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RESEARCH REPORT

Building and Justifying Interpretations of Texts: A Key Practice in the English Language Arts

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A key instructional goal of English language arts instruction is teaching students to read and interpret complex literary texts. This report reviews the literature on the development and pedagogy of literary analysis skills. It analyzes literary analysis skills as a *key practice*, a bundle of disciplinary skills and strategies that form a key target for instruction. This practice focuses on applying a variety of strategies for building textual interpretations, including strategies for deepening comprehension, inferring the author's purpose, considering multiple perspectives, connecting text to context, generalizing and applying themes, and participating in cultural conversations about texts. It also identifies a sequence of activities that define literary interpretation as a social practice and identifies key goals and subgoals for those activities. If literary analysis is viewed as a key practice, it requires participants to habitually engage in the following practices: (a) read and reread texts to find cues that suggest new possibilities for interpretation, (b) participate in interpretive discussions of literary texts, (c) use writing both as a tool to support interpretive work and as a means to communicate interpretive arguments, and (d) maintain an openness to new interpretations and a willingness to revisit previous interpretive conclusions in the light of new evidence. The evidence indicates that this is a late-developing practice, typically acquired during high school and never fully mastered by a large proportion of the population, though it can be encouraged and fostered in the upper elementary and middle school years with effective instruction.

Keywords Reading; writing; literature; interpretation; literary criticism; close reading; reader response

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Students need to know how to interpret texts. Even more importantly, they need to know how to justify their interpretations. This is true for practically any kind of complex text, but it is particularly true for literature. Literary texts invite close reading. They invite the reader to take an interpretive stance (Goldman et al., 2015), and they reward the reader who is willing to reflect on what they mean. When literary texts are particularly powerful (as in the case of Shakespeare's plays), they can become important parts of the shared experience of a community.

And yet, interpretive reasoning is not an easy skill to master, nor is it a skill that people can easily practice alone. People generally learn how to interpret texts by participating in a local community of people who care about what texts mean, much as they learn to participate in other discourse communities (Pennycook, 2010; Street, 1999). There are many such communities. Some are formal, professional groups, such as literary scholars, historians, lawyers, or theologians (Fahnestock & Secor, 1991; Juzwik, 2014; Lundeborg, 1987; Wineburg, 1991). Others are informal communities, such as the writers and consumers of fan fiction (Busse, 2017). But regardless of their exact status or focus, such communities define specific standards for interpreting and communicating about disciplinary content and thus create distinct contexts in which people naturally acquire interpretive skills (Fish, 1980). Membership in the community, and access to the necessary skills, is usually mediated via some form of cognitive apprenticeship (Collins et al., 1988) in a community of practice (Lave & Wenger, 1991).

Historically, interpretive practices have not been taught well in American schools, since the dominant curricular framework has emphasized the transmission of bodies of knowledge. Intrinsically interpretive disciplines, such as literature and history, have therefore been presented as collections of canonical texts or facts, combined with a body of specialized terms and concepts (Sipress & Voelker, 2009; VanSledright, 2008), with little emphasis on the problem-solving practices that helped build that knowledge in the first place (Gee, 2012; VanSledright, 2004, 2014). This approach tends to limit students' opportunities to learn how to take an interpretive stance (Collins et al., 1988; Zancanella, 1991). As a

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result, students may have little experience with disciplinary literacy practices before entering graduate school or some other form of professional training (Berkenkotter & Huckin, 2016; Wineburg, 1991).

Recognition of the deficiencies in the traditional curricular approach has led many educators to advocate instructional methods built around disciplinary literacy (Moje, 2008; Shanahan & Shanahan, 2008). This approach seeks to engage students in a variety of disciplinary literacy practices (Brock et al., 2014; Buehl, 2017) across a wide range of school subjects (Goldman et al., 2016). However, since literacy instruction is primarily situated in English language arts (ELA) classrooms, a focus on disciplinary reading and writing may cause ELA teachers to deemphasize literature and devote more instructional time to informational and argumentative texts, even though literary interpretation has considerable value and should remain a central goal of ELA instruction (Langer, 2013). This shift is perhaps most evident in the Common Core State Standards (CCSS; National Governors Association, 2010) and in curricular recommendations based on those standards. The CCSS are often understood to require teachers to spend more time on nonfiction (with an emphasis on literary nonfiction and on informational and argumentative texts) and less time on literary fiction, even when the interpretations of the CCSS have historically emphasized literary reading and writing (Beach et al., 2015; Calkins et al., 2012).

However, a critical feature of the CCSS is the emphasis they place on *close reading* and thus their emphasis on writer's craft and use of textual evidence. Close reading is a form of rhetorical analysis in which readers deepen their understanding of a text by analyzing features that reflect the author's purpose (Adler, 1940; Paul & Elder, 2013), and it emerged from the work of the so-called New Critics, such as Richards (1936, 2017). Thus, the CCSS represent, in part, an extension of literary analysis techniques to the entire text universe—fiction and nonfiction, literary and nonliterary, across a wide range of disciplines (Hinchman & Moore, 2013). However, the CCSS tend to focus on component skills—the ability to cite textual evidence, analyze text structure, or recognize the implications of an author's choice of words—without explicit recognition of these skills' role in building and justifying textual interpretations.

Moreover, it is far from clear that close reading is appropriate, in general, for all texts or for all reading purposes (Brewer, 2019; Eppley, 2019). Detailed text analysis will seem pointless to readers who want to make immediate use of the information that a text provides and have no cause to question the interpretation that occurs to them by default. It is far more natural to engage in close reading when the reader's purpose is to determine how to interpret a text or to build an argument from it. It is thus useful to conceive of interpretive reading as a specific and distinctive literacy practice, a kind of reading that is natural with literary texts, though it can be applied more widely. In a context where interpretive reading is appropriate, readers may consider multiple possible interpretations and use close reading and other literary or rhetorical analysis techniques to determine the most plausible interpretation (Bass & Linkon, 2008).

In previous publications, I and my colleagues have argued for a conception of the ELA domain organized around *key practices*—specific literacy practices that students need to master to achieve 21st-century literacy (Deane et al., 2015). This line of research has identified several key practices: (a) narrative (the key practice Building and Sharing Stories and Social Understandings; cf. Deane et al., 2019); (b) informational reading and writing (the key practice Building and Sharing Knowledge; see O'Reilly et al., 2015); (c) argumentation (the key practice Discuss and Debate Ideas; cf. Deane & Song, 2015); and (d) research (the key practice Conduct Inquiry and Research; cf. Sparks & Deane, 2015). This report reviews the literature on literary interpretation and rhetorical analysis, conceptualized as an additional key practice—*Building and Justifying Interpretations of Texts*. We conceptualize this key practice as distinct from the narrative key practice, since literary analysis techniques can be applied with equal ease to fiction or nonfiction. When students learn how to build and justify textual interpretations, they are developing a more nuanced, flexible, and critically aware approach to reading and writing (Blau, 2014; Rabinowitz & Bancroft, 2014).

Because literary analysis is a crucial element in both ELA instruction and assessment, it is important to have a clear idea of how interpretive reading and writing skills develop and what kinds of tasks not only provide evidence about student achievement but represent valuable literacy performances that students should master (Burkett & Goldman, 2016; Goldman, 2017; Lee & Goldman, 2015). Articulating the possible developmental trajectory of interpretive skills, and how to design tasks that would provide valid evidence of those skills, is the purpose of this report.

