-playing, simulations, story-telling, case studies, and a host of other instruction design strategies offer a rich environment for collaboration and situated literacy practices in which collaboration is key (Wilson, 1997). These all offer ways to support a pedagogy that is centered on dialogue and social practice.

One important aspect of new literacy studies is how these new sign systems change or reinforce existing power structures in the classroom. This is important because
language is used in many ways and has multiple effects on the people who discourse with it. “Language serves a great many functions in our lives. Giving and getting information is by no means the only one” (Gee, 2014, p. 2). Language, then, allows us to not only say things, but also to be and do things. While language conveys meanings, the meanings we convey have been shaped by the identities we have developed in part through our language and by the actions we have taken through the language we use. New literacy scholars explore how this is true when the language we use is conveyed digitally rather than traditionally, and critical research is an important area of research that explores how these new medium shape (or limit) the identities we create through the use of language.

**New Literacies as Cognitive Processes**

This is not to suggest that new literacy scholars are not also concerned with the cognitive processes that must be engaged as learners make meaning of digital texts, both in their writing and as they read. To a large degree this study supports both a socio-constructivist and a psycho-linguistic view of new literacy: literacy as a taught practice that relies on cognitive work as meaning-making is happening.

The notion of writing as a cognitive process was first introduced by Flower and Hayes in the 1970s, and this has far-reaching consequences in writing pedagogy. By the 1980s, researchers began challenging traditional notions of how reading and writing relate. They questioned models that saw reading as decoding and writing as encoding messages, instead studying reading as a complex meaning-making system with underlying processes all building to a goal (Tierney & Pearson, 1983). Much like writing, then, viewing reading in this cognitive model means one must acknowledge that
reading involves steps that are both nonlinear and recursive. This starts to blur the
distinctions between reading and writing and focuses much more on the meaning-making
that must be engaged in both, an effective framework for multimodal composing, where
reading and writing are less distinct, with tasks often involving both at once. So,
cognitive theories of reading and writing may begin to help explain the processes
involved in the semiotic work of new literacies, but such work needed to acknowledge
that digital texts “require skills and abilities beyond those required for the comprehension

Research into the reading processes of online (which involves screen reading and
includes hypertexts and links that are often multimodal) and offline reading (which is
print-based) has uncovered strategic approaches readers engage in during the
meaning-making process online that differ from those done with print texts (Afflerbach &
Cho, 2009). The “dynamic nature” of online contexts, with the pairing of text and
images, sounds and video, involve multiple layers and uncover distinct patterns of
cognitive processing (Vogler et al., 2013, p. 213). At the same time, new literacies often
make affordances that change the process and make it both more collaborative and more
public. Thus, creating and meaning-making with these new literacies is less isolated and
less stable than the traditional counterparts in reading and writing, for authorship and
meaning are bound up with semiotic, social, and critical meanings that interrelate with
one another (Winters, Belliveau, & Sherritt, 2009). Therefore, in order to understand
multimodal composing and reading, one must consider digital reading and writing when
trying to understand the processes of both.
Further, this research into digital reading processes has demonstrated that the nonlinear nature of hyperlinked reading demands complex decision-making by the reader. Sophisticated readers online then must constantly assess if the text they are looking at is relevant to the goal, select texts that contribute to the construction and meaning, and create paths that help to achieve that meaning (Cho & Afflerbach, 2015). This has meant that the Internet does not merely require readers to apply what they know about printed text to the Internet, for online reading requires more flexibility in thinking (Coiro, 2011). As a result, offline reading achievement does not automatically translate into online achievement. In addition, while prior knowledge of the topic was helpful in offline reading, such knowledge was less helpful online, where the reading context requires flexibility and is constantly changing (Coiro, 2011). And what constitutes online reading is itself constantly evolving; for instance, the role of touch and movement in the construction of knowledge is not yet defined in this age of touch-screen reading on such devices as IPads or other tablets (Simpson, Walsh, & Roswell, 2013).

While the research into digital and online reading is just beginning, research into new writing and composing contexts seems even less developed. Research has posited that these new composing platforms have supported the recursive nature of the writing process, allowing writers to critically engage in planning and drafting stages in nonlinear ways and as needed while they compose (Bogard & McMackin, 2012). Also, the new literacy contexts have made less abstract the notion of “audience,” providing a wide variety of public contexts for composing, often even during the early planning and drafting stages (Hall, 2015). The cultural models of writing have been expanded to
include digital content such as video games, often unknowingly influencing a student-writer’s choices and preferences (Harushimana, 2008). New literacy studies, therefore, have strong implications into the discipline classrooms, and those implications offer unique challenges to the ELA classroom.

New literacies studies have emerged in response to the rapidly changing literacy practices both in and out of classrooms. Drawing on socio-linguistic and cognitive theories, new literacy studies are premised on the concepts of semiotics; that is, technology has expanded the sign systems available to learners. It is important to recognize that these new practices are not merely digital versions of traditional literacy practices; the cognitive processes learners use while shaping meaning in a digital context are different from those used in traditional texts. Therefore, new literacies demand teachers to help students develop meta-understandings of the role of language in the digital world. These understandings transcend the medium and allow learners to adapt to the new environments as they are created through technology advancement.

**Disciplinary Literacy**

The following section explores the nature literacy practices specific to individual disciplines, an important concept in secondary literacy education.

**Literacy as Public Policy**

In 2010, when the National Governor’s Association introduced “an integrated model for literacy,” that included literacy standards not just for English classrooms, but also for content area classes, including social studies, sciences, and technology (National Governor’s Association, 2010). As has always been the case, looking at literacy
standards through a cultural lens is very telling about that culture. This is because study of curriculum’s content, instructional and assessment methods, and requirements for teacher certification, reveal socially constructed ideas of literacy that reflect the values and society of the time and influence later notions of literacy (Monaghan & Saul, 1987; Myers, 1996; Resnick & Resnick, 1977). As one educator wrote, “With changed standards come changed estimates of the adequacy of a population’s literacy” (Resnick & Resnick, 1977, p. 370).

For instance, early in American colonial history, reading instruction had two simple goals: to prepare people for the roles in life and train them to read the Bible (Kallus & Ratliff, 2011; Monaghan & Saul, 1987; Myers, 1996). However, as our economy moved from home to industrial work, 19th century immigration resulted. Literacy was now needed to help to standardize the culture and impose discipline (Monaghan & Saul, 1987; Myers, 1996). Early references to the concept of content area reading can be seen at this time, such as in White’s The Elements of Pedagogy (1886). In this, the author delineated between drill and knowledge books, but acknowledged the distinction can be problematic. Take a drill book in mathematics, he suggested. A student needs to be able to apply his knowledge of reading to conduct the math drill. White continued to emphasize the need for recitation, claiming “no chasm between oral reading and book study” (p. 149) and referring to fifth grade as a critical year for transitioning students from oral learning to book learning. The need for standardization drove the literacy instruction of the time, even within the subject areas. The concept of
literacy is rooted in the needs of society, and how we measure literacy is, therefore, a reflection of those needs.

The modern emphasis of reading for information probably has its roots in the technological advances that dominated the 20th century (Myers, 1996). Hence, it followed that more and more attention must be paid to the mechanics of reading, to the testing of reading, and to the methods by which reading was taught. Title One Elementary and Secondary Education Act generated locally created readiness guarantees, and an influx of “research-based” reading instruction ( “School Promises Reading Success,” 1970) and standardized testing was developed as a means of measuring a school’s outcomes (Moore et al., 1983). By 1983, in the National Commission on Excellence in Education report, “A Nation at Risk,” commissioned by President Ronald Reagan, concerns mounted over whether teachers had discipline-area knowledge, especially in math and science field. Through the end of the 20th century, emphasis was placed on systemic reforms that included reading initiatives and guarantees for elementary schools (L. Blair, 1999). Pressure on literacy programs mounted with the passage of the No Child Left Behind Act in 2002 (technically a reauthorization of the Elementary and Secondary Education Act of 1965), which laid out stronger accountability measures, including a reading and math guarantee by 2014 (Diorio, 2015). Policy makers looked to early reading instruction as the answer to poor reading achievement, establishing Reading First funding to identify students at risk of reading failure and elementary teacher professional development in reading instruction (Executive Summary of NCLB, 2004).
Within five years of the act, policy makers and educators were concerned that these reforms were not translating into improvements in secondary schools, despite stringent accountability requirements and funding for elementary literacy instruction (Hoff & Cavanagh, 2007). With fears that poor reading achievement in secondary schools may hinder the nation’s ability to participate in global markets, a group of education and industry leaders formed the Common Core State Standards initiative. They worked backwards, looking at college and career readiness and building standards around those skills (Common Core State Standards Initiative, 2014). Because of the increasing complexities in work and civic life, the concept of literacy was changing and reflected a much more demanding notion of what constituted literacy (Myers, 1996). Reading and writing for information gained new relevancy, resulting in a new area for literacy research: disciplinary literacy, a model of literacy that emphasizes the “specialized knowledge and abilities possessed by those who create, communicate and use knowledge within the disciplines” (Shanahan & Shanahan, 2012, p. 7).

**Early Literacy Instruction in the Disciplines**

Disciplinary literacy has its roots in developmental theories of learning that emerged in the late 19th and early 20th centuries. Developmentalists such as G. Stanley Hall and Arnold Grell looked at patterns of growth for children, and discovered that children at various stages of development adopted various methods of coping to the world around them (Moore et al., 1983). Moreover, developmentalists saw reading as sets of interrelated skills that differed with task and text (Gray, 1939). Leveled reading programs were developed that approached reading as a recursive skill; while such graded
programs existed prior to the 20th century, the developmentalists shifted expectations for
the reader based on developmental stages (Moore et al., 1983). Between the 1890s and
1910, research into the basic process of reading surged as educators came to understand
reading as a process (Venezky, 1977). While many of Edmund Burke Huey’s (1908)
notions of reading that have been disproven, his theory that linked thinking to reading
proved to be a prescient idea that helped to shape later cognitive theories of reading
(Walczyk et al., 2014).

This is not to suggest that public policy, which helped to spur the creation of
standardized tests, always stood in stark contrast to this more individual, process-oriented
approach to literacy: In fact, standardized tests, which asked students to read a passage
and complete tasks related to that reading on the spot, may have ushered in the first time
that students were asked to derive meaning on their own from what they read (Resnick &
Resnick, 1977). But this high level of literacy, which demands far more of the reader
than previous historical notions of literacy did, may very well be why some perceive
literacy as a crisis in our country. An alternative interpretation could simply be that
disciplinary literacy (and other current approaches to literacy) reflect the very real need
for today’s students to be able to understand and communicate effectively in increasingly
complex and sophisticated ways and with texts that are equally as challenging.

The emphasis on meaning-making within the act of reading established reading to
learn pedagogy and practices that are the foundation for later content reading pedagogy
(Moore et al., 1983). Early researchers saw reading as a complex act that involved
cognitive demands that differed with structure, content, and reader mindset and involved
balancing these demands in order to bring meaning to the text (Mead, 1915; Thorndike, 1917). Studies in the early 20th century began to attempt to determine the relationship between content area achievement with reading success, with early studies demonstrating a high correlation between overall academic achievement and reading ability (Moore et al., 1983). Thus, even as we were coming to understand what goes into the act of reading, we were also coming to see it as important for content area learning.

By 1941, Gray routinely included the study of content area reading in his broader discussion of reading, a result of interest in content area reading he dated back to the 1920s (Gray, 1941/1984). Early research pointed to some important factors in supporting student growth in content area reading, including:

- Determining whether the task involved with the reading would be better suited to intensive reading (such as basic knowledge acquisition) or extensive (such as studying to see patterns or connections)
- Training teachers adequately in the content area concepts related to the reading
- Increasing student vocabulary meaning so that a wider meaning is understood
- Giving students adequate background information to comprehend the content area reading being done (Gray, 1941/1984).

Literacy experts were coming to understand that different types of reading made different demands of the reader, noting that success in one area is no guarantee of success in all (Fay, 1954). What emerged, then, are two early approaches to content area reading: a direct instruction of skills (such as reading a line graph) that was taught regardless of
whether the current instruction required it, or a functional skills approach (such as teaching the line graph when such a graph was needed for the upcoming assignment) in which students taught the skills necessary for completing a task as that task is being assigned (Moore et al., 1983). Harold L. Herber, who wrote the first content area reading book *Reading in the Content Area* in 1970, stated that while teacher flexibility is key, designing lessons so that students practice reading skills in engaging, on-demand ways (much like the functional skills approach) will “help students learn to learn to set and accomplish specific purpose” adding that such structure will aid in student discovery, recall and use of important ideas (Herber, 1967, p. 14). The question of where to place the locus of instruction, embedded in content area demands or as a set of skills taught separately, remains important to the discussion of disciplinary literacy today.

**A Complex View of Meaning-Making**

What may be the key to understanding the limitations of past and current education policy may be how we have come to understand the demands of literacy overall. By the 1970s, researchers were beginning to see that writing involved a series of processes that were oriented to a single goal (Emig, 1977; Flower, 1979; Flower & Hayes, 1981). As this view of writing took root, researchers challenged traditional notions of reading and its relation to writing. They questioned models that saw reading as decoding and writing as encoding messages, instead exploring reading as a complex meaning-making system with underlying processes that all build to a cohesive goal (Tierney & Pearson, 1983). Much like writing, then, viewing reading in this cognitive model means one must acknowledge that reading involves steps that are both nonlinear
and recursive. Reading is not a single process that can be adapted to different contexts; rather, it is a series of component processes, each of which can be studied in isolation (Rayner & Pollatsek, 1994). This view of reading has far-reaching implications when considering disciplinary literacy skills, as the process of reading itself remains quite complex. In addition to this cognitive view of reading, socio-cultural views emerged that posited the idea that the process of reading and writing is embedded in our experiences and cultural practice (Everson, 1991).

As pressures mounted on schools to provide a rigorous education for all, researchers began to explore how the higher-order thinking skills necessary to meet the literacy demands related to typical literacy pedagogy. What emerged is an understanding that failure to cultivate aspects of higher ordered thinking and instead focus on lower-order skills was a likely source of learning difficulty (Resnick, 1987). This is because making sense of a written text involves a combination of what a reader knows, what the texts says, and general processes (such as making inferences, drawing connections or noting text structure) to construct meaning (Resnick, 1987). In doing this, the learner is creating abstract representations of the text, adding some information while ignoring others in order to reconcile the various elements of understanding. Four types of knowledge, therefore, are needed to construct such understandings: linguistic (knowledge of the words); topical (knowledge of the subject of the text); rules of inference; and conventional rhetorical structure (Resnick, 1987). What emerges is an understanding of reading comprehension that suggests that the complex tasks often reserved for older or more capable readers (such as analyzing a text and making arguments about it) are
actually the exact skills needed for comprehension; therefore, skills-based approaches do little to help struggling readers advance in their ability.

Socio-linguistics have, in turn, looked carefully at how the schooling approaches may create barriers to learning of this type. Programs that separate the act of reading from the process of meaning making may do little to help students learn to comprehend (even if they may help them to physically read what is on the page). This is especially problematic because children naturally engage in higher-ordered thinking skills outside of school, such as during game play. “So what is it about schools that transforms children who are good at learning . . . into children who are not good at learning?” (Gee, 2004, pp. 8-9). Shirley Brice Heath’s (1983) study of how the literacy practices of poor Black children differed from their White counterparts brought an anthropological view of literacy that both exposed how schools value some cultural practices of others, but also complemented the semiotic notions of meaning-making as embedded in community experience (Heath, 1983). Studying how students practice literacy is a powerful way to consider the link between those skills and the social world in which we live (Barton & Hamilton, 2000). These ideas complicate the notion of literacy within the disciplines, because now teachers must consider not only the underlying reading and writing processes, but the socio-cultural experiences that are central to make meaning through those processes. How does our experience (or lack of experience) with the content knowledge and literacy practices contribute to our ability to make meaning within the discipline fields?
This may be the key to why earlier government policy has failed to bring results: Such policy saw early reading instruction as the “vaccination” from later problems but did not account for the way cognitive demands change for students as they move into content area reading and literacy (Shanahan & Shanahan, 2008). This has meant that the lower-level strategies employed in the early grades will do little to aid students as they negotiate reading in a subject area in high school. With an increasing understanding of the relationship between literacy practices and discourse communities, policy makers may want to consider how each discipline area classroom can be seen as a separate discourse community, with differing literacy demands. At the same time, because students are merely novices in content area discourse, schools must do more to explicitly teach them how these demands shift from discipline to discipline (Collin, 2014). Semiotics and systemic functional linguistics suggests that sign systems are culture-dependent; therefore, viewing disciplines as a discourse culture and helping students to “join” those communities may help students to meet the demands of those disciplines. Elizabeth Moje (2007) wrote that “sharp divisions among the subject areas are most obvious when children leave elementary school setting and enter secondary settings,” in part because of the “slicing up” of the secondary school day into different subject matters, a practice that dramatically heightens disciplinary divisions and complicates the process of teaching disciplinary literacy (p. 3). Thus, the secondary setting has unique challenges that need to be addressed when teaching content area literacies.
Content Area Literacy

By the end of the 20th century, reading and writing in the content area, or content-area literacy, was established pedagogy. Largely focused on creating strategies that will be applied to various content area classes, this pedagogical lens is built on the idea that there are certain goals that must be reached in all reading—constructing meaning, making sense of the text, and questioning the author (Vacca, 2002). Content-area literacy acknowledges that the demands of literacy shift in high school and attempts to meet the concern that students receive little to no instruction on reading and writing strategies by offering teachers strategies to support literacy in the content areas (Vacca, 1998). Such a view saw the lack of purposeful instruction of content area literacy as the likely reason test scores remain flat and student’s perception of writing is largely one-dimensional and reflecting the demands of different English assignments but not connecting writing to content area learning (Vacca, 2002). Introducing reading and writing strategies into the content area classrooms can help to strike a balance: ebbing the concerns of “learned helplessness” by which struggling readers simply wait for the teacher to tell them the content they cannot get through their own literacy practices and supporting these readers as they attempt to make meaning and think critically with a text (Vacca, 2001). Essentially, this approach offers ways for teachers to support the cognitive demands of literacy in the classroom.

The key component of a strategies approach to content-area literacy is its emphasis on teaching cognitive skills that support meaning making. Herber promoted the idea that teaching cognitive strategies can help students make sense of texts in content
area classrooms, and he was one of the first to call focus on reading and writing for information (Moore et al., 1983). Later strategies, often called reading across the curriculum, attempted to harness the social contexts of the classroom in ways that linked classroom skills to the social world of the classroom, allowing students to access background knowledge, work together in collaborative meaning-making, and reconsider the knowledge in new and different modes (Barton & Hamilton, 2000; Guthrie & Klauda, 2014; Ogle, 1986, 2009; Palincsar & Brown, 1984). This pedagogical lens is built on the idea that there are certain goals that must be reached in all reading—constructing meaning, making sense of the text, and questioning the author (Vacca, 2002). This reading strategy pedagogy likens the work of teaching to the scaffolds that support a building under construction. “In the same way that builders provide essential but temporary support, teachers need to provide support that will help students to develop new understandings, new concepts and new abilities” (Vacca, 2008, p. 852). For instance, scaffolding student reading by forming small groups for discussion about the reading is one way to illuminate meaning making, allowing students to access schema and giving teachers a way to formatively assess their students (Fisher & Frey, 2014). What is key in strategies approaches such as these, though, is the idea that the same scaffolds can be used to support the construction of multiple types of buildings, or in this case, in all disciplines. The skills that emerge are believed to help students master the reading, writing, and literacy practices in the content area classes.

Some, however, posit that the emergence of strategies without regard to the context and demands of the discipline are not enough (Collin, 2014; Moje, 2007;
Shanahan & Shanahan, 2008). Pedagogical content knowledge premises that content area teachers need to know the content, good pedagogy, and an understanding of pedagogical practices specific to that discipline (Shulman, 1986). It is from this pedagogical content knowledge that questions emerge about how literacy is shaped by the content area itself. Samuel Wineburg (1991) was one of the first to note the distance between how schools teach literacy and how professionals in the discipline practice literacy. Shifting focus from school practice to discourse practices in the field means the needs and foci shift as students move from one discipline to another. This suggests that literacy demands are inherent to the disciplinary emphasis and thinking, and that lower-level reading strategies developed for all disciplines will do little to help students meet these demands (Shanahan & Shanahan, 2008). While it may be messy to attempt to separate a cognitive approach that focuses on strategies (such as reading in the content area or reading across the curriculum) from a disciplinary literacy pedagogy approach, it is important to note that the latter includes an emphasis on culture, both as it relates to the learner and the discipline (Moje, 2007). As an alternative to the strategies approach to literacy, researchers have looked at discipline literacy as sets of literacy skills and discourse events specific to the content disciplines in which they occur and in a way that mirrors the way those practices are done in the work of the disciplinary field (Shanahan & Shanahan, 2008). This reverses the cognitive/subject matter relationship, as cognition and thinking processes come through the work of the discipline rather than the discipline work coming as a result of those processes (Moje, 2007).
**Defining Disciplinary Literacy**

Disciplinary literacy is focused in developing a learner’s capacity to think as an apprentice within the disciplines, asking what does it mean to think, read, and talk like a historian? A scientist? A student of literature? Disciplinary literacy does recognize the importance of reading and writing across the curriculum, but it tries to address the problem that teachers often employ reading and writing strategies that are more appropriate for studying literary texts in an English classroom than attempting to duplicate the literacy demands in discipline fields (Collin, 2014). When reduced to its essence, both content-area literacy and discipline literacy can be seen as questions about how the world works, making a case for educators to view content-area literacy as the practice of students navigating the literacy contexts of where they live, work, and learn (Moje, 2015; Shanahan & Shanahan, 2008). In a disciplinary literacy approach, however, students are asked to focus more on the mindsets of the discipline in approaching these questions.

Disciplinary literacy has strong ties to systemic functional linguistics, a linguistic field that looks at the language as a social semiotic system in which people make grammar choices based on that system (Halliday & Matthiessen, 2004). The content area works as the grammar, which drives the literacy choices available to students, and the signs and choices available are socially constructed by discourse communities within the content-area fields. Therefore, the work in the classroom is to help students to understand the semiotic signs in the field and use those signs to communicate about the content.
When looking at disciplinary literacy as social practice and ways of knowing, it is important to note that the school setting itself becomes problematic. Importantly, the context of schools has changed the practice, as meaning making is dependent on context (Collin, 2014; Gee, 2000). Literacy is always domain specific in that “all literacy is enacted in a specific context, for a specific purpose and with a specific audience” (Moje, 2015, p. 256). Therefore, students will apprentice the practices but cannot fully engage with them unless they are offered opportunities to discourse within the discipline fields outside or as part of the secondary school setting. In addition, learners will need overt instruction about the practices of each discipline as they move through their typical school day, which will include multiple discipline classrooms. Because they lack cultural knowledge of the content area discipline, and each discipline is highly specialized, students need both the opportunity to apprentice the discourse practices of a community but also to push back against such assumptions in context of other knowledge or perspectives. This is important as teachers develop and plan for authentic assessments within disciplinary literacies because “activities taken from a community of experts may not automatically be transplanted to a body of novices. Disciplinary tasks embedded within the epistemic community draws meaning from the community’s frames, scripts, and schemas” (Bain, 2008, p. 160).

Consider an example of how this may be complex. A text about the Civil Rights Movement in America might be taught in both English and social study classrooms, for example. Teachers in both classrooms should allow students to question why their first concern about the text in social studies may be its source, but in English students are told
to consider audience first. Seeing these two contrasting priorities in relationship will help students negotiate the different demands of the discipline communities and effectively switch to meet those demands as they move from one discipline to another. Wineburg (2003) offered an example of this reality in telling the story of a time he had an accomplished professor of English lead a reading of a historical document in a room full of historians. Wineburg observed the historians appeared very uncomfortable with the reading because the English professor attended to questions of language rather than puzzling over questions of the writer’s identity and purpose, demonstrating that what is considered critical reading in one field may not be critical reading in another.

Developing frameworks for inquiry may help teachers negotiate this difficult task, because frameworks allow discipline area teachers to locate their discipline skills within it. Elizabeth Moje (2015) offered a heuristic model for content knowledge that emphasizes the teacher’s role in engineering a need for students to practice inquiry on their own. In this model, the teachers engage in a consideration of classroom practices in relation to discipline literacy practices, then elicit what a student knows about content knowledge and engineers a reason for them to gain more knowledge. Students are led through a close examination of the literacy practices in the discipline field and then evaluate those practices, determining when and how those practices were useful in the process, and allowing students to question the practices that they found problematic. Such a framework attempts to move to the core of all disciplines: “Members of the discipline ask questions or frame problems; work with data of some type; read and write
a range of texts; record, analyze and synthesize data; and communicate their findings” (Moje, 2015, p. 261).

It is interesting to note that the overt actions of a teacher from either the cognitive or epistemological approach can actually be the same, even if their understandings of how to teach for content understanding may differ. This means that the pedagogy developed in an epistemological approach may, in fact, use the same activities that are seen in a strategies approach. In the above model, the first step of the process is not unlike Ogle’s (1986) first step in a strategies approach called K-W-L charts, which includes a step in which the student elicits knowledge they bring to the literacy task. The difference though is that while both a cognitive content-area literacy approach and disciplinary literacy focus on deep subject matter learning, teachers engaged in disciplinary literacy must “not only provide opportunities for youth to learn with proficiency the established knowledge of a given field or disciplines but that also encourage youth to question, critique, and produce new knowledge within the discipline” (Moje, 2007, p. 37). Those who explore disciplinary literacy from the lens of discourse and practice focus more systematically on how what is needed to accomplish this may evolve from the disciplines themselves and tend to study how these strategies need to be adjusted within the disciplines (Shanahan & Shanahan, 2012).

**Disciplinary Literacy in History and ELA**

As I noted earlier, Samuel Wineburg (1991) compared the secondary high school literacy practices in social studies with those found in university history classes. He found that even high achieving students failed to read for the type of subtext in the
meaning making of historians, and that pedagogical practices and textbooks themselves perpetuated the problem by offering students textbooks with no authorial voice, little context, and a set of disconnected facts. Texts used in schools, Wineburg (1991) argued, were “merely the shell of the texts comprehended by historians” (p. 500).

Looking at the field of history, Wineburg (1991, 1998) demonstrated that it was not the content knowledge that mattered in mastering historical reading; rather, it was the reader’s ability to interpret the text by using subtexts. Through the study of subtexts, the historian is able to look at what the rhetorical choices reveal about the writer’s purpose and audience, as well as how the writing serves as an artifact of that author’s world views and belief systems (Wineburg, 1991, 1998). In such an approach, the teacher must frame learning in a way that helps to contextualize the text, thereby anchoring the text into time and place and forcing students to bring the full force of their intellect to the reading, but it also requires them to bring that intellect to their understanding of the text (Wineburg & Reisman, 2015).

A content-area literacy approach that might employ a reading strategy for the classroom textbook would not focus on these tasks explicitly, and a student would have no way to understand that is what is lacking in their reading for historical understanding. What is needed, therefore, is the use of multiple sources, rich in authorial voice and historical context, such as historical fiction and biography that will allow the students to use the writer’s voice and connection of events to make meaningful interpretations (VanSledright & Kelly, 1998). Offering multiple sources also offers an opportunity for students to compare how the information is presented differently by different sources,
which is “one way to make sense of the what are often contradictory accounts of the past” (Paxton, 1999, p. 329). The ability to make those comparisons becomes the real work that matters in the disciplinary classroom because it mirrors the way historians make sense of varying accounts of history. One important component of disciplinary literacy in history is that it restores agency to the reader, allowing them to select from a wide variety of sources rather than relying on texts selected by them (Wineburg & Reisman, 2015).

Importantly, the class evaluation system allows students to engage and refine their own product, offering the ability for them to “push back” at their own initial understandings of the disciplinary literacy demands of the task and supporting students who needed additional time and modeling.

The English classroom holds an interesting place in the disciplinary literacy approach to content. Because literature is always perceived as in conversation with other texts, ELA classrooms can also play a tremendous role in helping students negotiate the demands of various disciplinary communities, which are distinct social discourses (Rainey & Moje, 2013). Yet, there is also a set of discipline-specific practices that are taught in the ELA classroom. While the perception of the teacher of the literacy demands within the field are important, an English teacher is asked to include literacy demands from other disciplinary fields through the integration of informational texts in the classroom. The danger in this is that ELA teachers may lack an understanding of their own disciplinary literacy practices. For example, one study showed that preservice teachers agreed on the importance of ELA content area literacy, but their own understanding of what that entails is often unclear (Park, 2013). Terms such as
“informational text” or “close reading” may be understood slightly differently among practitioners, and that lack of clarity is further complicated by the tension between meeting the demands of and supporting informational and literary literacy practices. While this complex and language rich environment offers English teachers the unique chance to “act as guides who show students the similarities and differences across the various disciplines” it also means that those teachers must “have a foundational understanding of the literacy demands present in a range of disciplines” (Rainey & Moje, 2013, p. 85).

In an NCTE (2011) policy research brief, the complex and multi-faceted approach to literacy is titled “the plurality of literacy.” This demonstrates the idea that academic texts are situated in academic contexts and suggests the content reading approach of universal strategies that can be adapted for all types of texts is wrong. This brief clearly coincides with calls by disciplinary literacy scholars for collaboration between ELA teachers and content area teachers, suggesting this is an important pedagogical component for today’s English classroom (Moje, 2008; NCTE, 2011; Shanahan & Shanahan, 2008). This makes sense, because there is some overlap between literacies in other disciplines in other fields—students need the ability to read and write in all fields—but content area classrooms might require students to “use the tools of the trade” to fix, solve, analyze, organize, or explain, but in an ELA classroom literacy “might mean that students can decode certain kinds of texts and write in specific academic genres” (Lannin et al., 2014, p. 55). What emerges is an often ambiguous understanding of what ELA literacy might include.
One way to reconcile the need to teach discipline-specific literary practices in the ELA classroom while also supporting the literacy practices of other classrooms may be for English teachers to support rhetorical approaches to analyzing texts; that is, overtly aid students in analyzing texts for author’s identity, purpose, discursive, and situational context to which the text is responding, and intended audience (Warren, 2013). By focusing ELA instruction in such a way, an English teacher is helping students to understand that texts respond to situations and contexts in which they are placed, an understanding that could support meaning-making in a multitude of texts across disciplines as all disciplinary literacy is, in fact, rhetorical reading within the disciplinary context (Warren, 2013). Such an approach could help students bridge between literary texts and academic texts, as it emphasizes that all texts are, in fact, representation of knowledge and perspective.

**Disciplinary Literacies in the 21st Century**

John P. Gee’s Theory of Discourse postulates that language is not merely a way of using language, but a way of being (Gee, 1994). Because the disciplines have adopted multimodal texts and literacy practices, discipline classrooms must reflect those practices (Moje, 2015). Therefore, the use of such modes of discourse are critical not just because they mimic the way language is used within the disciplines, but also because they have shaped the thinking and social practices done by those in the fields. This offers new challenges in the classroom, and requires both content area knowledge and information literacy, such as abilities to search, identify, evaluate, parse, and effectively re-communicate information, and requires a broad knowledge of how to confront, handle,
and communicate in many mediums (Vaughn, Smith, & Cranston, 2016). For teachers, knowing the content is not enough: They must stay current and understand how information is accessed and shared by professionals in that field.

It is true that new modes of learning have been created through technology, but this does not have to mean that old ones become obsolete (Snyder, 1998). Rather, the teacher can find ways to bind one form to another and see them in relationship to each other. This reality means that teachers must be knowledgeable not only about the discipline content, but also stay current on its use of technology in its literacy practices. This is because technology does not merely expand the physical space for discourse; it also offers new semiotic systems that offer new ways to express ideas (Lemke, 2006).

Disciplinary literacy is distinct from content area reading pedagogy that came before it. For one, it draws heavily on the ideas of systemic functional literacy and semiotics, advancing the idea that the disciplines have distinct sign systems and, therefore, language practices. It relates to socio-linguistic understandings of literacy because it considers the importance of context and social practices within the disciplines. While it may draw on similar reading strategies used in content-area literacy, those strategies are adapted and selected based on epistemological understandings central to the disciplines. Importantly, disciplinary literacy is premised on the idea that content knowledge is gained through the literacy practices of the discipline rather than acquired in order to support literacy practices in the content area. Therefore, the discipline-specific literacy practices become the locus of instruction and the learner is able to understand the discipline by engaging in those practices. This requires teachers to
understand both the specialized knowledge within the discipline field and the literacy practices important to that field. In the 21st century, this is further complicated by the proliferation of literacy tools as technology expands the practices available within the discipline fields. This approach to literacy has wide-reaching consequences in the ELA classroom, which is uniquely positioned to help students see that all texts must be analyzed for purpose and context.

**Looking for New Understandings**

Semiotics and socio-linguistic understandings of literacy demonstrate the complex ways that learners come to make meaning from language. Traditional notions of text—and, therefore, traditional uses of language—are expanding exponentially and are being challenged in the more fluid digital environment. As a result, understanding how meaning-making occurs in these digital environments becomes central to any discussion of reading and writing in the 21st century. Research on the writing process within this framework is lacking, with more understanding needed to help explain how students negotiate the choices and affordances available to them as they attempt to compose and create in multimodal environments.

Likewise, traditional notions of ELA classrooms are being challenged in the context of disciplinary literacy. Seeing such literacy through a cultural lens is helpful and could frame the literacy practices in discipline area classrooms as discourse communities. Establishing the role of the secondary English classroom in helping students to navigate complex composing tasks both within its own discipline and others is something that has largely been ignored in research.
The goal of this study is to explore the intersection of these key elements in the literacy field: disciplinary literacy and multimodal composing. By looking at this intersection, a clearer understanding of the disciplinary literacy within the modern context can help educators support that literacy in more meaningful ways, respecting the relevancy of digital literacy in all realms of life, including academic.
CHAPTER III

RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

The previous chapters reviewed established research and existing theory that has led me to the current study design, questions, and data analysis. This chapter revisits the research questions and outlines the context and methodology of the study. I explain specific aspects of the study, including participants, setting, procedures for data collection, and methods for data analysis.

Overview

While much literature about case study varies on whether to define it as a research process (as Yin [1994] and Stake [1995] do) or as an end product (as Merriam [1998] and Wolcott [1992] do), there is widespread consensus about the importance of defining the limits of the case (Merriam, 1998). To define this case study, I draw on Miles, Huberman, and Saldana’s (2014) notion of a network that addresses a case study as a connection of links. In this case study, the bounded limits of the study were four key student participants selected from a group of 37 tenth grade students enrolled in both an advanced English course taught by Kathy Orr, and a history course taught by Mary Smith¹. The inclusion of these four key participants who are linked by simultaneous enrollment in both courses allowed me to show the complex interrelationship of the variables of that connection (Miles et al., 2014). I began by observing a few classes taught by Kathy and Mary (separately) that allowed me a wide lens as I observed the teachers interacting with all 37 students. My student participant selection was then

¹ All participants have been given pseudonyms to protect their identity.
further refined to include one small group, which consisted of four students, whom I observed and interviewed as they worked on a series of cross-disciplinary tasks. I go into further detail regarding my participant selection later in the chapter. The selection of these four students allowed me to delve deeper into their processes and perceptions as they engaged in several composing contexts. Thus, my bounded case ultimately consisted of these four students, the two teachers, plus myself. I was able to watch events over a six-week period as they unfolded in both courses and as the work of these courses become intertwined through a cross-disciplinary assignment. The smaller focus group allowed me to manage the data and explore student perceptions through interviews as learning tasks were attempted. Thus, this case study is focused on the phenomenon of composing as it unfolded in the bounded contexts of two disciplinary classrooms, limiting the case by phenomenon (Merriam, 1998).

The four key student participants of this study were chosen from a select group of 37 high school sophomores who were enrolled in two courses at the school site (Honors English1 0 and Advanced Placement U.S. History), essentially fencing the study in a way that allowed for these attributes important to a case study: Particularistic (focusing on a specific event), Descriptive (yielding rich data and description), and Heuristic (illustrating an understanding of the phenomenon of cross-disciplinary literacy practice; Merriam, 1998; Yazan, 2015). My theoretical lens, therefore, aligns with qualitative researchers who see such research as largely constructivist in nature because “most contemporary qualitative researchers should hold that knowledge is constructed rather than discovered” (Stake, 1995, p. 99). Within this theoretical lens, my job as researcher
was to examine individuals’ interactions with the social world in order to understand how they construct reality through that interaction (Merriam, 1998; Yazan, 2015). This allowed me deep latitude in exploring the ways that others make meaning of cross-curricular work and multimodal composing.

The research design primarily employed qualitative data using think-aloud protocols (Charters, 2003; Ericsson & Simon, 1980; Pressley & Afflerbach, 1995), semi-structured and group interviews, and classroom observations. Additional data points included work-product evidence from student learning. The aim of a case study is to “provide an analysis of the contexts and processes which the processes illuminate the theoretical issues being studied” (Hartley, 2004, p. 323). Because my research questions were very focused on both context and processes of this multimodal cross-disciplinary project, this plan allowed me to provide rich description of multimodal composing in the disciplinary classrooms. The research questions were:

1. How does a student’s perception of composing differ across disciplinary contexts, such as in a history class rather than an English class? How does this change when the composing is done in a cross-curricular project that spans both history and ELA?

2. Because new literacies expand the choices students must make through multimodal composing, what relationship can be seen between the authoring choices a student makes while composing multimodally and the literacy demands of various content area classrooms?
3. How does a student who is engaging in cross-curricular inquiry in both English and history perceive the disciplinary demands specific to each content area?

4. How do teachers account for the negotiation students must undergo in order to meet both English and history curricular goals in that cross-curricular project?

Table 1 aligns each of the study phases with the research questions, showing how careful study of each phase contributed to the overall study.

Table 1

*Study Phases as Each Aligned to Research Questions*

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Study Phase</th>
<th>Research Question 1</th>
<th>Research Question 2</th>
<th>Research Question 3</th>
<th>Research Question 4</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Teacher Planning</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Composition Phase 1 (Evidenced-based Writing)</td>
<td>X</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>X</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Composition Phase 2 (Discipline-specific sources analysis)</td>
<td>X</td>
<td>X</td>
<td></td>
<td>X</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Composition Phase 3 (History Final Exam)</td>
<td>X</td>
<td>X</td>
<td>X</td>
<td>X</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

As stated, I first observed classes that included students who were enrolled in both courses simultaneously—an initial cohort of 37 students. Ultimately, the selection of four key student participants allowed for a more careful study of their cross-disciplinary writing as they worked to compose in both traditional and nontraditional ways for traditional and nontraditional contexts. Within this leveling process, the case became an
“integrated system” (Stake, 1995, p. 2) but the truly limiting factor was the composing that occurred within the bounded context of these two courses, allowing that phenomenon to be seen as the heart of the case study (Miles & Huberman, 1994).

To begin with, the teachers (Kathy and Mary) collaborated to intentionally group their 37 shared students prior to the classroom introduction of the projects studied. In grouping the students, Kathy and Mary expressed concerns in balancing gender ratios and tried to keep students who happened to be in the same English and History periods together, allowing in-person collaboration to continue seamlessly between the two courses. In some cases, group members shared the same English class but had different history classes. In those cases, Kathy and Mary made sure that each student had at least one partner in the history class; collaboration continued in the English in a traditional setting, but the splintered group was able to collaborate digitally in history. The focus group was selected after observation of initial class work, during which I was able to observe classroom environments and expectations during introductory lessons by both teachers. In response to what I observed (as I came to understand the personal nature of the work as a result of these observations), I requested the help of the teachers in selecting a small group so that I could explore the classroom more intimately. I also solicited the suggestions of Kathy and Mary in selecting one group to follow more carefully. The teachers considered the nature of the student groups they had created and selected a group of learners they felt would represent the variety of learning styles and personalities typical of their classrooms. Early observations of those four students allowed issues as they occurred to draw me to further observations, making these issues
the “conceptual structures” and keeping the study open to responsiveness to those issues (Stake, 1995, p. 16). More is said about the four student participants in a later section.

In conclusion, to investigate the research questions, the four key student participants were observed as they completed several composing tasks across two disciplines: one traditional, evidence-based writing assignment for a social studies class (document-based historical argumentation), one traditional, evidence-based writing assignment for an English class (literary argumentation), source selection and analysis in both English and history (discipline-specific source analysis), a multimodal essay based on the earlier cross-curricular work, and a reflection essay that allowed students to consider what they had learned in the process. Table 2 further illustrates what tasks were completed in which course.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Task</th>
<th>Honors English 10</th>
<th>AP U.S. History</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Evidenced-based writing</td>
<td>X</td>
<td>X</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Discipline-specific sources analysis</td>
<td>X</td>
<td>X</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Multimodal essay</td>
<td></td>
<td>X</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Learner reflection essay</td>
<td></td>
<td>X</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
The Study

The study was completed in a suburban, parochial secondary school called Our Lady School\(^2\), with an enrollment of 700. This is the school in which I have taught for the past 11 years. Placement in the school is not highly selective, and tuition is around $12,000. With an average family income of about $100,000, the school includes students who come mainly from middle and upper middle class. This co-educational school is sponsored by a religious order and draws students from across four counties with students dispersed across rural, suburban, and urban communities. Although the communities from which the student population draws varies in racial diversity, the school community is overwhelmingly White, comes from mostly intact family units, and has one or more parent currently working in a professional field. Situating the study at my own place of employment served to both allow me to maintain my employment and offered me access to the participants who knew and trusted me as a member of their community.

Participants

The following sections offer more details about the study participants: the teachers as well as the students.

