The Peritext Book Club: Reading to Foster Critical Thinking about STEAM Texts

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Abstract

An after-school book club, led by the school librarian, was held to test the efficacy of the peritextual literacy framework (PLF) in teaching skills related to critical thinking, problem solving, information literacy, and media literacy. The PLF is an extension of paratext theory developed by Gérard Genette, which provides a typology of the functions of peritext; this extension results in a framework that can be used for research or as a scaffold for teaching. Twelve middle school students met once a month for five months to apply the PLF to an analysis of science, technology, engineering, art, and math (STEAM) texts. The participants enjoyed the club and were able to demonstrate their ability to use peritextual elements to think critically about STEAM-related nonfiction books. Students were able to discuss how the functions of peritext affected their motivation to read a text and their ability to retrieve information from a text, and how peritext functions might affect their opinion of the credibility of information presented in a book.

Introduction

What Are Peritext and Epitext Elements?

As the students open their Chromebooks and enter Google Classroom to start working on the pre-intervention survey, there is the sound of happy chatter:

> "I don't know what peritext is, and I'm really sorry." (eighth-grade girl)

> "Is this like a real thing or did they make it up?" (seventh-grade girl)

> "I'm just going to write 'I don't know' five times." (Another eighth-grade girl)

The concept of paratext was defined by Gérard Genette as common elements provided within a book (peritext) and elements outside of the book that refer to it (epitext); these elements can affect individual, as well as cultural, perceptions of a text (1997, 4–5). Peritext includes elements that surround the body of the text, such as the foreword, table of contents, index, and source notes. Epitext refers to communications outside the text that can also influence whether and how the text is read. Examples of epitext include book reviews, interviews, author websites and letters, and critical literary analysis.

Paratext theory has been explored in a wide range of academic fields, including education, information, and communication. The theory has become so accepted that "paratext is now one of the basic analytical tools taught in textbook introductions to the study of narrative and explicated in handbooks of literary analysis" at the college level (Birke and Christ 2013, 65). Applications of paratext theory have been expanded from Genette's focus on books to a wide variety of media. Examples include fanfiction (Fathallah 2016; Hill and Pecoskie 2014; Leavenworth 2015), videogames (Rockenberger 2014), film (Gray 2010; Kümmerling-Meibauer 2013), DVDs (Benzon 2013), digital texts (Malone 2015; McCracken 2013; Strehovec 2014), and transmedia (Nottingham-Martin 2014). However, despite the increasing interest in paratext and its importance for developing media literacy (Kümmerling-Meibauer 2013), it has been given only minimal attention in educational environments (Kümmerling-Meibauer 2013; Martinez, Stier, and Falcon 2016).

Why Focus on Paratext Elements?

The need for students to develop not only skills related to media literacy, critical thinking, problem solving, traditional literacy, and media literacy (Partnership for 21st Century Skills 2009) but also the disposition to use inquiry as a framework for learning (AASL 2007, 2) is a continuing concern for school librarians and other educators who work with youth. There is currently a strong emphasis on science, technology, engineering, and math (STEM) education (National Research Council et al. 2012), as well as the integration of art and design (STEAM) into education because all of these areas of learning are expected to be important to the economy going forward (STEM to STEAM n.d.). Along with these movements, the use of nonfiction in classrooms is growing, as use of nonfiction has been shown to develop background knowledge in readers, and background knowledge can account for as much as a third of the variance in student achievement (Marzano 2000). The acquisition of background knowledge is particularly important for upper elementary and middle school students as their nonfiction reading begins to contain elements not always found in works of fiction (Sanacore and Palumbo 2009; Young, Moss, and Cornwell 2007). These elements include headings, graphs, charts, and other components that are often peritextual in nature.

The PLF developed by Melissa Gross and Don Latham uses peritextual elements to assist readers in thinking critically about text, thereby supporting the development of problem-solving skills, media and information literacies, and engagement in reading and core subjects. It is theorized that analyzing peritext supports a reader's ability to consider the credibility of the text, the author's intent, why the author knows what the author knows, and how that knowledge was gained. Analyzing peritext also encourages readers to identify, navigate, and connect the text to their own interests, as well as to other works that might influence the interpretation of a text.