To address this purpose, it is necessary to take a step back and consider the distinctive features of literary texts, and the distinctive features of literary reading and writing, before we go on to define literary interpretation as a distinct form of disciplinary literacy. Once we have distinguished literary interpretation from other forms of literacy, we will examine how it emerges over time, with an emphasis on developmental factors that predispose students to engage in acts of literary

interpretation and on the social contexts and practices that make students more likely to engage with literary texts and take an interpretative stance. Finally, we will consider the implications for instruction and, especially, for assessment.

Distinctive Features of Literary Texts

While there is a degree of interpretation involved in practically any form of reading (Tierney & Pearson, 1983), not all texts reward this level of effort. Expertise in literary analysis is only worthwhile when the reader needs to construct a representation of the text that goes beyond literal comprehension (Zeitz, 1994). In fact, we can almost define the literary status of a text by the degree to which it rewards an interpretive reading (Iser, 1978).

Literary texts differ from simpler text types along several dimensions. To begin with, literary texts are examples of point-driven writing (Vipond & Hunt, 1984), where the author wants the reader to get more out of the text than the content that it explicitly communicates. To the extent that a text is literary, the reader will be drawn to make deeper inferences.

Furthermore, literary texts are designed to move the reader. This can happen in three ways (Bruns, 2011; Miall & Kuiken, 1999). First, a well-written literary text may *shock* readers by disrupting their existing sense of self and the world, thus making the familiar strange (Miall & Kuiken, 1994). Second, a well-written literary text may induce a sense of *recognition*, so that readers suddenly recognize some aspect of themselves or of their world in the world evoked by the text (Kuiken, Miall et al., 2004; Kuiken, Phillips et al., 2004). And third, a well-written literary text may *enchant* the readers, transporting them into an imagined world so fully that they are, for the moment, living vicariously within that world rather than in their own (Gerrig & Rapp, 2004; Kuiken & Douglas, 2017).

In addition, literary texts tend to be pragmatically “inconsiderate” (Zwaan, 2014); that is, they have features that make no sense if one assumes that the author’s purpose was to communicate information as efficiently and clearly as possible, which may even suggest that the author intends to communicate a message that contradicts the literal meaning of the text (Booth, 1974). It is usually important to pay close attention to the author’s precise wording while reading a literary text (Miall & Kuiken, 1994; van Peer et al., 2007), because the text typically provides indications of the author’s intent in the form of figures of speech, specific patterns of wording and phrasing, and other formal patterns (Widdowson, 2014).

Finally, literary texts tend to be ambiguous, or at least open to multiple interpretations, along multiple dimensions (Empson, 1932). To some extent, this ambiguity is a function of the indirectness of literary communication: If most of the meaning of a text is inferred by the reader, there is no reason for the author to structure the text to preclude multiple interpretations, and considerable reason not to do so, because the power of a literary work depends on its ability to move a wide range of readers who may approach the text from widely varying perspectives.

Distinctive Features of Literary Reading and Writing

At its most intense, literature can be experienced as a form of *transportation*, a kind of utter immersion in the literary experience created by the text. To be transported into a literary work, the reader must enter the author’s world without reservation,¹ identifying with characters in that world and perceiving it from the characters’ perspective. And yet it is the reader who constructs that world by responding to cues provided by the text.

To complicate this picture further, when readers come together to form an interpretive community, they discover that their initial reading of a literary work is not the only reading that makes sense. To participate in an interpretive community is to grapple with a multiplicity of interpretations, rejecting some, accepting others, and, in the process, developing a deeper understanding and appreciation of the original work. This picture is supported by several lines of evidence: evidence from studies of novice versus expert readers and the effect of intervention on reading ability and from studies focusing on the disciplinary practices of interpretive communities (Bode, 1998; Hanauer, 1999; Lee et al., 2016).

Evidence From Expert/Novice and Intervention Studies

Expert/novice studies provide a generally consistent picture of the differences in the ways that novices and experts read literary texts, whether the contrast is between English professors or English graduate students and people without literary training; between English majors and students with less literary training, such as high school students, college freshmen, or students from fields like science or engineering; or between stronger and weaker readers. Novice readers tend to approach literary texts the same way they do informational or straightforward narrative texts, with an emphasis on literal meaning,

facts, and plot points (Dorfman, 1996; Hunt & Vipond, 1985; Peskin, 1998; Reynolds & Rush, 2017; Zeitz, 1994). Novice readers are typically unwilling to revise their initial interpretations of a text (Earthman, 1992) and are more likely to show frustration in response to text difficulties (Peskin, 1998).

By contrast, expert readers are more likely to take an interpretive stance toward literary text (Earthman, 1992; Graves & Frederiksen, 1996; Hunt & Vipond, 1985; Peskin, 1998), which entails more attention to the communicative context (author and audience; cf. Graves, 1995; Graves & Frederiksen, 1996) and greater attention to some (but not all) formal features of the text (Graves & Frederiksen, 1991; Peskin, 1998; Zeitz, 1994) and to features that cue the reader to affective dimensions of the text (Gevinson, 1991; Janssen et al., 2006). Expert readers remember more about the texts at a gist level (Zeitz, 1994); are more invested in building coherent interpretations of the whole text, rather than attending to disconnected details (Dorfman, 1996; Graves, 1996); put more effort into elaborating their interpretations (Hunt & Vipond, 1985; Reynolds & Rush, 2017); and are more open to alternative interpretations (Earthman, 1992). Experts tend to show more consensus in how a text should be interpreted and greater awareness of literary complexity and common literary themes (Dorfman, 1996; Graves, 2001; Warren, 2011; Zeitz, 1994).

Most expert/novice studies confound the effect of training with other possible explanations, since the kinds of people who are likely to become English majors, become graduate students in English, or become literary scholars are likely to differ significantly from other populations on a variety of other dimensions, such as age, interest in literature, and prior experience in literary reading. However, there is also evidence from intervention studies that literary training can change how students read texts.

In particular, Peskin and Wells-Jopling (2012) examined the effect of scaffolding on the likelihood that sixth-, ninth-, and 12th-grade students would include interpretive and symbolic statements in their responses to literature and found that providing explicit education in interpretive reasoning had a facilitating effect at all three grade levels. Levine and Horton (2015) found that high school students produced more interpretive statements about literature after they were taught to explain their affective responses to specific features of literary texts. Sosa et al. (2016) found that high school (ninth-grade) students produced more interpretive statements after explicit instruction in how to analyze symbolism in literature.

At the college level, Bortolussi and Dixon (1996) showed that instruction in a specific literary genre (magical realism) produced significant changes in how students interpreted a magical realist story, compared to students who took a science fiction course instead. Similarly, McCarthy and Goldman (2017) examined the effect of explicit instruction in interpretive methods that were salient in an expert study, including rules of notice (attention to unusual text features to support interpretations) and rules of signification (including genre categories, such as the nature of satirical texts). They found that students who were systematically instructed in rules of signification and rules of notice produced significantly more interpretive statements and paid significantly more attention to textual details than students who did not receive that training. Finally, Hanauer (2007) found that explicit instruction about an author's characteristic literary patterns led to a higher prevalence of interpretive statements focusing on such elements when students were asked to interpret another poem by the same author.

The foregoing literature review thus supports a key assumption of ELA standards and instruction: that skilled readers read literary texts differently than novice readers and that the skills that support literary reading can be taught, even in K–12 classrooms.

Evidence From Studies of Disciplinary Practices

Literary criticism is the academic discipline most centrally concerned with interpretive reading; thus, it is natural to motivate a disciplinary approach to interpretive reading by examining the disciplinary practices of literary scholars. Several studies examined how literary scholars engage in interpretive reading and literary argumentation, either by performing rhetorical analysis on a corpus of articles written by literary scholars or by administering think-aloud protocols with disciplinary experts.