**Teachers.** The two teachers in this study are experienced teachers who have multiple leadership responsibilities within the school building. The history teacher, Mary Smith, has a master’s in education and is currently pursuing a master’s in history and government. She has been a high school social studies teacher for nine years, teaching AP U.S. History for three years. Mary is College-Board certified to teach the AP U.S.

\(^2\) The school’s identity has also been protected.
History course and has had her syllabus approved by the board. She has been an active member of school wide literacy initiatives, including a library task force and information literacy initiative. She has pursued multiple curriculum reforms in her department, where she serves as chair, to bring in pedagogically sound literacy tasks, including the DBQ Project.

Similarly, the English teacher, Kathy Orr, comes to this project with vast experience in literacy pedagogy. She has been teaching for six years in high school and two in a college setting as a graduate assistant while she pursued her master’s in English. For her master’s program, she elected to focus her thesis on teacher training, specifically looking at methodology courses that focused on writing instruction. While a graduate student (she suspended her teaching career for two years to pursue the advanced degree) and as part of her graduate assistantship, Kathy served as assistant director of the writing center at a small, liberal arts college in the Midwest. She, too, has been included in multiple literacy initiatives in the school, including a library task force, information literacy initiative, and summer reading program overhaul. During her first tenure as a classroom teacher, she worked closely with Mary to develop a cross-curricular humanities course that fulfilled students’ English and social studies requirements. That course has since been abandoned, but both teachers report still using the materials they developed together in their individual courses, many of which included multimodal and nontraditional composing.

Because I was interested in looking at multimodal writing across disciplines, these two teachers seemed to be obvious choices for this research study. They have exhibited
professional competence, a strong ability to collaborate, and an interest in using new literacies in their classrooms. Additionally, although the school has a functioning PLC program, Kathy and Mary are the only teachers who teach these two courses, which eliminated planning complications with other teachers who teach these specific English and history courses. And, most importantly, they were also willing to participate in the study and learn from its results.

**Students.** As previously stated, the students selected for the study were chosen from the pool of 37 students who were enrolled simultaneously in Honors English 10 (U.S. Literature) and Advanced Placement (AP) U.S. History. The criteria for placement in both courses are somewhat rigorous to begin with and include standardized test scores consistently in the 80+ percentile in verbal areas, a GPA of 3.5 or above, and strong performance in ninth grade English and social studies coursework. In both the English and social studies departments, students (and their parents) may opt to override placement recommendations and select to take the course without school recommendation. Mary, who is responsible for social studies placements, estimates about 10 students do this yearly in her department. In my capacity in the English department, I oversee the placement for advanced English classes, and only one or two students opt to do so in Honors English 10 each year. Therefore, in general, the classes I studied were comprised of high-achieving students in a college-preparatory school environment who have already had significant instruction on research and argumentation. The school is overwhelmingly White (>95%), and all four participants selected for the focus group were White.
As noted earlier, four students were selected from the large group to allow for further study and more developed inquiry. The focus group was selected from the learning groups created by the teachers for this project. About a month before the unit began, Kathy made the initial groupings first by organizing which students shared the same English and history sections. Once she had sorted students by their schedules, she worked to form heterogeneous groups, balanced by gender and grouping students by aptitude, trying to balance students whom she saw as more creative and open to new types of composing with students whom she believed would be stressed by such a creative, multimodal, interdisciplinary unit. Before beginning the unit, Mary made small changes to the list, moving some students she felt were incompatible or would distract each other if grouped together.

I had several reasons for narrowing my study to these four students, who I will call Nate, Mike, Sarah, and Hailey. The decision to focus on one group of four students was made, first of all, for convenience. These four students were all four enrolled in the same class sections for both history and English (there were three sections of history and three sections of English, and section enrollment for each course was determined independently, meaning that students in Miss Orr’s Block 6 English, for instance, did not necessarily share the same class period for history). Another reason for narrowing my focus to four students is that I wanted an in-depth focus on what the students did at each phase of the project, and I felt that the data collecting and analysis demands would be overwhelming if I focused on more than one group. Working with this smaller focus group helped to answer my research questions about student perceptions, as I was able to
develop an on-going relationship with the four students through routine interactions, allowing them to feel more comfortable exposing possible anxieties, challenges, and vulnerabilities. Also, the smaller sample gave me the chance to trace a manageable amount of student work product, which allowed me to see patterns and significant differences as they emerged. Lastly, once the small group was assigned and students worked within those groups, I was able to focus my classroom observations on their interactions and behaviors, making those observations less general and able to gather deeper insight.

Both Kathy and Mary recommended these four students after making their group assignments, as they believed the four learners would communicate honestly and candidly with me as the researcher. They reported the group seemed “typical” of the other groups when asked about their perception of the group’s combined academic abilities. Both teachers reported the girls (Hailey and Sarah) were consistent A students in their classes; the boys (Nate and Mike) often earned quarter grades that fluctuated between B– to A, with scores sometimes lowered as a result of incomplete, late, or missing work. In the observation of the document-based writing in English class in April and before selection of the focus participants, I had observed the four students and had noted three of the four had been engaged in the process: Hailey had asked multiple questions of the teacher, and Sarah and Nate had both taken extensive notes on their assignment papers while working with partners in a prewriting activity. In that observation, Mike had spent much of his prewrite time speaking with another student. I had not known at the time that these four would become the focus group participants.
The focus group for this study, then, included two female and two male students, all 16 years old at the time of the study. Below, I briefly describe each student participant.

While both boys in the study were considered by the classroom teachers to be rather casual in approach to their studies (contrasted with a class environment filled with high achieving students who often exhibit signs of performance-based stress), Nate presented himself as a natural scholar who shared what he had learned in other classes or in his own reading during class discussions. A tall boy of more than six feet, Nate’s low-key demeanor was contrasted by his intellectual curiosity. Nate appeared genuinely interested in learning, such as when he spent nearly 30 minutes finding out about a favorite childhood author who had drawn anti-Japanese cartoons during the time of internment camps. In interviews, he would often direct me to a point he thought I was missing—such as when we talked about the way he self-imposed structure on his English essay that was similar to the structure he learned in history writing. Nate was often self-deferential in his comments, such as when he admitted that he was generally not turned off by classroom work because of its difficulty but because of a lack of interest. Nate was a natural leader, often posing questions directly to Mike during their group interviews. His honesty and openness with me and others (such as when he would tell Sarah and Hailey his research was quickly done the night before and not very thorough) made him a strong participant.

Mike, the other boy in the group, was a bit quieter when speaking with me, and he appeared much more distracted by the social aspects of school. A good-looking, athletic
student, he was involved in track and cross country. Mike was not motivated by grades; his grades, while still in the B to B– range, tended to be lower than the other students. Mike was easily distracted by his peers, especially one girl in the class, who he would often sit near and chat with during class time. Mike is outgoing and seemed comfortable around adults, but he did not show the same initiative as the others. Mike’s procrastination, occasional absences (he was the only one of the four to miss a day of school during the study, and he missed two), and distractibility demonstrated some of the characteristics that teachers may find counter-productive but all-too-familiar.

Sarah, one of the girls in the group, distinguished herself as a deep thinker. A pretty, athletic girl, Sarah would often take a minute before she would respond to a question. Sarah is a strong student, though both teachers report that she has to work harder than the other three to maintain high grades. Sarah was known to provide thoughtful, often meandering answers that demonstrated her desire to consider things from multiple perspectives. Kathy reported Sarah was the child of a working-class family, a unique circumstance in a school filled with the children of lawyers, engineers, and business professionals. Still, Sarah is quick to share her thoughts and feelings and seems unconcerned by this apparent class difference. Sarah was the most creative of the four; she saw herself as a natural artist who enjoyed when assignments and tasks were changed up. Sarah’s desire for change, and her openness to new experiences, made her a strong participant as I watched for student perceptions of different composing contexts. Since she is not a particularly talented academic writer, I was able to see how these contexts impacted her perception of herself as a writer.
Kathy and Mary saw Hailey, the final participant, as the best overall student of the four. A very quiet, self-deprecating girl, Hailey would often offer a shy smile and speak in a quiet voice. However, her quietness did not seem to negatively influence her performance. While careful with her words, Hailey was also willing to honestly share the challenges she saw with the assigned tasks and provide critiques of the two courses. Hailey self-reported putting a lot of academic pressure on herself; she would often do much more than any assignment required (for instance, Hailey found more than twice the number of sources than her other group members found during the shared research). She was eager to please the teachers, but that eagerness also seemed to come from a genuine desire to grow intellectually. She was probably the most typical “honors” student in the group: motivated by grades and concerned with pleasing others. Her increased level of anxiety helped me to see how shifting composing contexts may contribute, or alleviate, those academic pressures. Table 3 summarizes the key personality trait that each participant contributed to a study of student perceptions.

Table 3

*Quick Participant Descriptions*

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Student Participant</th>
<th>Personality Trait</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Nate</td>
<td>Intellectually curious and open with adults</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mike</td>
<td>Distracted and somewhat unmotivated by school</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sarah</td>
<td>Seeking ways to be creative and share her perspective in school</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Hailey</td>
<td>Self-motivated and high-achieving to the extent of high pressure</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Details About the Study Setting

The study was conducted in the spring semester of the high school calendar year. The school operates on a continuously rotating block schedule, with courses spanning the year and 80-minute class blocks meeting on alternating days. The average ACT reading score for the school in 2016 was 25.1. Recently, the school transformed its media center to a collaborative Learning Commons and has upgraded instructional technology available for student and teacher use, indicating a desire by the school to engage in 21st century learning practices. Collaborative spaces for group work and increased access to digital research tools have infused instruction in both departments. For this study, the school learning management site (Blackboard), Gale subscription databases, Padlet, an online bulletin board platform, and Stupeflix, a web-based editing program, were used.

Instructional support for teachers in the school includes a literacy specialist to aid as a curriculum coach (which is my role on alternating days), a technology coach to help with technology integration, and a media specialist. During the three phases of assignments that were part of this study, the teachers requested support in developing student scaffolds from both the media specialist and me; I was also asked to develop the final version of the rubrics used in the cross-disciplinary aspects of the project after initial collaboration about its design, and the media specialist created a web-based reference that linked students to appropriate sources for use during the research phase of their project. It should be noted that it was not uncommon for Kathy and Mary to access such support, as both teachers routinely work with our library media specialist and me. In fact, Mary, the media specialist, and I presented at a national social studies conference in the Fall of
2017 about our collaboration on a world history simulation activity designed to develop students’ ability to identify appropriate sources while conducting historical research. Since Kathy functioned as a PLC of one for Honors English 10, she would often turn to me as her department chair and former mentor to refine and sometimes co-develop literacy assignments. Therefore, I was able to use these past experiences to gauge the influence I had as literacy specialist in this study as a way to assure that I was not providing undue influence on the results.

**Courses.** Advanced Placement U.S. History is a survey course that emphasizes historical thinking skills such as analyzing sources and evidence, making historical connections, chronological reasoning, and creating and supporting historical arguments. While the College Board offers a framework for planning, the course has been locally developed by Mary (with departmental collaboration and administrative oversight) and includes alignment to the state learning standards. Students in the course take an end-of-course exam in May, and those scores determine whether they qualify for college credit based on institutional requirements. This year was only the second year that it was offered to sophomores, but score analysis has shown that sophomores out-perform previous junior classes who had taken the AP exam in previous years. Mary attributes at least some of that improvement to her collaboration with Kathy, which she said has allowed her students to see a greater emphasis on argumentative writing across the curriculum.

In my role as English department chair and literacy specialist, I have led the English department curriculum mapping, attempting to create an ongoing culture of
collaboration between the English teachers, including Kathy, and me. Honors English 10 is a thematically designed course with an American literature focus. This course is locally designed by Kathy in collaboration with me (in my role as English department chair) and other members of the department (again with administrative oversight), and it emphasizes intertextuality, drawing heavily on informational texts to show connections between the literature and American history, culture, and current events. Such an approach relies heavily on rhetorical analysis, with a number of learning activities and assessments focused on helping to identify author’s purpose and perspective. Writing instruction in this class is offered in conjunction with the literature being studied, and it includes literary analysis, argumentation, narrative, and reflective writing. The unit that was part of my study was conducted just after students had conducted an extensive research-based literary analysis of an American poet.

The researcher. As noted, I have been teaching at Our Lady School for 11 years. My roles in the school include classroom teacher, English department chair, and literacy specialist. The role of literacy specialist was new for me during the academic year that this study took place. In the role of literacy specialist, I worked closely with teachers to develop lesson plans and assessments for various disciplinary fields. Additionally, I supported the integration of an information literacy framework across the core courses on the ninth grade level, helping to design learning activities within each discipline curriculum that allows for overt instruction of research and information literacy. My teaching assignment during the year of this study, which occurred on alternating block days, included a dual-enrollment college composition class, humanities
class, and film study class. The subject English teacher, Kathy Orr, also taught the composition class. For purposes of this study, I had not intended to work as a literacy coach, though it is not uncommon for me to collaborate professionally with both teachers as they design lessons and assessments. However, time constraints in the planning process caused both teachers to seek my help in developing elements of their teaching unit, such as drafting rubrics and creating models of the assignments for student reference as they composed. Largely, I worked in support of the teacher planning but did not lead its implementation.

While the current study is not classified as action research (I am not studying my own instruction or students), it is important to note that my position within this study site complicates the study in ways similar to such research. In speaking about his own experiences as a teacher-researcher, Bob Fecho (2003) wrote,

> Because practitioner researchers are so much a part of their focus communities, because they have co-constructed that community, and because their relationships within that community are based on much more than a mutual interest in a research project, how they represent themselves, their practice and their community takes on a heightened intimacy. (p. 284)

This is certainly true in my situation, as my relationship to the teachers and the greater community in this study extends beyond this study both personally and professionally. In addressing these complicating factors, I followed ethical guidelines for action research that note the importance of establishing a “relationship between the researcher and participants that is as democratic as possible. In doing so, the participants become part of
the decision-making process” (Nolen & Putten, 2007, p. 405). In this study, the student participants were given some latitude for scheduling the interviews, allowing them to select when and where to meet. In fact, it was at their request that I used a small group format to conduct the semi-structured interviews rather than to conduct them individually, a change that brought a richness to the interviews because the students entered into a conversation between each other that became revealing in its nature.

Initially, the two girls requested a shared interview time during a mutual free block in school as a convenience; when the boys saw our discussion in the library that day, they asked for the same format. Additionally, the study participants were invited to share other work from the two classes at their discretion (such as when one girl brought an earlier document-based historical essay), and review of their composing work for this study was done in collaboration with the students (except the video essay and self-reflection since they were completed at the end of the school year and no time was available to meet). At these times, I would share my insights and observations of their compositions, and they would respond and expand upon what I noted.

Perhaps a bit trickier was how to approach my relationship with the teachers, who are both colleagues and friends of mine. As I noted, my professional experiences outside of the study allowed me a gauge that helped me to modulate my interactions with both teachers in ways that assured I did not overstep their established roles as the teachers, protecting the study so that the assignments were developed as a result of their own insights as the classroom teachers and not as a result of my own needs. Whereas I established some study elements I required (access to the student work product and
observations of the classrooms, for example), I also invited both teachers to share with me anything they found relevant to the study. As a result, both teachers shared class score distributions, emailed personal reflections or brought unrelated but still pertinent student work artifacts to my attention (such as when Mary showed me an underdeveloped essay on another topic by one of the student participants). I was careful to use only the materials that were shared transparently as part of the study (during teacher-initiated moments such as above or in the context of semi-structured interviews and formal class observations) so that I was not taking advantage of the personal relationship I had with both teachers. Comments shared in the lunch room or hallways, for instance, were not included in the study unless I explicitly asked for permission.

It should also be noted that my position as a school community member was not only a challenge to deal with; it was also an asset. While I had never taught any of the students in the study, I was familiar with them and to them. Some had worked with me in my roles as diversity club moderator or summer reading coordinator, and at least one student recognized me as having taught his older brother. Participants may have been responsive to me in part because they saw my presence as understandable and not foreign or threatening. As noted earlier, both Kathy and Mary showed evidence that they were personally invested in my study in part, I believe, because of my role within the school community. This brought a level of trust, and, I hope, honesty, that I feel served to strengthen the study.
The assignment. A large part of the study included observing the planning process that both teachers underwent to develop the assignments that were part of the study. In early planning sessions, which began in the fall, I observed Kathy and Mary as they planned the cross-disciplinary assignment, and I conducted semi-structured interviews with them (each teacher individually) based on those observations. The teachers met monthly, usually at the conclusion of the school’s monthly teacher workdays. By spring semester, schedule conflicts necessitated a change in the direction of the assignments, which created a planning strain on the teachers (especially Mary, who would handle the brunt of the assignment and whose personal life included family obligations and participation in an online master’s program). By March the teachers had asked me to support their planning in my role as literacy specialist. At that time, I helped to draft assessment rubrics and created models to guide students as they approached the literacy tasks.

Resulting from this collaborative effort were the learner tasks that became central to the study. In sum, this study focuses on an interdisciplinary project centered on the study of historical periods in the late 20th century. The teachers began the unit by assigning their students writing tasks related to their study of the Vietnam War, and the unit culminated with a cross-disciplinary multimodal project that had a choice element (students could focus on an era of their choice within the late 20th century). In the following paragraphs, I summarize each assignment that was developed collaboratively in the study. Later, I detail the choices that ultimately informed my data collection.
**Phase One: Traditional essays.** Phase One of the project began on April 5 and lasted through April 28. Students were given one writing task in each course (English and history) that required them to synthesize historical sources to answer a composing prompt. These tasks correlated to curriculum goals in a history unit on the Vietnam War and an English unit covering a novel about that war written by Tim O’Brien, *The Things They Carried* (1990). This unit included the war poem “Facing It” by Yusef Komunyakaa (2001).

In history classes, students were asked to select six historical documents from eight provided to them. They were then prompted to use those documents to analyze the political, social, and economic divides created by the U.S. involvement in the Vietnam War in a written essay. The task was designed to anticipate the evidence-based writing task students would be given as part of the AP U.S. History exam that they would take in May. In English class, students were given five of the same historical documents and were instructed to use an unspecified number of them to support a claim about what was haunting the speaker of Komunyakaa’s poem, which is about a veteran visiting the Vietnam War Memorial in Washington, D.C. It is worth noting that Kathy chose to select only five of those sources for student use in this synthesis assignment. When asked why she did not include all the sources, she said she selected the ones she felt were most relevant to her prompt and as a way to signal to students that the expectations for this assignment differed from what students experienced in Mary’s class.

These two initial writing tasks (historical and literary argumentation), therefore, included synthesis of historical documents that were photocopied, labeled A through H.
and attached to the prompts. All documents were taken from the College Board website that includes access to previously used essay materials from released AP U.S. History exams. Table 4 presents a description of the documents used in each evidence-based, argumentative writing task.

Table 4

*Documents Provided for Argumentative Tasks*

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Documents provided for history argumentation</th>
<th>Documents provided for literary argumentation</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Excerpt of 1964 Gulf of Tonkin resolution that gave the president extensive war powers.</td>
<td>Excerpt of 1964 Gulf of Tonkin resolution that gave the president extensive war powers.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Lyrics from song by Country Joe and the Fish titled “I Feel Like I’m Fixin’ to Die” (1965).</td>
<td>Lyrics from song by Country Joe and the Fish titled “I Feel Like I’m Fixin’ to Die” (1965).</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>A speech given by Martin Luther King, Jr. in which he argues African Americans are disproportionately burdened by the war.</td>
<td>A speech given by Martin Luther King, Jr. in which he argues African Americans are disproportionately burdened by the war.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>A political cartoon by Bill Crawford entitled “Onward and Upward” (1967).</td>
<td>A piece by journalist James Fallows from 1969 that argues that the Cambridge men knew how to throw the military fitness tests, leaving more and less educated Chelsea, MA counterparts heading to war.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>A piece by journalist James Fallows from 1969 that argues that the Cambridge men knew how to throw the military fitness tests, leaving more and less educated Chelsea, MA counterparts heading to war.</td>
<td>An excerpt from a speech by President Richard Nixon in 1969 that justifies the continuation of the Vietnam War.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>An excerpt from a speech by President Richard Nixon in 1969 that justifies the continuation of the Vietnam War.</td>
<td>An excerpt from a speech by President Lyndon B. Johnson in which he warns that foreign policy should not bring down the Great Society initiative to combat poverty.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
To assess the student work, teachers used rubrics and procedures that had been
developed for each specific course and with which the students were already familiar. To clarify, students were not required to use a specific number of documents in English but were required to include at least six documents in the history argumentation. (See Appendices D & E for the complete documents and prompts.)

While each task required students to make and defend a claim in a traditional composition, the only collaboration at this point between the two disciplines was the use of mostly the same sources for purposes of student composition. The use of these sources in both tasks allowed for the study of how evidence-based writing is incorporated into these separate tasks depending on discipline. In history, the prompt required the students to make a claim and use the sources to support the claim about the historical understanding, or legacy, of the war. In English, the sources were used to help identify the ambiguous subject of the poem—what is “it” that must be faced in the poem?

During the period of time when Kathy and Mary were designing the tasks, I conducted semi-structured interviews with them and observed their planning process as they identified curricular goals and expectations for both tasks. Once the tasks were designed, each teacher introduced the tasks separately, and I observed the task set-up in the classroom, as well as the students as they completed the task. Following the writing tasks, on May 2 and 3, the smaller focus group of four students was then asked to participate in a semi-structured group interview that allowed me to access their think aloud protocols. Before engaging in the learning task, I introduced my research study to history and English classes that included the four focus participants, where I told students
that I would like to understand the writing choices they make in order to access their thinking processes as they write in a number of different situations. While I go into further detail on data collection and analysis later in this chapter, it should be noted that I analyzed student work products and interviews during this first phase of the project for discipline-specific concerns and choices in order to address my first research question (How does a student’s perception of composing differ across disciplinary contexts, such as in a history class rather than an English class? How does this change when the composing is done in a cross-curricular project that spans both history and ELA?). As a result, I looked for evidence that the sources Kathy and Mary provided to the students were used in support of historical thinking skills such as drawing connections between time periods when they composed their history essays. In English, I looked for evidence that the sources were used in support of rhetorical analysis of the poem during which participants explored the meaning behind the poet’s word choices. Teachers were then interviewed after they had graded the students’ essays, as I wanted to elicit their observations about how students did when completing their evidence-based writing tasks.

**Phase Two: Cross-curricular tasks (source creation and source evaluation).**

Phase Two of the project began on May 5 and ended on May 15. During this phase of the unit, students were given two cross-curricular tasks. This cross-curricular Phase Two of the project would ultimately culminate in a multimodal text—Phase Three—that would require use of English-based work but was assigned and assessed in history. While Kathy and Mary had initially planned to include Phase Three (which was a video essay) in both English and history, as a cross-curricular task, this became too burdensome for
both teachers once they realized the extensive number of students who were not enrolled in both courses and who would, thus, require extensive accommodations or an alternative assignment. Therefore, Kathy and Mary opted to plan complementary assignments (Phase Two) that served to prepare students for a multimodal composing task (Phase Three) that would end up being assessed only in history class. Kathy (the English teacher) expressed a desire that each of these Phase Two related tasks have merit as a stand-alone assignment for those who were not enrolled in the AP U.S. History class, and the teachers planned accordingly. First, students were assigned to groups of four in English, and then Kathy and Mary attempted to assure that each member of each group had at least one partner who would move from English to history with him or her (the students have varying schedules, so it was not possible to keep all English groups intact in history). All four of my case study participants were enrolled in the same history and English sections, so their group remained intact in both classes. In contrast, about a third of the assigned groups could not stay intact during history class due to scheduling variations.

There were two tasks within Phase Two—a “Curation” task and an “Evaluation” task. First of all, each group was instructed during an introductory English lesson to select from a list of historical time periods/developments in the late 20th century. These eras and/or developments were: Japanese internment camps, Holocaust, the use of the atomic bomb, the Cold War, McCarthyism, Civil Rights, and Vietnam. Each group was then asked to curate sources about the selected time period specific to each discipline. In English class, Kathy instructed students to look at literary texts of the era that might
indicate popular sentiment either for or against the specific historical events or developments of that era. In history class, Mary instructed students to find primary and secondary sources either about or from the era or events or that had been written in response to the era or event. Once these primary and secondary sources were identified, students then used a digital bulletin board application called Padlet that allowed them to share their resources with all students researching the same era. The school media specialist, who created a web page with links to appropriate databases and websites based on each topic, supported students during their source selection process.

After curating their sources, students who were enrolled in both the history and English classes were then given parallel writing tasks, which Kathy and Mary opted to call “Historian’s Notebook” and “Critic’s Notebook,” with each assignment specific to each class. The tasks in both classes required students to use the discipline-specific texts to make an analysis about trends in understandings and attitudes about the historical events at the time of its occurrence. Students were also asked to identify how those shifted both during and after the era. Each discipline teacher collected these assignments individually, but the two source analysis tasks shared nearly identical rubrics and instruction sheets.

I observed class instruction and student work days for both source curation and student composing of the written assignment. I was also able to analyze the group work as it was archived using the web-based tool called Padlet and as they composed for the written analysis (which the teachers called Historian and Critic Notebooks), and I interviewed the four case study participants to access their think-aloud protocols. Much
of the data I collected related to Phase Two supported Research Question 3 (How does a student who is engaging in cross-curricular inquiry in both English and history perceive the disciplinary demands specific to each content area?) and 4 (How do teachers account for the negotiation students must undergo in order to meet both English and history curricular goals in that cross-curricular project?). Further detail on data analysis follows. Below is a more detailed explanation of the two parts of this phase of the project: source curation and source evaluation.

Source curation. About a week after Phase One (the evidence-based writing) was conducted in both history and English classes, the learners were introduced to the Phase Two cross-disciplinary tasks, at which time my four case study participants selected a historical topic (Japanese internment camps during World War II). Table 5 outlines the instruction sheets that were shared with students in the Honors English and AP U.S. History classes.

Table 5

Shared Instruction for Source Curation Task

**Essential question:** They say facts don’t change, but our opinions about them do. Why do understandings of history change through time even though the events and facts of that history have not? This question is one that has implications in history and literature, because it is through these disciplines that society develops its understanding about history. This assignment will be done in both Honors English 10 and AP U.S. History, but it is designed in a way that does not require enrollment in both courses. First, you will be assigned an important historical time period to study. Topics include:
- World War II—The Hitler's Final Solution
- World War II—The Atomic Bomb
- World War II—The internment camps
- The Cold War—McCarthyism and the Red Scare
- The Cold War—Nuclear proliferation
- Civil Rights for African Americans
- Vietnam War—The protests

You will look at the perception of this time period at as it unfolded and then at two distinct times in history.
So…. After having been assigned this topic, your first job is to curate strong sources onto a website. Students enrolled in only one class need only curate the items required for that class. This will be a joint effort, and you will share your possible sources with others who have been assigned this time period. In this phase, you are selecting 5 possible sources.

To begin this process, the classes collaborated in groups and conducted and shared multimodal sources about the historical time period. As stated above, collaboration was done in an online environment using Padlet (a digital bulletin board) and included students from other classes who were researching the same topic. Students were asked to curate literary texts about the topic for English and historical documents for history. Table 6 outlines how those directions were shared with learners in the two classes.

Table 7 provides the directions that were common to both courses instructing students on how to format their sources using Padlet, which was linked to both course pages through the school learning management (Blackboard) website. Both teachers scored the student curation with the same rubric, shown in Figure 1.

Source evaluation. In a traditional but informal composing task, students were then assigned parallel writing tasks designed to help students identify trends in the texts that were shared via Padlet. Students were given similar but not identical directions about how to structure this assignment in each course. Table 8 shows the instructions, side-by-side, that were shared with the history and English students.

The rubrics used for these assignments were also parallel in structure but reflected the discipline-specific goals in each course. Table 9 shows the rubric description given for consistent mastery on this assignment in both history and English. See Appendices F and G for the entire rubric.
### Table 6

**Discipline-Specific Instruction on Source Type for Curation**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>History</th>
<th>English</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>From the historical time period… (FIND 2)</td>
<td>From the historical time period… (FIND 2)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Primary newspaper accounts</td>
<td>• Songs or artwork done during the time period.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Political speeches given at the time</td>
<td>• Poems or literature done at the time. (Think Hemingway)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Legislation, declarations and other official legislative action at the</td>
<td>• Contemporary movies or TV produced at the time.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>period</td>
<td>• Personal essays from people at the time.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Editorials and personal essays from people at the time</td>
<td>• Memorials that were constructed at the time of the event.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Photos of the event (think photo journalism)</td>
<td>• Prayers or hymns written during the event.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• New reels/broadcast stories from the time period</td>
<td>Retrospective references to the time period done at</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Personal letters from those involved.</td>
<td>10, 20, 30 years past the event…..(FIND 3)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• Songs and artwork done at a significant time after the event.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• Poems and literature written at a significant time after the time.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>(You can do excerpts and find summaries/reviews of longer works).</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• Movies or TV produced at a significant time after but about the event.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• Personal essays about the time period but written after it.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• Memorials that were constructed at a significant time period after the event.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• Prayers or hymns written for commemoration.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Retrospective references to the time period done at 10, 20, 30 years past the event…..(FIND 3)
Table 7

Common Instruction for Padlet Formatting

You will work individually, but will share your work with others who have the same topic. This will allow you to select from these options for the next step. This is graded for completion and is worth 10 points. On the curation site, please include the following:

- Either upload the source, or link to it.
- Your name.
- A brief description of the source.

Failure to curate by the due date means you have lost the privilege of using the site for your assignment, and you must therefore go out and find your own for the next step).

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Criteria</th>
<th>Consistent Mastery</th>
<th>Reasonably Consistent Mastery</th>
<th>Developing Mastery</th>
<th>Very Little Mastery</th>
<th>No Mastery</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Source selection</td>
<td>You found two appropriate sources from the time period and three retrospective sources. Sources selected are appropriate to the task and topic and will prove useful moving forward.</td>
<td>You found two sources from the time period and three retrospective sources. Sources selected are generally appropriate to the topic and will likely prove useful moving forward.</td>
<td>You are missing one source, or you did not find the appropriate number of time period and retrospective sources. OR 1 to 2 of your sources are clearly not useful to the task moving forward.</td>
<td>You are missing 2 to 3 sources and/or you did not find the appropriate number of time period and retrospective sources. Additionally, a significant number of your sources are clearly not useful to the task moving forward.</td>
<td>You fail to include sources OR the sources you find are not relevant to the task. 0-2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Source accessibility</td>
<td>You upload your all of your sources to the Padlet in a usable format for others to access, give an informative description of all the sources.</td>
<td>One or two your sources are not uploaded in a usable format for others to access, but you do give an informative description of all sources.</td>
<td>Your sources are not uploaded in usable format to Padlet, but you do give an informative description that helps others access the information.</td>
<td>While you may link and describe your sources, little care or concern is given to helping others access your information.</td>
<td>You fail to upload or describe the sources on Padlet. 0-2</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Figure 1.** Screen shot of student curation rubric.
### Table 8

**Discipline-Specific Instructions for Written Analysis (Historian’s Notebook and Critic’s Notebook)**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>History</th>
<th>English</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Entry 1:</strong> Write ½ page reflection in which you identify the most important facts known at the time. Explain what opinion or attitude is most prevalent and what trends you found in the curated materials you have available. To support this position, identify three sources and in a bulleted-point fashion, summarize the sources and explain how each backs up your argument.</td>
<td><strong>Entry 1:</strong> Write a ½ page reflection in which you identify what you believe was the most important reaction to the historical event at the time. What needs did society express at the time? What attitudes seemed most important at the time? To support this claim, identify sources in a bulleted-point fashion, summarizing them and explaining how it backs up your claim.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Entry 2:</strong> Write a longer reflection that identifies two changes in what was known or how opinion has shifted. This is looking at the evolution of our understanding, and must include specific examples of the shifts you identify. Then, to support each shift, identify four sources from the curation site in a bulleted-point fashion, summarizing them and explaining how each identifies a shift.</td>
<td><strong>Entry 2:</strong> Write a longer reflection that identifies two reactions you saw emerge as time passed from the historical event. This is looking at how literature reflects new understandings of the event, so focus on two different attitudes or opinions that emerged with time. Then, to support each new reaction, identify four sources from the curation site in a bulleted-point fashion, summarizing them and explaining how each backs up your claims.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Table 9

*Discipline-Specific Instructions for Written Analysis (Historian’s Notebook and Critic’s Notebook)*

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Criteria</th>
<th>Consistent Mastery</th>
<th>Criteria</th>
<th>Consistent Mastery</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Historical understanding</td>
<td>In a carefully written summary and using the sources uploaded to Padlet, you document important trends in attitude and opinions at the time of your historical event(s). Your summary shows strong synthesis and evaluation. 5</td>
<td>Initial Reaction</td>
<td>In a carefully written summary and using the sources uploaded to Padlet, you effectively explain not only what the most important reaction to the events was, but what social needs that reaction filled. You demonstrate strong synthesis and evaluation skills. 5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Backup sources: Historical Understanding</td>
<td>You use strong description and details to validate the claims you make in historical understanding by using 3 sources. 5</td>
<td>Backup sources: Society’s Understanding</td>
<td>You use strong description and details to validate the claims you make in initial reaction by using 3 sources. 5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Shift in Understanding</td>
<td>In a carefully written explanation, you identify two important changes to how public understanding of the historical event(s) have shifted. Your explanation demonstrates careful reading of sources available to Padlet, and you effectively use details to support your points. 14-15</td>
<td>Shift in Reactions</td>
<td>In a carefully written explanation, you identify two important changes to how public understanding of the historical event(s) were portrayed artistically. Your explanation demonstrates careful reading of sources available to Padlet, and you effectively use details to support your points. 14-15</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

*(table continues)*
Table 9 (continued)

*Discipline-Specific Instructions for Written Analysis (Historian’s Notebook and Critic’s Notebook)*

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Criteria</th>
<th>Consistent Mastery</th>
<th>Criteria</th>
<th>Consistent Mastery</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Backup sources: Shift in understanding</td>
<td>You use strong description and details about 4 sources to demonstrate not only the presence of a shift in understanding, but also the reasoning for that change. 9-10</td>
<td>Backup sources: Shift in Reactions</td>
<td>You use strong description and details about 4 sources to demonstrate not only the presence of a shift in presentation, but also the reasoning for that change. 9-10</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Phase Three: Multimodal video essay.** Phase Three of the project began on May 15 and ended on May 28. This phase of the project asked students to represent their understandings within a multimodal video essay, which addressed the essential question: “They say facts don’t change, but our opinions about them do. Why do understandings of history change through time even though the events and facts of that history have not?” Phase Three had originally been conceived as a cross-disciplinary task but the teachers found an unanticipated complication: too many of their students were not enrolled in both courses to allow for the multimodal essay to be completed as a cross-curricular assignment that would be assessed in both English and history. When it became apparent that the assignment would have to be completed in the history class (both teachers felt its focus was more appropriate for history), Mary recognized she would need to dedicate more instruction time to the project than she had anticipated. As
a result, and because of the pressures of the end-of-course exam, Mary proposed that the timing be moved back to the end of the year after the AP exam, which would allow her to dedicate appropriate time to the task. The teachers discussed ways to mitigate the obvious problem of student buy-in in May, and the two teachers decided to require the assignment as part of Mary’s final exam, which is worth 20% of the students’ semester grades. Mary hoped that this would help motivate the students to take Phase Three seriously. To try to preserve the interdisciplinary spirit of the original conception of the project, Mary and Kathy worked together to design the task so that English students would be required to bring the content and insight they had gained in curating and analyzing literary texts to their history assignment.

For Phase Three, students created a multimodal composition in the form of a video essay that asked them to draw on a wider range of sign systems to draw meaning (Harste & Carey, 2003). This task required students to draw together knowledge learned about the historical time period both through their history instruction and in their literature study in order to make a claim about why historical perception has changed through various time periods. After Phase Two, Kathy shared with Mary what literary trends had emerged from the student research of each historical time period, and this prepared Mary for assessing that aspect of the video essay assignment. Indeed, Mary told Kathy she felt that their experience co-teaching the cross-disciplinary class had prepared her to do this kind of assessment. Again, I conducted semi-structured interviews with the teachers as they designed the tasks, allowing me to identify curricular goals and expectations, and I observed and recorded these planning sessions for analysis, which
helped me to consider Research Question 4: How do teachers account for the negotiation students must undergo in order to meet both English and history curricular goals in that cross-curricular project?

In early April while planning Phase Three of the study, the teachers felt pressured for time, so Mary asked if I would complete the writing of the rubrics and create model examples of the source analysis task (Phase Two) and video essay (Phase Three). At this time, I created a planning guide the students could use to organize their video essays as a way to scaffold their composing process. All this was done in my capacity as literacy specialist at the school. In mid-May, I observed the task set-up for Phase Three in the history classroom, as well as the work the four participants did as they conducted the task. During work time for this project, I used voice recordings to record whole-class discourse. Additionally, I used think-aloud protocols and semi-structured interviews to follow the progress of the four student participants. The participants were prompted before the task to share their thinking as they planned and composed the task, and at least once per block, I moved to each participant to prompt him or her to comment on his or her composing choices. After the completion of Phase Three, I interviewed and analyzed the rubric comments of Mary (the history teacher). This allowed me to more fully consider Research Question 2: Because new literacies expand the choices students must make through multimodal composing, what relationship can be seen between the authoring choices a student makes while composing multimodally and the literacy demands of various content area classrooms?
As stated above, Phase Three asked participants to explore in true multimodal form (video) how their research and analysis addressed the essential question about the nature of history. The video essay, which was completed in history class and scored as part of the final exam for the course, was designed so that students would also include the literary texts and analysis learners had completed in English. Table 10 lists the directions presented for this task. And the rubric descriptors offered indicators for consistent mastery of this task (See Table 11).

Table 10

*Prompting Directions for Video Essay*

- Return to the essential question: They say facts don’t change, but our opinions about them do. Why do understandings of history change through time even though the events and facts of that history have not?
- Now in a 2+ minute video, begin to address that question based on your study of one time period. This essay should include:
  - Historical and literary “texts” – music, videos and paintings included
  - A representation of our historical understanding at the time of the event(s)
  - A progression of how that understanding changed with time.
- Remember that essential questions are intended to be too large to fully answer – you are “beginning to address” it and will not definitely answer this prompt.
- Those not enrolled in English can simply use historical documents, but feel free to include literary texts if you would like.
- Videos should be uploaded to Youtube and a link sent to your teacher(s) via an online Blackboard post.
Table 11

*Rubric Descriptors for Consistent Mastery of Video Essay*

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Category</th>
<th>Description</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Reading Comprehension</td>
<td>You accurately include historical and literary texts to answer the essential question and explain why our understandings of historical events have changed through time.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Essay focus</td>
<td>Your visual essay effectively addresses the essential question as it pertains to your study of a historical event(s). It is crafted with a focus on that question.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Organization</td>
<td>Your visual essay demonstrates coherent ideas, and organization that allows the viewer to understand initial, historical understanding and a progression of those understandings through time.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Awareness of Audience</td>
<td>Your visual essay demonstrates an effective style given the purpose. Your use of visual and written language clearly considers what your viewer needs to follow your ideas.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Conventions</td>
<td>Your visual essay is at least two minutes in length and includes a variety of visual and written texts to convey your ideas. Though there may be minor errors in editing and grammar, your meaning is clear.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

*Other final exam components.* During the class final exam meeting for history, each learner was asked to view the video essays composed by classmates, including at least one completed by a member of their Phase Two group. After viewing each video, students completed a form that asked them to identify how each of the video essays addressed the essential question about the nature of historical understanding. After viewing classmates’ video essays, each student then wrote a reflective essay. They were given the directions as listed in Table 12.
Table 12

*Prompting Directions for Reflective Essay*

Conal Furay and Michael J. Salevouris (1988) defined “historiography” as “the study of the way history has been and is written—the history of historical writing…. When you study ‘historiography’ you do not study the events of the past directly, but the changing interpretations of those events in the works of individual historians” (p. 223).

1. Looking at the essential question and the quote above, please explain why you believe humans continue to change interpretations of historical events? What evidence in your own project and in those you viewed can back up the points you raise here?

2. Then, consider what historical events have unfolded in your lifetime, and pick one. Explain how you have come to interpret and understand it today. What, do you think, might cause you to re-evaluate and reinterpret this event later in your life? What does this teach you about historiography?

This essay was scored using a writing rubric used in other history classes but had not been used previously during Phases One and Two. The rubric is listed in Figure 2.