The PLF provides a scaffold for learning by filling a gap in paratext theory, which identifies various paratextual elements, but does not explain how they function. The PLF fills this gap by

presenting a typology of the functions of peritext that can be used as a framework for research or as a method for teaching critical thinking. The original version of the PLF, which was modified as a result of its use in the peritext book club, describes six functions of peritext:

- **Bibliographic**: Elements that uniquely identify a work. Examples include author's name, work's title, publisher's name, and publication date.

- **Promotional**: Elements that interface between the work and its potential audience. Examples include the dust jacket, endorsements, author's biography, and award medals.

- **Navigational**: Elements that assist the reader in understanding the organization of the work and how to search the content. Examples include table of contents, chapter titles, and index.

- **Intratextual**: Elements within the work that interface between the work and the reader. Examples include acknowledgements, preface, and afterword.

- **Supplemental**: Elements outside the text proper that augment understanding of the content. Examples include glossary, maps, and timelines.

- **Documentary**: Elements that connect the audience to external works used in the production of the work or that reify or extend the content of the work. Examples include bibliography, references, and source notes.

Research and Instructional Goals

The overarching purpose of this study was to test the PLF for its efficacy in promoting 21st Century Learning (Partnership for 21st Century Skills 2009). The Peritext Book Club was designed to test the efficacy of the PLF for teaching students to evaluate nonfiction texts that present science, technology, engineering, art, and math (STEAM) topics. The specific goals for the book club were to:

- Demonstrate the application of the peritextual literacy framework (PLF) in supporting the development of skills related to critical thinking, problem solving, information literacy, and media literacy (Partnership for 21st Century Skills 2009).

- Refine the framework based on feedback from students.

- Refine the materials and process used in the book club meetings based on student feedback and analysis of their participation in the book club.

- Collect data to support the use of peritextual analysis as an educational approach.

Also, specific outcomes were targeted for the students who participated in the book club. These outcomes were:

- Students will be able to articulate the role of at least three peritextual elements in supporting the body of the text in a work of nonfiction.

- Students will be able to articulate how the presence of peritextual elements affect students' evaluation of the book as an informational text.

- Students will be able to express reasons for accepting the veracity of factual information gained through reading.

Participants

The book club was offered to students in sixth through eighth grades as an after-school activity. Recruitment was handled by the school librarian with the goal of signing up ten to fifteen students. Fourteen students returned parental consent forms and personal assent forms and were accepted for participation. Two of these students never showed up; the remaining twelve, three boys and nine girls, participated throughout with some absences. Because of this, the number of participants reported at each book club session fluctuates.

Methods

Materials

Young adult books about STEAM topics were selected for examination in the book club meetings because of the increasing emphasis on these topics within the school and, generally, in education. Young adult nonfiction books, as opposed to textbooks, were used as this was an afterschool book club, not an extension of the classroom. The books are listed in the last column of table 1; the books are also listed at the end of the paper (after the list of works cited).

Meeting Overview

The Peritext Book Club met in the school library once a month for an hour from January through May 2016. At each meeting pizza and a beverage were provided to students, as well as a copy of the book under discussion, which they were allowed to keep. At the last meeting, students were given a Peritext Book Club t-shirt for their participation. The book club was led by the school librarian. The co-principle investigators and a doctoral student observed all book club sessions. In addition, book club sessions were digitally audio-recorded.

At each book club meeting a new type of peritext function and associated elements were presented, and after the first session the peritext functions from previous sessions were reviewed before a new peritext function was introduced (see table 1). The students examined books to determine what peritextual elements were presented in each work and the extent to which these elements were effective in terms of their function. Students also noted when peritextual elements were missing from a work.

Table 1. Peritext Book Club Schedule.

Meeting	Topic	Discussion	Book
January	Art/Design	Introduce one another and explain book club procedures. Introduce peritextual analysis. **Bibliographic and promotional peritext**	Kidd, Chip. *Go: A Kidd's Guide to Graphic Design*. Workman Publishing, 2013

February	Science	Complete discussion of *art/design book*. Peritextual analysis of science book. **Intratextual peritext.**	Kramer, Stephen. *Hidden Worlds: Looking Through a Scientist's Microscope*. Houghton Mifflin, 2001.
March	Math	Complete discussion of science book. Peritextual analysis of math book. **Navigational peritext**.	Janeczko, Paul B. *Top Secret: A Handbook of Codes, Ciphers and Secret Writing*. Candlewick, 2006.
April	Engineering	Complete discussion of math book. Peritextual analysis of engineering book. **Supplemental peritext**.	Latham, Donna. *Skyscrapers: Investigate Feats of Engineering with 25 Projects*. Nomad Press, 2013.
May	Technology	Complete discussion of engineering book. Peritextual analysis of technology book. **Documentary peritext**.	Thimmesh, Catherine. *Team Moon: How 400,000 People Landed Apollo 11 on the Moon*. Houghton Mifflin, 2006.