One line of work builds on the rhetorical analysis originally developed by Fahnestock and Secor (1991) and extended by Wilder (2003). This approach analyses the arguments of literary critics in terms of disciplinary *topoi* (patterns of argumentation), including (a) *appearance* versus *reality*, claiming that there is a deeper, hidden meaning to the text, one that may not be apparent on the surface; (b) *ubiquity*, pointing out that a particular literary element repeats throughout a literary work, in ways that support some particular interpretation; (c) *paradox*, pointing out that a work brings conflicting

ideas together, but holds them in tension; (d) *paradigm*, applying a specific literary paradigm, such as Freudian literary criticism, to inform an interpretation; (e) *context/intention*, using information about the context or the author's intention to motivate an interpretation; (f) *mistaken critic*, contrasting one's favored interpretation to another interpretation, which is argued to be in error; and (g) *contemptus mundi and social justice*, arguing that there is a connection between literature and life, drawing a connection between ideas and themes in a work of literature and aspects of the present human condition, and responding to this connection variously with despair or a call to action. Warren (2006a, 2006b, 2011) extended this approach by asking eight literary scholars to think aloud while reading poems. Warren and colleagues coded the resulting think-aloud protocols to identify literary topoi produced by each scholar. They found a high frequency of the appearance/reality topos (51.5% of the scholars' coded comments) and the paradigm topos (21.5% of comments), with less frequent representation of the paradox, context, social justice, and ubiquity topoi.

Reynolds and Rush (2017) examined the reading practices of four literary scholars using a think-aloud protocol and contrasted them to the reading practices of four college freshmen. They coded each reader's comments to identify characteristic discourse moves. They found that literary scholars differed from college freshmen in the kinds of discourse moves they made. Literary scholars were more likely to hypothesize (make an interpretive statement about some detail in the text), to note specific vocabulary choices that affected how they interpreted the text, and to ask questions that they treated as the starting point for an internal dialog in which they considered multiple possible interpretations.

Rainey (2017) identified several characteristic moves that literary scholars made when reasoning about literary texts, combining data from formal interviews, classroom discourse, and concurrent and retrospective think-aloud protocols. She argued that literary scholars engage in six basic interpretive practices: (a) *seeking patterns*—not only reading for meaning but attending to formal patterns in the text; (b) *identifying strangeness*—not only looking for patterns but keeping an eye out for places in the text where something seems strange, surprising, or confusing; (c) *articulating interpretive puzzles*, building on the exploration of patterns and strangeness to identify a specific interpretive problem they would like to solve; (d) *recursively considering possibilities*, rereading the text to explore a range of alternative interpretations, informed by the specific interpretive puzzle on which they are focusing; (e) *considering histories of use and other contexts*, exploring relevant sources of information that could inform an interpretation, such as historical background, biographical information, other works by the same author, or multiple versions of the work in question; and (f) *making original text-based claims*, finding ways to formulate the results of the interpretive process into a claim and written argument that will be shared with other literary scholars and contribute to an ongoing discourse about the works being interpreted. While the terminologies differ, these studies reached very similar conclusions. Literary scholars read and reread a text to generate a range of plausible interpretations. They search the text to identify interpretive difficulties; identify formal patterns that suggest new interpretations; marshal historical, biographical, and other kinds of contextual information that may favor one interpretation over another; and apply critical theories to develop an interpretation that they believe offers new insights into the text. They apply these skills when they read a literary text, when they prepare written arguments, and when they evaluate the interpretive arguments offered by others.

The literature we have reviewed thus supports an understanding of literary interpretation as a distinct, disciplinary form of reading and writing that focuses on interpreting literary texts, where multiple interpretations are often possible, and that provides a tool kit of interpretive techniques to help the reader choose between multiple, competing interpretations. Because the academic curriculum places a premium on teaching students to deal with interpretive complexity, literary analysis fits easily into the key practice framework discussed. In the rest of this report, I use this lens to interpret the literature that addresses the development of literary analysis skills and that defines standards and strategies for language arts education focused on literary texts.

Literary Interpretation as a Key Practice

One of the key strategies developed in previous key practice analyses has been the creation of a *phase diagram* that shows how the different activities associated with a key practice fit together and how they link to specific, targeted skills. Figure 1 presents the results of just such an analysis for the key practice Build and Justify Interpretations of Text. The overall structure of this diagram provides a useful model of the overall flow of activities when people are actively engaged in literary interpretation. Many of the more detailed categories embedded in this diagram reflect the domain analysis presented by Lee and Goldman (2015) and Goldman et al. (2016), which distinguish several key cognitive aspects of

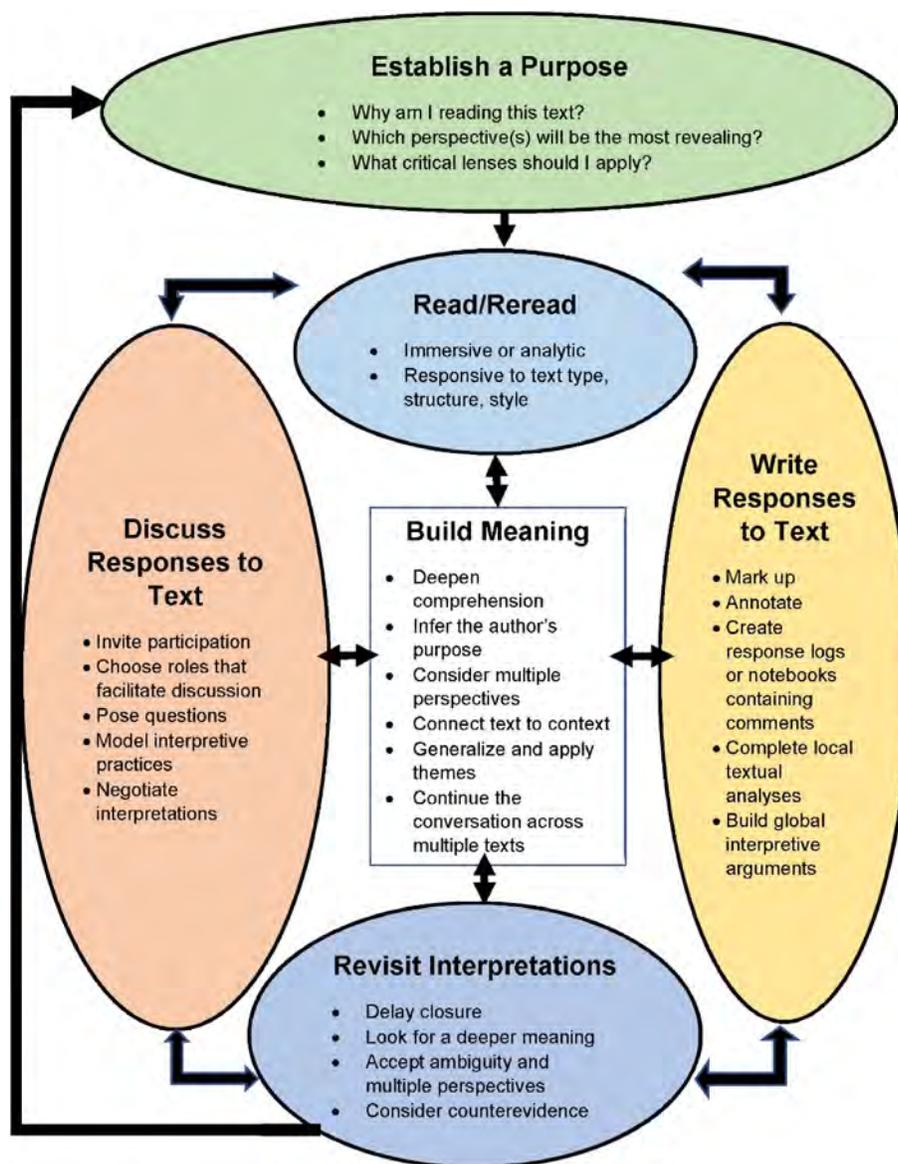


Figure 1 Phases of the key practice Build and Justify Interpretations of Texts. Overall structure modeled after Morocco and Hindin (2002, figure 1).

literary analysis, including inquiry strategies; epistemic cognition; background knowledge of text types, discourse, and language; and specific paradigms and purposes for literary analysis.