As a result, the students’ final exam score (which accounts for 20% of the semester grade) was derived from assessments of three tasks: a 50-point video essay completed in the final three work days of the semester and uploaded via the learning management website before the exam time, a 20-point observation worksheet that students filled out as they viewed others’ essays, and a 30-point reflection essay that required students to return to the essential question (see Figure 3).
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Excellent</th>
<th>Very Good</th>
<th>Good</th>
<th>Satisfactory</th>
<th>Unsatisfactory</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Accuracy</strong></td>
<td>No mistakes, scholarly and accurate. Excellent knowledge of the topic shown.</td>
<td>Few if any mistakes, any mistakes must be minor in nature, very good knowledge of the topic shown.</td>
<td>Some, but not many, mistakes made, good knowledge shown.</td>
<td>Several mistakes made, fair knowledge of the topic shown.</td>
<td>Many mistakes made. Does not show an adequate knowledge of the topic.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Use of historical details</strong></td>
<td>Used many details in a thorough and expert manner.</td>
<td>Used many details to illustrate topic.</td>
<td>Used some details to illustrate topic</td>
<td>Used one or two details, alluded to details vaguely.</td>
<td>Used no historical details. Made factual errors.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Demonstrated learning and understanding</strong></td>
<td>Applied integrated concepts; made connections between facts and ideas.</td>
<td>Clearly understood topic well.</td>
<td>Understood topic.</td>
<td>Followed directions, had a basic knowledge of the topic.</td>
<td>Thinking not justified; no evidence that knowledge was acquired.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Mechanics (Grammar or Art)</strong></td>
<td>Grammar and/or art work were without flaws and professional in nature.</td>
<td>Grammar and/or art work are quality in nature.</td>
<td>Occasional errors but not enough to distract.</td>
<td>Distracting errors, difficult to read.</td>
<td>Fragmented sentences and grammar. Art completed in a haphazard manner. Very difficult to understand.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Word Usage</strong></td>
<td>Word choice and usage are professional.</td>
<td>Word choice makes piece interesting.</td>
<td>Word choice simple but acceptable.</td>
<td>Some mistakes in word choice and usage. Could be clearer.</td>
<td>Word choice is inadequate or inappropriate.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

*Figure 2.* Screen shot of reflection essay rubric.
In addition to reviewing the learner tasks outlined above, I also observed (and at times participated in) the planning process in which the two teachers engaged as they designed the learning tasks and instructional activities to prepare learners for the above tasks. As stated above, I also wrote the rubrics for Phase Three and created model examples of the source analysis task (part of Phase Two) and video essay. In the following pages, I explore important aspects of the study and address the rationale for choices.

**Data Collection and Analysis**

In this section, I further discuss data collection methods and my methodology for data analysis as they relate to the study procedure outlined above. To review, the research questions are:
1. How does a student’s perception of composing differ across disciplinary contexts, such as in a history class rather than an English class? How does this change when the composing is done in a cross-curricular project that spans both history and ELA?

2. Because new literacies expand the choices students must make through multimodal composing, what relationship can be seen between the authoring choices a student makes while composing multimodally and the literacy demands of various content area classrooms?

3. How does a student who is engaging in cross-curricular inquiry in both English and history perceive the disciplinary demands specific to each content area?

4. How do teachers account for the negotiation students must undergo in order to meet both English and history curricular goals in that cross-curricular project?

Data Collection

The major points of data collection used in the study are illustrated in Table 13. A further breakdown of each data type follows. A detailed explanation of the interviews, including dates of interview and participants involved in each, follows in Table 14.
Table 13

**Major Sources of Data for Each Research Question**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Data Type</th>
<th>Question1</th>
<th>Question2</th>
<th>Question3</th>
<th>Question4</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Semi-structured interview of teachers (SSTI#1-12)</td>
<td>X</td>
<td>X</td>
<td></td>
<td>X</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Student focus group interviews (SFGI#1-4)</td>
<td>X</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Focus group work observation (FGWO#1-2)</td>
<td>X</td>
<td></td>
<td>X</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Student work product for individual tasks</td>
<td>X</td>
<td>X</td>
<td></td>
<td>X</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Observation of teacher planning</td>
<td>X</td>
<td></td>
<td>X</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Student think aloud interviews (STAI#1-11)</td>
<td>X</td>
<td>X</td>
<td>X</td>
<td>X</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Observation of task introduction/class work for cross-disciplinary task</td>
<td>X</td>
<td>X</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

*Note.* Member checking was completed with both teacher and student participants during all semi-structured interviews.
Table 14

*Detailed Break Down of Interviews*

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Interview</th>
<th>Participant(s)</th>
<th>Date</th>
<th>Focus</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>SSTI#1</td>
<td>Mary and Kathy</td>
<td>10-14-2016</td>
<td>Project planning</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>SSTI#2</td>
<td>Mary and Kathy</td>
<td>11-14-2016</td>
<td>Project planning</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>SSTI#3</td>
<td>Mary and Kathy</td>
<td>1-20-2017</td>
<td>Project planning</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>SSTI#4</td>
<td>Mary and Kathy</td>
<td>3-3-2017</td>
<td>Project planning</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>SSTI#5</td>
<td>Mary and Kathy</td>
<td>4-7-2017</td>
<td>Project planning</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>SSTI#6</td>
<td>Mary and Kathy</td>
<td>5-2-2017</td>
<td>Assessment of evidence-based writing</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>SSTI#7</td>
<td>Mary</td>
<td>5-3-2017</td>
<td>Expectations for writing in history</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>SSTI#8</td>
<td>Kathy</td>
<td>5-4-2017</td>
<td>Expectations for writing in English</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>SSTI#9</td>
<td>Kathy and Mary</td>
<td>5-10-2017</td>
<td>Assessment of source curation</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>SSTI#10</td>
<td>Kathy</td>
<td>5-25-2017</td>
<td>Reflection on source cross-disciplinary project</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>SSTI#11</td>
<td>Mary</td>
<td>5-25-2017</td>
<td>Reflection on source cross-disciplinary project</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>SSTI#12</td>
<td>Mary</td>
<td>5-26-2017</td>
<td>Assessment of video essay and reflection essay</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>SFGI#1</td>
<td>Hailey and Sarah</td>
<td>5-4-2017</td>
<td>Evidence-based writing task</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>SFGI#2</td>
<td>Nate and Mike</td>
<td>5-5-2017</td>
<td>Evidence-based writing task</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>SFGI#3</td>
<td>Hailey and Sarah</td>
<td>5-18-2017</td>
<td>Source curation and analysis and video essay plans</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>SFGI#4</td>
<td>Nate and Mike</td>
<td>5-18-2017</td>
<td>Source curation and analysis and video essay plans</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>STAI#1</td>
<td>Hailey</td>
<td>5-2-2017</td>
<td>Simultaneous to source curation</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>STAI#2</td>
<td>Sara</td>
<td>5-2-2017</td>
<td>Simultaneous to source curation</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>STAI#3</td>
<td>Nate</td>
<td>5-2-2017</td>
<td>Simultaneous to source curation</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>STAI#4</td>
<td>Mike</td>
<td>5-18-2017</td>
<td>Simultaneous to video essay composing (first work day)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>STAI#5</td>
<td>Nate</td>
<td>5-18-2017</td>
<td>Simultaneous to video essay composing (first work day)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>STAI#6</td>
<td>Hailey</td>
<td>5-18-2017</td>
<td>Simultaneous to video essay composing (first work day)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>STAI#7</td>
<td>Sarah</td>
<td>5-18-2017</td>
<td>Simultaneous to video essay composing (first work day)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>STAI#8</td>
<td>Sarah</td>
<td>5-22-2017</td>
<td>Simultaneous to video essay composing (second work day)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>STAI#9</td>
<td>Hailey</td>
<td>5-22-2017</td>
<td>Simultaneous to video essay composing (second work day)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>STAI#10</td>
<td>Nate</td>
<td>5-22-2017</td>
<td>Simultaneous to video essay composing (second work day)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>STAI#11</td>
<td>Hailey</td>
<td>5-25-2017</td>
<td>Simultaneous to reflection essay (exam day)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Additionally, teacher planning observations were conducted during 2016–2017 on the following dates: September 9, October 14, November 11, February 5, March 4, April 4, April 14, April 28, May 12, and May 26. Classroom observations began on April 28 and continued daily until May 27. The focus group was observed working together on source curation on May 4, 2017, and May 8, 2017.
Because qualitative research is inductive, it is important that any prior structuring needs to allow for flexibility so that the researcher can respond to emergent insights; however, some structure is needed to help insure compatibility with the research design and the data being collected (Maxwell, 2013). In addition, refining my methodology helped me to control the amount of data I collected. Therefore, I did enter the study with an outline of some aspects of my research plan, yet I remained open to the “possibility of substantially revising this if necessary” (Maxwell, 2013, p. 89). Below, I outline critical aspects of data collection.

**Interviews.** As a member of the school community in which this study is set, I was in a strong position to practice responsive interviewing, an approach that emphasizes the importance of working with interviewees as partners (Rubin & Rubin, 2012). Such an approach allowed my participants to bring their own experiences and interests and helped to me to position myself as more of a peer, despite my supervisory role in the school. While the decision to complete student interviews in pairs was made at the request of the four student participants, it did offer the “advantage of allowing one to complete with more detail the response begun by another” (Rubin & Rubin, 2012 p. 178). Additionally, the peer-to-peer interactions during group interviews gave me better insight into what was important to the student participants rather than what I found interesting, another advantage to such an interview format (Rubin & Rubin, 2012). As the researcher, my role was to suggest various lines of inquiry, but I remained flexible and responsive to what was said in response to these questions (Rubin & Rubin, 2012). As such, I wrote the following possible questions in advance of the interviews to structure
the line of inquiry, but these questions are neither absolute nor all-encompassing. The questions included:

Questions asked after the composition of the traditional essay included:

1. Explain how you went about understanding the teacher’s prompt and her expectations for this assignment.
2. Explain how you decided what information to use from the path-finder.
3. Explain what you think made this a distinctly English/Social Studies essay.
4. What do you think makes an essay an exceptional essay in English/Social Studies?
5. What was the last decision you made in the essay? Explain how you came to that conclusion?
6. Did you revise your paper? If no, why not? If yes, how? What prompted those revisions?

Questions asked during the composition of the cross-curricular project included:

7. Explain how you made a choice in the final product (Pointing to a specific element in the composition).
8. How did you know you had enough information to meet the teachers’ demands?
9. When did you seek out the help of your English teacher? Your social studies teacher? How did you decide when to ask which teacher?
10. What is the relationship you see between what you did in English class and this project? How about Social Studies?
11. How would you compare creating multimodal assignment to writing the essay? What makes it easier? What makes it harder?

12. What role did you perceive each teacher to have as you completed this task for her?

13. What support provided by the teachers best helped you in this process? When did you wish you had been offered more support? Why?

14. What were your guiding questions as you went forward with this assignment? How important were these questions as you addressed the assignment demands? What other questions did you have as you tried to answer the first?

15. Were you happy with your performance on this assignment? Why or why not?

For SSTI#1–12, I used the following list of questions as appropriate to the context as “jumping off” points for our interviews:

1. Explain the curricular goals you were attempting to meet with these assignments?

2. How did you communicate those goals to the students?

3. What was your perception of the class’s overall performance on both assignments?

4. What do you wish you had done differently with the written assignment? The multimodal assignment? Why?

5. In your mind, how did the multimodal assignment compare to the written assignment?
6. What were your assessment concerns when grading this task? What affected your grading process?

7. How do you think your assignment design supported student inquiry? Disciplinary knowledge?

8. What challenges did you encounter as students followed an inquiry path? Had you anticipated these? Why or why not?

In responsive interviewing, however, it was important that I remain attentive to what was said and allow participants opportunities to explore their ideas through the use of a conversational style meant to keep them at ease and that was open to follow-up questions to further help with clarity. Such questions helped me add layer to the participants’ meaning, adding vividness, nuance, and richness to data collected through the interview (Rubin & Rubin, 2012).

**Think aloud protocols and observations.** Think aloud protocols (also known as protocol analysis) were developed for psychology but have been applied to the disciplines of reading and language learning and nursing (Koro-Ljungberg, Douglas, Therriault, Malcolm & McNeill, 2013). Think aloud protocols have the advantage of offering insight into the thinking processes of students as they engage in learning tasks, but researchers should be aware that such insight is limited because the protocol requires the thoughts to be translated into language (Charters, 2003). This method has been used widely in research into writing, including by early researchers such as Janet Emig (1977) and Jennifer Flower (1979). Traditionally, the think-aloud method is used in controlled
settings and allows researchers to collect in real-time the unfiltered and unprocessed thought processes of participants as they complete a task (Ericsson & Simon, 1980).

Since the think-aloud protocols were conducted as participants worked in both individual and small group settings during a series of cross-curricular multimodal compositions, audio recordings and observations of the of the focus group of the four offered the possibility of concurrent protocol analysis when unprompted group discourse was used to explain individuals’ cognitive processes (Ericsson & Simon, 1980). Stop and think directives were less obtrusive and were used at least once each class in which students were actively composing during Phases Two and Three of the study. During Phase Two of the study, I would interview the four participants as they worked side-by-side on their individual Critic’s or Historian’s notebooks. During Phase Three of the project, during which the four participants were required to compose a video essay individually, I approached the four identified student participants as they worked on the video essays independently in the computer lab and asked each to discuss the last decision made while composing. Student participants were then asked a series of follow-up questions so that they could fully explain the reasoning behind that decision. Subsequent interviews were used to further explore the thought processes of the group as they composed their multimodal composition. Additionally, the personal essay required as part of the final exam and observations of unprompted participant discourse served as an additional protocol that offered insight into the thought process of participants as they composed in the various writing contexts.
**Work product data.** In addition to these two methodologies – interviews and think-aloud protocols—an additional data source included various work products from the four students. Extensive field notes were used to allow me to keep track of how the work product collected relate to other data, thus allowing such information to be “interwoven” with my raw data (Merriam, 1998, p. 165).

In the end, Kathy and Mary scored about 90 evidence-based essays and Historian and Critic’s Notebooks, and the history teacher scored 45 multimodal video essays for student mastery of task and purpose. I observed some of the process they underwent as they assessed these student work products in order to observe their understandings of how well the curricular goals were met. Essays were scored by disciplinary teachers in ways consistent with disciplinary concerns, and I was given copies of all student work for my own analysis. The multimodal, cross-disciplinary composition was scored holistically by Mary using the rubric developed by both teachers. Again, I observed this process in order to gain further insight into her perceptions of disciplinary specific goals as they related to the tasks. Analyzing the student work product served as an important data point, in part because such documents “already exist in the situation” and therefore are an independent means for data collection, as they cannot be influenced by my presence (Merriam, 2002, p. 13). Participant essays, planning guides, videos and online bulletin board postings were all collected and included in ongoing data analysis. When possible, screen shots or excerpts were included in field notes and became part of the data coding process. In the next section, I discuss aspects of data analysis critical to the study.
Field observations. As Sharon Merriam (2002) noted, observations allow the researcher to “notice things that have become routine to the participants themselves, things that may lead to understanding the context” (p. 96). Classroom observations were conducted routinely throughout the study. Initially, the observations allowed me to see the class contexts and environments from which the four student participants would emerge. Observing the classes gave me a sense of the four students’ personalities and the social dynamics that were observable before they were grouped. Later, the observations allowed me to see how the four participants reflected or differed from their own classmates as they worked to complete their tasks. This point of comparison helped me to discover when follow up would be helpful, such as when I noted Sarah was one of only two students completely done with the multimodal essay the last work day. I was able to explore with her why she seemed comfortable with the vast amount of choices such an assignment offered her. In contrast, seeing how Mike seemed to avoid the multimodal composing caused me to scan the rest of the room to see just how typical this reaction was. Observations of the teacher’s work within the classroom setting offered me a way to explore how their teaching goals as each expressed them were presented to the learner.

All classroom observations were recorded and later transcribed. At the same time, I took extensive field notes that included descriptions of participant actions, teacher demeanor, classroom environment, and interesting actions taken by other students in the classroom. In short, the careful observations I did allowed me to better understand the composing contexts.
Data Analysis

Analysis of all transcriptions and field notes were initially done using constant comparative analysis (Glaser & Strauss, 1967). Initial coding was based on my prior ideas as expressed in the research questions, but remained open to the inductive nature of new insights (Maxwell, 2013), allowing me to later develop new categories based on data that seemed important to the research questions. Simultaneous to data collection, I initially highlighted and coded data by its relevancy to each research question, indicated by a double line when data were relevant to multiple research questions. Using word processing programs, data were initially grouped by research question (screen shots were made of relevant work product and included in these groupings), making these codes largely theoretical categories (Maxwell, 2013). This allowed for the physical separation of categories from one another (Maxwell, 2013). While my initial organizing category was organizational, such coding does not necessarily make sense of what is going on (Maxwell, 2013) and therefore the inductive nature of open coding resulted in my revisiting data collected for each research question to further refine my data analysis.

Once initial coding by research question and data collection was complete, I returned to each existing code (which were grouped by research question) and used research memos to summarize the contents of each category, allowing me to balance for nuance and detail in the process (Rubin & Rubin, 2012) and giving me a chance to begin to find substantive and theoretical categories that explicitly identify the content of the data (Maxwell, 2013). From there, coding for each research question was further refined based on these emerging categories, and data were physically extracted by these
categories using basic word processing. At this point, I conducted multi-level coding (Merriam, 1998) as I created a nested coding system; that is, I coded within each existing category for multimodal composition concerns and again for disciplinary literacy concerns, assuring I was exploring these critical elements to my four research questions. How those nests intersected became areas of deep insight and allowed me to generate my own ideas. At this point, I wrote memos that served as narrative summaries of the coding categories that emerged for each research question. Throughout the coding process and as part of all interviewing sessions, I presented my emerging categories and summaries to the teachers and student participants for member checking. Finally, I located coding categories that were redundant or so closely related they should be combined and reordered the categories so that each category’s relation to others was made explicit. This allowed me to create a well-documented narrative analysis of the composing processes as they were observed in the different contexts that were guided by initial research questions. Further detail about critical aspects of data analysis by data type follows.

**Think-aloud and interview analysis.** The following section more fully explains the analysis conducted during think-aloud and semi-structured interviews.

**Student participants.** By the end of the data collection, student interviews (both in focus groups and as think alouds) proved to be critical to the study findings. In all, four student focus group interviews (SFGI#1–4), observation of two focus group work sessions (FGWO#1–2) and 11 think-aloud interviews (STAI#1–11) were transcribed in full, read multiple times, and hand-coded before being physically separated by research
question through basic word-processing in Microsoft Word. As described above, the think aloud interviews (STAI#1–11) were conducted as the focus group students worked individually alongside classmates and were recorded. In addition, semi-structured interviews of student participants were conducted as focus group interviews four times in the study (SFGI#1–4), and during that time group members were pulled out from class or met me during free time in the school day to be interviewed in pairs. To address any complications holding group interviews might introduce, I took notes and made audio recordings of the sessions to make sure I was able to delineate contributions by each participant. Sessions were subsequently transcribed. Combined, this data allowed me to uncover the student perceptions of the composing process students underwent as they shifted from context to context.

Initially, all of these transcriptions were put into theoretical categories by research question regardless of when these were collected, but concern was made to consider whether the think-aloud protocol was completed at the time of the task or retrospectively, as such verbal reports are thought to be more reliable when they occur as the participant engages in the task (Pressley & Afflerbach, 1995). Therefore, after physically separating the think-alouds by research question, hand coding was used to identify emerging trends (i.e., differing perceptions of writing demands in English vs. history; structural concerns in the composing process; challenges or frustrations students identified during the tasks) and data were placed into emerging coding categories using the cut and paste function of Microsoft Word. Nesting coding was done within these categories to discover what was revealed about disciplinary literacy and multimodal composing. Specifically, codes
emerged that looked at how students perceived the literacy demands of each course and teacher, as well as shifting writing contexts.

Open coding gave an overall picture of the types of comments students were making related to the various tasks, but I then looked for evidence that these trends were supported both by retrospective and simultaneous think-alouds. Peer-to-peer utterances about the process which were heard during observations and recordings of group work (FGWO#1–2), such as when one student told another, “we got this,” were treated as a think-aloud which occurred at the same time as the writing task occurred, as were the think-aloud interviews (STAI#1–11) I conducted individually with student participants during composing work days (at which time I approached students at least once a class to inquire about the latest decision each had made and then ask follow-up questions). The coding schemes began to demonstrate a consistent concern for writer agency, regardless of which research question was being coded. Importantly, think-alouds shared simultaneous to composing (either utterances during FGWO#1–2 or as responses to STAI#1–11) consistently supported the use of writer agency as a theoretical coding category as it relates to student perceptions of disciplinary literacy and multimodal composing. Therefore, the data collected in the think-aloud process became a significant source of insight for me.

Teacher interviews. Teacher interviews were conducted throughout the school year. By the end of the study, each teacher had been interviewed six times (12 total interviews) in a semi-structured situation (SSIT#1–12). Additionally, three email exchanges and about 12 text exchanges functioned as additional follow-up interviews.
initiated by me. Both teachers initiated at least one email correspondence related to the study (Kathy initiated five). These were generally short, but all interactions were read multiple times, transcribed, and then hand-coded, first in theoretical codes by research question, and then for additional codes as they emerged within each theoretical coding category. The codes provided clues to teacher expectations related to student composing and curriculum concerns as they related to each assignment (some example codes include: perceptions of student writing process; assignment design concerns; teacher and student frustrations and challenges). After initial and nested coding, I returned to the original, unsorted transcripts to determine how teacher expectations matched student perceptions. Research memos were used to map those queries and to assure trustworthiness and triangulation of any findings.

**Field observation analysis.** Classroom observations occurred over a period of six weeks; three 85-minute English blocks were observed, and six 85-minute history blocks were observed. Additionally, partial block observations were conducted three times (once in English and twice in history). Voice recordings and field notes were taken at each of these sessions. Planning sessions were observed monthly, and field notes were taken during all meetings. Two were voice recorded. All voice recordings were reviewed, transcribed, and read multiple times.

Field notes of class observations were mapped for relationship to voice recordings after initial coding based on research questions was completed. For an example, I noted in my field notes that students in Mary’s class “were generally positive about the process pieces.” This note was later mapped and paired with the audio transcription of that class
meeting during which a student told Mary, “This is my favorite worksheet you’ve ever
given me.” This allowed me to confirm and expand on comments made in the field
notes. The transcriptions and field notes were then combined for coding purposes and
were treated as a singular piece of data. Early observations allowed me insight into the
four student participants, as I had observed each multiple times during the classroom
observations before interviewing them. This gave me a chance to develop a better
relationship with all four, and it allowed me to see how each of their perspectives might
be both unique yet representative of the class as a whole. Classroom observations were
also conducted after the focus group was established, and during these I was able to
observe the four student participants work as a group or independently on various
composing tasks. Voice recording of the group tasks were also transcribed and mapped
with field notes taken during the observations.

Additionally, observations of teacher planning were conducted at least monthly
through the school year. These were used to help guide questions asked during follow-up
semi-structured interviews given at key times, such as when changes to the assignments
were made (SSTI#1–5), after students’ work was assessed (SSTI#6,9,12), and after class
observations were made (SSTI#7,8,10,11). Four of the meetings were recorded. Field
notes were extensive, and all of these transcriptions were read multiple times and
reconciled with the field notes to insure reliability.

**Work product analysis.** As previously discussed, work product content served
as an important data point, in part because such documents “already exist in the situation”
and therefore are an independent means for data collection, as they cannot be influenced
by my presence (Merriam, 2002, p. 13). While I was given access to all student work in the study, in order to manage the data, special attention was given to the work completed by the four focus group participants. The argumentation essays (both in history and English), digital bulletin board source curation, source analysis essays (both in history and English), video essays and reflection essays were part of that analysis. First, each work product was read and field notes were used to make summary observations about what was seen.

Since I did not produce each work product, it became important that I be able to reconstruct the process by which it was assembled (Merriam, 1998). Therefore, using the data collected through interviews and observations that had already gone through initial coding, I chose to copy or use screen shots of work product that related to the understandings as I saw them emerging. For instance, when each of the four students indicated the importance of structure in their history writing in a semi-structured group interview, I looked at all four essays to see how each related to the organizational pattern all students had reported learning in history class. Those that were especially strong examples of that pattern were then copied and included in the coding data as I began my subsequent and nested coding. Student work product was also used to substantiate teacher comments about their observation of student work. For instance, when Mary discussed her concern that the boys in the focus group did not include much perspective of the internment camps beyond the government’s, I viewed each video multiple times, transcribed each, and then analyzed the transcription to determine whose views on the camps had been included in the four student multimodal compositions. The review
showed that both boys had limited outside perspectives in both of their video essays when compared to the girls. The stability of the document as a data point (Merriam, 1998) made the documents an excellent source of triangulation and allowed me a stronger degree of confidence as I constructed the codes related to student perceptions of disciplinary literacy and multimodal composing through the continuous and comparative analysis that was critical to that process.

**Trustworthiness and Ethical Considerations**

Once I collected data, I was able to use the early and ongoing coding to find trends in the data, and then trace those trends as the process unfolded. This is characteristic of qualitative research, which is inductive and “proceeds from the specific to the general” (Hatch, 2002, p. 161). The frames of analysis, or levels of specificity, could not be determined but were in response to the data as it was collected (Hatch, 2002). However, I looked carefully for semantic relationships so that I could develop categories of meaning and domains that reflected what the data revealed and as a way to guide my ongoing and continual coding process. I looked specifically at evidence of disciplinary thinking, as well as how/when the students exhibited the various stages of the writing process in their composing processes. Additionally, I was able to compare these with the expectations the classroom teachers articulated for the assignment. I kept a researcher journal in which I documented my thinking, observations, and emerging trends. I was able to develop questions for follow up in later interviews with both the teachers and the students using these researcher tools. With each interview of participants, I shared key understandings I saw as they unfolded, allowing each
participant a chance to expand or push back on these understandings. The analysis of this case study was basic interpretive in design. This allowed me to explore how the participants made meaning of the situation as it unfolded.

Due to the bounded nature of this study, I cannot assume the generalization of the experience; rather, I need to be mindfully focused on this experience and its ability to further illuminate the complexities of composition (both traditional and multimodal) in support of disciplinary literacy in the digital age, as well as its ability to explore how a student may reconcile those demands in a cross-curricular setting. I confirmed triangulation of all results by assuring all results can be supported by at least multiple data sources, not merely relying on my own perceptions as they unfolded in the research journal, for instance, and therefore assuring trustworthiness (Hatch, 2002; Maxwell, 2013; Merriam, 1998). Constant and careful return to research questions in the process assured that my study remained valid and focused on what it was designed to study.

Since I chose to conduct my study in my current teaching situation, my ethical concerns included that I be mindfully aware of how my intimacy to the situation may distort my perceptions. Therefore, what was crucial to the integrity of my study was my triangulation of data. Triangulation came from the multiple observations, interviews, my researcher journal with field notes, work product, and assessments and member checks.

I did not want to take advantage of my relationships with Kathy and Mary (I was the mentor and serve as the department chair for Kathy, and I have worked closely with Mary for years) and students. When I had any guiding hand in the assessment design, I remained mindful that I maintain a critical eye on those design decisions. Importantly,
the research questions as they are written provided enough scope without exposing either the students or teacher to any undue pressure by me. In addition, my relationship with the teachers has a scope larger than this study, so I needed to remain aware of the possibility that this may have clouded my judgment or influenced the choices they make. I believe that by embedding myself for observations of multiple classroom meetings, I was able to get past any initial unease. I tried to make myself as invisible as possible in the process by locating myself in the back of the room and saying little to either the teacher or students I was observing. I developed an ongoing relationship with the four focus group students, which I hope allowed them to feel more at ease with the process. Teachers were invited to share data they felt were relevant to the study, which gave them a sense of ownership and, I hope, helped them to feel autonomy in the process. One advantage to my position within the school community is that trust had already been established between the teachers and me, as well as many of the parents and students (I have not taught any of the students, though I had taught one of the participants’ siblings). However, I was well aware that I remain mindful of that trust, and I continued to practice member checking at each interview opportunity with participants to insure transparency in the process and help me to identify any potential bias in my findings (Maxwell, 2013).

Written consent and permission were gathered from student participants and parents alike. While parents have the legal responsibility to provide consent, informed consent was gathered from the students as well so that they could understand the purpose of and methods used in the study. Kathy and Mary, too, were asked to provide written consent, and school administration was given an extensive overview of the study as I
sought approval for the school setting. As this study observed teaching and learning that was planned independent of the study (the two teachers had planned to introduce a cross disciplinary composition prior to knowledge of my study) and disciplinary work that is typical of the demands of both courses, there was little risk of harm to the participants. However, because it is clear that “students are especially vulnerable to exploitation because of their youth and their positioning as a kind of captive audience within the school” (Hatch, 2002, p. 67), special effort was made to explain the study and my role within it to all the classes before any research had begun. Students and parents were made aware in the consent process that participation (or non-participation) in the study had no effect on student grades. Assessment was done by the teachers, with assessment concerns independent from the study.

In summary, this study looked at multimodal composing within a cross-curricular context. By situating this kind of work after the students have engaged in a traditional composition assignment bounded in their discipline classrooms, I was able to seek out differences and important similarities. Think aloud protocols and participant interviews allowed me insight into the cognitive processes in the composing process, and offered me a chance to see if discipline-specific concerns factored into those writing decisions.
CHAPTER IV

FINDINGS

This case study focused on advanced-level sophomores in both English and history classes as they conducted multiple composing tasks through a six-week unit that spanned April and May of the school year. The nature of the tasks was described in the previous chapter. The tasks embedded in these assignments demonstrated varying contexts and modalities to demonstrate how today’s learner must negotiate disciplinary and composing demands in increasingly fluid writing contexts. This chapter outlines major findings as they emerged through the study. Please note that throughout the paper, I use the term “participant” or “four participants” to indicate the four focus students in the case study. Data collected from other students in the class during incidental observations are indicated differently, such as “learner” or “another member of class.”

A Project in Phases

Though the tasks under review were assigned late in spring semester, the study began in fall semester when the two teachers, English Teacher Kathy Orr and History Teacher Mary Smith, met to plan a cross-disciplinary research assignment. Throughout the planning processes, the teachers had to adapt to scheduling challenges, but the final project was presented to the students in three phases. The first three phases were completed in both English and history classes, but the final phase, which included a multimodal composing task, was completed only in history class. For purposes of this study, I divided the collection process by the study phases, which included the teacher planning and three distinct phases defined by learner tasks (Phase One: Evidence Based
Learning; Phase Two: Discipline-Specific Source Analysis; Phase Three: History Final Exam, which included multimodal composing tasks).

More on the Four Student Participants

Overall, this was a fairly homogenous group of students. Standardized testing scores for all four students had placed them in the top 85th percentile or above for their grade. Although not all 4.0 students, the four group members were high-achieving with GPAs that reflected B+ or above work. Both teachers reported all four as capable students.

However, my key informants were certainly not homogenous in terms of learning styles and personalities that would coalesce during group work. First there was Nate, who was well-liked by both teachers. Kathy had called him an “interesting thinker” because he was apt to ask questions and challenge assumptions. Nate was not particularly grade-driven, and he was prone to a missing or late assignment occasionally, which meant a few quarter marks that appeared lower than the A both teachers felt he was capable of earning. Mike, the other boy, was the most social of the four students. Often, he would spend his class work time chatting with others, explaining to either teacher that he preferred to work alone in his own bedroom. Mike was less careful in his work than the other students, and his grades in both English and history were known to dip into the lower B-range, but he seemed unconcerned by these minor lapses. Both teachers reported that Mike was a pleasant student; Mary even commented that he was the type of boy she hoped her two young sons may grow into. Sarah, the first of two girls, loved art and reported enjoying creative endeavors. Her teachers saw her as an
over-achiever because she often had to work harder than the other students in Honors English 10 or AP U.S. History on analytical tasks. Sarah came from a working-class family and her father was a professional house painter, something that was unusual at the school. Kathy reported that rather than be embarrassed by it, Sarah seemed to use her different background to bring new and challenging perspectives to class discussions, and that fresh perspective endeared her to both her teachers. Hailey, the final member, was probably the most capable student. Hailey was a consistent high achiever, but her ability was matched equally by her effort. Both teachers reported Hailey was naturally bright, but they also commented on her hard work. Hailey was quiet, but she would often lead by example. Kathy reported that it was often Hailey’s work she would use to calibrate her expectations when she began to grade a class set of essays because she knew that Hailey’s work would often be among the best.

**Teacher Planning**

From the perspective of the students in Kathy’s and Mary’s classes, my study spanned the final six weeks of the school year, but as stated earlier, much of the process of planning for these three phases began at the beginning of the school year. What these students did not see was the year-long effort that went into coordinating the assignment. Planning for this project began at the end of the previous school year, when I approached Mary and Kathy to ask if I could design my dissertation study around their classes. At that point, I told them I needed to observe students in two different disciplinary contexts and as they compose in a cross-disciplinary context. The only request I made was that at least some of the student composing be multimodal, as I was interested in studying
student perceptions of writing in a variety of contexts and situations. We made some preliminary decisions last year, sketching out a plan that became the starting point in August but was greatly modified by the time I was interviewing the student participants on rainy mornings in May. My observation of monthly planning sessions gave me insight that informed the class observations and participant interviews I conducted as part of the study.

What follows is a brief description of Mary’s and Kathy’s planning process. It was clear that one impediment to making this a truly integrated project for all the students is that not all students were enrolled in both Kathy’s and Mary’s classes. Once planning shifted to independent but related tasks between the two courses, Mary introduced the idea that the project could be used to enhance her AP U.S. History final exam. Because this was the second year that Mary coordinated the AP U.S. History class, she expressed a desire to use the project to reform her final exam, which generally comes just three weeks after the AP exam, and which she has tried to design so that it is both very different from the AP exam experience but also rigorous in a way appropriate for an advanced-level course. For example, the previous year Mary had planned a class debate as the final exam, but she had been displeased with what she saw as uneven performance and her belief that some students had not done enough research to prepare for the debates. Therefore, Mary and Kathy opted to coordinate the project so that work completed in English classes would be central to the final project that was completed for history, allowing the final piece to become part of Mary’s final exam.
From the beginning of their planning, Kathy and Mary had planned to assign traditional arguments typical of each discipline, and which are referred to as “Phase One.” However, in each class, students were given the same historical documents to support their claims as they wrote to the discipline-specific prompts. During their planning, Kathy suggested that having the same documents both in English and history would help students see how history and literature are related and can complement one another. Mary indicated that the literature they were reading in English class might allow students to see how changing perceptions of history is often a result of changing social power dynamics and because “other voices” can be heard as society evolves to include different groups, a key concept she called “historiography” and one that became the curricular focus in history. Kathy also said the project could help make concrete the abstract literary concept of perspective (whose voice is dominating the telling of the text) and audience. Building on these key ideas, the teachers then worked through the first semester to create parallel assignments, which became Phase Two and Phase Three. The evidence-based writing and source analysis tasks were designed to prepare learners for the final assignment in history class.

Again, to recap, teachers designed for several cross-disciplinary writing contexts. That design was conducted throughout the year, beginning in September. Teachers made significant changes to the initial plans as scheduling concerns became apparent. Finally, Kathy and Mary designed a multiple-step cross-disciplinary unit in which students looked at historical time periods from both literary and historical perspectives.
To prepare students to see how historical and literary perspectives intersect, students were asked to complete parallel evidence-based writing tasks about the Vietnam War (Phase One) before curating and analyzing sources in both English and history classes about a specific time period (Phase Two). During Phase Two, students used the help of the school media specialist to find and share literary and historical sources with group members, allowing for asynchronous collaboration with learners enrolled in different sections of history and English classes. Phase Two included a written source analysis for both English and history. In that task, learners analyzed the compiled sources for dominant trends in informal but academic writing assignments called “Historian’s Notebook” and “Critic’s Notebook.” In English, the Critic’s Notebook involved analyzing the shared literary texts for trends. Ultimately, learners were asked to analyze how the literary texts reflected popular understanding of the time period. In history, the Historian’s Notebook prompted learners to identify the dominant understanding at the historical time period, and then to look for shifts as time moved on. Both the source curation and source analysis assignments were scored using similar but not identical rubrics.

Phase Three of the project then moved to the history class and became part of Mary’s final exam. Mary’s history classes were asked to draw on the work of the previous two phases of the study to create a multimodal composition that addressed the unit’s essential question: “They say facts don’t change, but our opinions about them do. Why do understandings of history change through time even though the events and facts of that history have not?” The video essay asked students to use the sources curated and
analyzed in both English and history to identify ways that our understanding of a historical event has changed. Lastly, students were asked to review classmates’ work, provide feedback on that viewing, and then reflect in a personal essay on how this project better helped them understand the purpose of studying history. The final exam score, which was weighed as 20% of the semester grade in history, was a combination of all three tasks assigned during Phase Three of the study: the video essay, viewing of classmates’ video essays, and a personal reflection essay.

To better understand the teachers’ intents and curricular goals, I observed and recorded monthly planning meetings, which were mostly conducted at the conclusion of monthly teacher professional development days. To better understand how the students understood the context and demands of the project, I routinely observed Mary’s Block 4 history and Kathy’s Block 6 English classes throughout all three phases. Additionally, I observed and interviewed four student participants as they navigated the various steps of the project, allowing me to grasp their perceptions of the disciplinary and composing tasks in a more ongoing and personal way.

From here, I report important findings as they emerged from my analysis of the data collected, with findings presented chronologically through the study phases (Teacher Planning, Composition Phase One, Composition Phase Two, and Composition Phase Three). Importantly, I explore how each phase helped to answer the guiding research questions. Those questions were:

1. How does a student’s perception of composing differ across disciplinary contexts, such as in a history class rather than an English class? How does
this change when the composing is done in a cross-curricular project that spans both history and ELA?

2. Because new literacies expand the choices students must make through multimodal composing, what relationship can be seen between the authoring choices a student makes while composing multimodally and the literacy demands of various content area classrooms?

3. How does a student who is engaging in cross-curricular inquiry in both English and history perceive the disciplinary demands specific to each content area?

4. How do teachers account for the negotiation students must undergo in order to meet both English and history curricular goals in that cross-curricular project?

**Teacher Planning Phase**

During the teacher planning phase, I describe four findings—one in response to the third research question and three in response to the fourth research question (see Table 15).

**Findings Related to Research Question 3: Students Compartamentalize Writing Tasks by Discipline**

During several planning sessions, Mary and Kathy spoke about their belief that students treat literacy tasks (especially writing tasks) differently in English than history.
Table 15

Breakdown of Findings for Teaching Planning Phase

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Research Question</th>
<th>Findings to be Reported</th>
</tr>
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<tr>
<td>3</td>
<td>Students compartmentalize writing tasks by discipline</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4</td>
<td>Planning for common purpose helped keep focus when problems arose Structural and organizational constraints of school complicated teacher planning Openness to cross-curricular work became important</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Both teachers said they draw on their teaching experiences as educators to make this observation, including their experience working in a cross-curricular teaching environment. About five years ago, Kathy and Mary co-taught an American Studies class in which students enrolled in the class earned ELA and social studies credit. In Semi-Structured Teacher Interviews (SSTI) #1 and 2, both teachers indicated that the cross-disciplinary teaching allowed them to see firsthand how students approached writing tasks differently in English than history. Mary noted that students approached argumentative writing much more rigorously for their English assignments. After seeing the work students produced for Kathy, she saw that students developed much deeper, focused arguments about literature that allowed them to make interesting connections with the literature.

Because of the survey nature of the course, you only spend two weeks in any given area, so they are going to have a surface knowledge of it, and sometimes that produces a much more surface understanding. That’s why it becomes hard for students to find common themes through history. (SSTI#7)
In observations of the September and October planning sessions, Mary mentioned she hoped working with Kathy through this study would help her students focus more deeply on a few points rather than cover the prompt superficially as they often do.

On the other hand, Kathy said that she has seen that too much of an emphasis on literature in her ELA classrooms has meant that students don’t ask enough questions about the context of a text under review. Kathy explained: “I think history lends itself to more rhetorical analysis. Questions like why did so and so say this to one crowd and that to another, or why did McCarthy use the terms ‘the reds’ 17 times in that speech?” (SSTI#8). When she taught the American Studies class, Kathy noted, they naturally addressed the context of a text under review, but in English they rarely consider when a piece of literature was written and what may have shaped the author’s intentions. While she said she may address some background information with students, the paired nature of the literary and historical teaching had made the context more evident to her previous students.

Kathy also noted that in her experience, students themselves understand that they are treating writing differently in English than history. Kathy said she has learned to talk with students more explicitly about the varying writing demands in English and history. These differences are something students inherently understand, but it may not be easy for them to meet those demands in their own writing. “It’s just hard for them to apply and think, ‘I’m writing like a historian.’ But they do understand that there are differences,” she said (SSTI#8). In my class observations, I did note one exchange that demonstrated Kathy’s point. The last Honors English 10 class before the AP U.S.
History exam on May 5, Kathy ended the class by saying, “Good luck tomorrow. Remember to read and write like a historian, not an English teacher.” The students laughed at this, commenting that they never thought they would hear such advice from her. “So they acknowledge (the different writing demands), but developmentally it’s very difficult for them. As it would be difficult for me,” Kathy reflected after that class.

**Findings Related to Research Question 4**

During the teacher planning phase of the study, data I collected was relevant to Research Question 4, which looked at teacher negotiations in support of student composition in shifting contexts. The following section explores the findings.

**Planning for common purpose helped keep focus when problems arose.**

During the September and October planning sessions, Mary and Kathy identified and then shared what curricular goals they hoped to achieve in the common project. Articulating goals helped guide the teachers later, when they had to substantially adjust the project after realizing the number of students who were not enrolled in both Honors English 10 and AP U.S. History, a realization that meant that the cross-disciplinary instruction could not continue as originally planned.

When I asked the two teachers during the September 9 planning session what they wanted the assignment to accomplish in terms of student composition skills, Mary suggested students needed to practice a critical evaluation of historical texts in order to see what perspectives are emphasized, and Kathy suggested she would like students to learn to develop a few points more deeply rather than making multiple superficial arguments as they often do in argumentative essays. The two left the early meeting with
a broad agreement to participate in the study, but they agreed to further consider what curricular needs they would like to see addressed in the subsequent composing tasks.

At the October 14 meeting, both Mary and Kathy shared curricular needs they could address in the project. The conversation began when Kathy asked Mary what key history skill she wanted to build. Mary mentioned that in looking at the College Board’s AP U.S. History curriculum standards, she really felt she needed to spend some time on historical interpretation, which requires students to look at diverse interpretations of the past. She shared that early in the year students had looked at several textbook entries about Christopher Columbus so that they could identify how the perception of Columbus had changed as other voices were included in the conversation. “They liked that, but I just don’t have time to do more than that.” Kathy mentioned that was not very different from working on perspective, something she called a critical skill in ELA. She said finding different perspectives often challenges students because of its abstract nature. Kathy said she would like the project to help students consider audience more because she had a sense that her students were “just writing for me, an audience of one.”