In addition to these discussions, students participated in games developed using Kahoot! (a free game-based learning platform) and an interactive whiteboard; success in these games depended on knowledge of peritext types and elements. In one session students used PowToon (free presentation software) to work on ideas for teaching peritext to younger students. At each meeting students also completed pre- and post-intervention surveys of their peritext knowledge. When taking these surveys, participants responded to open-ended questions accessed on Chromebooks. At the end of the last book club meeting students also took a paper-based quiz. The Peritext Book Club schedule is presented in table 1. More information about each meeting is provided in the "Results" section.

Data Collection and Analysis

Each of the five book club meetings was digitally audio-recorded, transcribed, and analyzed for evidence of book club participants' skills related to critical thinking, problem solving, information literacy, and media literacy. Students' reactions to book club content and process and students' recommendations for improvement were coded using open coding and used to assess the success of the approach and to make improvements to materials and processes in succeeding book club meetings. Activities during the book club, such as short electronic pre- and post-intervention surveys administered through Chromebooks and a final paper quiz at the end of the fifth meeting, were used to assess knowledge gained about peritext within each session and overall.

Results

January Meeting: Bibliographic and Promotional Peritext

The first meeting focused on bibliographic and promotional peritext, and the art book *Go: A Kidd's Guide to Graphic Design* was used as the basis for the discussion. As would be expected, the pre-intervention survey demonstrated that the nine students attending did not have any knowledge of peritext or of the bibliographic and promotional functions of peritext. Students were active participants in the discussion of what peritext is and how bibliographic and promotional elements work to get readers' attention and draw them into the book. Students related instantly to how promotional elements work. At first they felt *Go: A Kidd's Guide to Graphic Design* might be too young for them, but as they explored the peritext, their interest grew, and when asked, "Does the cover of the book entice you to read it?" many said yes.

February Meeting: Intratextual Peritext

A total of twelve students attended the February meeting. Nine of these students were in attendance at the January meeting; these students were asked at the beginning of the February meeting to rate their enjoyment of the January meeting on a scale of 1 to 5 (5 being the most enjoyment). The mean rating was 4.8. None of the attendees rated the meeting at levels 1, 2, or 3. A comparison of enjoyment ratings of the January through April book club meetings are in table 2.

Table 2. Rate your enjoyment of the last book club meeting.

Book Club Meeting Rated	Number Responding	Mean Rating
January	8	4.8
February	9	4.3
March	9	4.1
April	7	4.7

Students who had attended the first meeting were also asked if they read all or part of *A Kidd's Guide to Graphic Design* since the last meeting. One attendee did not respond to this question. Of the seven participants who did respond, five (71.4 percent) said that they read a little of the January book, and two (28.6 percent) said they read most or all of the book.

In group discussion students talked about *how analyzing the peritext affected their decision to read or not to read the book. One girl said, "Yes, because* it's really cool. I liked the colorful cover of book; that interested me [talking about the cover]." A boy responded, "Judging from that you might say, 'Yes, I wanna read this book more. This book looks more interesting just by the fact that it's been reviewed or even awarded by this person'."

Those who did read the January book were asked to rate their enjoyment of the book on a scale of 1 to 5 (5 being the most enjoyment). Though only seven students reported reading at least

some of the book, all eight students who attended the previous program responded to this question. The mean rating of the book was 4.1. None of the attendees rated the book at the 1 or 2 level; one student (12.5 percent) rated the book 3; five students (62.5 percent) rated the book 4; two students (25.0 percent) rated their enjoyment of the book at the 5 level. A comparison of book ratings for February through May book club meetings is in table 3.

Table 3: If you read part or all of the book, did you enjoy it?