The proposed framework postulates five basic activities in which people engage when they are interpreting a text: establishing a purpose for reading, reading, and rereading the text; discussing responses to the text; writing responses to the text; and revisiting interpretations of the text. These activities draw on a set of common inquiry strategies that help people build meaning from texts. Taken together, they define an approach toward reading that assumes that literature is deeply meaningful and that rewards readers who put in the effort to reflect deeply on what texts mean, both to them and to others.

This report is also concerned with how people develop the skills and habits of mind that support textual interpretation. Like the other key practice analyses cited earlier, specific phases of the practice will be linked to learning progressions that capture how the skills that support literary interpretation develop. The goal is to support assessment and instruction that model authentic literacy practices (Hiebert, 1994) for close reading and literary interpretation, while providing appropriate scaffolding and support (Catterson & Pearson, 2017; Frey & Fisher, 2013).

Establishing a Purpose for Reading: Goals, Perspectives, and Paradigms

Literary texts are written to satisfy a distinct set of purposes for reading—what Rosenblatt (1978) termed an *aesthetic* reading stance rather than the *effere*nt stance more typical with procedural or informational texts. In an aesthetic reading, the reader is less concerned with the information to be extracted from a literary work than with what the reader experiences while they are reading it. As Ruddell (2002, pp. 264–265) noted, readers may value many different types of reading experiences, including *escape* (being transported into the world of the story), *problem resolution* (identifying with a character as readers work their way through a problem that may resonate with their own needs and goals), *prestige* (identifying with a character whose life seems valuable and significant), *understanding self* (finding insights in the text that shed light on their own lived experience), *intellectual curiosity* (using the text to explore and discover more about the world), and *aesthetics* (a sense of beauty and harmony).

Literary readers may also approach a text from different perspectives. For instance, they may focus on moral or psychological interpretations; examine the text in the light of the author's, readers', and characters' social identities and class positioning; analyze it in terms of historical developments, such as literary schools and movements; or examine how it contributes to a cultural conversation about some theme or issue (Beach et al., 2015). Whatever perspective readers may adopt, they are privileging some ideas and ways of understanding the text and deemphasizing or rejecting others. The term *critical lens* is sometimes used to describe this kind of framing. By choosing a specific critical lens, that is, a specific interpretive framework, the reader privileges specific ways of reading the text, and by applying many different critical lenses, the reader may be able to gain a richer, more flexible understanding of the text (Appleman, 2014; Golden & Canan, 2004; Hines & Appleman, 2000) and will become aware of issues that might otherwise have been concealed (Borsheim-Black et al., 2014; Lewis & Dockter, 2011; Thomas, 2008).

Particularly sophisticated readers of literature may adopt very specific paradigms based upon established literary theories (Fahnestock & Secor, 1991). When they do so, they are implicitly accepting specific theories of language, personality, society, and morality and are therefore exposed to specific intellectual opportunities and risks. For example, Freudian psychology gave rise to Freudian literary criticism, which highlights the importance of unconscious desires and drives and suggests that a text can have a meaning of which the author may not be consciously aware but which may nonetheless reveal itself in a variety of subtle ways (Wright, 2013). However, Freudian psychology has been subjected to intense criticism, so much so that many of its critics argue that it has either been refuted or revealed to be a form of pseudoscience (Eysenck, 2018; Webster, 1995).

And yet it would arguably be a mistake to equate the paradigm with the theory. One can reject Freudian psychoanalysis as a scientific theory and yet find value in the analytical approach it suggests. For example, using a Freudian lens forces one to consider how readers may gravitate toward or resist specific aspects of a story and thus how a story may be written more for some kinds of readers than for others (Holland, 1975). This point can be extended to nearly every modern and postmodern literary theory. Specific literary theories suggest particular ways of framing and focusing literary interpretation, while taking specific positions on a variety of social, moral, ethical, political, and philosophical issues (Barry, 2017; Culler, 2010)—positions with which many readers may disagree. Even so, there may be value in the framing, even for people who reject the theory with which that framing is associated.

As this discussion suggests, readers vary considerably in the purposes for which they may read literature; the flexibility with which they may switch between different purposes, stances, and perspectives; and the richness and variety of the perspectives they can bring to bear while they are reading a literary text. One of the goals of ELA instruction is to produce readers who are comfortable with many different purposes for reading and who can switch flexibly between different stances and perspectives as they seek to build meaning from the texts they read.

Figure 1 should be read as implying that once a purpose for reading has been set, readers can cycle back and forth between reading or rereading the text, discussing it or writing about it, and considering alternate interpretations. At any of these stages, they can draw on the strategies listed in the “Build Meanings” box to create a richer interpretation of the text, given the focus they have set by defining their purpose for reading. However, revisiting possible interpretations can have a metacognitive effect, because it can change the reader's purpose for reading, in which case another round of interpretive cycles can begin, in which the reader examines and considers the text from a different angle. As a key practice, literary analysis is thus implicitly recursive and open ended, because the reader can continue until they have exhausted all the possible interpretations that the reader, or other people with whom the reader is interacting, may be able to generate.

In practice, the strategies listed in the “Build Meanings” box are compatible with different purposes for reading and are therefore likely to be deployed only if the person interpreting a text reads the text multiple times, focusing on different purposes for reading. An initial reading, or even the first rereading, may function primarily to build a richer interpretation of the situation that the text describes. In later readings, the reader may try to infer the author’s communicative intent; consider the perspectives of the audience and how they might lead to different, and possibly contradictory, readings; or examine how the text develops an ongoing literary tradition or reflects common concerns and themes. For many readers, switching from one strategy to another may require considerable effort and attention. Viewed in this light, teaching students to perform literary analysis is all about making them aware of multiple purposes for reading and giving them effective strategies for reading the text for each of those purposes.

Reading and Rereading: Flexibility and Reading Purposes

Regardless of their ultimate purpose for reading, the reader must understand the text at a literal level first. This implies an initial pass through the text focused on comprehension, followed up by one or more rereadings. In other words, flexibility plays a critical role.

Of course, the way we read is affected by our prior experiences with reading. Fluent, sophisticated, and flexible reading skills typically emerge when people read regularly for pleasure (Anderson et al., 1988). Readers who can read a text flexibly for a variety of purposes must possess high levels of linguistic and metalinguistic knowledge, usually demonstrate familiarity with a variety of text types, and often display positive attitudes toward a variety of reading experiences.

Changing Stances Toward Reading

Literary readers change their stance toward the text as their understanding of it deepens. Langer (1991b) described this process in terms of stances that the reader takes during the reading process. She identified four such stances:

Stance 1: Being outside and stepping into an envisionment. When readers take this stance, they have not yet been transported into the world of the text. They are mostly focused on making sense of the text and building a literal interpretation.

Stance 2: Being in and moving through an envisionment. When readers take this stance, they are fully engaged in the imagined world created by the text, and they are putting most of their effort into building a richer, deeper understanding of that world.