The teachers worked on writing an essential question during the October 14 and November 11 meetings to guide the unit and their planning for subsequent tasks. Both teachers agreed having such a question was a good starting point, and they engaged in a lengthy discussion in front of a computer monitor, where they posted several drafts of the essential question. The final question read: “They say facts don’t change, but our opinions about them do. Why do understandings of history change through time even though the events and facts of that history have not?”
**Structural organizational constraints of school complicated teacher planning.**

The process of co-planning and teaching was often complicated by the school structure, such as course scheduling and school calendars. Specifically, the teachers discovered about two months into the planning that about a third of each of their students were not enrolled in the other advanced class. Before this realization, the teachers had planned to include the video essay as a cross-disciplinary task for both courses. The number of students who were not involved in both forced them to rethink that decision. Ultimately, the multimodal composing was completed in history classes alone.

To be clear, structural limitations existed before the cross-disciplinary planning began. While both Kathy and Mary discussed the value they saw in the cross-disciplinary work they designed in the American Studies class, both talked about the limitations of bringing those elements to their own, self-contained classrooms. When asked how she addressed the observation she made that literature helps students contextualize history, Mary admitted in SSTI#2 that she has had little success using literary texts in her history classroom. Since the AP U.S. History is a survey course, Mary commented, she has had to find ways to bring literature into the course in ways that require less instructional time. For instance, she does use the poem “Booker T. and W.E.B.” by Dudley Randall (1969) in her teaching of early civil rights movements. Additionally, Mary has had her history students read a historical novel and then create a Document-Based Question about the time period depicted in the novel, but such work is often difficult to schedule in the course. “There is just so much to cover in order to prepare them for the exam,” she said, adding that she feels better introducing literary
texts in her freshmen courses, which are not AP and therefore have more flexibility. Mary said that she generally sees literature as an asset in her teaching of history, though she acknowledged it means she has to slow down and cover less material, a choice she is not comfortable making on the advanced levels. However, the structural limitations of the school setting offered unique challenges once the teachers began to plan together. For her part, Kathy reported in SST#8 that she often found it difficult to bring in the best historical texts to the classroom to help her contextualize a work. She said she simply does not have enough content knowledge to select historical texts.

Once the teachers agreed to work together on a cross curricular project, a new complication arose: finding time for shared planning. The teachers met nearly monthly through March to plan the project, and they moved to bi-weekly sessions as it drew closer to the time of instruction. Usually, they would meet in the school’s Learning Commons, a renovated space with collaborative workspaces that include booths and monitors allowing screen sharing. These meetings often occurred in the afternoon of our monthly schoolwide professional learning days, and both Mary and Kathy would admit to fatigue when they sat down to meet. Most meetings would last about one hour, but some of that time was reserved for general conversation.

One unanticipated problem occurred at the November 11 meeting, when Kathy realized the number of students who were not enrolled in both courses simultaneously. Comparing rosters, Kathy noted that 15 students were in Honors English 10 and not AP U.S. History; Mary had 21 enrolled in her class but not Honors English 10. This amounted to about a third of each teacher’s student load. This observation caused several
glitches in the initial plans because Kathy and Mary had been building the unit so that it would culminate in a video essay that would be assessed in both English and history classes. As it became clear that scheduling concerns would change initial plans, Mary and Kathy agreed to these two conditions: (a) Mary would better focus on a project if most of it were to happen after the May 5 AP U.S. History exam; and (b) Because the two teachers had several students not enrolled in both courses, they agreed that they should continue to work together but revise the initial plans so that the work could be completed independently in each course.

Timing, therefore, was now a more limiting factor since the decision to move the video essay to history class required Mary to schedule its completion after the national exam. The project was now tightly bounded by the end of the school year. The teachers then discussed how instruction before the project could be more purposeful and support cross-disciplinary thinking. As a result, Kathy said she would move the sequencing of her course readings so that the Honors English 10 students read *The Things They Carried*, a Vietnam-era novel by Tim O’Brien (1990), at the same time they were learning about that war in Mary’s class. Kathy told Mary she chose that novel because of its rich cross-curricular possibilities. The new sequencing made it necessary for Kathy to make three major changes to the yearlong Honors English 10 curriculum map, but she agreed to make those changes. As the November planning meeting came to an end (about 4:30 p.m.), Mary said she would look for Document Based Question (DBQ) prompts about the Vietnam era, hoping that might provide some material that both she and Kathy could use in their separate disciplinary units. By the next planning meeting February 5, Mary
provided Kathy with a draft of the DBQ question and Kathy showed her the new Honors English 10 curriculum map.

In the February 5 meeting, the teachers started to look at the DBQ prompt Mary presented for possible cross uses in the classrooms. In the discussion of the prompt, a new concern became more evident: the two teachers recognized that Mary would be deeply involved in exam preparation at the time of the cross-disciplinary project, which was scheduled to begin in April. As a result, the two decided that Mary’s instruction would include elements of the AP exam, allowing Mary to meet her curricular goals for exam preparation, but also meeting the cross-curricular goals of the unit. In the end, the teachers decided that the DBQ question would be posed to the students in a way consistent to the AP exam in history class, and Kathy would then design a prompt that would ask students to compose a document-based argument about a work of literature in her class that used the same documents. This way, Mary’s evidence-based historical argument became part of her regular exam preparations, and the evidenced-based writing would also serve to support student exam preparation.

This created a tight window for assigning the work, as both teachers felt that the students needed some time to lapse between the two writing tasks in order to avoid confusion and writer fatigue. Kathy suggested that the two teachers rough out a schedule for the project. After consulting the school calendar, Mary suggested she assign her evidence-based writing task one week before Spring Break and Kathy assign hers one week after it. Kathy liked that suggestion, indicating it would allow students to approach the documents with a fresh perspective, yet the timing was close enough that the learners
would be able to see the relationship between the two tasks. “Hopefully they’ll clearly see what is different in each discipline, so they can see how to bring in elements of both in the video essay,” Kathy said. Mary, especially, was concerned that the tight schedule would leave little room for students to adjust, so she suggested that the instruction needed to be carefully aligned so that students were practicing the key skills they would later use in the composing phases. As a result, both teachers agreed to teach the protest song used in the documents for the first phase of the composing, and Kathy agreed to simplify the research process used in Phase Two since Mary had not focused on research as much in the school year (Kathy’s group had written an eight-page, fully documented research-based literary argument in February, but Mary’s group had only done a few general research assignments). They both expressed surprise at how long these decisions had taken to make together, and they agreed to meet March 4 to plan the rubrics themselves.

The March 4 discussion of the rubrics revealed a final structural hurdle for the teachers: how to assess the project phases in ways consistent with the cross-disciplinary nature of the task but that addressed the challenges they had already named. The two teachers identified these phases to assess collaboratively: individual curation of sources in each course, analysis of trends in sources curated by groups in each course (Historian’s Notebook and Critic’s Notebook), and a video essay addressing the essential question. Whereas Mary indicated she would complete the actual assessment in Phase Three (the video essay), she asked Kathy’s help in developing a robust rubric.
At the same meeting, the teachers noted that the timing created an assessment problem: students might not want to engage in a new writing task so near the end of the school year and performance may be influenced by a poor attitude. Mary was worried some students would work below their ability because they may believe the AP exam was the culminating activity of the year. To address this concern, Kathy suggested Mary use the video essay as part of the semester exam. Kathy indicated she liked this idea because she had not been happy with her previous exam, and this could help her address that concern. With Kathy’s help, Mary developed a plan to use the video essay as the exam, but both expressed concern that the video essay would need to be completed before the final exam class meeting so that students would not procrastinate and artificially lower their semester grades (the school requires the exam to be scored as 20% of the overall semester grade). The teachers discussed the idea of requiring students to upload their video essays before the exam date. During the exam, Mary suggested that students watch one another’s video essays and reflect on the project as a whole. She noted that the plan might also encourage students to work more carefully on the video essays, since they were aware that others would view their work.

As the March meeting came to an end, Kathy and Mary focused their discussion on how to draft the rubrics. Kathy suggested a more holistic approach to assessing, as she noted that Mary’s rubrics were fairly specific to AP-style assignments. “Students would be familiar with a rubric like our English one, but it would signal this is something different,” she offered. Mary agreed, and the two identified the appropriate criteria categories for the rubric. Both expressed feeling pushed for time, so they accessed two
instructional supports in the school designed to help teachers with their planning: Mary asked our school media specialist to finish the research pathfinder to link quality sources students could use for the project, and Kathy worked with me to finalize the rubrics.

Therefore, the structural constraints of the school year, including course enrollment, standardized testing dates, and final exam requirements, complicated Mary’s and Kathy’s initial plans for the study. As a result, the teachers had to carefully plan strategies that would allow their individual instruction in each discipline-specific classroom to support cross-disciplinary thinking and composing.

**Openness to cross-curricular work became important.** Despite the structural constraints and problem-solving involved in planning for the unit, Mary and Kathy continued to express how much they valued this kind of cross-curricular work and the benefits such an experience held for their students.

Kathy admitted that her experience during her graduate schooling, when she co-directed a college writing center, broadened her perspective, and allowed her to see that she can play a crucial role in supporting writing across the disciplines (SSTI#10). In that interview, Kathy said that she has come to realize that she needs to work closely with disciplinary teachers such as Mary who are clearly engaging in meaningful literacy tasks within their disciplinary classrooms. She said Mary often comes to see her for help on designing a lesson, sometimes using strategies she had seen Kathy use in their American Studies class. For Kathy, such collaboration is important, and she is happy to give up some of her planning time to help a colleague. She noted:
Who else is going to do it? I can have somebody like Mary, where she can say something like, “I want to do a two-voice poem like the one you did when we taught Gatsby. Can you put something together for me?” I think a lot of times in high schools the English teacher is not only unwilling to do this, but the other teachers are not willing to attempt to write in their classrooms because they have such a deep love for their discipline and they are so engaged with it. We have to help them engage with that discipline through the writing, and we know how to do that.

She shared that writing teachers need to be willing to listen and learn from colleagues in other departments. For example, she said, passive voice is a strict no-no in composition classes, but in science writing, it’s all about passive writing. I have to be willing to adjust my norms. Being open to other ways of doing things . . . It’s a mindset that I think a lot of English teachers are not willing to take on because they have a deep love for literature, but not every kid reads like that. Not every kid is going to write like that.

Kathy noted, too, that she has learned that Mary has a lot to offer her as well, and she said she often seeks Mary’s help in finding good historical texts to use in her English classroom. Kathy said,

I think history lends itself to more rhetorical analysis. Questions like why did so and so say this to one crowd and that to another, or why did McCarthy use the terms “the reds” 17 times in that speech? It does lend itself to English Language Arts thinking, but it’s a different path. (SSTI#8)
She said that Mary is often able to help her find good historical texts that allow her to bring more context to her instruction on literature. But reading political speeches and legal briefs are very different than teaching literature, she admitted. That, Kathy suggested, may be why teachers often don’t see that the crossover benefits students in both subjects. Traditionally, English teachers only see how their discipline can support the others, especially when addressing writing across the curriculum. “I think a lot of time, we don’t notice the transfer,” she said. “We see them as taking a lot of our skills to other teachers.” Teachers, she added, need to be open to understanding the writing demands in other classes and not see these as competing, but try to see how they relate.

For her part, Mary continued to express a desire to strengthen students’ argumentation skills. In SSTI#2, she said that she consistently sees the students producing more focused and developed arguments in Kathy’s class. “Perhaps I can help them be less shallow if I use some of (Kathy’s) techniques in my classroom,” she said. Mary is currently working toward a second master’s, and she noted that she had forgotten just how much knowing how to write well can help students in college. “I just think if you can write well, it’s easier to do well in college,” she observed (SSTI#7).

Mary’s desire to support the cross-curricular writing also gave her insight into what the students may need to support their video composing work. By the April 4 planning meeting, the teachers had all materials for initial steps uploaded and ready to go, but Mary came to see me the next morning with a concern that the assignments would be so different from what her students would be used to completing. “I don’t want to frustrate them,” she said. “That will defeat the whole purpose.” After some discussion, I
offered to write models of both source analysis papers (Historian’s Notebook and Critic’s Notebook) as well as the video essay. After composing the models and to address what I worried may be Mary’s discomfort with the process, I opted to also create a video essay planning guide that Mary could use with her students to support them as they composed the video essay task. The guide simply helped students plan what sources to include in their video essays. When I presented the items to Mary on the April 14 planning meeting, she indicated that she liked the concept, admitting that she had seen Kathy use such prewriting techniques but had never really developed such strategies much beyond requiring students to write an occasional outline.

In conclusion, both teachers expressed real appreciation for the benefits of cross-disciplinary thinking within their classrooms. This support of the shared goals seemed to guide the teachers as they worked to refine and evaluate each phase of the study.

**Composition Phase One (Evidenced-Based Writing)**

The initial composing phase of the study was designed to help establish disciplinary norms but also help students to begin the process of integrating the two disciplines. As noted earlier, in this phase of the study students were given separate evidence-based tasks to address in typical essay formats. In both situations, the writing was done in-class and on-demand. Both teachers expressed confidence that the tasks would be seen as typical for each course. Yet, the writing task included the use of the same five sources in both English and history, an intentional choice that both teachers thought would lay the groundwork for later cross-disciplinary thinking. The following is
data collected during this phase of the study, which addresses Research Questions 1 and 4. The data revealed two findings in response to the first research question and two findings in response to the fourth research question (see Table 16).

Table 16

*Breakdown of Findings for Composition Phase 1 (Evidence-Based Writing)*

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Research Question</th>
<th>Findings to be Reported</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td>Students perceive different purposes for writing in English and history classes Students were concerned with correctness in history and writer’s choices in English</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4</td>
<td>Students saw teacher support as related to discipline-specific concerns Teachers identify different student challenges in the evidence-based writing tasks</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Findings Related to Research Question 1**

The following section explores the data collected during the first composing phase of the study, which addressed Research Question 1 and explored student perceptions of disciplinary and cross-disciplinary composing.

**Students perceive different purposes for writing in English and history classes.** It was clear that the four student participants largely perceived the purpose of historical writing as being to demonstrate knowledge, whereas English was about discovering “something new.” The sequencing of the writing assignments in the two units may have contributed to this belief, as the English assignment was given on the fifth day of an 11-day unit and after students had read several related texts about war but before they had completed the focus novel, Tim O’Brien’s *The Things They Carried*. In
the history, however, the assignment was an end assessment for a two-week unit on the 1950s and 1960s in American history that included discussion of the Cold War and the Vietnam War. The prompt in English required the students to read the war poem “Facing It” by Yusef Komunyakaa (2001) and use the documents to suppose what the speaker was facing as he visited the Vietnam War Memorial in Washington, DC. English argumentation, as reported by all four participants during SFGI #1–2, was less intimidating because, as Hailey noted: “You can be right or wrong, as long as you prove your point.” Nate said in English “I have choices” because the prompt asks the writer to “explain what you are thinking.” All four expressed more comfort with composing for their English classes because of the more open-ended nature of the writing.

In those same interviews, the four student participants described historical writing as more prescribed. Nate and Mike talked extensively about how the history prompts often embed organization by asking a three-part question that naturally produces a five-paragraph essay. For instance, in the assignment under review for this study, students were asked: “Analyze the ways in which the Vietnam War heightened social, political and economic tensions in the United States.” The provided documents must then be analyzed and sorted according to the type of tension the students perceived it to demonstrate. Mike talked about how it was easy to organize the essay around the three topics: moving from social, political, and economic tensions and simply categorizing the historical documents by each category. Hailey and Mike both talked about how the prompt “organizes your thinking.” All four reported that while the organization was evident to them through the prompt, they were concerned because, as Nate put it, “you
can just blow it” by getting a fact wrong or misreading a document. Therefore, less concern was expressed about how to organize the topics (though Nate did mention that he would not follow the order of the prompt but would first discuss the topic he felt was his strongest), but all four talked about the importance of getting the supporting evidence correct. This differed in their discussion of English support, where students tended to focus more on how textual evidence supported their overall claim. “Miss Orr wants to know how (textual evidence) relates to my thesis,” Hailey explained. Students spoke about the “steps” of historical writing, which Sarah identified as going over the topic (Vietnam), summarizing the documents by categories, and then doing some analysis. Again, the students all spoke of the history rubric as a checklist that can be used to self-monitor and insure “everything is there,” as Hailey explained. When the four student participants were asked to explain the difference between the English rubric and the history rubric during SFGI#1–2, they talked about the English rubric as being more of a descriptor of good writing in general, whereas the history rubric was something that listed the steps. Indeed, the two rubrics were very different. The English rubric was holistic in nature with these categories: reading comprehension, writing focus, development of ideas, organization, awareness of voice and audience, and sentence fluency and conventions. The criteria were explained in terms of achievement (“consistent mastery vs. nearly consistent mastery”) and students were given indicators of each level mastery for each category. Table 17 provides excerpted portions of the descriptors of consistent mastery by criteria. Figure 4 is a screenshot of the entire rubric as it was presented to the students.
Table 17

*English Rubric Descriptors for Consistent Mastery*

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>English rubric criteria</th>
<th>Descriptor for consistent mastery</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Reading comprehension</td>
<td>Your choice of textual support shows that you accurately understood what the text said both explicitly and inferentially.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Writing focus</td>
<td>Your writing fully addresses the prompt and accurately interprets the purpose of the assignment.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Development of ideas</td>
<td>The support you give clearly advances the focus you are making and if fully explained in a logical manner.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Organization</td>
<td>Your writing demonstrates purposeful coherence, and includes a strong intro, conclusion, and a logical, well-executed progression.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Awareness of voice and audience</td>
<td>Your writing maintains an effective style given the purpose and audience.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sentence fluency and conventions</td>
<td>Your writing is polished.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Figure 4. Screen shot of English writing rubric.

In contrast, the history rubric was visually displayed as a checklist. The 7-point rubric was based on the College Board rubric for the AP exam. Mary would convert the student’s score out of 7 to a 50-point assignment that was entered in the grade book. The rubric included these sections: contextualization, thesis, document analysis, outside evidence, argumentation, and synthesis. Each criterion was worth 1 point, but document analysis was weighted as 2 points. Rubric indicators gave directions for each of the rubric sections, and students either earned that point or a zero (see Table 18). Figure 5 illustrates the pagination of these indicators, as presented to the students.
Table 18

*History Rubric Criteria Descriptions*

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>History rubric criteria</th>
<th>Descriptor/Direction</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Contextualization</td>
<td>Situates the argument (by explaining the broader historical context that is immediately relevant to the question (2-3 sentences).</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Thesis</td>
<td>Presents a thesis that makes a historically defensible claim and responds to all parts of the question (does more than re-state).</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Document Analysis x2</td>
<td>Correctly uses the content of at least SIX of the documents to support the stated thesis….and explains the significance of the author’s POV context, audience and/or purpose (CAP) for at least FOUR documents.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Outside Evidence</td>
<td>Provides an example or additional piece of SPECIFIC evidence beyond those found in the documents to support or qualify the argument.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Argumentation</td>
<td>Supports a “cohesive argument” that recognizes and “accounts for historical complexity by explicitly illustrating relationships among historical evidence such as contradiction, collaboration, corroboration and/or qualification.”</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Synthesis</td>
<td>Extends the argument by explaining the connections between the argument and a similar development in a different historical period or geographical area.”</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
The four student participants reported the rubric in history was more of a guide for them, offering them hints as to what to include and in what order. Hailey, Nate, and Sarah all said they would return to the rubric after completing the essay to check their own work. In contrast, all four indicated they spent little time with the English rubric.
after composing; Nate said that the rubric, which had been used throughout the year, offered a view of writing that Miss Orr wanted them to internalize. “You just got to think, ‘What will she think of this,’” Nate said.

When asked how they chose and then used the historical documents in each essay, the four participants expressed differences in the function and purpose of the document-based sources in each composition. During SFGI#2, Nate said that his aim in his history argument was to “connect the documents to what we learned in class.” He said he would describe each document and then quote key points to demonstrate in what way it showed heightened tensions as a result of the war. Mike, in the same interview, said that he used the documents in his literary analysis to support his own argument that he was making about the poem. His argument, as stated in the thesis he composed, centered on the idea that “Vietnam was life-changing and country-changing.” Mike said that he found the sources helpful in backing up this claim, “but I only used part of (the documents), because the whole the document . . . I didn’t need it.” Both boys noted, however, that while they needed to discuss nearly all the documents in history, the rubric did not require them to move beyond describing most of the documents. Therefore, they felt like they only “really” used a handful of documents in both essays. They may have been correct in this perception, because all four participants received a 47/50 on their historical evidence-based writing assignment. However, Mary did admit she may have scored them a bit high because she wanted to build their confidence the weeks leading up to the AP U.S. history exam. In English, Hailey received the only A (46/50). Nate
received a B+ (44/50), whereas Sarah and Matt each scored in the low B- range (42.5/50 for Sarah, and 41/50 for Mike).

**Students were concerned with correctness in history and writer’s choices in English.** The four participants spoke about challenges specific to each course, and the challenges they identified reflected their understanding of the disciplinary demands of each course. For history, students worried about being accurate; in English, students were concerned about making decisions in a more open-ended writing context.

In history, all four participants identified reading the documents accurately and efficiently as a challenge. Hailey noted that she “always run(s) out of time. I never get a chance to analyze the documents in a DBQ,” but Sarah admitted she had learned not to stress too much about explaining the documents in history because “even if I don’t get all my sources analyzed, I can still get like a 6 points on the rubric and do well” (SFGI#1). Participants all noted they were familiar with many of the documents from their unit studies, but Hailey described the 50-minute time limit imposed on the historical argumentation as “brutal” because of the sheer volume of reading the students needed to complete in that time. This problem seems central to the challenges participants expressed about the historical argument essay: it took time to figure out what document belonged to which point they raised in the thesis. All four reported weak conclusions in history because of time. Mike said, “My conclusions are pretty weak. That’s where we have to synthesize our essay and then connect it. My connections aren’t strong . . . I don’t know, it’s just, well, it’s not there, in the documents” (SFG#2).
While the four participants expressed a preference for the open-ended nature of the ELA composition, they admitted that led to one very real frustration of ambiguity. Again, Mike related the point during SFGI#2: “In English, it’s not so cut and dry, not so clear what to do and what to write about.” Nate talked about how he can “deconstruct” the history prompt and make composition decisions based on that, including how to organize the essay and what to include. As a result, he has learned to begin his history essays with his strongest point, but that strategy is not as easy to follow in English. “You can get off track in English, you know . . . in English it’s not so easy to decide what my weakest point might be.” Nate indicated that he often only discovers his literary argument in his conclusion because “by the time I’m at my conclusion, I know what I want to say.” Therefore, the organization for an English essay is less obvious and more likely to be uneven.

Findings Related to Research Question 4

The following section explores the data collected during the first composing phase of the study which addressed Research Question 4 and explored teacher support of students in varying composing contexts.

Students saw teacher support as related to discipline-specific concerns. The four participants’ observation of teacher support largely corresponded with the challenges they identified with each discipline. During SFGI#1–2, all four participants spoke of Mary’s early instruction on writing historical arguments, during which she broke down historical argumentation into steps that she taught explicitly in the fall and that students practiced routinely throughout the year. Hailey praised Mary’s practice of allowing a
rewrite option because she said it helped learners see what steps they had failed to complete because of timing concerns. Sarah said, “Mrs. Smith is very straightforward in history. It’s facts, you know, and she wants us to use the facts to talk about a historical event.” Nate said that the feedback and rewrite opportunity are important because “I can really look at the rubric and see where I lost points. You know, think about it. You know what the reader wants, and well, it helps me to see what I missed.” Mary reported fewer students took the rewrite opportunity than usual (she said less than 10 had done so), but she acknowledged that she had graded the essays “generously” because it was the last practice DBQ students would take before the AP U.S. History exam, and she had wanted to build their confidence before the standardized test (SSTI#6).

The feedback in English was seen by the four student participants as more general and more focused on the participants’ ideas and thoughts. Nate explained:

Miss Orr makes us footnotes; she comments for us. She points out things like “you need more analysis here” or “you need more support here.” I got to look at what she wrote and then look at what I had (so it’s not as easy to revise in English).

During SFGI#1–2, participants reported less teacher feedback on essay structure in English but more on whether they were able to clearly argue their point. “Yeah, Miss Orr doesn’t care how many sources we use, just that we answer the question,” Sarah said. “Miss Orr . . . she likes when we say something new, something unusual.” All four participants commented that Miss Orr has occasionally allowed rewrite opportunities, but they all indicated it was the frequency of writing that really helped them get better.
Participants reported that they wrote “something substantial” about once a week, significantly more than three to five times a quarter they reported in history.

In SSTI#6, Kathy reported that she found the class’s ability to draw their own inferences from the documents in order to analyze the poem was uneven among her students. “They would plug in the poem and then they would plug in the historical documents right at the end,” she said. This lack of context makes it difficult for students to analyze historical documents in depth, a trend she saw through every step of the current process. “It’s hard to get them to move beyond just providing a source or a quote and provide real analysis.” While Kathy did not allow the rewrite option, she did choose to copy and share two very well-done student responses so that individual students might be able to see what was missing in their own essays.

Teachers identify different student challenges in the evidence-based writing tasks. It may be that the students’ perceptions of teacher support differed in large part because teachers themselves identified very different needs when observing their students’ performance on the evidence-based writing tasks.

In SSTI#7, Mary made the observation that after engaging in these parallel evidence-based writing assignments with Kathy, she realized that the term “synthesize” meant different things in English than history. “Synthesize in a DBQ means that you are comparing that time period to another. You are kind of figuring out where that time period fits into the larger story.” When asked to define synthesis in English, Kathy commented, “So I want them to compare and contrast sources in order to build an argument. To use two sources to build an argument, whatever that may be” (SSTI#8).
Mary said that realizing the term is used differently can help her better address the students’ weaknesses. “They just might not realize what I’m asking,” she said (SSTI#7).

Teachers did not agree on the value that they saw in the complementary evidence-based writing tasks, which required students to perform similar tasks in history and English using the same historical documents. Mary thought that for some learners, the blurring of the lines through the shared historical documents for the evidence-based writing tasks created a deeper understanding. In SSTI#9, Mary pointed to Mike’s document-based argument, which she said was stronger because he had completed the assignment after his English essay, in which he analyzed the lingering effects of the war as they were presented in the poem. He was one of only a few students to sequence the two assignments in this order due to absences. Mary said she thought he was more focused on the human impact of the Vietnam War as he wrote the DBQ.

I think the cross disciplinary approach humanizes it a bit, where I think sometimes when it’s isolated like (an AP U.S. history course), they still kind of give the Disney version of history, where they are just glossing over it, generalizing, and—not that they say this in their ending—but it’s that happily ever after . . . where it’s very surface-y . . . I think (the students who read the war poem in English first) were looking at the war itself with a little more of critical lens. They were getting more frustrated; they were making comments about how frustrating that must have been to hear your government say this. . . . and that definitely drove home the point that this was definitely a war that humans experienced. (SSTI#9)
For her, the challenge became how to develop that deeper understanding when students do not have the benefit of a piece of literature to contextualize the historical time period. But in the SSTI#6, Kathy was less positive about the benefits of the close sequencing of the evidence-based writing tasks, in large part because she found some learners felt burdened by their experiences in history class and brought that to their English assignment one week later.

I think one of the downfalls was, I heard a lot of kids saying things like “I got a 5/7 on my DBQ, I got a 4/7 . . . so I don’t understand these documents.” They came into this with the idea that this is a DBQ, and I said this is not, I’m asking you to analyze this poem. For them, that was the fallback.

Additionally, the teachers demonstrated very different attitudes about the importance of structure in the writing task. To a large degree, this tension reflects the different purposes for writing (discovery vs. demonstration) students talked about when discussing the differences in writing for English and history.

For Mary, supporting students includes teaching structure and steps to historical argumentation.

In history, they tend to see content as a means to an end rather than apply that content to an analysis or argument. Unless I take them down that path, saying what I need them to do . . . I mean, rightfully so, I need to break it down for them.

(SSTI#7)
Through the years, Mary uses the example of a *Star Wars* movie that begins with the lines, “A long time ago . . .” She tells students they first need to contextualize and situate the historical argument.

Then, I always tell them when they are putting together a body paragraph or an argument, any history writing, think PEA—Point/evidence/analysis. You are starting off with your point that relates to your argument, you are providing the evidence that relates or proves that point and then analyzing it, bringing it back, tying it into the argument, summing it all up, constantly at the end of the paragraph so it shows that you are carrying that argument throughout the paper.

(SSTI#7)

She pointed to her DBQ rubric and explained that it was designed to support this approach.

At the final planning meeting for the year on May 27, Kathy expressed frustration with students who chose to follow that same structure in an English essay. Such structure limited students’ exploration of the prompt, she said. This was a problem she anticipated because her experience in graduate school, when she co-directed a university writing center, helped her to understand that different disciplines approach writing with different expectations. In SSTI#8, Kathy indicated this was one reason she wanted to work with Mary, because working on a cross-curricular piece could open students and teachers to the possibilities of writing beyond their own discipline norms, she said. Kathy admitted that while “not everything you’re going to analyze is through the perspective of an English major,” blurring the divisions between history and English could allow students
to explore history with a more interpretative lens (SSTI#8). This is something that Kathy sees as obtainable in part because “I know that my curriculum is so aligned to Mary’s—she’s teaching American history and I’m teaching American literature.” In the May 28 meeting, Kathy told Mary that she hoped that cross-curriculum experiences could help students see beyond the limitations of formulaic structures such as the ones learned in history classes. Despite her openness to future collaboration, it was evident throughout this phase that Kathy saw little evidence of cross-disciplinary thinking in the shared evidence-based tasks.

Composition Phase Two: Discipline-Specific Sources Analysis

The second phase of the study brought the work of the two courses together and prepared students for the video essay. In this phase, students engaged in a similar process of identifying and analyzing appropriate sources. The key difference between the work in English and history was the type of sources students were asked to curate and analyze: literary texts in English, and historical documents in history. The next section (including Table 19) illustrates important trends that emerged in the analysis of data collected during this phase. The findings addressed research questions 1 (2 findings), 2 (2 findings), and 4 (2 findings).

Findings Related to Research Question 1

The following section explores the data collected during the second composing phase of the study, which addressed Research Question 1 and explored student perceptions of disciplinary and cross-disciplinary composing.
The open-ended nature of the learning task left students unsure how to adjust. When the student composing shifted to a cross-curricular context that spanned both history and writing, students exhibited signs of anxiety, such as asking many questions of the teacher and one another. The shifting contexts left them wondering how to reconcile the demands they expect with each discipline to this more fluid setting. All four participants reported frustration over what they called “blurring” classroom expectations. “My objective is unclear,” Mike noted during SFGI#4, indicating that he felt that the cross-disciplinary assignment, in which learners found trends in historical and literary documents, was more open-ended than he was used to in history. “I’m not used to looking at someone else’s viewpoint in history,” he said. “I mean, I’m not used to having to think about what they are saying. It’s usually more factual.” Similarly, he reported a sense of confusion in English because his main argument was no longer focused on his own idea or opinion. “I have to think about what they are saying, not what

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<td>The more open-ended nature of the learning task left students unsure how to adjust</td>
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<td>Writers found ways to cope with the open-ended nature of the assignment</td>
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<td>2</td>
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Table 19

Breakdown of Findings for Composition Phase 2 (Discipline-Specific Source Analysis)
I want to say,” he commented. Hailey reported similar confusion in focus, indicating that she felt she was likely too focused on the historical facts and not enough on the inferences she could draw from the documents. “This is a different process that I had to use,” she said, indicating she knew that the literacy demands had shifted in history class but she did not feel she had made the appropriate adjustments (SFGI#3).

In class observations on May 16, this confusion was most evident in the English class, where class members asked Kathy several clarifying questions about their source curation task. A substantial number of students in the class seemed to have a difficult time identifying what sources would be considered literary texts, and students routinely asked Kathy to check their work on the online bulletin board. In a typical exchange about source selection, one learner came to Kathy with his laptop computer open and a website of Dorthea Lange pictures. “Is this a literary or a historical picture?” he asked. After this exchange and several like it, Kathy stopped class for a moment to announce she would extend the due date by a day because she noted their concerns and wanted to offer them more time to seek her help. “I’m making you think,” she told them, “but that’s hard.”

After that exchange with the students, Kathy continued to go about the room, answering questions and reassuring students. One student told Kathy that he was having a difficult time “categorizing” his sources: that is, he was not sure what type of source he was finding and whether it would be considered literary. Another student told me, “I am just frustrated by the magnitude of material I am finding” as she sifted through the sources others had left on the group’s Padlet page, which focused on the Civil Rights
Movement. One student indicated to Kathy that he was enjoying working with his fellow group members, but “perhaps I should have moved somewhere I can concentrate better,” indicating that he found the task of analyzing the English sources very taxing. However, he never did leave the pod he and his other group members had created from the moveable tables in the Learning Commons.

**Writers found ways to cope with the open-ended nature of the assignment.**

While the participants expressed increased anxiety in this phase of the study, they also used several composing strategies to meet these new challenges. Some of those strategies were discipline-specific. For instance, students adjusted their writing process to help them make decisions in this unfamiliar writing context. Importantly, although both written assignments required learners to identify trends and shifts in historical and literary documents, during SFGI#3–4 the four participants reported using a different prewriting process for English, where their job was to identify shifts in public opinion as they were seen in the literary texts. Sarah said that in English she found her sources first and then “wrote backwards and discussed the shifts. With history, I knew that just about everything could back up the trends I found, so I wrote that first and then decided what sources to use” (SFGI#3). Hailey agreed that the English component required students to draw more inferences, making it more challenging for the writer. “I had to use the Japanese American responses to figure out what the American opinions were,” she said (SFGI#3). Therefore, both students used what they had learned in English—to plan their writing before composing—to help them make decisions appropriate for the new writing context.
Additionally, once students made the adjustment for English, they expressed more confidence in making similar adjustments in history. Importantly, students found the composing task easier in history because it followed their composing in English. “You know how to get started,” Nate said.

If I get a project in a class like history, I usually don’t know what I’m doing. It can take a couple of days for me to just start it. But this time, I was able to jump in like Mrs. Smith wanted us to. (SFGI#4)

Therefore, students were using their compositions for English as a model for their history classes. This decreased their anxiety, indicating that they were becoming more comfortable with the blurred expectations that had unsettled them in the process.

Finally, in SFGI#3–4, students noted that the rubric for this phase was more open-ended than the usual writing rubric in history class. The holistic rubric allowed students to make more choices, Sarah commented, and all four noted that they liked having a holistic rubric similar to the English writing rubric because it allowed them some flexibility in their writing. While they reported liking the rubric, they also discussed how it made them unsure to have those choices in history classes. “I am not sure this is what Mrs. Smith wants,” Sarah indicated to me. Interesting, while Hailey and Nate expressed the most anxiety with the shifting writing context, they both received a 25/25 on their Historian’s Notebooks, indicating that although they reported significant confusion in the cross-disciplinary composing context, they were able to successfully adjust and meet the new demands required for success in the open-ended nature of the composing in Phase Two.
Findings Related to Research Question 2

The following section explores the data collected during the second composing phase of the study, which addressed Research Question 2 and explored new literacies as it relates to disciplinary-specific composing.

**Students drew mainly on ELA skills to navigate the complex composing context.** While the composing task was cross-curricular in nature, participants identified a skill important in English class—drawing inferences—as the critical element that helped them to bring purpose and focus to this new composing context and unfamiliar writing task.

The need to read for deep meaning and new understanding, a key demand in English, also became a recurring theme in SFGI#3–4. “I felt that English made this way harder,” Hailey noted, because she felt the sources found in English class required more interpretation on her part. She also said she found it challenging to discern popular opinion from artistic creations such as artwork and poetry. Kathy concurred with Hailey, saying that she found the class’s ability to connect such inferences from poems, paintings, and literature about the historical period was uneven among her students. However, she added, some students who were able to draw inferences, such as when Sarah realized that primary historical documents about internment camps lacked significant acknowledgement of the Japanese-American perspective in part because of existing racism (SSTI#9). In SFGI#3, Sarah noted that by looking at literary and artistic texts about the internment camps, she was better able to see “a lack of communication and understanding of each point of view” in the government’s official account of the
In SSTI#9, Kathy said that students who made such inferences were better prepared for the assignments that followed (video essay and reflection).

For student participants, the interpretive nature of the literary texts seemed to encourage more inferential thinking. In SFGI#3, for example, Sarah and Hailey reported that the literary texts allowed them to better contextualize primary source documents, such as newspaper editorials endorsing the camps. “I liked seeing both,” Hailey said.

For the primary documents, I liked seeing what actually happened. But looking at later times, I liked the literary ones because you could see the reactions and how we got to the point of change . . . why we gave reparations for those we interned. Sarah agreed, saying that she was able to note what perspectives and points of view so important to the literary texts were ignored in the historical documents she curated. She said her awareness of the Japanese perspective, which she gained through the curation of literary texts, allowed her to understand how the government manipulated the facts to fit its agenda when establishing the need for the internment camps. Sarah indicated she hoped this revelation would make her less able to be duped by her own government. “I guess it comes full circle almost,” Sarah said.

Because when you’re looking at the English responses, it shows how the Japanese Americans felt they were being silenced and how they were being silenced. . . . A lot of the literary sources, the poems and artwork, talked about being silenced and fenced in. And then when you see the historical responses, the American government responses, they say things like, “Oh (the Japanese in camps) are doing well. They love it. We just had to put them here to be safe.” It just shows
how they were being silenced by these people trying to keep their opinions quiet, low, to minimize it. (SFGI#3)

This emerging understanding was noted in classroom observations May 16. During a work day in English class, I observed Hailey and Sarah seated together in the Learning Commons pull-out classroom. “Look at this photograph I found,” Hailey noted to Sarah, showing a photograph of a woman protesting a recent policy by President Donald Trump. In the picture of a recent protest of that ban, a woman is seen holding a poster that included a reference to internment camps. In subsequent conversation, both girls connected the time of Japanese internment to the political situation in 2017, when President Donald Trump issued an executive order to limit visas for people in six (originally seven) majority Muslim countries. In the post-composing interview, Sarah discussed why she found that photograph powerful. “We obviously . . . I don’t know . . . I feel like not a lot of people learned that much from the internment camps since we are going through the exact same thing with Muslims today,” Sarah noted. She explained that she sees manipulation of the facts by government. “I think I know now, knowing that there could be manipulation through what the president is saying, what Congress is saying, because they are all on the same team that sees Muslims as a threat” (SFGI#3).

The photograph I observed the girls curating at this phase was posted on the history Padlet site, indicating that while she found the source in English and was able to draw inferences from it, she noted its relevancy was historical.

When asked if she would have seen a connection between the internment camps and the current political culture without looking at both the literary and historical texts,
Hailey was adamant. “No, we had to see both to get that. To understand why we study history, you know” (SFGI#3). In subsequent postings to the shared Padlet page about internment camps, both Hailey and Sarah posted images and quotes that referred to and drew comparisons between the Trump policy and the internment camps. In her critic’s notebook, Hailey discussed the connections she saw between the Civil Rights Movement of the 1960s and the Japanese Redress Movement that emerged after the internment. “At the time, Americans supported things that they later learned were wrong,” she noted. Later, drawing an obvious parallel to that observation and the current political climate, she wrote: “I think action needs to be taken to protect our country from terrorists; however, I do not think banning of a certain culture is the answer.” Therefore, it became clear that reading for inference, a skill that is often emphasized in English class, became critical to helping students bring purpose to this cross-disciplinary composing task.

In observations of the source analysis in history class May 16 and 18, learners seemed less concerned about how to curate and analyze the sources, but there was some indication that students were able to connect the historical and literary sources in important ways. For instance, a discussion of the racism inherent in the internment campus was central to the literary texts the girls curated for English classes. On the online bulletin board for history class, both girls linked newspaper articles about the internment camps from the time period with tag lines that described them as “White American responses . . .” Such overt discussion of race was not present in the sources themselves, and the two other participants never addressed issues of race in their postings.
Students seemed to show less effort in history. While the participants noted it was harder to find, analyze, and label appropriate sources for English class, there was some indication they did not work as hard to complete similar tasks in history. For instance, the focus group linked only database and museum sources to the online bulletin board assessed by the English teacher; but in history, students linked three sources from open or nonacademic sources, indicating they may have paid more attention to basic research skills in English class. Also, the source descriptions differed in quality from English to history. In history, students wrote quick labels, such as when Hailey wrote that a photograph “shows how Civil Rights movement impacted Japanese Americans,” but for an English entry, she wrote a much longer description that read: “Years after the internment camps, people reflect and remember the hard times in the camp.” Figure 6 is a screen shot of the bulletin board website for source sharing which was used in both classes (student names have been blocked out). An observation of this site indicates that students were also more careful as they composed descriptions for English class, writing longer and more precise descriptions of the sources they found.
Findings Related to Research Question 4

The following section explores the data collected during the second composing phase of the study which addressed Research Question 4 and explored teacher support of students in varying composing contexts.