Book Club Meeting in Which Book Was Examined	Number Responding	Mean Rating	SD
January	8	4.1	0.6
February	8	3.6	1.3
March	9	3.8	1.4
April	6	3.7	1.6

The topic of the February meeting was intratextual peritext, and the science book *Hidden Worlds: Looking Through a Scientist's Microscope* was at the center of the discussion. The pre-meeting survey demonstrated that the eleven students attending the book club could not guess the function of intratextual peritext.

During the ensuing discussion, one girl had this to say about an intratextual element:

Foreword. It's really boring part of the book. There, somebody that has read the book discusses it and might pick [sound muffled] it apart and talks about how the author this and that stuff.

And another girl offered:

Yeah, with the preface and the dedications and everything you can see what their [intention] of writing this book was, who it was [for], who helped them. And it can show you, you know, when we, anytime we talk about writing an essay expository and persuasive, is it persuasive, and it says with a lot of reason, did they write this book? A lot of reason to write this essay? This is the same thing.

Concerning whether they pay attention to intratextual peritext one boy said:

I start it, but don't always read the whole thing.

A girl said:

I don't know why, but I feel like [if] I don't read every single word I miss it out.

Another girl offered:

I normally just read the whole book and go back read all the extra stuff at the end.

At the end of the February meeting only seven attendees remained because some of them were picked up by parents or left a little early for sports practice. Of the seven students who responded

to the post-meeting survey, five (71.4 percent) were able to provide a definition of intratextual peritext.

March Meeting: Navigational Peritext

There were ten participants at the March meeting. Participants were asked to rate their enjoyment of the February meeting on a scale of 1 to 5 (five being the most enjoyment). The mean rating was 4.3, indicating the attendees had a good time. Nine participants at the March meeting had attended in February. Among these, no one rated their enjoyment of the book club at levels 1 or 2. The book club meeting was rated 3 by two students, and as 4 by two students. Five students rated their enjoyment of the meeting at the 5 level.

Participants were also asked if they read all or part of the February book *Hidden Worlds: Looking Yhrough a Scientist's Microscope* since the last meeting. Three students (33.3 percent) said they had not read the book; three (33.3 percent) said they had read a little of it; three (33.3 percent) said they had read most or all of the book.

Those who did read the February book were asked to rate their enjoyment of the book on a scale of 1 to 5 (5 being the most enjoyment). Eight students responded, and the mean rating of the book was 3.6. Two students who indicated that they did not read the book rated their enjoyment of it anyway. One of these students gave it a 1 rating, and the other gave it a 3 rating. Of the attendees who did decide to read the book, all rated it in the 3 to 5 range.

At the March meeting one girl said:

> When you look at that, the front cover is a little fuzzy thing, as XXX said, if you don't like Creepy Crawlies, then you might not want to pick it up, but knowing something from inside, cause we are talking about intra? Intratextual, bibliographic, then you will be able to maybe know that knowledge of the thing. I don't really like the book, but this is interesting or even knowing that it helps you if you are doing like a paper.

Another girl offered:

> It provided more information so you understood what you were reading not just like the pretty pictures, so I understood what's going on the pictures and how was it happening, like, etc.

The topic of the March meeting was navigational peritext, and the students examined a math book *Top Secret: A Handbook of Codes, Ciphers and Secret Writing* for examples of navigational elements. Students were quick to pick up on this peritextual function. When discussing how navigational elements are an aid to the reader, typical of students' comments was a girl's remark, "When you have the index and know where everything is, it's a lot harder to get confused." All nine students who responded to the survey were able to define navigational peritext at the end of the meeting.

April Meeting: Supplemental Peritext

A total of ten students attended the April meeting. Of these, nine participants who had attended the March meeting were asked to rate their enjoyment of that meeting on a scale of 1 to 5 (5 being the most enjoyment). The mean rating was 4.1. One participant rated enjoyment of the

meeting at the 1 level; four participants rated their enjoyment of the meeting at the 4 level; four participants gave the meeting a rating of 5.

These participants were also asked if they read all or part of the March book *Top Secret: A Handbook of Codes, Ciphers and Secret Writing* since the last meeting. One participant (11.1 percent) said no; seven (77.8 percent) said they read a little of the book; one student (11.1 percent) reported reading most or all of the book.