Stance 3: Stepping back and rethinking what one knows. When readers take this stance, they start connecting the imagined world to the world they know and live in and use their imagined experience as the starting point for reflection.

Stance 4: Stepping out and objectifying the experience. When readers take this stance, they distance themselves from the imagined experience and begin to take a more critical approach to the ideas raised by their previous readings of the text.

A critical point about these stances is that readers may move flexibly between them at different points in their reading experience. Flexibility in reading purposes is one of the hallmarks of a skilled interpretive reader (Janssen et al., 2012).

Evidence in favor of the hypothesis that readers can take multiple stances toward reading can be found in surveys that have asked readers to characterize their literary reading experiences. One of the most influential of these studies, Miall and Kuiken (1995), developed a questionnaire (the Literary Response Questionnaire; LRQ) designed to measure readers’ orientations toward literature. This study, which was originally aimed at higher skill (college-level) readers, identified seven dimensions of reader orientation toward literature: (a) *insight*, or the extent to which readers value the possibility that reading literature will change their self-perception or their understanding of the world; (b) *empathy*, or the extent to which readers value literature because it helps them to identify with characters in the text; (c) *imagery vividness*, or the extent to which readers value the vividness with which literature evokes images and sensations in an imagined world; (d) *leisure escape*, or the extent to which readers value literature as an escape from everyday responsibilities; (e) *concern with author*, or the extent to which readers are interested in the author’s perspectives, styles, themes, and place in literature; (f) *story-driven reading*, or the extent to which readers value a story for the plot and story line and thus value stories with

narrative tension and compelling plot resolutions; and (g) *rejection of literary values*, or rejection of literature as a school subject, particularly involving resistance to close reading and analysis. The instrument showed good internal consistency, retest reliability, and factorial structure. Its seven factors correspond to different forms of internal motivation, though in some cases, as with the rejection of literary values, it takes the form of a rejection, rather than the acceptance, of a particular goal for reading.

Miall and Kuiken (1995) identified two second-order factors: *experiencing*, loading positively on insight, empathy, imagery vividness, leisure escape, and concern with author, and *literal comprehension*, loading negatively on concern with author but positively on story-driven reading and rejection of literary values. However, follow-up studies failed to replicate this structure. van Schooten et al. (2001) replicated Miall and Kuiken's (1995) study with Dutch students. They confirmed the seven base-level factors of the LRQ but found that a different second-order factor structure was the best fit. They labeled their two second-order factors *trance* (with positive loadings on empathy, imagery vividness, leisure escape, and story-driven reading) and *literary interpretation* (with positive loadings on insight and concern with author and negative loading on rejection of literary values). Similarly, Nenadić and Oljača (2019) replicated Miall and Kuiken's (1995) study with Serbian students. Like van Schooten et al. (2001), they confirmed the seven underlying dimensions of the LRQ but failed to replicate Miall and Kuiken's (1995) second-order factors. Nenadić and Oljača (2019) proposed and validated a simplified questionnaire, the Receptiveness to Literature Questionnaire, with two main dimensions: reading for pleasure (roughly comparable to van Schooten et al.'s, 2001, *trance* factor) and thorough reading (roughly comparable to van Schooten et al.'s *literary interpretation* factor).

An unrelated study, Braun and Cupchik (2001), obtained similar results to those found by van Schooten et al. (2001). The authors provided both qualitative and quantitative (factor-analytic) evidence that readers can adopt either *close* or *far* perspectives on text, where the close perspective was related to the extent to which readers identified with the protagonist and entered into the protagonist's experiences in the story and the far perspective was related to the extent to which readers were focused on understanding the author's intention and making inferences from text details. While Braun and Cupchik (2001) observed that individuals could take either stance, they also found stable individual differences in the likelihood that a reader would adopt a close or far perspective.

Overall, these studies support the thesis that there are two very different dimensions of literary reading: *immersive reading*, associated with reading for pleasure, high degrees of emotional involvement with and absorption with the world of the text, and a tendency to engage in leisure/escape reading, and *interpretive reading*, associated with reflective reading and rereading, in which the reader may seek to gain deeper personal insights, gain a better understanding of the author's intention, or analyze the writer's craft. These studies have indicated that students can have different attitudes toward the two types of reading. Some readers may place a high value on immersive reading but resist close reading; others may be willing to engage in close reading, with less interest in immersive reading; while others may be committed to both or unlikely to engage in either.²

Note that the four stances Langer (1991b) described can arguably be interpreted in terms of the two dimensions of literary reading. The first stance, *being outside and stepping into an envisionment*, is the most literal form of reading, with low immersion and little explicit interpretation. The second stance, *being in and moving through an envisionment*, would correspond to high immersion and little interpretive effort. The third stance, *stepping back and rethinking what one knows*, would correspond to a combination of immersion and interpretive effort, while the fourth stance, *stepping out and objectifying the experience*, would seem to correspond to low immersion and high interpretive effort.

Arguably, a literary education should enable readers to move fluently between immersive and close reading so that they can enrich their initial appreciation of a literary text through reflection and analysis. But if students assume that only the literal meaning of a text matters, consider literary analysis a waste of time, or fail to see any connection between literature and life, they would seem unlikely to engage easily in both immersive and interpretive forms of reading.

Reading in Different Genres

Stance is not the only way reading can differ. Literature is not a monolithic mass of texts. There are many kinds, or *genres*, of literature, which may be organized along different patterns, be written in characteristically different styles, and respond to the needs and interests of very different kinds of readers (Frow, 2014). Skilled readers change their reading strategies from one genre to the next (Zwaan, 1994) and then use the features of genres to guide the inferences that they make (Afflerbach, 1990).

Genres can be viewed as categories of text that emerge within a community of practice (Bhatia, 2014; Bowker & Star, 2000). They embody characteristic solutions to recurrent rhetorical needs (Miller, 1984) and play a key role in the transmission of social practices to new generations of practitioners (Berkenkotter & Huckin, 2016). Not all genres are literary, of course: A variety of text genres in professional and academic settings, for example, would not be considered literary in nature and arise from the specific discourse needs of those communities (Swales, 1990). Literary genres include the genres of mass market publishing, which arise from a confluence between the desire of publishers to find works that readers will buy and the desire of readers to find new works that they are likely to enjoy reading (Rieder, 2017). But literary conceptions of genre also reflect the archetypes of the literary tradition in which categories like comedy, tragedy, and satire play a central role and common tropes and patterns recur across a wide range of literary texts (Fowler, 1982; Frye, 1951).

However, literary genre is more than a categorization of texts; it is a recognition of recurrent patterns. Knowledge about text types therefore entails developing knowledge about common plot structures and character types (Belknap, 2016; Propp, 2010) and established forms, such as the novel, the short story, the ballad, and the sonnet (Klarer, 2013). This kind of knowledge also provides a metalanguage for talking about literary text types. Skilled readers have acquired the ability to read in a variety of genres and thus have developed both a broad familiarity with a wide range of literary texts and metacognitive awareness of similarities and differences across text types.

The Role of Linguistic and Metalinguistic Knowledge in Literary Reading

Skilled reading builds on linguistic knowledge. But interpretive reading requires more than tacit linguistic knowledge. It depends on paying close attention to textual details because the text provides a primary source of evidence for building literary arguments. This means that the literary reader cannot simply discard their surface representation of the text and retain only the gist, which is how fluent readers usually operate (Kintsch, 2012; Kintsch & Kintsch, 1998). During literary reading, skilled readers read more slowly and retain much more detailed representations of the surface form of the text than they would for other forms of reading, such as news articles or encyclopedia entries (Hanauer, 1998; Zwaan, 1994). Thus, developing greater metacognitive awareness of the linguistic structures and rhetorical devices employed in literary texts can play an important role in facilitating literary reading (Leech & Short, 1981; Simpson, 2004; Widdowson, 2014).