The disciplinary teachers approached the writing task very differently. One very important difference I noted as this project unfolded in the classrooms was that Kathy seemed to spend more time preparing and instructing her students regarding this project than Mary, who seemed to consider the assignment, especially the curation of sources, as uncomplicated or not needing much explanation on her part.
Both teachers used class time to introduce the project steps, but the approaches varied significantly. In her introduction to the assignment on May 10, Kathy used metaphors to help frame the research and writing steps students completed in English class. She talked about the local museum of art and explained how art curators often negotiate terms to loan out works by famous artists. “If the museum was to host an exhibit on, say, Picasso, somebody from the (local art museum) would call other museums,” she told the class. “This lets the museum have a better exhibit than it would without a curator.” She went on to explain that the online bulletin board would allow the group members to have more resources than they could find alone. While introducing the analysis of the sources on May 12, Kathy again used a metaphor, this time of the hunter/gatherer. “Last class you hunted possible sources. Today you will gather them and bring them back to be used in an argument,” she told them. While introducing various elements of the composing phases, Kathy routinely would have the students read the model or rubric, instructing them to highlight for some details. For instance, on May 12, she had the class read the sample source analysis, instructing learners to highlight “every time the author writes about people’s attitude toward women’s right to vote.”

Mary’s introduction to the site curation on May 10 was minimal and largely involved reading the directions and answering questions. After class and while the students worked independently, she reported to me that most students were familiar with the process because they had already started the parallel English assignment. When introducing the “Historian’s Notebook” source analysis on May 12, Mary chose to have a much more developed introduction in which she reminded students of an earlier
assignment in which they read textbook passages about Christopher Columbus that demonstrated a growing understanding of the wrongs inflicted on indigenous people. One student even teased her, “You mean when we found out that throughout most of our history, Americans didn’t care that Columbus was guilty of genocide?” Mary had students compare a song from the Broadway musical Hamilton to an article about politically liberal Americans’ perceptions of Alexander Hamilton that was published in a political science magazine. “What we are going to do is a lot like this,” she told the class. “We’re going to look at how and why people’s attitudes about historical events have changed.”

Whereas both teachers paid attention to the class environment for this phase of the study, they made very different decisions about that environment. During class work days, Kathy moved her class to the school Learning Commons. She conducted whole-class instruction in a pullout classroom in the commons, and then invited learners to move about the large space to work. About three groups chose to spend those work days in the small classroom, moving the modular furniture to allow for easy viewing of each other’s laptops while the others worked in other work spaces, including pod seating and booths. Mary, on the other hand, kept her class in their regular classroom and brought in a computer cart for student use. She played a movie while students curated sources, largely because she had begun the movie the day after the AP exam, she explained. If they were not able to finish the movie because of the project, they would resent the project, she noted.
In SFGI#3–4, the four participants expressed a significant difference in teacher focus for the cross-curricular assignments. Nate noted: “Miss Orr explained it a lot more. She went through each step.” Mike agreed, stating: “Miss Orr wanted more of a process, with understanding ideas and coming up with ideas, whereas Mrs. Smith . . . we just jumped into that one.” In observations of the class, I noted that Kathy circulated the room while students worked, offering feedback and addressing their questions. In history class, Mary gave instructions and then turned on a movie for the class to watch while working independently on their writing and research tasks. Two learners were given permission to work in the hall because they stated a preference to work in quiet.

In SSTI#9, both teachers reflected on reasons and concerns they had about the process as they observed some of these learner difficulties, but the nature of their observations were very different. Kathy was concerned about the scaffolding she offered her students. While I was observing student frustration over how to distinguish a literary from a historical source, Kathy commented to me that she would like to adjust her instruction if the project were repeated next year. “I need to do a better job helping students categorize the sources they find,” she said. On the other hand, Mary’s concerns were more about the process. For example, Mary found that some learners, especially those who moved from Honors English 10 to AP U.S. History, found it was difficult for students to focus on such similar tasks in two classes on the same day. “This is a lot . . . It’s pretty intense. Maybe we should have students do their English work a week or two earlier next year,” she commented.
Teachers perceived a need to increase support for students in Phase Two.

One common teaching element was consistent in both classrooms: a belief that students needed support through the research process. In the February 5 planning meeting, Mary and Kathy agreed to simplify the research process for the history students since Mary had not focused on research as much in the school year (Kathy’s group had written an eight-page, fully documented research-based literary argument in February, but Mary’s group had only done general research assignments). Instead of having students find and evaluate appropriate sources, the teachers asked the school media specialist to create a research pathfinder that would link students to appropriate sources. With the media specialist’s help, they created one pathfinder per topic. This made the project more accessible for students, Mary explained to me in SSTI#11, so that the project would be seen as something fresh, not something that was frustrating. Figure 7 is a screenshot of a portion of the pathfinder as it was accessed by learners through the learning management website. This was created by the school media specialist with the teacher’s input.

Another way to reduce stress had to do with teacher talk in the classroom. Both teachers used humor and supportive language to keep the students from becoming too anxious. The banter between Kathy and her students was evident when she teased them at the end of the May 10 work day, saying, “Oh, I can tell I’m making you think. I believe that’s hurting more than one of you. I know, you’re sophomores. You’re not used to thinking.” Students would often tease her back, such as one student who told her, “Maybe you should go work at the art museum” when she shared her source curation metaphor. His tone was playful, and Kathy simply smiled back at him. Kathy also used
supportive language frequently. After fielding several questions from students writing
the Critic’s Notebooks during a project work day May 14, Kathy stopped the class to tell
them, “I can tell you are really thinking in here.” On that same day, a student came to her
concerned a text was historical and not literary (a frequent problem they faced). She
assured them, “Do your best. It’s OK if you mistakenly put something historical into the
literary section. It’s not the end of the world.” In reflecting on their instructional
language, Kathy indicated she thought it was challenging for students to find their own
sources and she wanted to mitigate any anxiety (SSTI#10).
Similarly, in observations of this phase of the study on May 10–16, Mary would often tell the class that the assignments were “clear-cut, pretty simple” to ease any tension she saw in the class as they worked. She, too, used humor to ease anxiety, such as when she introduced the song from the musical *Hamilton* on May 12. Students asked
her if she forced her young sons to listen to the musical, and she responded, “Of course. Doesn’t every mother?” She, too, used supportive and complimentary language. At the end of the May 16 work day for the written analysis of sources, Mary noted that most students had worked diligently throughout the process, and therefore extended the due date until the next class. She told students, “I know I’m asking you to really think here, and you’re doing great.”

Several times the teachers would stop class and offer a clarifying comment, such as when Mary stopped the May 16 class to share her observation that learners might not find a huge shift in historical understanding so much as a natural evolution of an idea, or when Kathy told her class that a photograph that is posed is almost certainly a literary and not a historical text during the May 12 work day.

The rubrics for the source analysis (Historian’s and Critic’s Notebooks) mirrored the English departmental writing rubric with which students had become familiar in English class. This was a purposeful choice by the teachers, who suggested during the March 4 planning session that they felt it helped to establish the dual nature of the assignment. In the final planning session May 27, Mary indicated that she liked the holistic nature of the rubric for this assignment because she was better able to reward students for complex thinking.

**Composition Phase Three: Video Essay**

The final phase of the study introduced a non-traditional composing element: video essays. Although this task was situated in the history classroom, it was designed to include the source curation and analysis students had conducted in English classes earlier.
The following (as well as in Table 20) are important trends that emerged in the data collection during this phase. These findings addressed four findings related to Research Question 2; two findings related to Research Question 3, and two findings related to Research Question 4.

Table 20

*Breakdown of Findings for Composition Phase 3 (Video Essay)*

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<tr>
<th>Research Question</th>
<th>Findings to be Reported</th>
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| 2                 | Participants perceived the multimodal composing as connected to earlier class work  
|                   | Students wanted teacher support in the new composing context  
|                   | Students engaged in a process-approach to video composing  
|                   | Students showed agency for multimodal composing |
| 3                 | Disciplinary demands, even in English, were important as students composed multimodally  
|                   | Using literary sources with historical sources allowed students to connect the disciplines |
| 4                 | Teachers intentionally connected the two disciplines  
|                   | The discipline-area teacher created an environment that allowed students to experiment |

**Findings Related to Research Question 2**

The following section explores the data collected during the third composing phase of the study, which addressed Research Question 2 and explored new literacies as it relates to disciplinary-specific composing.
Participants perceived the multimodal composing as connected to earlier class work. While not all students in the class indicated a desire to complete the final phase of the project (perhaps due in part to the timing of the project), the participants seemed to see the task as a natural conclusion to the cross-disciplinary work they had completed in Phases One and Two. This was an observation I made of the class in general. In fact, when Kathy told her English classes on May 14 that the final step of the project, the video essay, would be completed in Mary’s classes, she was surprised by the disappointment from the students who were not enrolled in AP U.S. History. “Several of them groaned and said, ‘Man, I wish I’d taken Mrs. Smith’s class.’ I told them they should have,” Kathy recalled (SSTI#10).

When Mary introduced the video essay assignment to her class on May 18, she was met with good-natured reactions from most of her class. As students entered the classroom, she passed out the rubric and planning guide. One student looked at the planning guide and said, “This is my favorite worksheet in here—ever.” When pressed why, he told Mary it was “so straightforward. I get what you’re asking.” Mary, assuming he was referring to the many study guides she had completed with her students prior to the exam, laughed and said, “Well, the exam is done.” Mary indicated to the class that I had completed the planning sheet and the model she was about to show them, and one class member said, “We love you, Mrs. Walsh-Moorman.” As the model video began, another class member jokingly told Mary, “Of course, it’s about Women’s Suffragist.” Mary smiled and told him, “Anything that’s worth having is worth suffering for.” As the viewing concluded, Mary told the class: “Look at this as a way to enhance your second
semester grade. I don’t think you would do worse on this than an actual semester exam.” One learner affirmed that comment, saying, “I don’t think anything could be worse than my performance on the midterm in this class.” Several students, including Mike, agreed with the comment. One student complained, asking Mary why their class was not completing a debate as had been required for the semester exam the previous year. “I heard that was a lot of fun,” she told Mary. Mary told the class, “This is work, but so was that.” One student asked a question about Mary’s expectations. “Do our videos have to include clips like that, or can they just be pictures and words?” Mary told the class there was no reason not to include clips as the online video editing software allowed the class to edit streaming videos into their project and “this is all modern stuff. We have lots of videos of these time periods.” She pointed out that the students had already found their sources and had curated them in English and history. Mary then indicated the class would move to the computer lab so that learners could use desktop computers to compose the video essays. Several students affirmed that decision, indicating that laptops would be difficult for such a task. As students walked to the computer lab, Hailey, Sarah, and Nate walked together and discussed the project and their plans for it. Mike walked with a friend and spoke about unrelated matters.

In the computer lab, most of the class got to work quickly. Some had to finish the written source analysis, which Mary said she would collect at the end of the class. Others started to fill out the planning guide; by the end of the class period, most students had opened the online bulletin site that housed their source links. The room was very focused, something Mary noted surprised her given that this was one of the last classes of
the school year. The four study participants found their own seats, with Sarah sitting at a table alone, and the others sitting close to friends. Each of them opened the classroom learning management system to the links, and the girls started to complete their planning guides. Nate finished his written historical analysis, while Mike talked socially with his friend.

Although most of the class was agreeable, a few showed some resistance. The assignment clearly annoyed one learner. He sat in the back of the room at a table, using his own laptop. He had his head down on the desk and looked visibly irritated. When Mary asked him what was wrong, he told her that he felt the class “shouldn’t have to do anything” after the AP exam. Mary told him that his project is helping her teach “historical thinking skills beyond the content of the class,” and later said “that thinking is very important. I don’t just want you to know names and dates, but why they matter.” She left him with his head down, indicating he often had a poor attitude. “It doesn’t help that this is fourth block . . . He often complains. Maybe he’s just tired by the end of the day, but it’s not unusual,” she said in a quick interview after that class.

**Students wanted teacher support in the new composing context.** While most students did seem to work diligently, they required on-going support from Mary, indicating they may have felt some unease with the open-ended nature of the assignment.

During the final work days for the project (which were also the final class meetings of the year), the class met in a computer lab rather than their regular classroom. Mary told the class she felt the computer lab allowed them to focus on the task, and she instructed students to bring earbuds and play music if that would encourage focus.
Through the three work days, several learners sought Mary’s feedback. By the second work day on May 20, Mary had brought in her own earbuds so that she could easily listen to the audio of student video essays while previewing them without distracting others given the quiet, focused atmosphere of the classroom. Throughout the class, learners would raise their hands and ask her to preview their drafts. Mary would often end such a coaching session with a compliment, reassuring the student, but she would also ask something like “what do you want to put next?” She helped a few students fill out their planning guides, pointing them to the prompt a few times as they made plans for what sources to include in the video essay. One learner had a difficult time seeing shifts in the historical understanding of Vietnam protests. After discussing his concern with Mary, he asked if it was all right to consider the shifts “lessons learned” from Vietnam so that he could instead focus on why the American public treat soldiers much better today.

Most students worked throughout the three work days, but a few expressed frustration and concern about the project directly to Mary. During the May 22 class meeting, one learner said she hated the technology and would rather just write an essay. Another indicated that the open-ended nature of the project overwhelmed her. In both cases, their friends offered to help them, and the first girl was teased by others in the class. “Oh, you just like to complain,” her tablemate told her. Others laughed and continued working. One learner spent a large part of the May 22 class going back to the model, which Mary had posted on Blackboard for the class to access. For nearly 30 minutes, I observed him watching the video and stopping it at segments. When I asked him why he was doing this, he told me, “I wanted to make sure I get this assignment.”
Three of the four participants sought out Mary’s help. Nate wanted Mary to hear a part of a TED talk he had clipped, asking her if she thought his editing made sense. Sarah sought out Mary as she sat at the back of the room to ask her if she could include a soundtrack, and Hailey wanted Mary’s advice on the choice of a picture. I never observed Mike seeking Mary’s help. Instead, he spent most of his time talking quietly to a friend or with the Padlet site open but no other work complete; however, Mary did come to him several times to redirect him and encourage his progress.

**Students engaged in a process-approach to video composing.** Even though the video essay was composed for a history class, there was evidence that students accessed their knowledge of composition that they likely gained in English classes.

Observations of the class work days made it clear that creating the video was a discursive process. At several points, I saw each of the four study participants previewing their video drafts and making adjustments, and Nate often walked to his other group members to offer to watch their drafts as they worked to complete their video essay on internment camps.

The model video essay I created proved to be important. The learner I discussed above, who spent a good portion of the May 22 class watching the model, told me:

Without the model, I probably would have made it a lot less interactive. I don’t think I would have thought about including music or movie clips. The model gives me ideas, and as I’m making my own video I keep going back and thinking am I doing something like this.
Sarah agreed: “Because we watched the model in class, it helped to see it and make sure I was doing it right. I could have ended up with a slideshow of pictures and not a video essay.” That would be a problem, she said, because

There is a big difference between a video and a PowerPoint. A PowerPoint is more formal . . . a video is more fun to make; you can add more elements but if I had thought of it as a PowerPoint it would have been less elements and less

“WOW” I guess. (STAI#8)

The model video, which was uploaded to YouTube and linked through the school’s learning management site, was viewed 57 times that month (three of which would have been Mary’s use of the video in her introductory lesson). Figure 8 is a screen shot of the model, as it appeared to students accessing it through the learning management system, showing it received 57 viewings. Although Mary showed the video once to each of her three classes while introducing the assignment, the views indicate that a number of students accessed the model again while composing their own.
Figure 8. Screen shot of model essay, indicating views.

In another prewriting task, students were asked to complete planning guides. During a class observation May 18, I observed Sarah and Hailey both completing their planning guides before drafting the video essay. They opened the Padlet site from the earlier curation tasks, which housed the links, and spent time deciding what to include in the video and in what order. Sarah indicated that her video, which she completed one day early, was carefully planned.

The outline was a big help . . . Helped me decide what goes where. I did like using that, and with the rubric. I made the video and then looked back just to make sure I had everything, Like I had two clear different historical points.

(STAI#8)
Mike never turned in his planning guide, and Nate was filling it out as he was watching a preview of his nearly completed video essay. When I asked him if he had preplanned the essay before he created it, he said he had, but that he had not written it down before he created the video. He said he always knew, for instance, that he wanted to include a clip from a TED Talk by George Takei, but “I had to figure out what part” (STAI#5). He spent nearly half a class period previewing and then selecting the clips from the talk that he wanted to include in his video essay. Although the earlier in-class composing I observed during Phase One had been a traditional, timed essay, I had not noticed Nate’s interest, nor did I observe him seeking any help from the teacher during that phase.

Through the work days, much of the class was engaged in editing larger videos into short clips for use in the video essays. Students were intrigued by the ability to embed short clips from longer YouTube videos in their own video essays. They found full-length documentaries with historical footage and clipped that footage because they knew it must be important since the documentary makers had used it. When I asked one learner using this technique if he worried it was plagiarism, he said now that the way he clipped it mattered and made sure it was related to his topic. “It’s like using DBQ source,” he told me.

**Students showed agency for multimodal composing.** While composing in the traditional context of evidence-based writing, students had indicated little ownership of their writing for history class, but the open-ended nature of the video essay allowed them to feel more agency in the multimodal composing.
For one, nearly every student in the class was observed asking friends to preview the video essay, indicating students wanted to improve their essay on their own terms. If they had only wanted to please Mary, it is likely they would only have sought her out. In follow up interviews, Nate and Sarah demonstrated ownership of their drafts. “We are putting our thoughts and ideas and using the evidence to prove it,” Nate said of the process. “It’s more of us in the essay” (STAI#10). Sarah said that she liked the creative aspect of the project because “I like to work with visuals. I take art classes, and I like adding some of my own ideas into it” (STAI#8). In the same class, Hailey demonstrated some anxiety about the project because “I don’t want to look stupid. I want it to look professional” (STAI#9).

The selection of a soundtrack, which most students chose to include even though it was neither part of the model nor required, became a recurring discussion during observations of the May 22 work day. When prompted by Mary to begin to work on his project, Mike (who had been chatting with a girl in the class) spent time on the video editing website finding a song for his soundtrack. The site included several canned options for soundtracks, and most students used those when selecting a sound track for their video essay. Mike found several upbeat songs, including one titled “Happy” and joked with Mary, “How’s this for a video on internment camps?” He then found a rap song about the camps, and when he called Nate over to show him, Nate commented, “Dude that was on our Padlet. I found it.” Mike laughed and continued working. Another student in the class called Mary over to ask about an appropriate song for her video on the Civil Rights movement. She did not want to include any of the canned
songs from the website, so she was looking for free mp3 files to download and use for the project. “Is ‘This Little Light of Mine’ appropriate for the topic?” she asked Mary. Mary instructed her to research it, but told her, “There were lots of protest songs that they used, including church songs.”

The work days and the final exam on May 25, in which the learners viewed classmates’ videos and made comments on them, were focused. Students sat in their seats, only moving purposefully to help one another, or get an item off the printer. Even the reluctant student who complained about the project earlier worked diligently the subsequent work days and ended up having his essay uploaded one day before the exam.

**Findings Related to Research Question 3**

The following section explores the data collected during the third composing phase of the study, which addressed Research Question 3, a question that explored student perceptions of discipline-specific composing demands in cross-disciplinary contexts.

**Disciplinary demands, even in English, were important as students composed multimodally.** While students did not seem able to adjust to meet disciplinary demands for both English and history in earlier writing tasks, they seemed to draw on both their experiences in history and English when composing for the video essay.

When asked what she thought of the video essay after having completed it early, Sarah said, “I thought this portion was easy, because it was bringing together what we did in English and history” (STAI#8). In think aloud interviews, all four participants reported that historical understanding was central to the project. Also, in their final
reflection essays for the history exam, each reported that the project helped them to see beyond a more superficial understanding of the internment camps. Hailey wrote in her final reflective essay during the class exam time on May 25:

This project shows that history is not always just going to study the past and those facts that go along with it, but it is going to look at differing opinions on those events over time, which makes studying history interesting.

Even though it was clear that the process of creating the video essay was open-ended and required learners to make important decisions about what to include in their project, one class member told me during the May 22 observation that he found picking the sources “like using a (document based question) source.” Nate said the act of selecting historical sources “was just a matter of going through those sources and deciding which ones to use” (STAI#5). While students indicated in interviews and comments that the process was simple, Mary was constantly being asked to help students with source selection. One student, who was working on a video essay about the Vietnam essay, quipped: “This is hard. I mean, what do you even think about Vietnam today besides it was bad?”

Although the four student participants reported that they found the historical connections challenging, reflection essays by participants demonstrated that most were able to see the discipline of history is more than just a recording of what has happened. For example, Mike wrote: “Over time, humans change their views on historical events because we move farther away from them, and even the values of society change” (sic). Related, I observed Mary as she worked with one student on May 18 who was struggling
to find shifts in society’s understanding of the Vietnam War protests. He seemed almost excited when he realized he could reframe the question to ask what lessons were learned from Vietnam. “Vietnam was a bad time, but we learned to separate our politics and support our troops,” he told Mary.

In the following narrative, I describe the participant videos highlighting details that may reflect the major curricular skills identified by the two disciplinary teachers: making historical connections (Mary in history) and attending to the audience (Kathy in English).

Hailey. Hailey’s video was the longest of the four (4:08 minutes) and included the most texts. Her soundtrack choice was unique and not part of the stock options on the editing website. It was a slow-paced Japanese instrumental that set a sad mood. Hailey used the title slides to introduce and explain the inferences she was making when using art. For instance, before showing racist drawings completed by Theodore Geisel, she wrote, “As a result of the attack (on Pearl Harbor), fear and hatred of the Japanese began to grow in American society.” She identified important historical connections in the video, including how Japanese-American activists were emboldened by the Civil Rights movement in the 1960s. She would overlay text to the visuals so that viewers could connect them to the historical point she was making. For instance, over the video of President Ronald Reagan signing the bill that established reparations for survivors, Hailey wrote, “During Reagan’s presidency, the Civil Liberties Act of 1988 was passed” in text that scrolled across the bottom of the screen as the clip played. She used the image of the Japanese American Memorial to Patriotism During World War II in
Washington, DC to signal her final historical connection. Among the pictures of the memorial, she included an inscription from Rep. Daniel Inouye, who served in the Army during the war. It read: “The Lessons Learned Must Remain as a Grave Reminder of What We Must Not Allow to Happen Again to Any Group.” She went on to include clips of Fox news coverage of a proposal to reinstate a registry for immigrants from Muslim countries. She ended her video with a title slide that read, “Hopefully we can apply the lessons learned from Japanese internment to the issues in our country today.” Figure 9 is a screenshot of a frame in Hailey’s video in which she streams text below a video clip of President Ronald Reagan to help the readers understand the context of the video clip, demonstrating her attention to detail.

Figure 9. Screen shot of Hailey’s video essay. Demonstrates Hailey’s use of textual overlay to contextualize her video selections.
Sarah. Sarah’s video was almost a minute shorter (3:08) and used many of the same historical pictures as Hailey’s, but she chose to include a slow guitar medley available through the editing platform as her soundtrack. She began with the discussion of the Japanese Internment rather than Pearl Harbor. She used fewer title slides than Hailey, but did use them to clarify images, such as when she showed the racist cartoons by Theodore Geisel and then wrote, “However, the fear of Japanese led to a lot of racism and discrimination.” She did not make the historical connection to the Civil Rights movement, identifying 1988 as the first point of change because, as she wrote, “In the late 1980’s there was a change that led to the Civil Liberties Act of 1988.” She included fewer clips, but these were much longer than the clips Hailey showed. For example, she also included President Ronald Reagan’s remarks before signing the reparations bill, but she chose to include the tearful reaction of the survivors who were present, which Hailey had not included. She then included information on the Japanese American Citizens League after the video clip, identifying the signing as “a result of the emergence” of the advocacy group. In her transition to a connection with today’s struggles with Muslim immigrants, she stated in a title slide: “We are seeing a reemergence of sorrow for these camps . . . This reemergence is because of the 75th Anniversary, and a possible Muslim ban.” Her contemporary pictures included a protest at an airport challenging President Donald Trump’s executive order issuing a travel ban for seven Muslim countries in January 2017. One protestor is holding a sign that reads “Japanese Jew Against Targeting Entire Groups of Humans . . . #Never Forget #Never Again.” Sarah ends with a title slide that reads, “Hopefully everyone can remember all the painful effects of the
internment camps on the U.S.” Figure 10 shows screenshots of Hailey’s final three frames, which demonstrate her concern about how the past events of the internment camps are being echoed in current politics.

*Figure 10.* Screen shots of Sarah’s video essay. This series of shots demonstrates Sarah’s focus on a current political situation in relation to the historical time period she studied, internment camps.
Nate. Nate’s 3:48 video included soundtrack music available through the video editing platform that was instrumental. Interesting, it was the same music that Mike eventually selected for his video. Nate began with a title slide about Pearl Harbor, but no visuals to accompany the words, “After the attack on Pearl Harbor, US government and American people believed the Japanese living in Hawaii and on the West Coast were the root cause of the Homeland Attack.” He used title slides to introduce key visuals, including the same Geisel cartoon pictures used by both girls. He chose to introduce the pictures with a slide that read, “Artists, such as Dr. Seuss, expressed the hatred and racism that was growing in the United States.” His first historical connection was 1988, but he did not include any visuals of President Ronald Reagan signing the civil liberties act. His next connection was a vague reference to “years after the war,” and the following visuals included a series of sources that demonstrate the personal experiences of those in the camps, including a long TED Talk clip, a poem written by a child in an internment camp, and images of the Japanese American Memorial to Patriotism During World War II in Washington, DC. Nate spent several slides explaining the memorial, showing pictures of key elements and narrating the purpose of each memorial element in title slides. For instance, before showing the main memorial sculpture, Nate wrote in series of title slides:

The focal point of the memorial is a sculpture of two bronze cranes, tangled in barbed wire. Around the memorial is a curved wall, listing the name of each internment camp along with number of people held there, as well as a list of Japanese Americans who died in combat during WWII.
He then showed a series of pictures of the memorial, showing each of the parts described above. He ended his video essay by stating on a title slide, “The dedication of the memorial and the signing of the Civil Liberties Act show the shift in feelings from support to sorrow for those in internment camps.” Figure 11 is a screenshot of the title screen and pictures Nate used to introduce the disturbing images by Theodore Geisel. Nate’s video depicted two sources he found and to which he reacted strongly: these pictures and a TED talk by a Japanese American actor, George Takei.

*Figure 11.* Screen shots of Nate’s video essay. These two shots demonstrate how Nate included images to which he consistently demonstrated a strong reaction: anti-Japanese propaganda drawn by childhood artist and author Theodore Geisel (Dr. Seuss).
**Mike.** Mike’s video was the only one to last less than 3 minutes (2:56) and was uploaded just an hour before it was due. It began with a historical picture of the Civil Control Administration instructing Japanese Americans to report to civil authorities and beginning the internment process. Throughout the video, instrumental music played, and he chose to include a clip of a survivor sharing a memory of his first night in the camp. In two slides identifying historical connections, Mike wrote too much text, cutting off his title slide in mid-thought. One slide read, “around the 1960’s the Redress Movement was brought forward to try to again rights [sic], compensation and an apology from gov . . .” The other read, “Today their [sic] is more sympathy for the Japanese Americans affected along with many memorials and actions taken to pre . . .” He ended with two pictures of peace memorials but did not identify where they are or what the Japanese text reads.

Figure 12 shows two screenshots of Mike’s video. One is of the incomplete title slide that demonstrates his problems with language control, and the second is of the picture to which that slide transitioned, which demonstrates his attention to historical context.
Figure 12. Screen shots of Mike’s video essay. Though the title slide shows obvious lapses in language control, it does demonstrate Mike’s attempt to bring context to the picture he uses in his video essay.

Using literary sources with historical sources allowed students to connect the disciplines. As students engaged in the multimodal composing, they began to see that the literacy demands of English and history were both important to meeting the challenges of the video essay, a realization that seemed related the way the assignment drew from the source curation and analysis conducted in both discipline classrooms. However, meeting that expectation was neither easy nor consistently mastered in the video essays of the four key participants.

Throughout the video essay composing work days, I observed Mary’s students making comments about how much more open-ended the project seemed to them. This
was stated both positively and negatively, but it echoed how the participants spoke about composing in English class earlier in the study. For example, during the May 18 class observation, I overheard one student tell a friend, “I like being able to decide what to use in here,” but another told Mary, “I just wish you’d tell me what to put in here.” Sarah commented that the wide range of sources available was challenging. “I feel like selecting the sources was a big part of it,” Sarah said (STAI#7). She found it difficult to select what documents to include in her video essay in part because she had access to such a large and diverse collection of historical documents and literary texts about the internment camps developed by her group members and posted to the online bulletin board site. Sarah said she understood that many of her video essay’s more powerful visuals had come from the literary texts she had curated because “they say a picture is worth a thousand words, you know.” In SSGI#3, which occurred just after source analysis and during early planning for the video essay, Hailey said that it was not until she brought the historical and literary sources together that she felt confident in her analysis of the Japanese American perspective. “I liked seeing what actually happened,” she said, adding that the literary texts allowed her to see the reactions beyond those represented in official documents. Although the four participants reported in semi-structured and think aloud interviews that they found the historical sources easier to locate, they talked about being intrigued by the art they found after much searching, such as the cartoonish figures of Japanese Americans penned by Theodore Geisel in support of internment camps. “I couldn’t believe Dr. Seuss was a racist,” Nate said as he explained why he included those cartoons in his video. “My childhood hero . . .” (STAI#5).
The four student participants found it challenging to find the right literary resources to demonstrate inferences in their video essays, an indication that they inherently understood the importance of using both disciplines to support their video composing. Nate commented, “I feel like it was a lot easier to find historical documents” (STAI#10). Hailey expressed concern that she did not include enough of her literary sources in the video essay, though she had compiled and included a list of four different pieces of literature that explored the internment camp experience (STAI#11). That list, however, was presented in the video as merely a list of titles and did not introduce or include any of the content of the movies and novels on it. Upon reflecting on that choice by one of Honors English 10 students during the May 27 planning meeting, Kathy commented that she believed Hailey would never make such a choice in an English assignment because Hailey understood the importance of analyzing the literature but did not transfer that knowledge in this situation. Similarly, Nate’s video included a passage from a poem but gave no information about the poet or the nature of the work. When asked about that choice, he admitted that he would never simply quote a poem in English class but noted that it seemed appropriate in the cross-curricular project. “I don’t think of this as an English project,” he said (STAI#10).

Mary said that overall, video essays were more analytical because the learners had to consider the literary texts in the video essays. “You can see (the students) thinking about the background of the documents and not just the words they were saying,” she said (SSTI#12). In her experience, students lack enough lived experience to see historical connections, Mary said, but literature allows them to learn from others’
experiences. She found strong evidence of this in the video essays composed by Sarah and Hailey, who connected their topic to a contemporary immigration issue. During the May 27 planning session, Mary shared the video with Kathy. She reflected after showing the video,

One thing I’d suggest is that girls tend to, I don’t know . . . crave connections in history. They want to see how one person’s actions relate to another. Guys, on the other hand, they tend to view history from a strong man’s perspective. They see history as a series of battles or struggles—war, politics, natural disasters. But it’s all about who comes up on top and why. Perhaps the videos reflected this, and this assignment sought the more typically girl perspective of history.

Earlier, Mary reported seeing a more superficial approach to history such as this is a symptom of the way history is taught.

Because of the survey nature of the course, you only spend two weeks in any given area, so they are going to have a surface knowledge of it, and sometimes that produces a much more surface understanding. That’s why it becomes hard for students find common themes through history. (SSTI#7)

In the May 27 meeting, both Mary and Kathy reported that they found the learners were able to move past the formulaic historical writing they had used on document-based questions in the video essay. Mary said, “I wonder if it’s because they have so much background knowledge – plus the literary texts . . . Many of the videos were unique, even when . . . (we) viewed multiple essays on the same topic.” Kathy agreed, suggesting that looking at history through literature “is often so much more moving—I mean it’s easy to
feel sympathy for the victims of an internment camp when you read their perspective.” “Perhaps that is why they had more to say beyond the steps of historical analysis,” Kathy said. Similarly, when asked how this assignment compared to other history assignments, Nate said in a think aloud interview while composing the video essay that the assignment felt more like an English assignment because “this is more my idea. More about me,” he commented (STAI#10).

**Findings Related to Research Question 4**

The following section explores the data collected during the third composing phase of the study which addressed Research Question 4 and explored teacher support of students in varying composing contexts.

**Teachers intentionally connected the two disciplines.** Through careful planning of the project, the teachers intentionally tried to shape students’ perceptions that history and English are complementary.

Importantly, the rubric used for the video essay offers insight into how the project was designed so that students needed to use both the knowledge gained in the analysis of literary texts completed in English as well as the trends students identified in historical documents. As the literacy specialist for the school, I was tasked with drafting the rubric. Mary and Kathy both edited the final product, and our continued focus was on how we could use the rubric to signal to students that they needed to focus and explain the historical trends (a skill central to Mary’s course), but also consider how to convey that analysis effectively to an audience (a skill Kathy saw as critical in her classroom). The holistic rubric was developed to model the English rubric, once again a purposeful choice
proposed by Kathy. Categories and indicators for consistent mastery are illustrated in Table 21. Figure 13 shows a screenshot of the rubric as it was presented to the students.

Table 21

*Video Essay Rubric Descriptors for Consistent Mastery*

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Video essay rubric criteria</th>
<th>Descriptor for consistent mastery</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Reading comprehension</td>
<td>You accurately include historical and literary texts to answer the essential question and explain why our understandings of historical events have changed through time.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Essay focus</td>
<td>Your visual essay effectively addresses the essential question as it pertains to your study of a historical event(s). It is crafted with a focus on that question.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Development of ideas</td>
<td>Your visual essay shows effective and comprehensive development of ideas. The support you give clearly advances the point you are making about why our understanding of a historical event has changed over time.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Organization</td>
<td>Your visual essay demonstrates coherent ideas, and organization that allows the viewer to understand initial, historical understanding and a progression of those understandings through time.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Awareness of voice and audience</td>
<td>Your visual essay demonstrates an effective style given the purpose. Your use of visual and written language clearly considers what your viewer needs to follow your ideas.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sentence fluency and conventions</td>
<td>Your visual essay is at least two minutes in length and includes a variety of visual and written texts to convey your ideas. Though there may be minor errors in editing and grammar, your meaning is clear.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Criteria</td>
<td>Consistent Mastery</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>--------------------------</td>
<td>--------------------</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Reading Comprehension</td>
<td>You accurately quote historical and literary texts to answer the essential question and explain why your understanding of historical events has changed through time.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Essay Focus</td>
<td>Your visual essay effectively addresses the essential question in a way that is clear and focused on the issue at hand.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Development of Ideas</td>
<td>Your visual essay shows coherent and comprehensive development of ideas. The support you give clearly demonstrates the points you are making about why your understanding of historical events has changed through time.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Organization</td>
<td>Your visual essay demonstrates coherent ideas, and the organization of historical events is logical and easy enough to follow.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Awareness of Audience</td>
<td>Your visual essay demonstrates an effective style given its purpose. Your use of visual and written language clearly considers what your viewer needs to follow your ideas.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Credibility</td>
<td>Your visual essay is at least two minutes in length and includes a variety of visual and written texts to convey your ideas, though there may be minor errors in editing and grammar. Your writing is clear.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Figure 13.** Screen shots of video essay rubric.
In introducing the video essay on May 16, Mary included process steps that I developed as the literacy specialist. First, I developed a four-minute model video essay on a topic the learners had not been offered as an option. Then, Mary showed her class how to access an online editing tool we found and vetted for the assignment. Additionally, Mary gave the learners a simple planning guide I developed which she collected and scored for completion. These were not steps she typically would include in a class assignment; when she asked me to help develop these a month earlier, she indicated the assignment was different from what students were used to completing in her class. “I don’t want to stress them out,” she said as she explained her desire to offer the process supports listed above. Later, as the class was working in the computer lab during the May 18 work day, Mary admitted that she prefers alphabetic composing. “Just ask me to write a paper,” she said. “I don’t like this kind of stuff.” Therefore, Mary felt that she wanted to access my support as literacy specialist because she wanted students to draw inferences and make connections that spanned both disciplines, and she felt unprepared as a teacher to design appropriate help.

The discipline-area teacher created an environment that allowed students to experiment. Because she recognized that the task was complex and demanded students to make a lot of decisions while composing, Mary tried to create an environment that supported experimentation and risk-taking.

In introducing the video essay on May 16, Mary spent some time reviewing the planning guide and discussing the model. For the video essay work days, she moved the class upstairs to a traditional computer lab with two desktop computers per table. While
the students worked on May 18, she told me that the larger screens, access to computer mice for editing, and isolated work spaces allowed for greater student focus. When it became clear that the class needed to listen to clips and music while composing the video essays, Mary invited learners to get their own earbuds and then located and passed out headphones for those who had none. She explained that she believed the quiet classroom left individuals feeling pressure to get something done, which she thought was a positive for the end of May.

Mary presented the assignment in ways she perceived as non-threatening so that students felt empowered to be creative. Throughout the process, the students kept a running joke going about the models, which were all focused on the Women’s Suffragist Movement. One student told Mary her class was “suffering, not suffragist,” and Mary told him that “anything worthwhile is worth suffering for—like this project. “Mary would often tell the class that the assignments were “pretty clear-cut, pretty simple” and assured the class that the video essay was designed to allow them greater flexibility and higher achievement for the final exam. “You are really working in here. You have to do some good stuff in here, do some interpretation. You deserve credit for that work.” She would also indicate to the class that she doubted their video essays would hurt their overall grades. “Look at this as a way to enhance your semester grade,” she told them on May 16, as she explained how the exam would be graded. On the May 18 work day, Mary mentioned that she wanted to be encouraging because she would have disliked this assignment as a student. “I don’t like this kind of stuff,” she said. “Just give me a good
old-fashioned essay.” When pressed why, she shared that she felt she had more control over an essay and felt unable to make her point in a video.

Throughout the process, Mary used the observations she made of student work as a way to reflect and refine her own teaching. She admitted several times that she was not used to supporting students in such an open-ended assignment. As she watched students during the work days, Mary would share her observations with me. She found that students were being too concrete with the connections they were making when looking for changing perceptions and connections to the historical time period. She spoke several times about improving the prompt for the next school year by having students work backward from current events to find historical connections. After assessing the essays, Mary returned to that point.

I had one student I thought was really going somewhere. They had Civil Rights and then they showed a Black Lives Matter protest, and I thought, yes. But then, they showed an All Lives Matter clip and well, I guess they just don’t have the life experience yet to see connections. (SSTI#12)

In the post-project meeting with Kathy on May 27, Mary reiterated her concern even as she acknowledged the benefits of the video essay assignment.

I think it got them further than other assignments I’ve used to get them thinking, but I think with some of the topics they don’t have enough of a frame of reference to really go in and identify those shifts, to identify where it comes from.

When Kathy pressed for an example, Mary shared the differences between the Hailey and Sarah’s videos and Nate and Mike’s. “The guys were more concrete. Their videos
included only the government perspective. Their videos left off with Reagan’s speech about the compensation, whereas the girls took it further and took it to the protest of the Muslim ban,” she shared. Next year, Mary said, she would try to get all her students to reach the level of mastery she saw in Hailey and Sarah’s projects. “At least nearly all,” she said.

**In Summary**

Through the three phases of the study, students were given multiple writing contexts, and composing was completed traditionally and multimodally. While work was completed in two disciplinary classrooms—English and history—it became clear that students both made negotiations specific to each discipline and yet had ideas about composing that seemed to remain consistent even across the disciplines. Additionally, student perceptions of the nature and purpose of historical and ELA disciplinary composing changed and shifted with these changing contexts. In the next chapter, I discuss some of the most important implications, as well as explore the study’s limitations and possible future inquiry paths it uncovered.
CHAPTER V
DISCUSSION

At the start of the 2015–2016 school year, the state of Ohio launched new proficiency tests just two years after joining the Partnership for Assessment of Readiness for College and Careers (PARCC). According to state officials, the decision was prompted largely by lagging student performance on the PARCC tests, which were designed to align with the Common Core State Standards (O’Donnell, 2015). Among the most concerning results that year were reports that more than a quarter of the state’s ninth and 10th graders failed to meet proficient or above in ELA (27.3% for 9th graders; 27.5% for 10th graders).

Surely, the use of such testing results on state-created district report cards and teacher evaluation systems caused tension that moved beyond questions of pedagogy, but understanding the implications for instruction such poor performance on next generation tests has is more complex than it may appear. History guides us to one important truth about literacy education: in order to meet the literacy needs of today’s learners, stakeholders need to look beyond what educators have done in the past. This is largely because standards for literacy have historically shifted to meet emerging literacy demands (Moore et al., 1983; Resnick & Resnick, 1977), and those historical shifts were often met with the same sense of frustration and concern as we see today. I am sure that there has always been a group of critics who have wanted schools to return to past practices as a way to fix current literacy failures; but with the emergence of new types of literacy and new disciplinary demands on students today, it is likely that past instructional
practices will prove inadequate because “the old tried and true approaches, which nostalgia prompts us to believe might solve current problems, were designed neither to achieve the literacy standard sought today nor to assure the successful literacy for everyone” (Resnick & Resnick, 1977, p. 385). Looking at the current policy debates through a historical lens, the worrisome test scores that prompted statewide changes to testing are probably not a reflection of poor teaching or student apathy. It is more likely that these scores are an indicator that we are at another crossroads in which shifting literacy demands have created gaps in learning and instruction because “curriculum histories clarify the origin and development of instructional practices in order to define the conditions which educators inherit” (Moore et al., 1983, p. 420). In sum, our past practices may not be meeting the learners’ current needs.