Those who did read the March book were asked to rate their enjoyment of the book on a scale of 1 to 5 (5 being the most enjoyment). The mean rating of the book was 3.8. One student (11.1 percent), who did not read the book, gave the book a 1 rating. Of those who read the book, three students (33.3 percent) gave the book a 3 rating; one student (11.1 percent) gave the book a 4 rating; four students (44.4 percent) rated their enjoyment of the book at the 5 level.

The focus of the April meeting was the engineering book *Skyscrapers: Investigate Feats of Engineering with 25 Projects* and the topic was supplemental peritext. However, because in the Kahoot! and interactive whiteboard games in the previous months' meetings students continued to struggle with understanding the functions of bibliographic peritext, some of the April meeting time was used to discuss the bibliographic function further to see if there might be a better way to present this concept. One girl offered,

> I was gonna say that we are struggling with bibliographic because I know the other ones, like the name kinds of helps you understand navigational, you are navigating the text, promotional, you are promoting the text. And yet, with bibliographic, you know, we know "biblio" is book and "graphic" because it is writer and something like that. So it might be harder for people to see that what they are… like flat out what that peritext is.

When asked what might be a better term students offered various suggestions: "background peritext," "creational peritext," "information peritext," "factual peritext," "production peritext," and "publication peritext."

Students had an easier time with supplemental peritext. One girl defined it as "extra oomphs!" In the post-meeting survey, seven students could define supplemental peritext; one gave an answer that was partially right; one student could not define supplemental peritext.

May Meeting: Documentary Peritext

There were eight students at the May meeting. At the beginning of the May meeting, these students were asked to rate their enjoyment of the April meeting on a scale of 1 to 5 (5 being the most enjoyment); the mean rating was 4.7. Two participants rated their enjoyment at the 4 level, five rated their enjoyment at the 5 level, and one participant did not respond.

Participants were also asked if they read all or part of the April book *Skyscrapers: Investigate Feats of Engineering with 25 Projects* since the last meeting. One student did not respond to this question. Four students (57.1 percent) said they did not read the book; two (28.6 percent) said they read a little of the book; one (14.3 percent) participant read the whole book.

Those who did read the April book were asked to rate their enjoyment of the book on a scale of 1 to 5 (5 being the most enjoyment). The mean rating was 3.7. Two students did not respond to this question. Three students who said they did not read the book nevertheless offered ratings; therefore, the number of responses is six instead of three. Of the three students who did not read

the book, but rated it anyway, one student gave the book a 1 rating, one student gave it a three rating, and the other rated enjoyment of the book at the 5 level. Of the three students who did read the book, one rated enjoyment at the 3 level, and two rated their enjoyment as 5.

At the May meeting the topic was documentary peritext, and the technology book *Team Moon: How 400,000 People Landed Apollo 11 on the Moon* was the center of the discussion. Documentary peritext was another term that the students readily understood. During discussion of the elements in *Team Moon*, the topic of what to call bibliographic peritext came up again. Students at this point were better able to name bibliographic elements, but still liked the idea of changing the name to something like "publishing" or "production" peritext. Participants seemed to have fun in this session identifying peritextual elements in the book. At the end of the meeting, participants completed both a post-meeting survey and a written quiz about peritext. These are discussed in later subsections.

The meeting closed with several students expressing enthusiasm about their experience and several asking if the book club would be available next year. One girl asked, "Can I do the book club next year again? You'd better do this again next year!" Another girl exclaimed, "We should make a dance called 'the peritext'!"

Pre- and Post-Intervention Surveys

Surveys were given at the start of each meeting; in these surveys students were asked to define the type of peritext that was the focus of that week's book club. Surveys were administered electronically using Chromebooks. Pre-intervention survey results indicated that students were unable to guess what bibliographic, promotional, and intratextual peritext might be. However, before discussion, eight of ten attendees were able to guess the definition of navigational peritext, and four of ten were able to guess the definition of supplemental peritext.

Results of the post survey, administered at the end of the last book club meeting, indicated that all students could define peritext and that half or more of students could define all of the functions of peritext except for bibliographic peritext, which only three students could define.