It should thus come as no surprise that linguistic, metalinguistic, and textual knowledge is directly targeted in several of the CCSS reading standards (National Governors Association, 2010), including the following:

1. *Reading Anchor Standard 1.* Read closely to determine what the text says explicitly and to make logical inferences from it; cite specific textual evidence when writing or speaking to support conclusions drawn from the text.
2. *Reading Anchor Standard 4.* Interpret words and phrases as they are used in a text, including determining technical, connotative, and figurative meanings, and analyze how specific word choices shape meaning or tone.
3. *Reading Anchor Standard 5.* Analyze the structure of texts, including how specific sentences, paragraphs, and larger portions of the text (e.g., a section, chapter, scene, or stanza) relate to each other and the whole.
4. *Reading Anchor Standard 6.* Assess how point of view or purpose shapes the content and style of a text.

Literary reading cannot be equated with the nuts and bolts of rhetorical, linguistic, and grammatical analysis. But the skilled literary reader will almost certainly notice how a text manipulates text structure, provides markers of perspective and stance, and modulates style and diction to produce literary effects. Noticing such effects is often the first critical step toward formulating an interpretive inference, and thus an analysis of style may shed considerable light on what a text means (Simpson, 2004).

Building Meaning: Six Strategies for Literary Inquiry

As Figure 1 suggests, there are many modes of interpretative inquiry, each of which tends to support a different purpose for reading and which may come into play equally well during reading/rereading, oral discussion, and writing about literary texts. Each mode draws on different sources of evidence and tends toward different kinds of conclusions. The following types of inquiry are particularly important in literary reading: deepening comprehension, inferring the author's purpose, considering multiple perspectives, connecting text to context, generalizing and applying themes, and continuing a conversation across multiple texts. In the sections that follow, each of these is described in turn.

Deepening Comprehension

Every reader makes inferences from the literal words of the text and constructs a mental model of the situation or concepts that the text represents (Kintsch, 1988). However, readers vary in the depth and richness of the inferences that they draw, depending partly on prior knowledge and the depth of the understanding they are able to construct without special interpretive effort but, more crucially, on their purpose for reading and the stance they take toward the text. Literary reading requires the reader to draw more and richer inferences, even if that means they need to reread the text and reflect on what it says (Goldman et al., 2015).

This reasoning process is governed by a variety of conventions, which Rabinowitz (1998) classified under four major headings: (a) *rules of notice*, such as the idea that special attention should be paid to titles or the first or last sentences of paragraphs; (b) *rules of significance*, such as the idea that a shift in style implies a shift in perspective; (c) *rules of configuration*, such as the expectation that in a detective novel, justice will triumph in the end; and (d) *rules of coherence*, such as the expectation that the plot twists in a novel will make sense in the light of what has come before. For the most part, these conventions are unconscious and can be applied automatically by readers, but reflective readers will be able to invoke them to justify their inferences (Burkett, 2015).

Inferring the Author's Purpose

When writers choose a word with a negative instead of a positive connotation, make a blatantly false statement that they had to know that the reader would reject, or repeat the same word so many times that the repetition becomes an obvious pattern, the reader will assume that they did so for a reason and will try to infer what that reason was.

These kinds of inferences depend partly on recognizing specific elements in the text that have a conventional signaling function (Lemarié et al., 2008) but also on specific inferences about the relation between context and text content. For instance, Jonathan Swift's *A Modest Proposal* depends for its effect on the reader's recognition that Swift's proposal is neither modest nor serious. This kind of pragmatic interpretation happens in every form of communication, but literary readers can assume that every detail of the text reflects the writer's deliberate choice (Sell, 2014; Vipond & Hunt, 1984) and thus justifies close reading.

Considering Multiple Perspectives

Textual interpretation often requires the reader to distinguish multiple perspectives within the same text, such as the author, the implied reader, the narrator, and the protagonist (Booth, 2000). Literary effects often depend on tension between perspectives; for instance, Robert Browning's poem "My Last Duchess" depends for its effect on the difference in perspective between the audience and the speaker, which produces a sensation of gradual, unfolding horror (Adler, 1977). However, one of the effects of perspective taking is that the reader can learn to identify with people whose perspectives differ significantly from their own (Clarke & Whitney, 2009; Hoeken et al., 2016) and eliminate stereotypes about other cultural groups (Athanasios, 1998). It is particularly important for readers to draw inferences about how characters' values influence their perspectives (Thein, Beach et al., 2007).

Connecting Text to Context

Literary texts do not exist in a vacuum. They presuppose that their readers have prior knowledge about social arrangements, historical and scientific facts, religious and political beliefs, and many other subjects, and, often, biographical information about the author. Having rich prior knowledge makes it easier to understand a text (McNamara & Kintsch, 1996) and increases the likelihood that a reader will enter deeply into the world created by the text (Green, 2004). It also can have a significant impact on how a work will be interpreted and received; for instance, reactions to Ezra Pound's poetry have been significantly affected by his support for fascism during World War II (Nadel, 2010). It is thus common practice to investigate a text's historical milieu and gather biographical information about the author to inform further interpretation (Galda & Beach, 2001; Gillespie, 2010).

Generalizing and Applying Themes

Literary texts are relevant to life. This may take a simple form, such as identifying a moral or theme (Zwaan et al., 2002), or it may take a more complex form—an analogy to real life or an examination of issues that matter to the reader (Beach & Myers, 2001). This is one of the things readers are most likely to value about literature, and so effective instruction in literature tends to make connections between literature, students' lives, and the world outside school (Goldman et al., 2016; Langer, 2001). When literature addresses issues of identity and the place of the individual in society, it is particularly relevant to adolescent readers (Lee, 2016a).

Continuing the Conversation across Multiple Texts

No text stands alone, with no relation to previously encountered texts (Hartman, 1992). Sometimes a text will quote from another text or allude to it less directly. But other times, a literary text will reuse elements from earlier texts, even if it transforms them in the process. The way that a literary work may recall, echo, transform, or reply to earlier works is what Kristeva (1980) has termed *intertextuality*. For example, one way to interpret *West Side Story* is to consider how it both echoes and transforms *Romeo and Juliet* (Buhler, 2002), which, of course, was itself echoing and transforming the original myth of Pyramus and Thisbe. Focusing on intertextuality moves the focus of interpretation from the creativity of the author to the way in which both readers and authors draw on a multiplicity of texts to build meaning (Allen, 2011; Worton & Still, 1991). For example, when works form part of a series, or when characters from one work are reused in another, the reader may need to update their mental models (Donovan & Rapp, 2018). Intertextuality can play a role in the author's generation of ideas or in the reader's unconscious textual response, but it can also be created when two texts are linked in a literary argument or as part of a larger cultural discourse or dialog (Bloome et al., 2018).

Revisiting Interpretations: Ambiguity and Closure

As Figure 1 suggests, revisiting and considering multiple interpretations plays a central role in literary analysis. Literary reasoning thus constitutes a distinct kind of thinking with distinct epistemological properties. As Lee et al. (2016) argued, following Chinn et al. (2011), participation in literary interpretation entails specific assumptions about (a) epistemic aims and values (why people engage in literary interpretation and why they consider those goals important), (b) the structure of literary knowledge (what people need to learn when they engage in literary interpretation), (c) the sources and justifications of knowledge (what kinds of evidence people should look for while they are building literary interpretations and what kinds of arguments they should make based on that evidence), (d) epistemic virtues and vices (what predispositions and habits of mind will help or hinder literary reasoning), and (e) reliable and unreliable methods (what strategies can be counted on to yield useful knowledge). They argued that while literary theories differ on points of detail, several common themes emerge, yielding a specific form of epistemic cognition. As they see it, literary reasoning is concerned with understanding how literary texts communicate insights about the human experience; assumes complexity and ambiguity of meaning; builds interpretive arguments based on textual and contextual evidence; is open to multiple interpretations; and relies on careful, reflective reading and especially rereading to find the best interpretation(s) of a text.