This case study was designed to help clarify the conditions that exist as students and educators experience today’s shifting literacy demands in two areas that have seen great change: the nature of disciplinary literacy and the ways students compose. Through the study, I closely followed learners and teachers as they navigated the complex and often fluid nature of today’s literacy demands. Through the study of four students and two teachers, I traced literacy practices and expectations in discipline-specific, cross-disciplinary, and multimodal composing contexts. In this chapter, I discuss the implications of this local case study as it is framed in this very global educational debate and as guided by the research questions that framed the study. To review, those questions are listed below:
1. How does a student’s perception of composing differ across disciplinary contexts, such as in a history class rather than an English class? How does this change when the composing is done in a cross-curricular project that spans both history and ELA?

2. Because new literacies expand the choices students must make through multimodal composing, what relationship can be seen between the authoring choices a student makes while composing multimodally and the literacy demands of various content area classrooms?

3. How does a student who is engaging in cross-curricular inquiry in both English and history perceive the disciplinary demands specific to each content area?

4. How do teachers account for the negotiation students must undergo in order to meet both English and history curricular goals in that cross-curricular project?

In the following sections, I discuss some of the implications of my findings as reported in Chapter 4.

**Discussion of Findings Related to Research Question 1: Student Agency and Inquiry**

The following section discusses the findings as they related to student perceptions of composing, both discipline-specific and cross-disciplinary.

**Student Perceptions of Writing Tasks**

First, it is important to note that students identified purposeful writing instruction in both English and history classrooms, but the focus of the instruction in history classes
led students to value the argumentative essay structure over new discoveries about the nature and importance of the Vietnam War in American history. The teacher’s early instruction on the essay format, prompts, and rubrics suggested to the student writer that it was the structure that mattered more than the argument itself. The focused learning, then, becomes how to write the essay, not what to say while composing. If writing can be seen as a series of processes that are oriented to a single goal (Emig, 1977; Flower, 1979; Flower & Hayes, 1981), the four participants in this study believed the goal in the history writing assignment was really about organizing the argument correctly. Therefore, student participants perceived the goal of the assignment as following the established steps as they were instructed; as a result, students did not articulate new insight or learning into the topic. This is significant because if the goal of disciplinary literacy is to orientate students to think as an apprentice within the field, as Elizabeth Moje (2015) posited, then students failed to use their composing to examine insight into historical context but instead developed constructs about the writing structure and organization of historical argumentation. The evidence-based writing assignment did little to foster a disciplinary apprentice mindset; in fact, in some respects it may have hindered such thinking by focusing the learner away from complex cognitive thinking about the content. This seems to suggest that the students would have benefited from instructional interventions that focused learners on general literacy practices, such as more focus on rhetorical practices important to strong argumentation skills. Thus, even disciplinary-area educators such as Mary should remember that they “cannot—and need not—leave general literacy aside” (De La Paz, et al., 2017, p. 48) if the goal is to foster
deep thinking about disciplinary topics. In other words, students may have needed the teacher to help them see that the quality of their historical argument included both discipline-specific elements (such as incorporating correct historical evidence), but also application of general argumentation skills (such as developing and explaining points raised in the argument in nuanced ways). This is unfortunate, because what resulted was a dichotomy that need not exist but is often evident in history classrooms: writing to demonstrate reading comprehension or historical thinking (Monte-Sano & Harris, 2012), when writing can encompass both. Had students understood their evidence-based writing task to be more than merely showing evidence of reading comprehension, they may have demonstrated more interpretative thinking. While Mary reported an interest in fostering such thinking, the learners approached the task as one that involved less interpretation and more as a demonstration of content-area knowledge.

In his research into the gap between disciplinary practices of historians and those literacy practices prevalent in high school history classes, Samuel Wineburg (1991, 1998) discussed the significance of identifying and evaluating subtexts in history. Literacy researchers in the field of history have found that many high school history textbooks lack rich authorial voices and historical context, and it may be that traditional high school writing tasks in history class, such as the one I witnessed in this study, do little more than duplicate the decontextualized understanding of history that is presented in these texts. For instance, Nate noted that he would begin his history essays with his strongest point and then move on to his weakest, a process that suggested he saw historical writing as linear and essentially the process of categorizing content. Sarah said she had learned that
she could still score adequately on an essay even if she failed to effectively analyze the documents themselves in that essay, suggesting a lack of authorial voice in her own writing. The writing task presented to the participants was not seen as requiring them to make sense of multiple sources with contradictory accounts of history, which is the very type of reasoning that is important to historical literacy (Paxton, 1999). What emerges is a writing task which the participants saw as closed-ended and that required little of their own reasoning beyond the ability to correctly identify which area of the prompting question each document addresses. In such an experience, writing is no longer discursive, and the composition can be judged quite strictly as right or wrong, not as a product of the writer’s reasoning and perception.

In contrast, students reported perceiving the English assignment as far more dependent on such reasoning and much more focused on inquiry. The more open nature of the prompt, which asked students to interpret the speaker’s perspective using the poem and knowledge of the Vietnam War, which could be gained from historical documents, may have helped create that perception. Planning for inquiry by asking open-ended questions is important because engaging in inquiry allows students to develop skills while learning the content, a more effective way to develop both (Jacobs, 1989). The prompt did not appear to have a linear or accepted answer; instead, students felt that their interpretation was the focus of the assignment. This allows for coherency in the curriculum, making the content seem less disconnected and more meaningful (Applebee, 1994). However, it should be noted that students did not seem to see the value in the historical documents they used for their evidence-based English argumentation; both
Kathy and the participants discussed the rather arbitrary way they used the documents to support their claims about the speaker in the poem. Therefore, despite the effort Kathy put into presenting a way for students to draw historical and literary connections, the process was somehow flawed in achieving that goal.

While discussing the evidence-based writing task in English, participants spoke about the need to demonstrate some new understanding or insight into the text under consideration. At one point, Nate suggested that composing concerns such as structure and organization were subordinate to such thinking. He said he would often discover his point as he wrote, pointing to an important distinction he was making between English and history writing: in English, one writes to learn; whereas in history, one writes to demonstrate what is already known. The view of writing as a way of learning, which Kathy shared with students in the Honors English classes, demonstrates the pedagogical shift in the late 20th century that was championed by leaders in the field, when composition researchers reframed writing as a process of personal discovery (Elbow, 1973/1998; Macrorie, 1968; Moffett, 1968/1983). In this study, writing completed in the English class was seen as a “unique mode of learning” (Emig, 1977, p. 7) as the participants all shared a desire to offer their own interpretations of the poem. It may be that by using the same documents in English as the students had encountered in history, students did not perceive the documents as central to that discovery; they were familiar with them and had used them already. They were, in short, not new to their learning. Indeed, the collaboration between the two teachers may have meant that Kathy presented the students with documents that were not as connected to the poem as others may have
been; that is, in her attempt to connect the learners’ experiences to their history classes, Kathy may have limited the usefulness of the materials she offered for student synthesis.

The nature of inquiry itself may have shaped the learners’ decisions to dismiss the historical documents. Inquiry-driven experiences create student agency because inquiry can build upon the learner’s competence and allow them to feel control of their own learning, two factors important for intrinsic motivation to learn (M. W. Smith & Wilhelm, 2006). In this study, students spoke with more agency about their writing for English class, even after acknowledging that English writing is more difficult and is often scored lower than history. Participants suggested that it was their ideas that mattered and had value in the English classroom. It is likely that this agency shaped that preference for English despite the many demands ELA placed upon the learners, leaving one to consider the role that intrinsic motivation may play in the composing process. This sense of agency may, in fact, have left students feeling comfortable that the historical documents were not important to their literary argumentation. It may be that the documents did little to develop their own understanding of the poem, and therefore, they likely rejected the use of those documents in the writing task. What resulted was students complying with the demands of the task—they did each include at least two historical documents into their literary argument, but in a way that Kathy saw as simply “plugging in” these documents. It is likely that the participants found the inclusion of the historical documents more in line with their expectations for writing in history, not English. In this light, it may be that the shallow nature of their historical evidence in the English argument demonstrates the careful role teachers must play in helping students draw
meaningful connections across disciplines. In this case, Kathy may have failed to help students see those connections. Oddly, their lackluster use of the historical evidence demonstrates that Kathy’s student writers felt comfortable making that choice in light of how they had come to view argumentation in Kathy’s class. Because it did little to build their argument, they did not use it.

**Students Related One Discipline to Another**

The four student participants in this study were able to distinguish between the demands of English and history writing, and the distinctions they made were pretty stark but did show some fluidity. For instance, Nate talked about how he applied the writing instruction he received in history class to his English assignment during the first phase of the study. After completing the two evidence-based writing tasks, Nate spoke about organizing the more open-ended English response into a three-part thesis that mirrored the ones he would write for history class. This was interesting, indicating that a more open-ended prompt, such as the Honors English 10 prompt, may require the learner to impose one’s own limitations as a way to make the writing task more manageable for the learner. For his part, Mike indicated that he chose documents for English that he was familiar with in history class because he felt more comfortable using those historical documents to support his literary argument. These two examples suggest that while the typical American high school structure generally isolates one discipline from another, student understandings and literacy practices are not so tightly compartmentalized. So, while cross-disciplinary assignments such as those assigned during Phases Two and Three of the study may signal the appropriateness of crossing these disciplinary divides,
the very nature of literacy practices may mean that students do just that naturally. Early content area literacy research largely focused on instructional strategies that could be universally applied across the disciplines to support reading and writing in the content area (Vacca, 2008). This study suggests that such practices have some value and may have made the natural process of transferring literacy skills more overt for some learners, such as Nate. Such strategies, however, will not effectively support complex disciplinary thinking unless they are directly tied to the skills required for a specific task; that is, unless the teacher has taught them and learners have used them in the context of the specific disciplinary demand a learner is undertaking. Thus, school leaders and teacher educators should place emphasis on building capacity for teachers to thoughtfully select appropriate strategies for such learning tasks, because secondary teachers serve as “advocates for learning” in their subject area (Moje, 2010, p. 276). Kathy’s failure to use English-specific strategies for the use of historical documents in their literary arguments may have been an important factor in the results Kathy reported as disappointing. Importantly, class score distributions and teacher comments suggest that not all were able to adjust their historical thinking skills to meet the demands of the English essay prompt. Therefore, it is reasonable to believe that instruction that helped students explicitly integrate historical documents to support literary analysis would have improved their performance, demonstrating the benefits to a disciplinary literacy approach which focuses on instructional strategies specific to the context and demands specific to each discipline (Moje, 2007; Shanahan & Shanahan, 2008). Likewise, the less developed nature of the source curation in history class during the study’s second phase, where students
annotated with incomplete thoughts and used nonacademic sources, demonstrates the need for teachers to be explicit when expectations move beyond the classroom norms to which students have adjusted. In this case, students needed to understand that the same expectations for source analysis applied in history class and English class, even though students had received far more instruction on the research process in English.

While the initial writing tasks in Phase One asked students to complete their composition in discipline-specific contexts, integrating the disciplines is something that should have seemed more natural in English class, where student participants reported having completed several syntheses writing tasks that involved using informational texts. NCTE (2011) has called for a “plurality of literacy,” which asks for a broader of understanding of literacy that includes meaning making in multiple text types and modes, certainly a philosophy that was evident in the study. For instance, the collaboration of the disciplines in the source curation and analysis steps of the projects (Phase Two) involved visual, traditional, auditory, and video texts. While access to such a wide variety of text types was largely seen as a benefit by the student participants, teachers found it challenging to support the students through the process. Both Kathy and Mary discussed at length how to improve the second phase of the study; for Kathy, better preparation was needed in the literacy task itself (she felt students found it difficult to categorize sources as literary or historical). Mary, on the other hand, found the intensity of timing, with some students moving from one 80-minute English block to her 80-minute history block, too much. While participants initially reported confusion over the vast decisions they were required to make in Phase Two (selecting and understanding
different types of texts and evaluating each text’s disciplinary purpose), it is important to note that the participants never reported that as debilitating. In fact, as the process unfolded and the video essay assignment was introduced in Phase Three, student participants reported seeing continuity in instruction. However, observation of the ELA classroom experience in particular during Phase Two (the cross-disciplinary phase of the study) indicated the learners required a significant level of teacher support as they tried to adjust to the new demands of multimodal literacies. Students were observed seeking Kathy’s support, and several students showed anxiety when asked to select appropriate literary texts. At one point, Kathy stopped the class as they worked so she could clarify the question for them, even offering that they should not worry too much because mistaking a historical text for a literary one was “no big deal.” The teachers’ ongoing reflections of the process as it unfolded was not surprising, and given the demanding nature of the literacy task involved “it makes sense to think about . . . instructional purposes and select the approaches best aligned with those purposes” (Shanahan & Shanahan, 2017, p. 21). However, Mary and Kathy’s reflections focused on very different aspects of the project. This indicates that such professional reflection and discernment is not easy, and it may be shaped by factors other than just disciplinary or literacy skills, such as a teacher’s pedagogical focus and concerns.

**ELA Tasks Supported Historical Inquiry**

Early learner confusion, however, did not prove to be futile as the study unfolded, and it became clear that the English classroom became an important partner for developing historical thinking. Throughout Phase Two of the study, students asked
constant questions of Kathy as she helped them develop their source curation and analysis. For instance, Nate, Hailey, and Sarah called Kathy to their table during this phase to inquire about the use of letters to the editors in newspapers, as they saw these as possibly personal essays and not historical accounts. Importantly, as the class worked through initial questions and tasks, they expressed fewer frustrations with the process. In fact, by the time the process was continued in the history classroom, learners were observed speaking with confidence about understanding the process and demands of the project. This leads me to presume that the work in the ELA classroom throughout the phases allowed students to situate their response in a multitude of contexts. The literary analysis which began the study (in which students interpreted a poem about the Vietnam War) though flawed in some aspects did help to establish the idea that texts are always in conversation with other texts, a framework for literacy that extended beyond Kathy’s classroom and prepared students for the composing tasks in history class that included identifying themes and trends in the sources (Phase Two) and then analyzing those to answer a broad essential question about the nature of historical truth in the video essay (Phase Three). ELA instruction that allows for such rhetorical focus, therefore, did serve to prepare the students for literacies across the disciplinary contexts (Warren, 2013). Specifically, the use of multiple perspectives—including those gathered in literary texts for English during Phase Two of the study—prepared students to see history as interpretative and deliberative based on the varying accounts of the past (Monte-Sano, 2011). In this study, comparing the differences of opinion that were present in the literary texts (especially those of the Japanese survivors of internment camps) helped
students understand what factors shaped the differing accounts of history, an important aspect of historical reasoning (Monte-Sano & De La Paz, 2012).

Finally, Sarah and Hailey showed strong indicators that the inquiry-driven nature of the source analysis and video essay assignments moved them to look past simply being taught traditions of the past but “how to enter into and participate in those of the present and future” (Applebee, 1996, p. 3). The cross-disciplinary assignment in Phase Two allowed both learners to place what they learned about internment camps into their world and as something that matters to them when they drew parallels between the historical time period and current affairs. It is not clear that a traditional, discipline-specific study of the historical documents or literary texts would have supported both girls as they connected their learning about internment camps to current discussions about immigration. In an interview after writing a traditional historical argument during Phase One, both girls suggested their primary concern was accurately reading the documents. While the historical argument requires students to connect the time period under review to another time in U.S. history (a task labeled synthesis on the rubric), Sarah noted that she found she could skip that process entirely and still get a decent grade. But placing these two disciplines, the historical and literary texts, side by side supported truer inquiry because it offered context and challenge that both girls reported had changed their thinking and allowed them to come to a new understanding about why it is important to know society’s past experiences with internment camps. Focusing learning in two disciplines around one essential question and supporting both participants as they delved into that question by using both personal and historical writings allowed internalization
and fostered deep understandings of the historical time which they studied. Seeing the girls’ ability to challenge their own assumptions about internment campus should be seen an indication of true inquiry (Wilhelm, 2007). However, there was no evidence of this type of complex thinking by student all participants (the boys did not make such direct connections between the past and the present), an observation that suggests learners need practice with this type of cross-disciplinary context and inquiry-driven approach to composing. This is especially evident in way that Mike (and Nate to a lesser extent) seemed to focus solely on the historical documents in his video essay. At the point of synthesis of content and process during Phase Three, the boys may have reverted back to their understandings of the expectations of historical composing, expectations they knew and with which, perhaps, they were more comfortable.

Students’ experiences with cross-disciplinary tasks allowed them to begin to break down their assumptions about the nature of historical writing. Early in the study, participants reported seeing historical writing as evidence of content knowledge while English was about demonstrating new thinking, but as the disciplinary lines blurred, those distinctions became less stark. Teachers often unwittingly played important roles in shaping those perceptions – sometimes to the greater benefit of the learner, but not always. What emerges is a complex narrative that demonstrates the importance of careful teacher support as learners engage in new unfamiliar writing contexts.
Discussion of Findings Related to Research Question 2: Multimodal Composing and Disciplinary Demands

The following section discusses the authoring choices made by students when multimodal composing was introduced as this related to the disciplinary demands of the assignments.

Choice and Anxiety

Multimodal composing offers unique challenges because it juxtaposes and combines semiotic sign systems. Gee (2003) has suggested that personal identity and social practices are central to learning. Through their personal practices, Gee posited, students gain vernacular knowledge of composing modes; that is, students develop constructs of various text types they encounter in their out-of-school literary practices. The student participants in this study clearly brought such vernacular knowledge of video composing to the discussion of history and literature during Phase Three of the study. For example all four participants chose to include a soundtrack for their video essay. This was not a convention that was included in the model or required in the rubric; therefore, it was clearly a convention that the learners felt compelled to include because of their own experiences with videos and video-making. During class work days, learners were observed spending significant time selecting color schemes and templates for their videos, again elements that were not significant in the academic context. It is evident that students drew from their own repertoires of literacy practices, “from which they drew and integrated images, sound and texts in complex ways” (Pyo, 2016, p. 428). This is important because while the study is focused on disciplinary demands, the
students did not engage in composing in a way that identified with either English or history, or even school itself. Halliday (1977) wrote that semantic options are made relevant in environments, but in this situation learners needed to make decisions about what the learning environment entailed. In this case, students had to consider such questions as: Was this an English assignment? A history assignment? If it is both, what does this mean? Was it more like a YouTube video than a history essay? This fluidity of environment is challenging, affirming the notion that new literacies offer “unprecedented amounts of freedom” to represent knowledge (Slatin, 1990, p. 880).

However, there is evidence that the freedom in the video essay composing caused some amount of anxiety for learners. The one student in class observed repeatedly watching the model essay spoke about not wanting to get the assignment wrong. That is important and leads one to wonder how he might judge right or wrong in this composing context. Sarah commented that she, too, found the model important because she would have approached the video essay as a more traditionally academic text. Sarah said she would have just composed a “PowerPoint” to indicate she would not have easily understood how to approach the video essay without a model. Both learners own a smart phone and likely have personal constructs of many types of multimodal texts from online literacy practices. They curated online sources in Phase Two and analyzed those sources in both English and history, indicating they had background knowledge of the content. In short, both learners brought ample background knowledge to the video composing task, but both expressed some hesitation when asked to compose multimodally. Both Sarah and Hailey reported having a sense of discomfort when beginning the composing tasks.
In interviews, both girls admitted to spending a lot of time checking their video essay drafts with the rubric for the assignment because they were not sure what belonged in the video essay. While grades and performance pressure probably contributed to this anxiety, it is likely that at least some of that anxiety was due to the ambiguity the composing context raised. Students seemed to be reconciling their video composing practices with their understanding of academic literacy tasks.

Throughout the three video essay work days, observations confirmed that the learners needed support as they met these unfamiliar literacy demands. Mary spent much of the video essay work days answering questions and previewing student work in order to offer feedback to her students. She even started to bring her own earbuds to the class so that she could listen to the videos without distracting the others. One of the four study participants, Hailey, verbalized her fear that she would look unprofessional in this assignment. Therefore, it becomes important to note that the inclusion of choice may build agency (as noted in the distinction between how students spoke about composing for English and history classes earlier), but it also creates anxiety in the classroom. In my observation of the class work days, students had their rubrics out routinely, referring to them as they compose. The unfamiliarity of these new forms of composing points to the need to create places online where students can “create, build and modify digital artifacts that represent their identities as learners,” (O’Byrne & Pytash, 2017, p. 499).

It seems that having to reconcile their personal understanding of video texts—the semantic system they had developed in their personal lives—with the sign systems they had come to expect for history and English classes was a challenge for the learners. In
fact, Sarah mentioned the importance the video essay model had in allowing her to begin to trust her vernacular knowledge of video texts. Had she not had the model, with its inclusion of video clips and exclusion of academic conventions such as in text citations or a litany of facts, Sarah admitted she would have likely created “a PowerPoint,” a reference to a mode of text she sees much more obviously as academic and situated in an academic environment. Harste and Carey (2003) posited that signs are not arbitrary but their meanings are made clear through the rules and contexts in which they appear, and Sarah’s lack of experience with this new context (creating a video for an academic class) made it difficult for her to make semantic choices. While students had developed a grammar of visual literacy through their personal practices, they were anxious about accessing that grammar in the classroom context of this project. Thus, the project complicated students’ ability to access a grammar of visual literacy in part because there was a lack of clarity of the context for which they were composing. In the end, students needed to access their vernacular knowledge in order to meet this academic demand. In essence, they had to weave what they knew about video editing with the unknown—that is, how to use those elements in an academic setting. However, this weaving of the known and unknown components of the project may also have helped students access the project in a way that is more accessible and, perhaps, allowed the exploration of critical thinking that was evident in the video essays composed by Hailey and Sarah.

In Phase Three, student participants did demonstrate that some of their video editing choices drew on the literacy conventions they expected in a history composition, often with varying degrees of success. For one, all four videos were presented in
chronological order. This is clearly a choice that reveals linear thinking that they almost certainly identify with historical thinking. All four student participants referenced the Japanese attack on Pearl Harbor to some extent in their video, following the advice from their history teacher to contextualize all historical writing early in their essays. In all but one of the video essays, language control was evident. Participants chose to limit the text they used, but their title slide overlays would include important historical information or would demonstrate a need to rhetorically explain an inference they had drawn from the video. In earlier interviews, all four participants reported that explaining their thinking is important in English compositions, so this choice reflected what they had learned about composing in English. Mike’s essay showed the least concern with academic conventions, but even his video essay showed evidence of historical thinking and basic rhetorical structure, with title slides offering transitions and relevant facts to contextualize the visual elements. The binary nature of the classroom, which could be seen in such relationship as English/history or academic/personal, forced students into a situation in which they had to make important choices about how they perceived the environment and what sign systems to access (Burnett, 2014).

**Historical Thinking in the Project**

Earlier I theorized that to some extent, the traditional document-based historical argument which Mary used in her classroom during Phase One may recreate the problem Samuel Wineburg (1991) identified in most textbooks used in history classes: a lack of authorial voice, little context, and often disconnected facts. Wineburg’s notion that these texts were “merely the shell of the texts comprehended by historians” (p. 500) identified
a problem with history pedagogy that he found problematic and an underlying source of
the disconnect between pedagogy and disciplinary thinking. In Phase Three, students
demonstrated far more attention to context and authorial voice when selecting supporting
texts for the video essay. The multimodal nature of the tasks resulted in video essays that
showed cohesion, context and authorial voice, especially in the two essays completed by
Hailey and Sarah. In both of those essays, the girls come to a strong point at the video
essay’s conclusion, using carefully chosen video clips and pictures to draw comparisons
between the internment camps and calls for Muslim bans in current United States politics.
The ability to draw such comparisons mirrors the way historians think (Paxton, 1999).
Sarah and Hailey both reported that making this connection made the learning more
meaningful to them, and Sarah’s choice of a protest with a sign that reads “Japanese Jew
Against Targeting Entire Groups of Humans #Never Forget #Never Again” seemed to
exemplify the connection and the historical thinking that was critical to the video essay.
Both learners were engaged with the authentic text Sarah found, and this engagement
helped to shape their historical thinking abilities because it allowed the two learners to
“engage in the actual practices and discourses of the discipline” (Pytash & Ciercierski,
2015, p. 15). In short, the video essay allowed students to access a wide variety of texts,
which allowed them to practice historical thinking in ways that had not been evident in
the early evidence-based argumentation task of Phase One.

If disciplinary literacy in history requires students have access to multiple texts
that are rich in authorial voice and context (VanSledright & Kelly, 1998), then the video
essay supported such literacy. Nate shared confusion and disappointment about his
favorite childhood author, Dr. Seuss, when he found racist cartoons penned by Theodore Geisel shortly after Pearl Harbor. I observed several conversations he had with the other participants about this discovery; Nate needed to explore subtexts and contexts to help him understand how a beloved childhood author could contradict the messages Nate believed were so prevalent in Dr. Seuss’ later work and which had been an important part of Nate’s childhood. That struggle was both real and required him to practice strong historical literacy to come to a new understanding that Dr. Seuss had been controlled by the fear and later learned from that experience. In fact, the discussions Nate had about Dr. Seuss may have impacted two other participants who also included those pictures as part of their video essays, essays which also increased their understanding of historical subtexts related to internment camps. Importantly, Hailey and Sarah expressed that the video essay allowed them to see the “silenced” voices from that time period. Because this project exposed the girls to a variety of texts, they were able to find subtexts in the official documents of the internment camp experience that they admit they would never have seen absent exposure to the other perspectives. Through their exploration during Phase Two of poetry, fiction, and personal essays written by internment camp survivors, the girls were able to see in a much richer way the unfairness of the government’s action while composing the video essays during Phase Three. Both girls talked about this as if it offered them some power; that is, they spoke of not being fooled by their own government during discussion of current events. The constant comparisons of the types of texts (literary and historical) helped to establish strong historical thinking; ironically, it
was the literary texts that brought the girls to see the contradictory nature of accounts of the past, a key historical understanding (Paxton, 1999).

Coming to these complex understandings required participants to bring their own intellect to the process, as evidenced when Nate suggested the video essay had “more me” in it. Each video essay demonstrated agency through the unique choices the participants made. Mike’s discussion of sound tracks for his video and his final selection of sound demonstrated his desire to affect the mood so that his viewers would see the tragedy of the internment camps. Nate’s inclusion of the George Takei TED talk was done with careful planning. In my observations, I watched Nate spend more than 30 minutes trying to decide how to clip the 15-minute video into his own video essay. He had found this video early in the curation process, and he had shared it with Sarah and Hailey, telling them he found a very interesting video. He seemed genuinely excited because, as he told the girls, it really showed what survivors felt. In the end, the selection of three short clips from the video were carefully chosen to demonstrate what Nate felt were the most impactful moments of the talk. It could be argued that Nate did much the same thing during Phase One of the study, when he identified a selection from a source to support his point, but in his discussions of that selection was more dismissive. When asked how he selected documents to back up his literary argument in Phase One, Nate simply said he found documents that” backed up” the point he was making. He did not seem to demonstrate the same care that he did in the video essay, suggesting the video essay required far more intellectual consideration. Nate, too, made the unique choice to explain the Japanese American Memorial to Patriotism During World War II in
Washington, DC. While the others selected pictures from the memorial (remember that the four group members shared sources during Phase Two, so such duplication was not surprising), Nate clearly did additional research into the memorial and provided a narrative through title slides that explained the memorial’s design.

It was interesting to see that even in the duplication of sources in the video essay, participants demonstrated varying purpose and context. For instance, Hailey and Sarah both clipped a scene from a documentary that pictured President Ronald Reagan signing the Civil Liberties Act of 1988. However, Sarah chose to include a much longer segment of the documentary, not only sharing Reagan’s words just after the signing, but also depicting the tearful responses of the survivors who were present. This slight difference reflected a complex decision-making process, and the subtle distinction demonstrates that each learner came to slightly different understandings of the event. For Hailey, the important aspect was clearly the government’s desire to correct a wrong; for Sarah, the concern was far more on the human impact such correction had. Similarly, both Nate and Mike used videos of internment camp survivors. However, Mike chose to include a very short clip of an anonymous survivor sharing his memory of how cold it was his first night at the camp. Nate, on the other hand, clipped large sections from a TED talk by a celebrity who had been interred in the camps. While both thought it was important to include the voices of the survivors, Mike used his to offer context about the camp conditions and draw sympathy for the Japanese; Nate’s choice reflects his exploration of the complex legacy of the camps and highlights George Takei’s complicated feelings about our nation’s tradition of justice given what he witnessed as a 4-year-old boy. In
short, the use of the survivors’ voices had very different purposes in the two videos. Wineburg and Reisman (2015) spoke about the importance of allowing learners to “push back” at their initial understandings of history, and the personal choices the students made in their video essays indicate that each learner was engaging in a personal process of unpacking and making sense of the time period.

**English Language Arts Disciplinary Literacy in the Project**

In the study, teachers Kathy Orr and Mary Smith designed the project so that it would intentionally blur the distinctions between English and history classrooms, even though the video essay was introduced and assessed only in the history classroom. The choice to include the video essay in history only was not a pedagogical one, but a decision that was reached as a result of class management concerns. This is one very real challenge in schools attempting to include more cross-disciplinary learning, but it also demonstrates the critical importance that English skills be accessed across the disciplines, as evidenced in NCTE’s (2011) policy brief that calls for a multi-faceted approach to literacy, an approach coined a “plurality of literacies.” There are unique challenges in ELA, which requires educators to distinguish the discipline’s own literacy concerns, a difficult task in part because literacy is so central to ELA yet reading and writing are central tools for other disciplines (Lannin et al., 2014). However, Warren (2013) has suggested that ELA classrooms are distinct in that they instruct students to apply rhetorical concerns (author’s identity, purpose, discursive and situational context and audience) to reading and writing of all texts, thereby helping bridge the gap between literary and academic texts and writing. Smagorinsky (2015) suggested that ELA helps
writers become “chameleons of convention: speakers who adapt to new situations—from baby talk to Spanglish to formal English to sports jargon—smoothly and in relation to the expectations of other speakers” (p. 143). Using these as markers for ELA literacy, there was ample evidence of such concerns by the student participants during Phase Three (video essay composing) of the study.

First of all, learners seemed to address the video essay composing in a way consistent with a cognitive understanding of writing that posits writing is a process with a series of sub-goals aimed at a higher goal. In class observations, learners in Mary’s class demonstrated that they valued the overtly process-oriented steps Mary included (and which I helped develop as the school’s literacy specialist). Learners made comments that suggested they embraced both the planning guide and the model essay as ways to enter into the process and perhaps articulate the higher goal of the assignment. Both Hailey and Sarah used the planning guide to select and sequence the video essays components, and Nate indicated he had completed such planning before beginning the video essay (though he did not write it down until after). The recursive nature of the composing, which is often emphasized in the ELA classroom, was clear in the observations as well, as students previewed and then adjusted their essays continuously. The editing platform allowed for this quite easily, and it was common to see students previewing one another’s video. Students would offer feedback on how the composer could better cut clips or rearrange pictures in attempts to help classmates strengthen their messaging. This may very well demonstrate how multimodal composing, which is less isolated and less stable, can be seen as more dynamic and more supportive of cognitive processing while
composing (Vogler et al., 2013). For instance, I observed Hailey inserting title slides into her video as she was previewing it, evidence that she was engaging in a nonlinear editing process that allowed her to consider if she was meeting her larger goal. In fact, it was Hailey who suggested some anxiety because she could continue to edit forever, a comment she intended as a joke. Even Mike, who showed the least anxiety or care over the project, showed concern for the selection of soundtrack clips even as he was making joking comments with his history teacher. This contrasts sharply how students discussed the traditional in-class writing assignments in Phase One, which allowed for little revision or adjustment during the composing process, and which students saw as a linear process that included steps that were completed one by one.

The video essay allowed students to show greater awareness of the rhetorical concern for audience, a strength of new literacy contexts (Hall, 2015) and a concern central to many writing classrooms. The concern for audience became very important in part because of the way that Mary structured her final exam to include student viewing of one another’s videos. Hailey noted a desire to look professional in her video essay, a clear indication that she was aware that others in the classroom would view her video. Learners had to consider both their large composing goal and the needs of the audience in order to make decisions that allowed them to effectively clip longer videos for use in their own video essays. All four participants’ video essays included well-selected clips from longer pieces that allowed the viewer to get the gist of the clip without the entire content. Title slides included introductory texts that framed the clips, and even Mike (whose essay included lapses in language and incomplete thoughts) introduced his clip of
President Reagan signing the Civil Liberties Act of 1988 with a slide that read “Around the 1960’s the Redress Movement was brought forward to again rights [sic], compensation and an apology . . . “ The time stamp for the uploaded video and class behaviors indicate that Mike procrastinated, but even his incomplete efforts suggest some awareness of audience. Hailey used extensive title slides to sequence her video, even overlaying text with the video. This effort indicates her desire for clarity and her consideration of the audience’s perspective as they view her video. In a post-composing interview, Hailey admitted to focusing on how others would perceive her video, demonstrating a desire for them “get what I’m saying.” Palmeri (2012) noted that multimodal composing can effectively support traditional composing because the visual nature of such composing requires students to consider the audience perspective, much like a producer of a film. Students did tend to see themselves as producers, not writers, in the video essay, as when Sarah stated that “a video is more fun to make; you can add more elements.”

**Composing as a Complex Practice**

To some extent, all four participants created video essays that demonstrated transformed practice (New London Group, 1996) in which students applied what they learned about the internment camps to modern society. This was gained through the situated practice of the essay, which allowed for critical framing through the selection of sources for the video. Related, instructional choices such as Mary’s mini-lessons on historiography and the use of a model video essay showed the way that overt instruction can support students’ critical framing and help them to transform their own practices.
While these new literacy skills were not clearly articulated as the instructional goals of the unit, they complemented the disciplinary literacy goals of the project (historical thinking in Mary’s class and audience perspective in Kathy’s class). The complexity and choices offered in the assignment created a collaborative culture that I could easily observe in the classroom. As students worked on their composing, they routinely shared their work and offered feedback with each other. Thus, it became clear that they were actively engaging in a critical framing of history that Mary had named as her curricular goal, a skill she called historiography. Likewise, their concern for editing and arranging indicated that the participants were constantly assessing how to best represent various historical perspectives in a way that was accessible to the viewer (indicating concern for audience, which Kathy suggested was her overall curriculum aim of the project).

Related, the notion of *metalanguage* in the New London Group (1996) report indicates the importance of helping students understand the differences between text types and relate those to culture and situation. While accessing the metalanguage was not directly named as one of Mary’s instructional goals, such learning seemed to happen naturally through Phase Three. The inclusion of so many types of texts in the video essays created a situation in which students needed to really discern what one text might add over another. In some cases, students chose a picture over a video just because that was what was available, but often students had access to many text-types. Inherently, then, they must have been basing each selection on something akin to Halliday’s (1977) notion of functional grammar, or a working understanding of how such choices would be understood by the audience. Looking at the choice to include a sound track as it was
discussed earlier, one can imagine that students saw such a choice as a way to set the mood and guide viewers to the composer’s understanding. While none of the participants framed it that way, Mike made a jesting comment to Mary that he include an upbeat song titled “Happy” as his soundtrack. While clearly a joke, this demonstrated that Mike inherently understood that the music tone needed to complement the content of the video. To a great extent, it was understanding the roles and purposes of various text types that transcended the project, because it is such meaning making that is central to any multimodal composing.

In conclusion, while new literacies expand choices available to students (such as what type of texts to include), it is clear that these choices make room for the students to more authentically practice and apply key literacy skills. While the video essays demonstrated complex and deep historical thinking that resulted from comparing various contexts and perspectives, they also allowed students to draw from their understanding of rhetoric and composing often associated with the ELA classroom. Therefore, while the multimodal composing context did allow for greater evidence of historical thinking, it also demonstrated the learner’s ability to draw from their ELA experience to help learners make key composing decisions. While this process is not easy for the learners and some anxiety was certainly observed, the end products demonstrated the benefits of the open-ended and student-centered approach that multimodal composing encourages.
Discussion of Findings Related to Question 3: Disciplinary Literacies in Relation to Each Other

Deweyan theories of learning posit that new learning should come in relation to what the learner already knows, and reconciling the new with the old is the crux of such learning (Dewey, 1916, 1938). In constructivist models of learning, greatly informed by the works of John Dewey, learning is therefore seen as a process, not a set of behaviors or skills. The nature of the three composing phases in this study, which were designed to force learners to reconsider what they learned in English and history classes, reflected John Dewey’s theories of learning. Learners were constantly asked to relate the different content areas to each other, and in that process learners came to new insights. The use of an essential question that spanned both disciplines gave students a starting point for inquiry, a key mode of learning that allows students to demonstrate the key facets of learning. The importance of essential questions and facets of learning are explained in Wiggins and McTighe Understanding by Design (1998/2003), a framework for planning that is used extensively at the school in which this study was conducted. Key learning facets suggest that students can truly understand when they can explain, interpret, apply, have perspective, empathize and have self-knowledge about the content being taught (Wiggins & McTighe, 1998/2003). Through the source analysis and video essay, learners were asked to demonstrate all those facets, and learners began to see the role the individual disciplines played in helping them do just that.

First, the student participants saw the historical documents as a way to explain the basics of the historical time period and what happened during the internment camps.
Nate’s discussion of historical sources as straightforward, and the selection of historical items posted on the project’s online bulletin board suggest that these sources were seen as fundamental yet accessible. This becomes important because it is the literary documents that cause the tension Dewey suggested is key to new learning, as when Hailey and Sarah noted the lack of Japanese perspective in most of the sources contemporary to the internment camps. Without the cross-curricular nature of the assignment, it is possible that participants would have continued what Mary described as a “surface” knowledge of history. Because the literary texts were perceived by the four participants as requiring more inference to understand, participants began to see the video essay as open-ended and requiring interpretation. That is, the learners stopped seeing history as simple facts that can be right or wrong; their understandings became more nuanced and therefore participants were able to interpret and apply. This can be seen through the various ways that the learners chose to include discussions of current examples of discrimination and bias in their videos; making those connections required the learners to understand more than just what happened during the time period, but what motivated and drove these historical actions. There is evidence that the tension between the historical and literary documents caused some participants to inquire beyond the initial scope of the assignment. Hailey curated far more than the five sources required in English and history classes during Phase Two, and she admitted that many of those were sources she found as she was working on the written analysis and video essay because she discovered there was more information she wanted to know in order to draw her own inferences. Nate told his group members that he spent additional time conducting online research about
Dr. Seuss to better understand why he would have drawn the racist pictures Nate found in his English source curation. In the process of accessing higher thinking, these learners were also acquiring more content knowledge. It was through their interpretation of literary documents that learners identified perspective. Importantly, the girls both demonstrated through their notations on the source curation site that they applied their understanding of perspective (the skill they believed central to literary source analysis) when interpreting the historical sources as well. This is especially evident when they made notations on the history class’s source curation site that a newspaper article demonstrated “white America’s response” to the internment camps or the interview responses in which they identified how the official accounts of the time period “silenced” a group of people. Finally, all four participants demonstrated new understanding and learning about internment camps. In varying degrees, each video essay composed by the four participants brought the subject of internment camps to questions of discrimination in current society. Both Nate and Mike spoke generally of the need to learn from the fear that Americans allowed control them and that resulted in the discriminatory actions of the internment camps; the girls made explicit references to current events. Importantly, both girls drew historical connections between a current response to illegal immigration and the historical response to the threat of war posed by Japan. Mary said this demonstrates that the project allowed for a “more typically girl perspective of history” in her observation that the girls were much more prone to make connections that explore human impact, but one can also argue that the literary skill of identifying perspective had taught the girls to seek out the human impact rather than the historical precedent of the event.
By requiring them to use that skill in preparation for the video essay, the girls came to new insight.

Therefore, each discipline played a role in helping to guide true inquiry and genuine learning. One saw evidence of disciplinary literacy in the ways that students noted context and facts of the time period: that is, they each framed their video essays with discussions of the Japanese attack on Pearl Harbor, and they provided the viewer with facts such as the number of Americans interred or the process of notification that the government took. English Language Arts disciplinary literacy was evident in the way participants spoke of needing to understand perspective and make composing choices that were more related to meaning rather than an understanding of formulaic historical writing, such as when students used title slides to clarify a point raised in a visual text. This suggests that by placing the project across the two disciplines, Mary and Kathy strengthened the learners’ skills as they relate to both disciplines, but it also prepared students for robust and thorough learning that extended beyond discreet composing skills. Moje’s (2015) heuristic model for content knowledge offers the notion that the teacher’s greatest role in supporting disciplinary literacy may be in engineering a reason for students to survey what they know and learn more in response to a reason posed by the teacher. It appears that Mary and Kathy created an opportunity for that to be done in their classroom, though the students did not necessarily recognize the way the project extended their content knowledge in history or applied their composing skills from English.
In conclusion, it became clear that while the participants attempted to meet the literacy demands of historical thinking central to the video essay project, they often drew on key literacy skills from English class to meet those demands. In the end, the participants were able to use English skills to support their historical thinking, blurring the lines in the classroom that supported true inquiry and allowed students to come to new understandings about the time period.

**Discussion of Findings Related to Question 4: The Importance of Teacher Communication**

Teaching in the context of such shifting literacy practices is not easy. Kathy and Mary demonstrated the idea that in preparing students for the demands of the 21st century, teachers find themselves in new and old roles, including design consultants, resource managers, and co-learners while exploring how assumptions and beliefs must be adjusted in this changing landscape (Lapp et al., 2012).