Again using Chromebooks, an electronic survey given at the end of the last book club meeting included seven questions asking participants to define peritext and the six functions of peritext (bibliographic, promotional, intratextual, navigational, supplemental, and documentary). The results of this survey are in table 4. These results indicate that the concept of peritext was understood by all participants by the end of the last book club meeting. Participants were best able to articulate definitions for the promotional, navigational, and documentary functions of peritext. Intratextual peritext was defined by half of the participants, and bibliographic peritext remained the most difficult peritextual function for them to internalize. Only three students could provide a definition for bibliographic peritext.

Table 4: Can you define?

Concept	N (%)
Peritext	8 (100.0)
Bibliographic peritext	3 (37.5%)
Promotional peritext	7 (87.5%)
Intratextual peritext	4 (50.0%)
Navigational peritext	7 (87.5%)
Supplemental peritext	5 (50%)
Documentary peritext	8 (100%)

Some students provided definitions that described the actual function of the type of peritext. Some examples of these definitions are:

> Peritext is everything in the book that is not the story that aids in the understanding of the book.

> Promotional peritext is the peritext that is meant to persuade someone to pick up the book.

> Intratextual peritext is peritext within the book to help you better understand what the book will be about.

In general, students understood that peritext refers to elements in a book that are not part of the main text, but not all students could completely articulate full definitions of the various functions of peritext. Instead, students named peritextual elements that belonged to the category they were asked to define. For example, when asked to define intratextual peritext a student might respond by writing the word "foreword."

Final Quiz

As participants did when responding to the May electronic post-meeting survey, when taking the paper quiz at the end of the May meeting participants were able to define peritext, but some definitions were more complete than others. Examples of responses include:

> Any part of a book that is not the main body.

> Peritext is looking at elements of the book and deciding if you wanna use it or not.

> An element that persuades you to read a book.

> Textual evidence in a book.

When asked to name three different peritextual elements, all students except one were able to give three answers. One student provided two examples. Six students responded by naming various functions of peritext (supplemental, promotional, etc.), and two named elements such as

page number, author's name, index, etc. In the assessment, all these answers were considered correct.

When asked how peritext might affect their opinion of a book, all participants had reasonable responses indicating that peritext could influence their opinions by providing information about the book that made it seem interesting, credible, or understandable. Only one student answered in a way that did not indicate how peritext might change a reader's opinion of a work and stated instead only, "It could change your opinion."

The final question on the quiz asked participants how they decide if the facts in a book are correct or not. All students responded by pointing out the need to assess the resources a book's author used; two students referred to documentary peritext. One student responded, "You can look it up online."

Discussion

Overview

Overall, we considered the Peritext Book Club to be a success. The participants indicated that they enjoyed participating and demonstrated their ability to use peritext to think critically about STEAM-related nonfiction books. The following discussion focuses on what was learned from the book club in the context of our project goals and student outcomes.

Project Goals

Demonstrate the application of the peritextual literacy framework (PLF) in supporting the development of skills related to critical thinking, problem solving, information literacy, and media literacy. The PLF used in the context of an afterschool book club demonstrated its value as a scaffold for thinking critically about nonfiction reading. Participants were quick to understand peritextual elements related to the promotional, navigational, supplementary, and documentary functions of peritext and to use these functions to assess books. Participants were able to discuss how these functions affected their motivation to read a text, how the functions affected their ability to retrieve information from a text, as well as how these functions might affect their opinion about the verity of the text. These understandings are closely related to attainment of information, media literacy, and technology skills, which require the ability to reason effectively, analyze how the parts of a text work to make up the whole, evaluate information critically, and use information accurately (Partnership for 21st Century Skills 2009).

Participants demonstrated an understanding of intratextual elements but tended to pay less attention to them. Participants most easily identified the foreword and afterword as performing intratextual functions, and were able to identify books' intratextual elements while playing games. However, students demonstrated little interest in reading intratextual elements or using them as a way to better understand the text.

Participants had the greatest difficulty understanding the bibliographic function and its related peritextual elements. This was a surprise to the researchers, who initially thought the bibliographic function would be the simplest to explain. Over the course of the book club, the bibliographic function was presented in a variety of ways. One way was pointing out that these are the same elements students use when preparing the works cited portion of a paper. In two

book club meetings feedback from participants was sought on what name they would give this function to make it easier to understand.