These commitments are reflected in Figure 1, especially in the phase "Revisit Interpretations." To revisit interpretations is to be open to more than one interpretation. It entails a willingness to reread the text, reconsidering what every part of it means and evaluating the strength of arguments for and against multiple interpretations. Thus, following Lee et al. (2016), it seems reasonable to assume that skill in literary interpretation is associated with a specific set of epistemic commitments.

To measure these commitments, Yukhymenko-Lescroart et al. (2016) proposed and validated the Literature Epistemic Cognition Scale (LECS). This instrument focused on three major dimensions: Relevance to Life (the major epistemic aim of literary analysis), Openness to Multiple Meanings (a key epistemic virtue in literary analysis), and Multiple Readings (a reliable process for building interpretive knowledge about texts). Positive scores on these dimensions were significantly positively associated with measures of whether students liked to read; read often; and understood learning as a complex, gradual process.

Arguably, these commitments boil down to a willingness to revisit interpretations, rather than to stick with the interpretation that seems most plausible on first reading.

Discussing Responses to Text

The picture we have drawn so far presents literary reading and writing as a form of disciplinary literacy (Buehl, 2017; Moje, 2008; Shanahan & Shanahan, 2008) and thus as a specific set of literacy practices acquired through cognitive apprenticeship. But developing disciplinary literacy is not only a matter of reading and writing; it also builds on oral communication (Barnes, 1976), or, as Britton (1971) argued, “learning floats on a sea of talk.” Oral discussion appears to play a particularly important role in the development of literary interpretation skills. Group discussion creates a space in which readers can explore interpretive possibilities (Langer, 1991a). It can highlight what readers value in a text, while encouraging them to take a more critical stance (Lehman & Scharer, 1996). It also provides a context in which expert readers can model and scaffold appropriate interpretive practices (Miller, 2003). Thus, the act of reading and rereading a text, and considering multiple interpretations, is not a solitary activity. It is fundamentally embedded in a community of readers, whose disparate perspectives and responses to the text motivate the reader to consider and apply different interpretive strategies, in response to the existence of multiple perspectives and conflicting readings that individual readers might never have considered if they had not interacted with other readers about a common text.

Writing Responses to Text

Writing also plays a critical role in literary interpretation, even during the act of reading. Literary readers have long been encouraged to mark texts up as they read (Adler, 1940) and to take extensive notes reflecting their understanding and interpretation of text content (Blair, 2010). Typical annotation practices include underlining or highlighting key ideas and writing questions or comments in the margins. More extended forms of note taking include the creating response logs or notebooks. And as has already been made clear in the introduction, formal genres of writing about literature are central to expert practice (Fahnestock & Secor, 1991; Wilder, 2003) and are built on specific rhetorical patterns that support interpretive arguments (Camper, 2018). To a significant extent, learning how to participate in critical discourse is learning how to construct and frame literary arguments in written form. Developmentally, it seems likely that disciplinary modes of writing about literature develop later, and require greater expertise, than oral discussion. Communicating in writing implies an extended time span between publication and response, and interactions with a broader community, than students typically encounter among their peers.

Overall, Figure 1 suggests an understanding of literary reading and writing as a form of disciplinary reading that is built on multiple encounters with text, transacted alone (during the act of reading and taking notes), in groups (through oral discussion), and within a larger community of readers (through various forms of written communication, including book reviews and discussions in journals or online forums). Literary reading is distinctively concerned with generating and evaluating multiple interpretations and entails reading and rereading the same text for multiple purposes and from multiple perspectives.

Developmental Trends and Malleable Factors

There are two critical issues in the study of the development of literary reading skills: (a) understanding when students are ready to learn specific skills and (b) identifying specific educational practices that will help them achieve a higher level of performance. The sections that follow briefly review the current state of knowledge in the field.

Learning to Read for Specific Purposes and from Specific Perspectives

The way people read a text is strongly influenced by the standards of coherence they apply, which reflects their purpose for reading and specific task instructions (McCarthy & Goldman, 2015; van den Broek et al., 2011). Even during a single reading session, skilled readers may change their purpose for reading (Janssen et al., 2012), shifting among literal and various forms of interpretation.

There is little specific literature on developmental patterns in the flexibility with which students read literary texts, though a variety of developmental studies have suggested that the ability to reason about interpretations mostly develops during adolescence (Pillow, 2008). Similarly, although a variety of practitioners’ recommendations and case studies address the use of critical lenses in the classroom (Clarke & Whitney, 2009; Gillespie, 2010; McDaniel, 2004; Pace, 2006;

Thein, Beach et al., 2007; Troise, 2007; Wilson, 2014), very few studies give us a clear sense of how this kind of instruction interacts with student development.

Because most critical theories presuppose fairly sophisticated understandings of psychology, culture, social theory, linguistics, and semiotics, they may be easier to teach in secondary and postsecondary classrooms. Teaching a critical perspective can help students become aware of links between the worlds evoked by literature and social, economic, political, and cultural issues (Galda & Beach, 2001), though a focus on critical lenses can sometimes engender student resistance (Thein et al., 2011, 2012; Thomas et al., 2010). However, there is some evidence that explicit teaching of critical lenses can improve the quality of students' written arguments at the high school level (Zimanske, 2017).

The pattern of development we have just summarized is presented as a hypothesized learning progression in Table A1.

Developmental Patterns in Literary Reading

The Development of Literary Genre Knowledge

Knowledge of literary genres is an emergent phenomenon; it grows as children read a variety of texts (Donovan & Smolkin, 2006). As students gain sufficient exposure to texts within a specific genre, they begin to become aware of the typical features that define the genre, including organizational and stylistic patterns, common themes, and recurrent tropes (Kamberelis, 1999), and thus may then engage differently with a text, depending on its genre (Hanauer, 1998; Zwaan, 1994).

Developmental studies of literary genres have primarily focused on fiction and poetry, viewed broadly, and less on specific genres, such as literary nonfiction or fantasy novels, or particular forms, such as sonnets or ballads within poetry (though see Dixon & Bortolussi, 2009). Readers of fiction tend to focus more on plot and character, readers of lyric poetry, more on form and interpretation (McCarthy, 2013; Peskin, 1998). These trends are related to general developmental patterns in the way children read fiction and poetry.

Developmental Trends in Reading Fiction

Early (1960) proposed a three-stage model of how literary appreciation for fiction develops, in which readers move from unconscious enjoyment to self-conscious appreciation to conscious delight. In Early's view, reading for pleasure—immersive reading—emerges first. Interpretive reading emerges gradually as readers mature, become more self-consciously reflective, and develop greater willingness to put in the effort needed to read and appreciate literary texts. Similar ideas have been advanced in a variety of studies of literary reading during the school years, including Applebee (1978), Thomson (1987), Appleyard (1994), Witte (2009), and Witte et al. (2012). These studies have provided a general picture of how literary reading develops, in which epistemic cognition, inquiry strategies, knowledge of frameworks and text types, and control of language develop hand in hand. The picture they draw closely resembles developmental theories of aesthetic development in other domains (cf. Gardner & Gardner, 1990; Parsons, 1987).