**A Need for Communication**

Kathy and Mary had already developed a relationship that prepared them for the challenges of working together in this context. While both teachers talk passionately about their disciplines, they also have experience working in a cross-curricular context and making the negotiations that such an arrangement requires. It was clear from our early meetings that the co-teaching environment they had shared taught them protocols for working together, such as when Kathy began the planning process by asking that both teachers articulate exactly what the curricular goal for each teacher may be. These protocols helped to clear up confusion and guided the teachers to make adjustments as
they worked through the planning process. For instance, when it became clear that too many students were not enrolled in both classes to design the project as first conceived, the discussion of curricular goals helped Mary and Kathy to shape their choices for revision. Kathy was focused on helping her students consider perspective and audience; Mary was concerned with the concept of historiography, or the study of history, an idea that required students to analyze the differences between historical time periods. This allowed the multimodal nature of the composing to come into relationship with the traditional literacies so essential in the course (Snyder, 1998). It was helpful that the teachers saw these goals as complementary; Kathy even suggested that historiography was just a discipline-specific way to consider the rhetorical concept of perspective. The ability to draw literacy connections between ELA and history is a natural complement, in part because both disciplines focus so much on argumentation that requires students to take a stand and support it was appropriate evidence (Monte-Sano, 2011).

While Kathy and Mary believed the collaborative project helped both of them meet curricular goals, what did frustrate both teachers was the realization that this was a time-consuming process. Even though this assignment was not introduced until spring, the two teachers met monthly to prepare for it. This was an extensive time commitment that they were thankfully able to accommodate since their school structure allowed for monthly teacher work days. It became the practice of both teachers to meet in the afternoons of those days. Even with that structure, both teachers often self-reported feeling fatigued or stressed by other obligations. Kathy had three preparations, including a new composition course in the school. Mary served as department chair, and she was
taking classes to earn a second master’s degree, this one in history (her previous master’s degree is in education). At least three of our meetings were postponed due to conflicts; some of these were school-related, but at least once Mary had to leave due to a family obligation. In short, there were plenty of competing stressors in the planning process.

Another key issue was the limitations of the school schedule. Moje (2007) has criticized the way the sharp divisions in high schools have heightened disciplinary divisions, and those divisions could not be avoided even between two teachers very willing to try. As an AP U.S. History teacher, Mary felt she had to stay laser-focused on the test. This meant that the cross-curricular project in Phase Three needed to be completed in spring and after the test, a challenging time to sequence a rigorous or meaningful project. Kathy was the first to realize the extensive number of students who were not enrolled in both courses (a problem they anticipated but did not expect to be so extensive), and the ELA portion was scaled back so that students not enrolled in both courses could still participate in a way that made sense. The teachers tried to accommodate this problem creatively. For instance, by placing a Vietnam novel in the spring in English class, the students were benefitting from cross-curricular instruction before the project. Another fix occurred when Kathy and Mary opted to introduce the historical argument in a way that mirrored the testing requirements students would face in their May exam. As a result, Kathy adapted her prompt to include the same historical documents but in the context of a literary analysis, allowing for cross-curricular thinking but preserving Mary’s need to focus on exam preparation. Though this decision proved to be of questionable use, Kathy’s willingness to do so demonstrated her commitment to
supporting her colleague. Some of the revisions to the project complicated the planning process, and the teachers realized a need to utilize school resources (including asking help of me as the literacy coach and the media specialist). As a result, the teachers’ use of the school learning management website helped to clarify communication about expectation and processes. Digital technology can enhance literacy, in part because of its ability to exponentially increase the ways students can collaborate (Wilson, 1997), and the use of online bulletin board and classroom learning management systems streamlined the complex process in a way that prepared both students and teachers alike.

Despite the challenges of time and schedule, both teachers stayed committed to the process. At the heart of both teachers’ pedagogy was inquiry. Mary continually talked about a desire to get students thinking, and Kathy was very focused on getting the essential question correct. Moje (2015) suggested secondary teachers may benefit from seeing literacy as a framework for such inquiry that would allow disciplinary teachers to find themselves and their skills with in it. This is notable because the skills and content become secondary to the inquiry, a concept that may challenge teachers because in such a setting results cannot be tightly controlled. The constant reflection by Mary and Kathy as this study unfolded indicated to me that both teachers were willing to engage in an inquiry-process; Mary’s probing statements about how to improve the prompt and process suggested that she was responding to the students’ inquiry and not attempting to control the situation. The nature of the classrooms, with much humor and responsive teaching, played a critical role in the success of the process. Importantly, even when it
was decided that the project’s final steps were completed only in Mary’s classroom, Kathy offered support and input in planning and assessing.

**Articulating Differences**

For Mary, a clarifying moment came the week after her students had completed the Document Based Question about Vietnam in history class (Phase One). At the time, the students were using the same documents to support a literary analysis, and Kathy had commented that in some ways she felt like those students not enrolled in AP U.S. History were at an advantage because they were coming to her assignment with fresh eyes. In mulling over that comment by her colleague, Mary realized that synthesis meant something different in her class than Kathy’s. In Mary’s class, when she asked her students to synthesize the documents, she wanted them to make a connection between the historical time period of the documents (Vietnam) and another time in history. For Kathy, synthesizing was asking students to use two sources to build a new argument. In this phase of the project, this realization was not a critical problem as the teachers were largely functioning independently from one another, but recognizing and explaining how literacy demands may be specific to a discipline (and even a term such as synthesis can mean something different in one classroom than another) is important and allows students to begin to see how one disciplinary approach may differ from another. Moje (2015) stated that such metacognition is critical in allowing students to make these negotiations as they move from one discipline to another. It makes sense that such distinctions become even more important when one moves into a cross-disciplinary context such as was created in this study.
Resnick (1987) stated that it is important to recognize the higher-order thinking skills required for a literacy task (linguistic, topical, inference and rhetoric), and Mary and Kathy needed to support students in ways that allowed them to sharpen their literacy skills in support of content-specific skills (historiography and perspective). During Phase One, as students separately composed English and history arguments, most of the attention was dedicated to the curricular tasks related to each discipline and focused on more traditional literacy skills. The multimodal environments of phases two and three proved more problematic for students. For instance, students grew frustrated in the source curation process of Phase Two, in part because they lacked the knowledge of how to identify texts appropriate for their task. This was especially true in English, where learners were curating literary texts, which Kathy defined as texts that represent the popular culture’s response to the historical events. One student brought Kathy a Dorothea Lange picture from an internment camp. On one hand, such a picture could be seen as journalistic, but the student rightly pointed out it was artistically created, with the subjects posed. Which type of source was this, he wanted to know. During Phase Three in Mary’s classroom, the digital composing class was presented as “straightforward” and dismissed as simple, yet observations indicate that for some students the task was challenging. Learners expressed some concern that they lacked experience with creating a historical argument visually, a context in which the steps of argumentation did not apply in the same way. Perhaps this was because the learners were not able to understand that the video essay was not about practicing a discreet skill, such as writing a document-based historical argument, but about asking questions about how the world
works—a more global concern in disciplinary literacy that involves navigating complex literacy contexts (Moje, 2015; Shanahan & Shanahan, 2008). In the end, students needed to be comfortable with the idea that the video essay was about identifying a way of thinking, not a concrete way of composing or documenting. Mary and Kathy were flexible and supportive of students as they sought help and direction. This project demonstrated the idea that multimodal composing requires explicit instruction about the digital literacies, room for experimentation and teacher responsiveness (Hobbs, 2013).

**Signaling to Students**

There were, however, several ways that the teachers were able to signal that this project was somehow different from others students have done in the past. This seemed to be done as a way to offer support through this new approach. As Kist (2005) stated, the use of the new literacies did allow both teachers to move beyond the standardized and scripted and use “the power of students’ minds and talents to actually do some things” (p. 83). First, the curation and source analysis during Phase Two functioned to prepare the learner for the video essays. Essentially, this was a bonding of the traditional literacy (written) with the visual as students found multimodal texts but wrote traditional analysis of what was curated digitally. The participants saw such careful sequencing of the project as helpful, as when Sarah noted that earlier steps all made sense when she got to the video essay. There was strong evidence that the bonding of traditional and new literacies proved useful, as all four participants’ video essays during Phase Three used sources they curated and wrote about during the second phase of the study. This
coherence helped students negotiate the unfamiliar context of the video essay, and perhaps helped to lower the anxiety of the students.

NCTE (2005) has indicated that the nature of assessment can be critical in helping students negotiate the demands of multimodal composing. Both Kathy and Mary saw the rubrics as a way to signal the changing nature of the current assignment. While earlier rubrics Mary used in her course were very skill-oriented, the video essay rubric was more holistic and set up similar to the English Department’s writing rubric. This rubric made it explicit that it was the students’ new understanding, and not their adherence to any structure, that mattered most. Students saw that shift in the rubric, with Nate commenting that the video essay felt more like an English assignment than a history assignment. However, using the holistic rubric required Mary to be flexible; in the end, however, she embraced that flexibility as a way to award student thinking over adherence to composing conventions. While it was not clear that she planned to change assessment approaches for future evidence-based tasks (Mary never did critique the DBQ rubric she used for Phase One), Mary may have some understanding of the limitations of her original rubric when recognizing the way the holistic rubric used for the video essay prioritized thinking over structure.

Mary’s introduction to the project, in which she played a song from the Broadway musical *Hamilton*, signaled the importance of both historical and literary texts in the project. This showed that the project and Mary’s teaching were designed to help students see the ways that historical thinking relates to the literacy practices in English. Through multiple interviews and observations, Mary recognized the complementary roles English
and history can play in a student’s learning, and her instruction and the project itself were
designed to explore that corresponding relationship. Moje’s (2015) heuristic likens
instructional designing to engineering, and Mary was able to articulate important
structural supports that could assist student learning during the third phase of the study.
Although the complexities of digital literacies were not always acknowledged by the
teachers (Kathy recognized well into the Phase Two that she had not scaffolded the
students’ source curation enough, and Mary often told students the process was simple),
Mary was able to see the need for students to access a model before composing the video
essay. That model, and the accompanying planning guide I developed, helped to push
learners to move beyond the composing they have done traditionally for Mary’s class. In
classroom observations, I saw several instances of learners going back to the model as
they were making their own choices for the video essay. The planning guide also helped
to make a non-linear process a bit more manageable for the students. Like any support, I
saw some who accessed it, such as when Sarah wrote the guide before beginning her
video essay, but others, like Mike, did not. It should be noted that the students saw these
supports as different from the norms in their history classroom (such as the student who
called the planning guide his “favorite worksheet ever”) and that difference alone
prepared students for the fact that they were embarking on a different type of composing
for history.

Finally, the language the teachers used attempted to keep the project positive and
make the process less intimidating. Mary was especially careful to limit student anxieties
by suggesting the video essays would have the effect of increasing semester grades.
While this did put some students at ease, it may have contributed to the problems faced by others. For instance, Mike’s video essay was clearly rushed. Perhaps he had a false sense of comfort in the process and was unprepared for some of the time-consuming elements of composing multimodally. Others, such as Hailey (who commented she was worried she would not look professional), were made a bit self-conscious because they found the task challenging. The teacher comments may have confused students such as her, who saw this as a daunting task.

**Letting Go of Content**

Peter Elbow (1973/1998) suggested it is healthy to allow students to be freed from structure in composing to support independent thinking. The multimodal nature of the video essay freed students of the pressure to conform to any structure, and it allowed students to begin to explore their own free thinking. However, this was not always an easy process.

First, Mary acknowledged a need to help students seek out profound questions about the socio-cultural contexts of history, an idea called critical framing (New London Group, 1996). While Mary worried that students did not universally get to these questions of purpose and context, it was clear through her interactions with students that was her goal. While she was disappointed that one student in the same class as the four participants was not able to see current connections and disconnections with the Civil Rights Movement and current perspectives of Black Lives Matter in a nuanced way, he became a novice in such exploration and was beginning to ask questions that moved beyond factual. Even in her musings about how to improve the process, Mary understood
that she would never get 100% of her students to the point of true critical framing, but she acknowledged that the current project had required such thinking of the students more than previous ones had. It is important to note that in her growing awareness of that, Mary let go of content concerns. She had no notion of what knowledge students had to include in their video essays, but spoke about wanting students to provide context in order to make sense. Additionally, while Mary admitted her preference for traditional composing as a student herself, she neither shared that preference with her students nor disparaged the validity of multimodal composing. This had to have required a conscious choice to move beyond her own bias.

It is also important to note that the teachers sought out tools that allowed students to focus on meaning-making, not gadgets (Kist, 2005). For instance, the online bulletin board and video editing platform were all free, online, and simple to use. The rubric designs were centered on questions of messaging with phrases such as “answer the essential question” or “explain your understanding.” This meant that both teachers had to be comfortable with the challenges that ensued. For instance, some groups organized the online bulletin board by type of source; for others, the board was a disorganized mess. The teachers accepted both. One day, Mary reported that she had to adjust her lesson plan because the video editing platform’s website was down. She took that frustration in stride, calling students to the front of the room to discuss the project’s essential question in a Socratic-style discussion. Video essays showed unique and varied approaches, and Mary adapted her rubric and assessment practices to allow that.
However, this was an imperfect process that sometimes left students feeling anxious. In English class, Kathy failed to help students make negotiations in source curation. When students were confused by whether a text could be considered literary or historical, she simply assured students that making a mistake at this point could not be considered critical. One might consider whether a teachable moment was lost in that reply; a discussion of context and perspective may have helped students see historical and literary texts as inter-related rather than fragmented. While Mary used language to ease student’s concerns and frustrations with the project, she sometimes failed to recognize how complex the literacy demands truly were. Her decision to have the class multitask and watch a movie while engaging in initial source curation, and her comments that students should see the video essay as unintimidating did not recognize how truly demanding the student tasks were. Such lapses in teacher support were often well-intentioned, but they illustrate how complex teaching for new literacies truly is.

In conclusion, the process of cross-disciplinary and multimodal planning required flexibility and commitment from both teachers. Many structural constraints complicated the various phases of the study, and both teachers needed to remain committed to the project in order to address those issues as they arouse.

**Limitations and Implications for Future Study**

It is true that for case studies, the issue of generalizability “looms large” (Merriam, 2002, p. 178). In this case, there are some questions of limitation that I address and then consider what implications for further study the case study presents.
First, the students in this study were highly capable as measured by standardized testing. The study was situated in two classrooms, both advanced courses in a college-preparatory, parochial school, with course placement criteria that includes a 7th stanine or above on standardized tests in verbal areas. While I had hoped that the selection of such a group would allow me to eliminate some learning factors as I observe student difficulties, the group is not representative of all, or even typical, students. For instance, I was quite surprised by the preference the participants shared for English composing, despite acknowledging the lower scores and increased level of difficulty they faced when writing for English. I would have assumed that learners who felt grade pressure and were in an academically competitive environment would have preferred writing that was perceived as more formulaic and could be approached systematically. Because these students have more academic skill, I wonder if this preference is due to the fact that they feel more prepared to seek greater challenges, and I further wonder how a student with documented lower ability might perceive the difference between English and historical writing differently given that the composing task itself may be more daunting in English.

Secondly, this was a largely homogenous group of White, upper middle-class students. There was some economic diversity (for instance, one participant’s father is a house painter while another’s is a psychiatrist), but no significant racial diversity. As the two educators noted, the project asked learners to consider perspectives and ask other critical questions about how history is presented. While grading the final reflection essays, Mary noted many in her class wrote politically conservative comments. This is
typical of the school, and asking questions of power offers distinct problems when the learners come from the dominant culture. Digital literacies offer a rich environment to explore and create texts with a more critical lens, but that potential may be limited in a school whose students come from such positions of privilege.

Additionally, the timing of the project was not ideal. Due to Mary’s AP exam concerns, the project was placed at the end of the school year, as students were preparing for a number of exams and looking forward to summer. Making the project part of the semester exam mitigated this concern, but the timing may not have shown the full potential of all students. A few students in the class, including one study participant, seemed distracted and rushed in the project. One student in Mary’s class was observed complaining about having such a rigorous assignment after completing end-of-course exam for the College Boards. There was ample evidence that students moved past such distractions, including observations of focused student work days, but the timing of the project may have sapped some focus and interest.

Finally, one important limitation to the study could be my relationship to the participants. While I had not taught any of the four participants, I was a member of their school community and they may well have wanted to impress me with their comments. They knew, for instance, that I had created the models and probably suspected I had written the rubrics (since these were set up much like the writing rubric they encountered in English class). While I do believe that there were definite benefits to knowing the school context and participating teachers well, I wonder how I may have unintentionally influenced the study results. Did Mary and Kathy make planning decisions that were
more shaped by their perceptions of my needs, not theirs or their learners? Did the students involved want to help me achieve my study goals as they had come to understand them during the consent process? Was I sometimes unable to see teaching mistakes because I know and respect the two teachers involved? I know that member checking and triangulation surely helped me to see some of these limitations, but these are subjective and imperfect checks as well. I know that my approach remained ethical, but I am not as certain it was not without some flaws, especially in relation to my closeness to study participants.

It may be worth noting that both teachers were highly skilled and familiar with co-planning. While not a study limitation per se, it is a distinction that may affect the generalizability of my results. Kathy’s experience in a college writing center gives her perspective that is beyond the typical secondary English teacher. Mary’s current enrollment in a master’s program has offered her current experience with academic writing and being a student. This single unit was typical of the type of work both teachers have done together in the past, and so they have a strong rapport and have developed a protocol that facilitates such collaboration. These are all strengths, but it is likely that most collaborations across disciplines will involve more trust-building. I believe the planning process was different in this study because of that existing relationship and the teachers’ own achievements.

Turning to future study implications, some aspects of the study’s design could be addressed for purposes of further study. First, it would be helpful to conduct a similar case study with students whose testing shows more average (or even below average)
ability in verbal areas. It would be interesting to note if such a student would demonstrate a preference for agency over ease of composing as these higher performing students showed in this the study. I actually thought that the grade pressures and competitive academic environment would have led the study participants to show a preference for the historical writing because its expectations were presented with more clarity. I wonder if students who feel less comfortable writing show a preference for historical writing, which is presented in a much more linear fashion, with checklists and rubrics that allow for easier self-monitoring.

This study was designed so that traditional disciplinary work was sequenced before the cross disciplinary assignment. This allowed for a sense of comparison for both the participant and the researcher and allowed me to observe possible elements of discipline-specific literacy demands in the cross-disciplinary project. Reversing that order would allow a researcher to see how student perceptions and performance in a discipline-specific classroom may be shaped by a previous cross-disciplinary assignment. Both teachers in this study talked about the relationship of literary inquiry to historical inquiry, and Nate spoke about how he has tried to transfer some of the historical argumentation writing skills to his written English assignments. It would be potentially illuminating to see what evidence of skill transfer and cross-disciplinary thinking is evident when the sequence of composing is reversed.

Further studies could also explore the relationship between English and other disciplinary literacies, such as science or math. This study was able to define complimentary elements of literacy as practiced in English and history. Theories of
disciplinary literacy suggest that the true value of disciplinary inquiry is in the way it allows students to approach literacy tasks with differing perspectives and priorities. Mary and Kathy found that juxtaposing historical learning with literature allowed students to contextualize the history. Kathy spoke about the potential of historical literacy to help students and teachers better approach rhetorical analysis. What complementary elements of literacy could be found if work was shared in English and science classes? Or English and math? Because English Language Arts both requires its own discipline-specific demands and supports the process of meaning-making that crosses across the disciplines, looking for interconnected moments for literacy education when English is paired with other disciplines can inform ELA educators as they prepare for the complex inter-literacy demands that are part of the 21st century experience.

In looking at the study results, it clear that the study provides ample questions for future practice. For instance, because it appears that multimodal writing increased the writer’s sense of agency, it would be helpful to delve more into why that may be. Literacy experts have discussed the importance of offering choice in creating agency, and this accounts for the often open-ended nature of many literacy tasks in an ELA classroom. However, a multimodal composition makes this choice more complex, because it is no longer just about the learner’s discretion to determine what to say, but to a much larger extent the learner is also asked to decide how to say it. This is a truly Herculean task, and understanding how to offer that chance in manageable ways would help educators to use digital literacies in a way that furthers students’ knowledge, skill, and agency.
Finally, I was struck by the difference between the ways that the two teachers spoke about the composing tasks and walked students through the composing process. I saw evidence of process-oriented thinking in both classrooms, but it was far more overt and integral to the learning in the ELA classroom. For instance, Kathy was far more clear and process-oriented in her instruction during Phase Two, the source curation and analysis. While Mary said she saw writing as a process of discovery, her initial instruction in Phase Two in particular left the learners on their own for source curation. She often told the students the tasks were “simple” and “straightforward” when observational evidence indicated that the students found aspects of the project quite challenging. Discovering how teachers across the disciplines talk about composing and then looking at how that language affects student perception of the task would be informative and could help ELA teachers support their counterparts in other classrooms, as well as shape professional learning that could help disciplinary teachers become more effective in literacy instruction.

**Conclusion**

This study was designed to show how students and teachers alike negotiated shifting contexts for literacy learning. Elizabeth Moje (2015) offered a framework for literacy that both transcends specific disciplines but can be used to help students articulate heuristic understandings that are essential to each discipline. In teaching literacy, no matter through which discipline, learners should “ask questions or frame problems; work with data of some type; read and write a range of texts; record, analyze and synthesize data; and communicate . . . findings” (Moje, 2015, p. 61). This project
allowed students to use both disciplines to accomplish such a task, a process that required both teachers to focus more on the process of meaning-making and less on the minutia of each discipline. Seeing the framework in the cross-curricular context allows one to acknowledge that in the end, students use the disciplinary thinking to come to new understandings. Ideally, those understandings are the true goal of any instruction.

Digital literacies have expanded a learner’s ability to complete the literacy tasks required within Moje’s (2015) framework. Done correctly, this offers rich opportunities for the educators to engineer for inquiry in the classroom, but the opportunities such options offer may also serve to diffuse and confuse the learning in ways that limit the growth of the learner. Our increasing digital reality has made our world more global and more complex, and no discipline can escape the changes that we have seen since 1996, when the New London Group first framed the issues of new literacies. Learners are constantly asked to engage in literacy tasks with shifting contexts. Teaching learners to thrive within this fluid environment will prepare them for digital literacy practices that dominate all facets of modern living.
APPENDICES
APPENDIX A

RECRUITMENT LETTER AND CONSENT FORMS
Appendix A

Recruitment Letter and Consent Forms


Dear Families of Honors English 10/AP U.S. History students:

As part of doctoral studies at Kent State University, a student is required to engage in original research. A member of the NDCL faculty, Beth Walsh-Moorman, has reached this point in her doctoral program Curriculum and Instruction-Literacy. This letter is a request your help in achieving this goal.

Beginning in January, Mrs. Walsh-Moorman will be engaging in research that involves both Miss Orr’s Honors English 10 classes and Mrs. Smith’s AP U.S. History. This research will look at how students compose differently in different writing contexts: an English classroom, a history classroom and a cross-curricular assignment for both classes. This study proposal has been approved by an advisory board at Kent State University and any parent who would like a copy of that proposal can email Mrs. Walsh-Moorman at the address below. Prior to beginning the study, Kent State University’s Institutional Review Board (IRB) and the administration of NDCL have approved the study. We are writing you today, however, to ask your permission. As part of the study, Mrs. Walsh-Moorman is seeking permission to observe your child as he or she interacts with the teacher and each other during these various writing assignments. No assignments will be outside of the normal scope of the class, and class will function as it normally does. A few students may be asked to participate in interviews to allow Mrs. Walsh-Moorman to further explore the students’ perceptions as they work. While some of the work sessions and interviews may be audio recorded, no identifying information will ever be used and all data will be kept in a locked, secured cabinet to insure your child’s privacy.

If you agree to allow your student to participate in this study, please sign and return the accompanying document to either Miss Orr or Mrs. Smith as soon as possible. Please know that there is absolutely no consequence for not participating, and we thank you for your support of our educational goals.

Thank you,

Dr. William Kist
Professor
Teaching, Learning and Curriculum Studies
wkist@kent.edu
Informed Consent to Participate in a Research Study

**Study Title:** Multimodal Composing in Support of Disciplinary Literacy: A Search for Contexts in ELA and History Classrooms  

**Principal Investigator:** Dr. William Kist  
**Site Investigator:** Beth Walsh-Moorman

Your child is being invited to participate in a research study. This consent form will provide you with information on the research project, what your child will need to do, and the associated risks and benefits of the research. Your child’s participation is voluntary. Please read this form carefully. It is important that you ask questions and fully understand the research in order to make an informed decision. You will receive a copy of this document to take with you.

**Purpose:** The study is designed to investigate how students negotiate various types of composing demands in an English classroom and history classroom. This will allow the researcher to better understand how students consider the demands and requirements of assignments in two different disciplines.

**Procedures**  
As the site investigator, Mrs. Walsh-Moorman will observe class instruction and student work on traditional essay assignments in both Miss Orr’s Honors English 10 class and Mrs. Smith’s AP U.S. History class. Some students may be asked to be interviewed. Upon completion of this task, students will be observed as they work on a cross-curricular, multimodal assignment (a presentation that will include writing, audio, video and pictures). Some students will be asked to record their group work and participate in interviews. While participation in the study is not required, the tasks will be required in both courses. The researcher will be in the classroom to conduct interviews and observe class interactions multiple times in a one-month period.

**Audio and Video Recording and Photography**  
Some interviews and class work will be recorded using digital audio recording devices. The recordings will only be used for study purposes and all files will be destroyed upon completion of the study.

**Benefits**  
This research will not benefit you or your child directly. However, your child’s participation in this study will help us to better understand how teaching and composing contexts might affect a student’s ability to understand a learning task.

**Risks and Discomforts**  
There are no anticipated risks beyond those encountered in everyday life.

**Privacy and Confidentiality**  
Identifying information will not be made available in the publications and/or presentations of the research data. Information obtained from your child or materials (if applicable) that are collected from your child (i.e., class projects, homework assignments, journal entries, etc.) will not contain identifying information about you or your child unless express consent is gained from you and your child.
Your child’s study related information will be kept confidential within the limits of the law. Any identifying information will be kept in a secure location and only the researchers will have access to the data. Research participants will not be identified in any publication or presentation of research results; only aggregate data will be used.

Your research information may, in certain circumstances, be disclosed to the Institutional Review Board (IRB), which oversees research at Kent State University, or to certain federal agencies. Your child’s confidentiality may not be maintained if there is an indication that if he/she may harm themselves or others.

**Compensation**
Participation or non-participation will have no effect on your child’s grade in the classroom.

**Voluntary Participation**
Taking part in this research study is entirely up to you and your child. You and/or your child may choose not to participate or may discontinue their participation at any time without penalty or loss of benefits to which he/she is otherwise entitled. You will be informed of any new, relevant information that may affect your child’s health, welfare, or willingness to continue participation in this study.

**Contact Information**
If you have any questions or concerns about this research, you may contact Dr. William Kist at 330-672-2580 or Beth Walsh-Moorman at 440-286-6226. This project has been approved by the Kent State University Institutional Review Board. If you have any questions about your rights as a research participant or complaints about the research, you may call the IRB at 330.672.2704.

**Consent Statement and Signature**
I have read this consent form and have had the opportunity to have my questions answered to my satisfaction. I voluntarily agree to grant permission for my child to participate in this study. I understand that a copy of this consent will be provided to me for future reference.

__________________________    ______
Parental Signature                Date

**Statement of Student Assent**

I have read this consent form signed above by my parent and guardian and have had the opportunity to have my questions answered to my satisfaction. I voluntarily assent to participate in this study.

__________________________    ______
Student Signature                Date

Please print student’s full name neatly here:

__________________________
Informed Consent to Participate in a Research Study

**Study Title:** Multimodal Composing in Support of Disciplinary Literacy: A Search for Contexts in ELA and History Classrooms

**Principal Investigator:** Dr. William Kist

**Site Investigator:** Beth Walsh-Moorman

You are being asked to participate in a research study. This consent form will provide you with information on the research project, what you will need to do, and the associated risks and benefits of the research. Your participation is voluntary. Please read this form carefully. It is important that you ask questions and fully understand the research in order to make an informed decision. You will receive a copy of this document to take with you.

**Purpose:** The study is designed to investigate how students negotiate various types of composing demands in an English classroom and history classroom. This will allow the researcher to better understand how students consider the demands and requirements of assignments in two different disciplines.

**Procedures**
As the site investigator, Mrs. Walsh-Moorman will observe your individual planning and class instruction for a discipline-specific writing assignment in one of your discipline classes. She will be present for one class period. You will be asked to participate in interviews and share your thoughts as you assess the students’ work from that lesson. Upon completion of this task, Mrs. Walsh-Moorman will observe your planning sessions for a joint, cross-curricular, multimodal assignment (a presentation that will include writing, audio, video and pictures) with a teacher from another discipline. She will be present as you introduce the assignment and students work to complete it. You may be asked to audio record your planning and participate in interviews. The researcher will be in the classroom to conduct interviews and observe class interactions multiple times in a one-month period.

**Audio and Video Recording and Photography**
Some interviews and class work will be recorded using digital audio recording devices. The recordings will only be used for study purposes and all files will be destroyed upon completion of the study.

**Benefits**
This research will not benefit you directly. However, your participation in this study will help us to better understand how teaching and composing contexts might affect a student’s ability to understand a learning task.

**Risks and Discomforts**
There are no anticipated risks beyond those encountered in everyday life.

**Privacy and Confidentiality**
Identifying information will not be made available in the publications and/or presentations of the research data.
All study-related information will be kept confidential within the limits of the law. Any identifying information will be kept in a secure location and only the researchers will have access to the data. Research participants will not be identified in any publication or presentation of research results; only aggregate data will be used.

Your research information may, in certain circumstances, be disclosed to the Institutional Review Board (IRB), which oversees research at Kent State University, or to certain federal agencies.

**Compensation**
There will be no compensation for participation in the study.

**Voluntary Participation**
Taking part in this research study is entirely up to you. You may discontinue your participation at any time.

**Contact Information**
If you have any questions or concerns about this research, you may contact Dr. William Kist at 330-672-2580 or Beth Walsh-Moorman at 440-286-6226. This project has been approved by the Kent State University Institutional Review Board. If you have any questions about your rights as a research participant or complaints about the research, you may call the IRB at 330.672.2704.

**Consent Statement and Signature**
I have read this consent form and have had the opportunity to have my questions answered to my satisfaction. I voluntarily agree to grant permission for my participation in this study. I understand that a copy of this consent will be provided to me for future reference.

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APPENDIX B

IRB APPROVAL
Appendix B

IRB Approval

RE: IRB # 16-715 entitled “Multimodal Composing in Support of Disciplinary Literacy: A Search for Contexts in ELA and History Classrooms”

Hello,

I am pleased to inform you that the Kent State University Institutional Review Board reviewed and approved your Application for Approval to Use Human Research Participants as a Level II/Expedited, category 6 & 7 project. **Approval is effective for a twelve-month period:**

**December 6th, 2016 through December 5th, 2017**

For compliance with:

DHHS regulations for the protection of human subjects (Title 45 part 46), subparts A, B, C, D & E

*If applicable, a copy of the IRB approved consent form is attached to this email. This “stamped” copy is the consent form that you must use for your research participants. It is important for you to also keep an unstamped text copy (i.e., Microsoft Word version) of your consent form for subsequent submissions.*

Federal regulations and Kent State University IRB policy require that research be reviewed at intervals appropriate to the degree of risk, but not less than once per year. The IRB has determined that this protocol requires an annual review and progress report. The IRB tries to send you annual review reminder notice by email as a courtesy. **However, please note that it is the responsibility of the principal investigator to be aware of the study expiration date and submit the required materials.** Please submit review materials (annual review form and copy of current consent form) one month prior to the expiration date. [Visit our website](#) for forms.

HHS regulations and Kent State University Institutional Review Board guidelines require that any changes in research methodology, protocol design, or principal investigator have the prior approval of the IRB before implementation and continuation of the protocol. The IRB must also be informed of any adverse events associated with the study. The IRB further requests a final report at the conclusion of the study.

Kent State University has a Federal Wide Assurance on file with the Office for Human Research Protections (OHRP); **FWA Number 00001853.**

If you have any questions or concerns, please contact the Office of Research Compliance at [Researchcompliance@kent.edu](mailto:Researchcompliance@kent.edu) or 330-672-2704 or 330-672-8058.

**Bethany Holland** | Assistant | 330.672.2384 | bhollan4_stu@kent.edu
**Tricia Sloan** | Coordinator | 330.672.2181 | psloan1@kent.edu
**Kevin McCrery** | Assistant Director | 330.672.8058 | kmcrea1@kent.edu
**Paulette Washko** | Director | 330.672.2704 | pwashko@kent.edu
**Doug Delahanty** | IRB Chair | 330.672.2395 | ddelahanty@kent.edu
APPENDIX C

INTERVIEW QUESTIONS
Appendix C

Interview Questions

Questions to be asked after the composition of the traditional essay:

1. Explain how you went about understanding the teacher’s prompt and her expectations for this assignment.
2. Explain how you decided what information to use from the path-finder.
3. Explain what you think made this a distinctly English/Social Studies essay.
4. What do you think makes an essay an exceptional essay in English/Social Studies?
5. What was the last decision you made in the essay? Explain how you came to that conclusion?
6. Did you revise your paper? If no, why not? If yes, how? What prompted those revisions?

Questions to be asked during the composition of the cross-curricular project:

7. Explain how you made a choice in the final product. (Pointing to a specific element in the composition).
8. How did you know you had enough information to meet the teachers’ demands?
9. When did you seek out the help of your English teacher? Your social studies teacher? How did you decide when to ask which teacher?
10. What is the relationship you see between what you did in English class and this project? How about Social Studies?
11. How would you compare creating multimodal assignment to writing the essay? What makes it easier? What makes it harder?
12. What role did you perceive each teacher to have as you completed this task for her?
13. What support provided by the teachers best helped you in this process? When did you wish you had been offered more support? Why?
14. What were your guiding questions as you went forward with this assignment? How important were these questions as you addressed the assignment demands? What other questions did you have as you tried to answer the first?
15. Were you happy with your performance on this assignment? Why or why not?
Questions for teachers:

1. Explain the curricular goals you were attempting to meet with these assignments?
2. How did you communicate those goals to the students?
3. What was your perception of the class’ overall performance on both assignments?
4. What do you wish you had done differently with the written assignment? The multimodal assignment? Why?
5. In your mind, how did the multimodal assignment compare to the written assignment?
6. What were your assessment concerns when grading this task? What affected your grading process?
7. How do you think your assignment design supported student inquiry? Disciplinary knowledge?
8. What challenges did you encounter as students followed an inquiry path? Had you anticipated these? Why or why not?
APPENDIX D

EVIDENCE-BASED WRITING TASK—HISTORY ARGUMENTATION

PROMPT, SOURCES, AND RUBRIC
Appendix D

Evidence-Based Writing Task—History Argumentation Prompt, Sources, and Rubric

UNITED STATES HISTORY
SECTION II
Part A
(Suggested writing time—45 minutes)
Percent of Section II score—45

Directions: The following question requires you to construct a coherent essay that integrates your interpretation of Documents A-I and your knowledge of the period referred to in the question. High scores will be earned only by essays that both cite key pieces of evidence from the documents and draw on outside knowledge of the period.

1. Analyze the ways in which the Vietnam War heightened social, political, and economic tensions in the United States. Focus your answer on the period 1964 to 1975.
**Document A**

Source: Gulf of Tonkin Resolution, 1964

Whereas the United States is assisting the peoples of southeast Asia to protect their freedom and has no territorial, military, or political ambitions in that area, but desires only that these people should be left in peace to work out their destinies in their own way: Now, therefore be it

Resolved by the Senate and House of Representatives of the United States of America in Congress assembled, That the Congress approves and supports the determination of the President as Commander in Chief, to take all necessary measures to repel any armed attack against the forces of the United States and prevent further aggression.

**Document C**

Source: Martin Luther King, Jr., 1967

...It became clear to me that the war was doing far more than devastating the hopes of the poor at home. It was sending their sons and their brothers and their husbands to fight and die in extraordinarily high proportions relative to the rest of the population. We were taking the black young men who had been crippled by our society and sending them eight thousand miles away to guarantee liberties in Southeast Asia which they had not found in southwest Georgia and East Harlem.

**Document B**

Source: Country Joe and the Fish, "I Feel Like I'm Dying Too," 1965

Well, come on Wall Street, don't move slow,  
Why man, this is war au-go-go,  
There's plenty good money to be made  
By supplying the army with the tools of the trade.  
Just hope and pray that if they drop the bomb,  
They drop it on the Viet Cong.

And it's one, two, three  
What are we fighting for?  
Don't ask me, I don't give a damn,  
Next stop is Vietnam.  
And it's five, six, seven.  
Open up the poorly gates.  
Well there ain't no time to wonder why  
Whoopie! we're all going to die.

Well, come on mother throughout the land  
Pack your boys off to Vietnam.  
Come on fathers, don't hesitate,  
Send 'em off before it's too late.  
Be the first one on your block  
To have your boy come home in a box.

**Document D**

Source: "Onward and Upward" 1967 Bill Crawford
**Document E**

*Source: James Fallows, writing about his 1969 draft board experience*

...Even as the last of the Cambridge contingent was throwing its urine and deliberately failing its color-blindness tests, busses from the next board began to arrive. These bore the boys from Chelsea, thick, dark-haired young men, the white proles [members of the working class] of Boston. Most of them were younger than us, since they had left high school, and it had clearly never occurred to them that there might be a way around the draft. They walked through examination lines like so many cattle off to slaughter. I tried to avoid noticing, but the results were inescapable. While perhaps four out of five of my friends from Harvard were being deferred, just the opposite was happening to the Chelsea boys.

**Document F**

*Source: Richard Nixon, Address to the Nation, 1969*

I know it may not be fashionable to speak of patriotism or national destiny these days. But I feel it is appropriate to do so on this occasion...

Let historians not record that when America was the most powerful nation in the world we passed on the other side of the road and allowed the last hopes for peace and freedom of millions of people to be suffocated by the forces of totalitarianism. And so tonight to you, the great silent majority of my fellow Americans, I ask for your support...

Let us be united for peace. Let us also be united against defeat. Because let us understand: North Vietnam cannot defeat or humiliate the United States. Only Americans can do that.

**Document G**

*Source: George McGovern, 1972*

What I propose is that we spend all that is necessary for prudent national defense, and no more. I propose that we conserve our limited resources:

- By no longer underwriting the appalling waste of money and manpower that has become such a bad habit in our military establishment;

- By rejecting the purchase of weapons which are designed to fight the last war better, with almost no relevance to today's threat;

- By refusing to maintain extra military forces that can have no other purpose than to repeat our experience in Vietnam, a venture which nearly all of us now recognize as a monstrous national blunder;

- By repudiating the false world of old discredited myths, made up blow, puppets and dominoes, facing instead the real world of today and the future with multiple ideologies and interests.
**APUSH DBQ RUBRIC**

**CONTEXTUALIZATION:** Situates the argument by explaining the broader historical context that is immediately relevant to the question (2-3 sentences). Some prompts will only accept context that is within the time frame of the prompt (although for some prompts, the period immediately before may be appropriate).

**Thesis:** Presents a thesis that makes a historically defensible claim and responds to all parts of the question (does more than re-state).

**Document Analysis: (Two Points)**

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<th>Used</th>
<th>POV/CAP (any)</th>
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- Correctly Uses the content of at least SIX of the documents to support the stated thesis (or a relevant argument).
- Explains the significance of author’s POV, context, audience, and/or purpose (CAP) for at least FOUR documents.

**OUTSIDE EVIDENCE:** Provides an example or additional piece of SPECIFIC evidence beyond those found in the documents to support or qualify the argument.

- Must be 1) distinct from evidence used to earn other points and 2) more than a mere phrase or reference. Better safe than sorry – try to provide at least TWO pieces of evidence.

**ARGUMENTATION:** Develops and supports a cohesive argument (typically supporting the thesis, if present) that recognizes and accounts for historical complexity by explicitly illustrating relationships among historical evidence such as contradiction, corroborations, and/or qualifications.

- Basically, develop a coherent and consistent argument and put the documents in conversation with each other. In practice, this is often a capstone point for an excellently argued essay that impresses the reader.

**SYNTHESIS:** Extends the argument by explaining the connections between the argument and a similar development in a different historical period or geographical area.

- You may also bring in a course theme and/or approach to history that is not the focus of the essay (political, social, etc.) to get the synthesis point but the approach is less common than time/place synthesis.
APPENDIX E

EVIDENCE-BASED WRITING TASK—HONORS ENGLISH 10 WRITING
PROMPT, DOCUMENTS, AND RUBRIC
Appendix E

Evidence-Based Writing Task—Honors English 10 Writing Prompt, Documents, and Rubric

Name: ________________________________               Honors English 10

Prompt: Read the following poem, “Facing It” by Yusef Komunyakaa and the sources attached. Then write an essay in which you explore what is the “it” the speaker of Yusef Komunyakaa’s poem is facing, and how do you know? Use the poem and the historical documents to support your claims.

Facing It

Yusef Komunyakaa, 1947
My black face fades,
hiding inside the black granite.
I said I wouldn’t,
dammit: No tears.
I’m stone. I’m flesh.
My clouded reflection eyes me
like a bird of prey, the profile of night
slanted against morning. I turn
this way--the stone lets me go.
I turn that way--I’m inside
the Vietnam Veterans Memorial
again, depending on the light
to make a difference.
I go down the 58,022 names,
half-expecting to find
my own in letters like smoke.
I touch the name Andrew Johnson;
I see the booby trap’s white flash.
Names shimmer on a woman’s blouse
but when she walks away
the names stay on the wall.
Brushstrokes flash, a red bird’s
wings cutting across my stare.
The sky. A plane in the sky.
A white vet’s image floats
closer to me, then his pale eyes
look through mine. I’m a window.
He’s lost his right arm
inside the stone. In the black mirror
a woman’s trying to erase names:
No, she’s brushing a boy’s hair.

From *Dien Cai Dau* by Yusef Komunyakaa. Copyright © 1988 by Yusef Komunyakaa.