Refine the Framework based on feedback from students. Overall, the framework worked well. Students enjoyed the language used to name the functions and were happy to use the multisyllabic terminology to which they were being introduced. The students made a point of using the terminology with each other, playfully, and in an affected tone that indicated the terms had an intellectual sound to them. The one type of peritext, as noted above, that did not work well for the students was the bibliographic function. Based on discussion with students, the name of the bibliographic peritext function was changed to "production." "Production" seemed to work best as it relates to the fact that these elements reveal much about the making of the text, such as who wrote it, who illustrated it, who published it, and when it was published. The term "production" is also preferable because it will be easier to use with texts that are not printed books. In the future work we hope to promote the use of the PLF with various types of media (streaming video, DVDs, webpages, etc.) and have decided that if the term "bibliographic" is difficult to use with books, it will be even more difficult to relate to when students are asked to use the PLF with other media.

Refine the materials and process used in the book club meetings based on student feedback and analysis of their participation in the book club. In addition to discussing peritext functions and elements in the context of the selected texts, in the meetings students also played a Kahoot! game online and games presented on an interactive whiteboard, and in pairs or small groups worked on electronic presentations in PowToon. These presentations were intended to teach something about peritext to younger students at school. The participants enjoyed the Kahoot! game but also became bored with it after a few book club meetings. Students enjoyed playing a game on the interactive whiteboard during the last two book club meetings. The participants liked the idea of teaching younger students about peritext, but only one subgroup was able to finish its presentation due to time constraints. Setting up PowToon took students longer than anticipated. In future book club or classroom sessions, more time would be needed for students to develop presentations to teach peritext concepts to younger students. Pairing older students with younger students would be a good way to allow older students to see the process all the way through.

Collect data to support the use of peritextual analysis as an educational approach. Data that supports the use of PLF as an educational approach relate directly to the attainment by participants of the student outcomes outlined for this educational approach. These are discussed individually below.

Student Outcomes

Students will be able to articulate the role of at least three peritextual elements in supporting the body of the text in a work of nonfiction. By the last book club meeting all participants except one demonstrated their ability (by means of the post-meeting survey) to define the functions of at least three peritextual elements. The student who could not define three functions of peritext was able to define peritext itself. This participant was absent for two of the five book club meetings. In the final quiz all participants except one were able to name either three functions of peritext or three peritextual elements. One student was able to provide two peritextual elements; this was the same student who was absent for two book club meetings.

These findings suggest that this student outcome was met for all participants who had good records of attendance at the meetings.

Students will be able to articulate how the presence of peritextual elements affect students' evaluation of the book as an informational text. In the final quiz all participants agreed that analyzing peritext could affect their opinion of a text. When asked to elaborate on why analyzing peritext could affect opinions on the books, all except one student noted functions and/or types of peritext that influenced opinions of a text. Findings indicate this outcome was met for all participants except one.

Students will be able to express reasons for accepting the veracity of factual information gained through reading. In the final quiz all except one student described ways to determine the quality of the information in a book; this description was achieved by pointing to documentary evidence and/or by analyzing sources used by the book. Only one student answered this question by suggesting looking at information online, rather than through an examination of the text itself. Findings indicate that this student outcome was met by all students except one.

Conclusions

In examining the books, students learned to identify the presence or absence of peritextual elements in the books and to identify which functions of peritext particular elements serve. Students could articulate how peritextual analysis can be an aid to deciding whether to read a text, to navigating a text and searching for information, and for assessing the credibility of a text by examining documentary evidence provided by the author. Students reported enjoying the learning process and demonstrated their ability to use the new concepts and related terminology presented in the PLF. Only one student had low scores on the final assessments, and these are attributed to irregular attendance at the book club meetings.

The findings demonstrate that the use of the PLF in educational contexts can aid students' assessments of information presented in nonfiction texts. However, more research is needed to further develop and test the use of the PLF with larger groups, with varying age and grade levels, and with a wider variety of texts. Further research will also require the development of a variety of lesson plans to facilitate teaching the functions of peritext as a way to improve reading skills, as well as students' ability to think critically about nonfiction texts.

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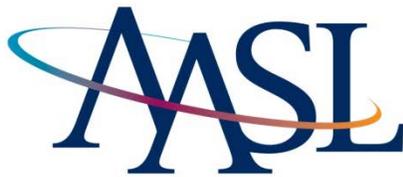
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