This essay will be graded according to the NDCL Writing Rubric, and it will be worth 50 points in the Achievement category.
DOCUMENT A

Source: Gulf of Tonkin Resolution, 1964

Whereas the United States is assisting the peoples of southeast Asia to protect their freedom and has no territorial, military or political ambitions in that area, but desires only that these people should be left in peace to work out their destinies in their own way: Now, therefore be it

Resolved by the Senate and House of Representatives of the United States of America in Congress assembled, That the Congress approves and supports the determination of the President, as Commander in Chief, to take all necessary measures to repel any armed attack against the forces of the United States and to prevent further aggression.

DOCUMENT B

Source: Country Joe and the Fish, “I-Feel-Like-I’m-Fixin’-To-Die,” 1965

Well, come on Wall Street, don’t move slow,
Why man, this is war au-go-go.
There’s plenty good money to be made
By supplying the Army with the tools of the trade,
Just hope and pray that if they drop the bomb,
They drop it on the Viet Cong.

And it’s one, two, three,
What are we fighting for?
Don’t ask me, I don’t give a damn,
Next stop is Vietnam.
And it’s five, six, seven,
Open up the pearly gates,
Well there ain’t no time to wonder why
Whoopee! we’re all gonna die.

Well, come on mothers throughout the land,
Pack your boys off to Vietnam.
Come on fathers, don’t hesitate,
Send ’em off before it’s too late.
Be the first one on your block
To have your boy come home in a box.

I Feel Like I’m Fixin’ to Die Rag, words and music by Joe McDonald. Copyright ©1965 renewed 1993 by Alkatraz Corner Music Co. All rights reserved. Used by permission.
DOCUMENT C

Source: Martin Luther King, 1967

... it became clear to me that the war was doing far more than devastating the hopes of the poor at home. It was sending their sons and their brothers and their husbands to fight and die in extraordinarily high proportions relative to the rest of the population. We were taking the black young men who had been crippled by our society and sending them eight thousand miles away to guarantee liberties in Southeast Asia which they had not found in southwest Georgia and East Harlem.

DOCUMENT E

Source: Robert F. Kennedy, 1968

For years we have been told that the measure of our success and progress in Vietnam was increasing security and control for the population. Now we have seen that none of the population is secure and no area is under such control . . . .

This has not happened because our men are not brave or effective, because they are. It is because we have not conceived our mission in this war. It is because we have misconceived the nature of the war. It is because we have sought to resolve by military might a conflict whose issue depends upon the will and conviction of the South Vietnamese people. It is like sending a lion to halt an epidemic of jungle rot.

DOCUMENT F

Source: James Fallows, writing about his 1969 draft board experience

... Even as the last of the Cambridge contingent was throwing its urine and deliberately failing its color-blindness tests, buses from the next board began to arrive. These bore the boys from Chelsea, thick, dark-haired young men, the white proles [members of the working class] of Boston. Most of them were younger than us, since they had just left high school, and it had clearly never occurred to them that there might be a way around the draft. They walked through the examination lines like so many cattle off to slaughter. I tried to avoid noticing, but the results were inescapable. While perhaps four out of five of my friends from Harvard were being deferred, just the opposite was happening to the Chelsea boys.
DOCUMENT G

Source: Richard Nixon, Address to the Nation, 1969

I know it may not be fashionable to speak of patriotism or national destiny these days. But I feel it is appropriate to do so on this occasion. . . .

Let historians not record that when America was the most powerful nation in the world we passed on the other side of the road and allowed the last hopes for peace and freedom of millions of people to be suffocated by the forces of totalitarianism. And so tonight to you, the great silent majority of my fellow Americans, I ask for your support. . . .

Let us be united for peace. Let us also be united against defeat. Because let us understand: North Vietnam cannot defeat or humiliate the United States. Only Americans can do that.
### English Department Writing Rubric

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Criteria</th>
<th>Consistent Mastery</th>
<th>Reasonably Consistent Mastery</th>
<th>Developing Mastery</th>
<th>Very Little Mastery</th>
<th>No Mastery</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Reading Comprehension</td>
<td>Your choice of textual support shows that you accurately understand the text and support your ideas clearly and effectively. Your analysis of the text is accurate and shows full comprehension of the complex ideas.</td>
<td>Your choice of textual support shows that you mostly understand the text and support your ideas clearly and effectively. Your analysis of the text is mostly accurate and shows comprehension of the complex ideas.</td>
<td>Your choice of textual support shows that you largely understand the text and support your ideas clearly and effectively. Your analysis of the text is generally accurate and shows some comprehension of the complex ideas.</td>
<td>Your choice of textual support shows that you minimally understand the text and support your ideas only partially. Your analysis of the text is inaccurate and shows minimal comprehension of the complex ideas.</td>
<td>Your writing provides no evidence of understanding the text, showing little to no comprehension of ideas expressed in the text.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Writing Focus</td>
<td>Your writing fully addresses the prompt and accurately interprets the purpose of the assignment. Your writing has a clearly stated focus on a main idea.</td>
<td>Your writing appropriately addresses the prompt and generally interprets the purpose of the assignment. Your writing has a partially stated focus on the main idea.</td>
<td>Your writing sometimes addresses the prompt and interprets the purpose of the assignment. Your writing has an unclear focus on the main idea.</td>
<td>Your writing is severely limited in its understanding of the prompt and purpose of the assignment. Your paper fails to focus.</td>
<td>Your writing shows no understanding of the prompt and purpose of the assignment.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Development of Ideas</td>
<td>Your writing provides effective and comprehensive development of ideas. The support that you give clearly addresses the focus you are making and is fully explained in a logical manner.</td>
<td>Your writing provides limited development of ideas. The support you give clearly addresses the focus you are making and is partially explained in a logical manner.</td>
<td>Your writing somewhat provides development of ideas. The support you give minimally addresses the focus you are making and is not fully explained in a logical manner.</td>
<td>Your writing is limited in its development of ideas. Your support does not advance your thesis, and your explanations lack logic and development.</td>
<td>Your writing shows an undifferentiated view and support that lacks logic.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Organization</td>
<td>Your writing demonstrates parallelism, coherence, and includes an introduction, conclusion, and logical, well-structured progression of ideas, making it easy to follow your progression of ideas.</td>
<td>Your writing demonstrates a general notion of coherence, and includes an introduction, conclusion, and logical progression of ideas, making it slightly difficult to follow your progression of ideas.</td>
<td>Your writing shows basic coherence and includes an attempt at an introduction and conclusion. Your ideas are presented logically, however, your progression of ideas is un insurgent and not obvious.</td>
<td>Your writing demonstrates limited coherence with an attempt at an introduction and conclusion. Making the progression of your ideas to generally unclear.</td>
<td>Your writing shows a lack of coherence with its progression of ideas.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Awareness of Voice and Audience</td>
<td>Your writing demonstrates an effective voice that gives purpose, audience, and focus of the assignment. The responses use precise language, including descriptive words and phrases, sensory details, linking and transitional words, words to indicate tone, and appropriate tone.</td>
<td>Your writing demonstrates an effective voice that gives purpose, audience, and focus of the assignment. The responses use precise language, including descriptive words and phrases, sensory details, linking and transitional words, words to indicate tone, and appropriate tone.</td>
<td>Your writing shows basic awareness of an effective statement, giving purpose, audience, and focus of the assignment. The responses use wordy, precise language, including descriptive words and phrases, sensory details, linking and transitional words, words to indicate tone, or dominant specific vocabulary.</td>
<td>Your writing shows an ineffective voice, giving purpose, audience, and focus of the assignment. The responses include limited descriptions, sensory details, linking or transitional words, words to indicate tone, or dominant specific vocabulary.</td>
<td>Your writing lacks an...</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
APPENDIX F

SOURCE CURATION INSTRUCTION SHEET AND RUBRIC
Appendix F

Source Curation Instruction Sheet and Rubric

Step 1: CURATION

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>APUSH sources</th>
<th>Honors English 10 sources</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>From the historical time period… (FIND 2)</td>
<td>From the historical time period… (FIND 2)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Primary newspaper accounts</td>
<td>• Songs or artwork done during the time period.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Political speeches given at the time</td>
<td>• Poems or literature done at the time. (Think Hemingway)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Legislation, declarations and other official legislative action at the time</td>
<td>• Contemporary movies or TV produced at the time.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Editorials and personal essays from people at the time</td>
<td>• Personal essays from people at the time.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Photos of the event (think photo journalism)</td>
<td>• Memorials that were constructed at the time of the event.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• New reels/broadcast stories from the time period</td>
<td>• Prayers or hymns written during the event.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Personal letters from those involved.</td>
<td>Retrospective references to the time period done at 10, 20, 30 years past the event…..(FIND 3)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Retrospective references to the time period done at 10, 20, 30 years past</td>
<td>• Political speeches in which this time period is referenced.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>the event…..(FIND 3)</td>
<td>• Editorials and personal essays that reference this event.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Political speeches in which this time period is referenced</td>
<td>• Textbook references to the event at various times removed from it.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Editorials and personal essays that reference this event.</td>
<td>• Legislation, declarations and other official legislative action at the time period</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Textbook references to the event at various times removed from it.</td>
<td>• Court rulings that reference the time period.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Legislation, declarations and other official legislative action at the time</td>
<td>• Personal letters from those who were involved but written after</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>period.</td>
<td>• Anniversary stories that run in newspapers, magazines, etc. about the event.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Court rulings that reference the time period.</td>
<td>• Speeches and stories about commemoration of the event.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Personal letters from those who were involved but written after</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Anniversary stories that run in newspapers, magazines, etc. about the</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>event.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Speeches and stories about commemoration of the event.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

You will work individually, but will share your work with others who have the same topic. This will allow you to select from these options for the next step. This is graded for completion and is worth 10 points. On the curation site, please include the following:

• Either upload the source, or link to it.
• Your name.
• A brief description of the source.
Failure to curate by the due date means you have lost the privilege of using the site for your assignment, and you must therefore go out and find your own for the next step).

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Criteria</th>
<th>Consistent Mastery</th>
<th>Reasonably Consistent Mastery</th>
<th>Developing Mastery</th>
<th>Very Little Mastery</th>
<th>No Mastery</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Source selection</td>
<td>You found two</td>
<td>You found two</td>
<td>You are missing</td>
<td>You are missing 2 to</td>
<td>You fail to include</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>appropriate sources from the time period and three retrospective sources. Sources selected are generally appropriate to the task and topic and will prove useful. 5</td>
<td>two sources from the time period and three retrospective sources. Sources selected are generally appropriate to the task and topic and will likely prove useful moving forward. 4</td>
<td>one source, or you did not find the appropriate number of time period and retrospective sources OR 1 to 2 of your sources are clearly not useful to the task moving forward. 3.5</td>
<td>one source, or you did not find the appropriate number of time period and retrospective sources. OR 1 to 2 of your sources are clearly not useful to the task moving forward. 3</td>
<td>sources OR the sources you find are not relevant to the task. 0-2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Source accessibility</td>
<td>You upload your all of your sources to the Padlet in a usable format for others to access, give an informative description of all the sources.</td>
<td>One or two your sources are not uploaded in a usable format for others to access, but you do give an informative description of all the sources.</td>
<td>Your sources are not uploaded in usable format to Padlet, but you do give an informative description that helps others access the information.</td>
<td>While you may link and describe your sources, little care or concern is given to helping others access your information.</td>
<td>You fail to upload or describe the sources on Padlet.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Rubric: History's Perception Through Time  Part 1: Curation**  
**Points: 10 (practice)**
APPENDIX G

SOURCE ANALYSIS—HISTORIAN’S NOTEBOOK INSTRUCTION, RUBRIC
AND MODEL
Appendix G

Source Analysis—Historian’s Notebook Instruction, Rubric and Model

Step 2: APUSH – A Historian’s Notebook

Return to the curation site, and explore the various sources you have there. In each case you will be asked to complete the following:

APUSH:

Entry 1: Write ½ page reflection in which you identify the most important facts known at the time. Explain what opinion or attitude is most prevalent and what trends you found in the curated materials you have available. To support this position, identify three sources and in a bulleted-point fashion, summarize the sources and explain how each backs up your argument.

Entry 2: Write a longer reflection that identifies two changes in what was known or how opinion has shifted. This is looking at the evolution of our understanding, and must include specific examples of the shifts you identify. Then, to support each shift, identify four sources from the curation site in a bulleted-point fashion, summarizing them and explaining how each identifies a shift.
### Rubric: History's Perception Through Time
#### Part II: Historian's Notebook (AP History)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Criteria</th>
<th>Consistent Mastery</th>
<th>Reasonably Consistent Mastery</th>
<th>Developing Mastery</th>
<th>Very Little Mastery</th>
<th>No Mastery</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Historical understanding</td>
<td>In a carefully written summary, and using the sources uploaded to Padlet, you document important trends in attitude and opinions at the time of your historical event(s). Your summary shows strong synthesis and evaluation.</td>
<td>In a well-written summary, and using the sources uploaded to Padlet, you document important trends in attitudes and opinions at the time of your historical event(s). Your summary shows use of synthesis and evaluative thinking.</td>
<td>While your writing may have some errors in language, your summary uses the sources uploaded to Padlet to document at least one trend in attitudes and opinions of the historical event. However, your writing lacks synthesis and evaluative thinking.</td>
<td>In writing that demonstrates significant errors in language, your summary shows limited use of sources uploaded to Padlet. While you do document trends, your writing lacks synthesis and evaluative thinking.</td>
<td>Your writing shows a lack of understanding of the assignment and prompt.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Backup sources: Historical Understanding</td>
<td>You use strong description and details to validate the claims you make in historical understanding by using 5 sources.</td>
<td>You use mostly strong description and details to validate the claims you make in historical understanding through the use of 3 sources.</td>
<td>You writing begins to show inconsistent understanding of how 3 sources can validate the claims you make. Some details may be too vague or disconnected from your claims.</td>
<td>You show limited understanding of how 3 sources can validate the claims you make. Most details are too vague or disconnected from your claims.</td>
<td>You either don't use backup sources, or your summary does little more than identify and describe the sources.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Shift in Understanding</td>
<td>In a carefully written explanation, you identify two important changes to how public understanding of the historical event(s) have shifted. Your explanation demonstrates careful reading of sources available to Padlet and you effectively use details to support your points.</td>
<td>In a well-written written explanation, you identify two important changes to how public understanding of the historical event(s) have shifted. Your explanation demonstrates reading of sources available to Padlet and you use details to support your points.</td>
<td>While your writing may have some errors in language, you identify two changes to how public understanding has shifted. Your explanation lacks specific references to sources available in Padlet and your details are inconsistent in their support of your points.</td>
<td>In writing that demonstrates significant errors in language, you show limited understanding of important shifts in social understanding of your historical event. You show limited use of sources available in Padlet, and few details are included to support your point.</td>
<td>Your writing shows a lack of understanding of the assignment and prompt.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Backup sources: Shift in understanding</td>
<td>You use strong description and details about 4 sources to demonstrate not only the presence of a shift in understanding, but also the reasoning for that change.</td>
<td>You use mostly strong description and details about 4 sources to demonstrate not only the presence of a shift in understanding, but also the reasoning for that change.</td>
<td>You writing begins to show inconsistent understanding of how 4 sources can validate the claims you identified. Some details may be too vague or disconnected from your claims.</td>
<td>You show limited understanding of how 4 sources can validate the claims you made. Most details are too vague or disconnected from your claims.</td>
<td>You either don't use backup sources, or your summary does little more than identify and describe the sources.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Historian’s Notebook

An Example

Part 1: Perception at the time

The Woman’s Suffragist was largely shaped by the leadership of women in the abolitionist movement, even though it was not actually achieved until after World War I. In fact, the famous Seneca Falls Convention for women’s rights was hosted in upstate New York in 1848, though the right to vote was not secured until 1919. The movement was an extension of the social justice campaign to end slavery, as women filled the ranks of abolitionist groups. Harriet Beecher Stowe, for instance, was not herself a women’s right activist, but she was a contemporary to such important suffragists as Susan B. Anthony and Elizabeth Cady Stanton. Though her depiction of women in the novel Uncle Tom’s Cabin tended to favor the cultural norms of the time, her leadership in the abolitionist movement was in some ways a challenge to those norms. It was seen as ironic by women’s rights activists that the abolition movement was able to secure full citizenship to formers slaves even while some of their staunchest women supporters were denied the same. The women’s movement persevered through the rest of the 19th century, when an attempt was made to show that women should vote precisely because of “womanly” virtues. At this point, the temperance movement was led by women who sought to outlaw alcohol in the U.S., claiming the country needed protection from the destructive forces of alcohol. In fact, some religious conservatives saw advantages to opening the voting rolls to women, who were often sympathetic to the temperance movement, as women were often left to suffer the devastating consequences of
alcoholism on the family unit. It was this belief in the moderating power of women that led western states – first Idaho and Utah – to extend the right to vote to women by the early 20th Century. Southern states especially saw this as a radical move to uproot traditional family values, and the movement was unsuccessful in the nation’s southeastern region. It was, however, the contribution of women on the home front during World War I, when women had to fill jobs left vacant as men were conscripted to fight. It was the belief that women had proven themselves to be patriotic and crucial to civic life that finally quieted the opposition. Three sources to support this analysis include:

- The Seneca Falls Declaration of sentiments uses the wording of the Declaration of Independence, adding “men and women” are created equal, and later introducing language that shows that “the history of mankind is a history of repeated injuries and usurpations on the part of man toward woman, having in direct object the establishment of an absolute tyranny over her. “ Much of this language here serves as a list of human rights violations that align treatment of women with the treatment of slaves.

- A signed statement by Susan B. Anthony from 1901 (when she was 80 years old) declares that the achievement thus far, of suffrage in five western states demonstrates that early success and hope was found in the newer, western states of the U.S., perhaps because they were less bound to a sense of tradition.

- A Salvation Army poster from 1918 shows a woman, dressed like a soldier, holding up a plate that says “We’ll serve it to them over here, over there…”
demonstrating that women played vital support roles in the World War I, creating sympathy for the suffragists’ idea of the role of women in civic life.

**Part 2: Perception through time**

While the women secured the right to vote in 1919, leaders of the movement immediately turned attention on an Equal Rights Amendment (ERA) that would outlaw discrimination based on sex. That idea was met with staunch resistance and stagnated for 40 years. In the early 1960’s, the woman’s movement once again found political life through a social cause. As leaders such as Martin Luther King and Malcolm X started to press for protections based on race, women began to emerge as strong supporting voices. In 1966, the National Organization for Women, led by Betty Friedan and Pauli Murray, used familiar nonviolent tactics when they staged women strikes and sit-ins in their campaign for an Equal Rights amendment. In August 1970, on the 50th anniversary of the passing of the 19th amendment, NOW organized the largest such strike. At the conclusion of the Women Strike for Equality and Peace, 50,000 protestors lined the streets of Fifth Avenue and held a rally. Voices such as Friedan and Gloria Steinem led a renewed call to secure greater access for women in civic life. Another familiar element at this time, however, was the resistance to this change by social conservatives who feared the undermining of traditional values. An interesting – if not ironic – difference now as compared the resistance in the 19th Century was the emergence of women as leaders to this anti-feminist movement. Phyllis Schlafley was a constitutional lawyer who founded the Eagle Forum and was a strong critic of the ERA and worked tirelessly to keep it from
being ratified in the states after Congress passed the amendment in 1972. Like the 
suffragist movement before, the legal battle was slow and faltering, and resistance to it 
was dominated in the southern states. While the amendment never passed, some 
protections for women have been achieved through legislation, and the ERA movement 
died out in the 1970’s. However, the recent Women’s March on Washington on Jan. 21, 
2017, brought renewed interest to women’s right and once again reflected the 19th 
Century suffragist movement. While the election of Donald Trump over Hillary Clinton 
spurred the March, the question of woman’s representation in government had emerged 
as a central concern much earlier. Emily’s List, a political action committee dedicated to 
raising money for women candidates, was founded in 1985. In 1992, much attention was 
drawn to what pundits called the “year of the woman” because four women won bids to 
the U.S. Senate. Activists pointed out that calling this an achievement minimized the 
problem that even with these victories female senatorial representation totaled six. Today, 
that number has risen to 21 in Senate and 83 (out of 435) in the House or Representative. 
This is far below proportionate representation. The United States ranks 104 worldwide in 
female representation in government, according to a study by the Inter-Parliamentary 
Union, which actually shows a decline from our best ranking of 54 in 1999. Progress for 
women is historically slow, it seems, and this may be the reason so many women were 
angered by the defeat of the first female presidential nominee of a major party to a 
political outsider. Throughout her campaign, Clinton had shown direct connections with 
the early suffragist movement, opting to wear white in several high-profile events, a 
symbolic nod to early suffragists, who adopted that color for their movement (Clinton
was even wearing that color when she attended the inauguration of Donald Trump as a former first lady). In the aftermath of the election, much of the political activism in resistance to Trump has evoked techniques from earlier eras, including marches, rallies and work stoppages. Four sources to support this include:

- The August 24th Time article “The Day the Women Went on Strike” talked about the frustration that women felt that current political and civic institutions were largely masculine. This connection is not unlike the arguments suffragists made earlier that women should vote precisely because they are different, and can therefore moderate, men.

- Phyllis Schlafley’s 1972 essay “What’s Wrong with Equal Rights” argues the primary importance of the family unit, and the role of women in that unit. This argument echoes the same resistance that was voiced in opposition to the Suffragist Movement.

- The January 20, 2017 article from Vox “Hillary Clinton Wore White to the Donald Trump’s Inauguration” spoke about the history of that color symbolism to women’s rights. The article talked about how this color was used by famous female officeholders, including Shirley Chisholm, Barbara Boxer and Diane Feinstein.

- The Fortune Magazine from November, 2016 titled “Women Made Zero Progress in Congress” reported recent figures that show female representation is about 19 percent of Congress, a figure that has been in decline in recent years. This
demonstrates frustration many women activists have shown throughout American history that progress for women is often a slow, decades-long battle.
APPENDIX H

SOURCE ANALYSIS—CRITIC’S NOTEBOOK INSTRUCTIONS, RUBRIC AND MODEL
Appendix H

Source Analysis—Critic’s Notebook Instructions, Rubric and Model

Step 2: Honors English 10 – Critic’s Notebook

Return to the curation site, and explore the various sources you have there. In each case you will be asked to complete the following:

HONORS ENGLISH 10:

Entry 1: Write a ½ page reflection in which you identify what you believe was the most important reaction to the historical event at the time. What needs did society express at the time? What attitudes seemed most important at the time. To support this claim, identify sources in a bulleted-point fashion, summarizing then and explaining how it backs up your claim.

Entry 2: Write a longer reflection that identifies two reactions you saw emerge as time passed from the historical event. This is looking at how literature reflects new understandings of the event, so focus on two different attitudes or opinions that emerged with time. Then, to support each new reaction, identify four sources from the curation site in a bulleted-point fashion, summarizing them and explaining how each backs up your claims.
### Rubric: History’s Perception Through Time  Part II: Critic’s Notebook (Honors English)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Criteria</th>
<th>Consistent Mastery</th>
<th>Reasonably Consistent Mastery</th>
<th>Developing Mastery</th>
<th>Very Little Mastery</th>
<th>No Mastery</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Initial Reaction</td>
<td>In a carefully written summary and using the sources uploaded to <em>Papad</em> you effectively explain not only what the most important reaction to the events was, but what social needs that reaction filled. You demonstrate strong synthesis and evaluation skills.</td>
<td>In a well-written summary and using the sources uploaded to <em>Papad</em>, you mostly effectively explain not only what the most important reaction to the events was, but what social needs that reaction filled. You demonstrate strong synthesis and evaluation skills.</td>
<td>While your writing may have some errors in language, your summary uses the sources uploaded to <em>Papad</em> to document an important reaction to the historical event. However, you show limited use of the sources and your reasoning tends to be concrete.</td>
<td>In writing that demonstrates significant errors in language, your summary shows limited to little use of sources uploaded to <em>Papad</em>. While you do document a significant reaction, what you identify is limited and shows little abstract reasoning or synthesis.</td>
<td>Your writing shows a lack of understanding of the assignment and prompt. 0-2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Backup sources: Social Understanding</td>
<td>You use strong description and details to validate the claims you make in initial reaction by using 3 sources.</td>
<td>You use mostly strong description and details to validate the claims you about society's initial reaction to the events through the use of 3 sources.</td>
<td>You writing begins to show inconsistent understanding of how 3 sources can validate the claims you make. Some details may be too vague or disconnected from your claims.</td>
<td>You show limited understanding of how 3 sources can validate the claims you make. Most details are too vague or disconnected from your claims.</td>
<td>You either don’t use backup sources, or your summary doesn’t little more than identify and describe the sources. 0-2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Shift in Reactions</td>
<td>In a carefully written explanation, you identify two important changes to how public understanding of the historical event(s) were portrayed artificially. Your explanation demonstrates careful reading of sources available to <em>Papad</em> and you effectively use details to support your points. 14-15</td>
<td>In a well-written explanation, you identify two important changes to how public understanding of the historical event(s) were portrayed artificially. Your explanation demonstrates careful reading of sources available to <em>Papad</em>, and you are mostly effective in the use details to support your points. 12-13</td>
<td>While your writing may have some errors in language, you identify two changes to how understanding of the historical event(s) was portrayed artificially. However, your explanation lacks specific reference to sources available in <em>Papad</em>, and your details are inconsistent in their support of your points. 11</td>
<td>In writing that demonstrates significant errors in language, you show limited understanding of how historical event(s) were portrayed artificially. You show limited use of sources available in <em>Papad</em>, and how details are included to support your point. 9-10</td>
<td>Your writing shows a lack of understanding of the assignment and prompt. 0-3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Backup sources: Shift in Reactions</td>
<td>You use strong description and details about 4 sources to demonstrate not only the presence of a shift in presentation, but also the reasoning for that change. 9-10</td>
<td>You use mostly strong description and details about 4 sources to demonstrate not only the presence of a shift in presentation, but also the reasoning for that change. 8.5</td>
<td>You writing begins to show inconsistent understanding of how 4 sources can explain the shifts you identified. Some details may be too vague or disconnected from your claims.</td>
<td>You show limited understanding of how 4 sources can validate the claims you make. Most details are too vague or disconnected from your claims. 7-7.5</td>
<td>You either don’t use backup sources, or your summary doesn’t little more than identify and describe the sources. 0-6</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Sample of Critic’s Notebook

Part 1: Art at the Time

During the woman’s suffragist campaign of the late 19th and early 20th Century, art was used to explore the ideological divide the movement exposed. In fact, English artists banded together to create pro-suffragist art, and that art was widely in the U.S. influenced American artists. Artists were important to the national debate, and pro-suffragist art was led by Louise Jacob. At one point 76 artists claimed membership in the National Society for Women’s Suffrage. Interesting, both sides of the debate used images from classic Greece to spread their political messages. An art campaign led by the National League for Opposing Women Suffrage used the image of Greek womanhood to demonstrate that modern ideas could denigrate the feminine ideal. In response, Jacobs and others used the same images, but in these versions the woman served as a beacon of hope and the others around her equated disenfranchisement with slavery and sweatshop labor abuses. Songs, too, explored the struggle for equality, with many protest songs emerging as a soundtrack to the many strikes and labor strikes. One very popular song, “A New America” used the idea that woman’s suffrage was an extension of the basic civil rights we have extended on others. Opposing views were often penned in song, including the “Anti-suffragist Rose” that equates opposition to women’s vote to protection of a red rose. Like visual art, film tended to demonstrate the division of the movement dramatically. Silent films were new to the culture at the time, and many melodramas mocked the suffragist movement, depicting women’s right as a threat to men. One such film, *Looking Forward*, imagined a chemistry student finds the ability to
travel to the distant future in which men were the disenfranchised minority. Another, *The Militant Feminist*, mocks the political actions of the movement by exaggerating them into temper tantrums on screen. Charlie Chaplin made several slapstick films mocking the movement. More serious films, however, explored the true good empowered women can do. For instance, *Women in Politics* chronicles a doctor whose warnings go unheeded and tenement residents are greatly harmed by the corrupt politicians. Another, *What 80 Million Women Want*, included inspirational speeches by prominent activists. Women writers, such as Charlotte Perkins Gillman and Kate Chopin, used their craft to demonstrate how our romantic notions of motherhood may actually harm women, an attempt to counter the strong opposition the movement faced by social conservatives. What is most striking is the way that art was used for political purposes and tended to explore the tension the suffragist movement caused. Three sources that support this analysis are:

- The 19th Century Masterfile by paratext.com that shows the artistic images of the time period. On both sides, classic images of women evoked the Greek art, but the phrases around the art revealed the art to have drastically different messages. In one example, the one woman holds a sign that reads “Classic Womanhood: Say no to the Vote” while the other sign reads “We Want the vote to stop white slave traffic, sweated labor and protect our children.”

- A YouTube clip from the channel, “The Phonograph,” includes a recording the song “The New America.” This song, which the video
indicates was written for the 1891 Suffragist Convention, includes lyrics such as “now claim us the liberty” and “our birthright claim we now.” This shows how music helped to depict the movement as a natural extension of the American ideal.

- New Project’s series called “Silent Film and the Suffragists” which depicts scenes from several films from the time period. The clips demonstrate how extreme many of the movies were in their opposition or support of the movement.

Part II: Art through Time

Art’s depiction of the suffragist movement and its underlying values changed with the time period, often demonstrating that gender divide has roots in the movement. Perhaps the greatest example of this the classic 1964 movie Mary Poppins, which includes a famous song called “Sister Suffragist”. While the film is about something entirely different than women’s right to vote, the mother is depicted as out-of-touch with her children and unable to see their desire to be with her. While the mother sings that her “daughter’s daughters will adore her,” she is unable to connect with her own present children. This film is released at a time when the women’s movement was reemerging as part of the Civil Rights movement of the time. There were many who feared reopening the divisions of the political movement, and this clip demonstrated a desire by many to marginalize the cause. Popular music, however, began to embrace the movement, with some female artists becoming strong voices in support of women’s liberation. Linda
Ronstadt, Joni Mitchell and Aretha Franklin were among the most popular artists to voice feminist ideas in songs. Franklin’s “Respect” is still seen as an iconic call to feminism. Ironically, the emergence of the contraception was both a liberating and limiting factor to the movement. While it allowed women control over their reproductive choices, it also brought about a notion of sexual liberation that tended to objectify women. Therefore, movies from this time included such icons as Marilyn Monroe and *Some Like it Hot* (1963), that treat women as objects of desire. However, *Bonnie and Clyde* (1967) demonstrated a more open and equal depiction of sex. The more frank depiction of sex in the later was met with resistance, as social conservatives wanted to Hollywood to reject these modern ideas. The ensuing debate was largely the inspiration for our current rating system. Sylvia Plath was a popular poet whose personal accounts of her struggle to find her place as a woman and mother in the modern world were seen to largely demonstrate the difficulty of the modernization. One of her more famous poems, “Lady Lazarus,” decries modern society and its treatment of women. “Soon, soon the flesh / the grave cave ate will be / At home on me // And I a smiling woman. / I am only thirty. / And like the cat I have nine times to die.” Her death by suicide only served to further demonstrate the challenges of the time. Other women writers were more overt and positive in their call for liberation, including many African American writers. Maya Angelou’s “Still I Rise” sings is praise of the black woman who rises despite the ugliness around her – “Does my sassiness upset you” the defiant speaker asks as she talks about the twisted lies of history. Art from the 1960’s saw the emergence of the women’s movement as a natural consequence of the past’s mistreatment of women, but in the following 40 years the focus
moved to the way that societal changes have been superficial at best. This can best be seen in the 2015 release of the movie *Suffragette* that explored the British movement. While a historical film, the focus on the film largely sought to show parallels between that political cause and current political unrest, such as the Black Lives Matter Movement. The movie featured riot scenes that included rock throwing and police brutality not unlike what is seen in current conflicts. As frustration about the lack of female representation in government has sweltered, television has sought to offer an alternative reality with shows that often depict women in positions of authority, including dramas such as *Madame Secretary* (a drama that follows Tea Leona as a secretary of state,) *Homeland* (which includes a female president in the last season) and *Veep* (which is a comedy that stars Julia Louis Dreyfus as an unlikely vice president. Women comedians have become strong political voices for change, including Sarah Silverman, Samantha Bee and Amy Schumer. Samantha Bee’s *Full Frontal* often attacks current events from a decidedly feminist perspective, and Amy Schumer’s close relationship to her uncle Sen. Chuck Schumer has given her criticism of current attitudes toward women more political bite. What emerges currently is the idea that women should be frustrated by the slow pace of change and that real change, perhaps begun by the suffragists, has not been yet been realized. Three sources that support this analysis are:

- *The Washington Post* article “What the Movie the *Suffragette* does not tell you about Women’s Right to Vote” explores the political violence that often surrounded the movement. It goes on to show how the movies depiction begin,
but do not fully disclose, the parallels between this time period and the current political struggles, such as Black Lives Matter.

- A clip of the song “Sister Suffragettes” that clearly mocks the movement because the mother is unaware that her fellow “sister soldier” is actually about to quit because her children have been so bad. The lyrics seem sympathetic to the cause, but the scene’s context is not.

- Thoughtco’s article “Feminist Poetry and the Black Women” which explores how writers such as Adrienne Rich and Maya Angelou fused women’s liberation and civil rights. This article talks about how they served to offer a different view of women’s liberation as one that rejects the historical limitations placed on women.
APPENDIX I

VIDEO ESSAY INSTRUCTIONS, RUBRIC AND PLANNING GUIDE
Appendix I

Video Essay Instructions, Rubric and Planning Guide

Video Essay Directions (APUSH)

Return to the essential question:

They say facts don’t change, but our opinions about them do. Why do understandings of history change through time even though the events and facts of that history have not?

Now in a 2+ minute video, begin to address that question based on your study of one time period. This essay should include:

- Historical and literary “texts” – music, videos and paintings included
- A representation of our historical understanding at the time of the event(s)
- A progression of how that understanding changed with time.

Remember that essential questions are intended to be too large to fully answer – you are “beginning to address” it and will not definitely answer this prompt.

Those not enrolled in English can simply use historical documents, but feel free to include literary texts if you would like.

Videos should be uploaded to Youtube and a link sent to your teacher(s) via an online Blackboard post.
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Criteria</th>
<th>Consistent Mastery</th>
<th>Reasonably Consistent Mastery</th>
<th>Developing Mastery</th>
<th>Very Little Mastery</th>
<th>No Mastery</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Reading Comprehension</td>
<td>You accurately include historical and literary texts to answer the essential question and explain why your understanding of historical events have changed through time.</td>
<td>You are mostly accurate in your use of historical and literary texts to answer the essential question and explain why your understanding of historical events have changed through time.</td>
<td>Your use of historical and literary texts shows limited accuracy of the essential question and explains why your understanding of historical events have changed.</td>
<td>Your essay provides inaccurate or limited analysis of literary or historical texts.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Essay Focus</td>
<td>Your visual essay effectively addresses the essential question as it pertains to your study of a historical event(s). It is crafted with a focus on that question.</td>
<td>Your visual essay appropriately addresses the essential question. It is clear and relevant to the question.</td>
<td>Your visual essay somewhat accurately addresses the essential question as it relates to your study of a time period, but only on a basic level.</td>
<td>Your essay shows no understanding of the essential question or purpose of the assignment.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Development of Ideas</td>
<td>Your visual essay shows effective and comprehensive development of ideas. The support you give clearly advances the point you are making about why our understanding of a historical event has changed over time.</td>
<td>Your visual essay provides effective development of ideas. The support you give generally advances the focus on the essential question.</td>
<td>Your visual essay somewhat provides development of ideas. The support you use inconsistently advances your focus on the essential question.</td>
<td>Your visual essay is limited in its development of ideas. Your support does not advance the focus on the essential question, and your explanations lack development or logic.</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>Organization</td>
<td>Your visual essay demonstrates a coherent and logical organization that allows the reader to understand the development of ideas and a progression of your understanding of historical events.</td>
<td>Your visual essay shows a great deal of coherence through a progression that is logical to follow.</td>
<td>Your visual essay has demonstrated limited coherence, but the progression of ideas is too obvious or incoherent.</td>
<td>Your writing shows a lack of coherence with no progression of ideas.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Awareness of Audience</td>
<td>Your visual essay demonstrates an effective style given the purpose. Your use of visual and written language clearly highlights the viewer's interests and needs to follow your ideas.</td>
<td>Your visual essay demonstrates a mostly effective style given the purpose, but care of the use of visual and written language may not consider the viewer's needs and interests. Your writing may be too short, or only a few visual or written elements are used to convey your ideas.</td>
<td>Your visual essay has limited effectiveness given the purpose. Your use of visual or written language shows limited consideration of what the viewer needs to follow your ideas.</td>
<td>Your visual essay has an inappropriate style given its purpose.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Conventions</td>
<td>Your visual essay is at least two minutes in length and includes a variety of visual and written texts to convey your ideas. Though there may be minor errors in spelling and grammar, your meaning is clear.</td>
<td>Your visual essay is at least two minutes in length and includes a variety of visual and written texts to convey your ideas. There may be one or two distracting errors in spelling or grammar, but meaning is generally clear.</td>
<td>Your visual essay may be too short, it includes only a few visual or written elements to convey your ideas. Some grammar or spelling errors begin to impede understanding of the ideas.</td>
<td>Errors in editing and language impede understanding and distract the viewer. The essay may be too short to be effective.</td>
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</table>

The essential question is: They say facts don’t change, but our opinions about them do. Why do our understandings of history change through time even though the events and facts of that history have not?

First, list your time period here: __________________________

Now, what are three important facts of that time period you want to include in the video?

1) 

2) 

3) 

At the time of the historical events, summarize dominant American feelings or understandings?

Name at least two visuals you could use to show this (Visuals include pictures, drawings, videos).

Other possibilities for video/audio in the essay
The prompt asks you to explore how that understanding changed at two distant points from your event. What is the first distant time period you hope to write about? ______

What is the dominant change in perception you saw then? What do you suppose caused that change?

Name at least two visuals you could use to show this (Visuals include pictures, drawings, videos).

Other possibilities for video/audio in the essay

What is the second distant time period you hope to write about? ______

What is the dominant change in perception you saw then? What do you suppose caused that change?
Name at least two visuals you could use to show this (Visuals include pictures, drawings, videos).

Other possibilities for video/audio in the essay
APPENDIX J

FINAL EXAM INFORMATION FOR HISTORY
Appendix J

Final Exam Information for History

Your Name ___________________________________

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Scores</th>
<th></th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Video Essay</td>
<td>____/50</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Reaction Sheet</td>
<td>____/20</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Personal Essay</td>
<td>____/30</td>
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A.P. U.S. History
Final Exam

Essential Question: They say facts don’t change, but our opinions about them do. Why do our understandings of history change through time even though the events and facts of that history have not?

Part: (50 points) Video Essay. Be sure your video essay has been uploaded to YouTube and a link has been shared via Blackboard.

Part 2: (20 points). Reaction to Others. Watch four other video essays from your class’s Blackboard site. Take note of your initial responses to each essay in the chart below.
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Student’s Essay you watched</th>
<th>Time period studied</th>
<th>Reflection: How did this video essay address the essential question?</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
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Conal Furay and Michael J. Salevouris (1988) defined “historiography” as “the study of the way history has been and is written—the history of historical writing…. When you study ‘historiography’ you do not study the events of the past directly, but the changing interpretations of those events in the works of individual historians” (223).

3. Looking at the essential question and the quote above, please explain why you believe humans continue to change interpretations of historical events? What evidence in your own project and in those you viewed can back up the points you raise here?

4. Then, consider what historical events have unfolded in your lifetime, and pick one. Explain how you have come to interpret and understand it today. What, do you think, might cause you to reevaluate and reinterpret this event later in your life? What does this teach you about historiography?

This essay will be scored using the rubric attached.
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>General Rubric</th>
<th>Excellent</th>
<th>Very Good</th>
<th>Good</th>
<th>Satisfactory</th>
<th>Unsatisfactory</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Accuracy</strong></td>
<td>6</td>
<td>5.5</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>0-3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>No mistakes, scholarly and accurate. Excellent knowledge of the topic shown.</td>
<td>Few if any mistakes, any mistakes must be minor in nature, very good knowledge of the topic shown.</td>
<td>Some, but not many, mistakes made, good knowledge shown.</td>
<td>Several mistakes made, fair knowledge of the topic shown.</td>
<td>Many mistakes made. Does not show an adequate knowledge of the topic.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Use of historical details</strong></td>
<td>Used many details in a thorough and expert manner.</td>
<td>Used many details to illustrate topic.</td>
<td>Used some details to illustrate topic</td>
<td>Used one or two details, alluded to details vaguely.</td>
<td>Used no historical details. Made factual errors.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Demonstrated learning and understanding</strong></td>
<td>Applied integrated concepts; made connections between facts and ideas.</td>
<td>Clearly understood topic well.</td>
<td>Understood topic.</td>
<td>Followed directions, had a basic knowledge of the topic.</td>
<td>Thinking not justified; no evidence that knowledge was acquired.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Mechanics (Grammar or Art)</strong></td>
<td>Grammar and/or art work were without flaws and professional in nature.</td>
<td>Grammar and/or art work are quality in nature.</td>
<td>Occasional errors but not enough to distract.</td>
<td>Distracting errors, difficult to read.</td>
<td>Fragmented sentences and grammar. Art completed in a haphazard manner. Very difficult to understand</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Word Usage</strong></td>
<td>Word choice and usage are professional.</td>
<td>Word choice makes piece interesting.</td>
<td>Word choice simple but acceptable.</td>
<td>Some mistakes in word choice and usage. Could be clearer.</td>
<td>Word choice is inadequate or inappropriate.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
REFERENCES
REFERENCES


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