In these studies, less advanced readers make fewer elaborative inferences when they read literary texts and focus almost exclusively on the text's literal content. In fiction, this focus on literal content corresponds to an emphasis on action and directly dramatized emotion and to a preference for texts that use everyday language and can easily be related to the students' immediate lived experience. As readers become more sophisticated and more familiar with different genres of writing, they start making more sophisticated inferences about characters' thoughts, beliefs, and actions, and they begin to develop an interest in texts that raise moral, psychological, and social issues and leave more of the interpretive work to the reader (Beach & Wendler, 1987). As their interpretive skills increase further, readers become more interested in the author's communicative intent. They become more comfortable with ambiguity, irony, and other complexities of presentation and content, and they are much more willing to read works that are distant from their own lived experience and written in difficult or inaccessible styles. And finally, as their literary repertoire expands, readers become much more concerned with understanding how texts build on the work of other authors and reflect the historical and social contexts in which they were written (see Table A2).

Of course, this is an ideal progression, and only a minority of students will reach its higher levels by 12th grade, if ever. Progress in literary reading is contingent on strong general reading skills, reading experiences that produce strong

motivation to read texts of increasing difficulty and sophistication, and an education that builds the necessary supporting skills. But they reflect an awareness that fiction is built around characters and plots, and in the early stages of growth in literary reading, that is what readers focus on.

Developmental Trends in Reading Poetry

Dias (1996) analyzed the literary responses of ninth- and 10th-grade students to poetry and identified four typical profiles of literary response: *paraphrasers*, who tended to a strictly literal interpretation of the poem and simply tried to restate the content in their own words; *thematizers*, who try to reduce a poem's meaning to a simply stated, general theme or moral; *allegorizers*, who tend to treat a poem as a statement about real-world meaning; and *problem solvers*, who try out multiple ways of interpreting the poem, considering textual evidence to accept or reject hypotheses about the best way to interpret the text. This work suggested that students' beliefs about what "interpreting" a poem means play a key role in the approach they take to interpreting a poem.

Peskin (2010) proposed a four-stage model of the development of genre knowledge about poetry (see Table A3 for a summary of this learning progression). In the first stage, the reader does not differentiate poetry from other kinds of texts and focuses on what the text says or implies about the world. In the second stage, the reader recognizes poetry as a distinct genre but has not yet developed a distinct interpretive approach toward reading a poem. In the third stage, the reader has begun to be sensitive to the formal devices used in poetry and uses them to build a specifically poetic interpretation of the text. In the fourth stage, the reader has fully internalized the interpretive conventions of poetry as a genre. Peskin examined developmental differences between fourth, eighth, and 12th graders in their interpretation of paired texts (poems and a prose presentation providing a paraphrase of the same content) and reached the following conclusions:

- Fourth graders were much less likely than eighth and 12th graders to explicitly categorize poems as poems, consistent with the prediction that fourth graders were much more likely to be at Stage 1.
- Fourth graders did not comment on typographic markers of poetry, such as line breaks and stanza divisions, again consistent with the prediction that fourth graders were much more likely to be at Stage 1. Both eighth and 12th graders showed awareness of the typographical features of poetry, consistent with them being at least at Stage 2, but there were significantly more comments about the format of poems at 12th grade.
- Twelfth graders showed greater sensitivity to such textual devices as repetition, alliteration, contrasts, juxtapositions, and metaphoric language than either fourth or eighth graders, suggesting that they were more likely to be at or above Stage 3.
- Twelfth graders showed significantly greater sensitivity than fourth or eighth graders to conventional expectations for poetry, such as the idea that a poem should make a point or that it will resist a simple, literal interpretation. Once again, this contrast suggested that 12th graders were more likely than fourth or eighth graders to be at or above Stage 3.

Peskin's results are consistent with those of some earlier studies, most notably Harker (1994), who observed that 10th graders mostly provided literal responses to poems, with little evidence of symbolic interpretation, and Svensson (1987), who found little evidence of symbolic interpretations of poems among 11- and 14-year-olds. Similar results were obtained by Pieper and Strutz (2018), who found significantly fewer explicitly metaphorical interpretations of a poem among ninth graders in a German school compared to 12th graders.

Peskin and Wells-Jopling (2012) suggested that these developmental trends may be related either to developmental limitations or to the lack of focused, explicit instruction in the genre norms for poetry. They examined the effects of explicit instruction on symbolic interpretation of poetry in sixth, ninth, and 12th grades and found that instruction had a significant impact on students' symbolic interpretations of poetry at all three grade levels, without a negative impact on their enjoyment of the poems. In their pretest data, most sixth graders produced a literal interpretation, and most 12th graders produced a symbolic interpretation of the poems they read. But after instruction, the proportion of symbolic interpretations increased significantly in all three grades, suggesting that all students in Peskin and Wells-Jopling's study were capable of learning how to interpret poems symbolically.

Changes in Attitudes toward Literary Reading

Attitudes toward literary reading are closely linked to student attitudes toward reading in general. Students who do not enjoy reading, or who are unable to handle the challenges of reading a literary text, are unlikely to become confident literary readers. However, most developmental studies of reading attitudes have been framed in very general terms, at most distinguishing reader attitudes along a few major dimensions, such as digital versus print and academic reading versus reading for pleasure (Conradi et al., 2013) or vocational, academic, and pleasure reading (Moore & Lemons, 1982). This literature has suggested that attitudes toward reading and reading achievement tend to become more negative over time (McKenna et al., 1995) and also tend to become more and more tightly coupled, so that low reading achievement and negative attitudes toward reading reinforce one another (Kush et al., 2005; Martinez et al., 2008). However, there does not appear to be enough research to support hypothesized learning progressions in this area; at best, the empirical results suggest that student interest in reading can only be maintained if the curriculum and teacher practices effectively communicate the value of literary reading.

Van Schooten and de Gloppe (2006) conducted a detailed analysis of how Dutch students' attitudes and beliefs about literary reading changed between seventh and 12th grades. In their data, students in earlier grades had consistently higher scores on the Leisure/Escape, Empathy, Concern With Author, and Trance dimensions of the LRQ and more positive attitudes on the Rejection of Literary Values dimension compared to students in earlier grades. Various factors appeared to mitigate this shift toward more negative attitudes toward literary reading. This downshift was strongest for male students, for students from home environments where little leisure reading occurred, and for students with weaker academic records or smaller vocabularies. However, some teaching variables also affected changes in student attitudes. Interest in reading literature remained stronger if students received more frequent literature instruction, especially literature instruction that provided frequent opportunities to read high-quality literature. Instruction in the history of literature also had generally positive effects. On the other hand, structural analysis—roughly speaking, instruction in close reading techniques—seemed to benefit students' attitudes toward reading from 10th grade onward but appeared to have a negative impact on student attitudes between seventh and ninth grades.

Van Schooten and de Gloppe's (2006) results were for a Dutch sample and so do not generalize directly to U.S. schools. However, the LRQ has been validated in multiple languages, and literature instruction in European languages like English and Dutch generally draws on similar approaches and pedagogies. As a result, there may be implications for ELA instruction in the United States. ELA instruction needs to build and maintain students' interest in immersive reading, while building the skills and interests that will enable them to participate in close reading practices. But recent educational reforms, including the CCSS, have led U.S. schools to emphasize explicit instruction in close reading from the fourth grade onward. If van Schooten and de Gloppe's results generalize to U.S. schools, this policy may have a negative impact on student attitudes toward interpretive reading. At the very least, their results suggest the importance of determining what kind of interpretive reading instruction is developmentally appropriate before the high school grades, especially since getting students to do large amounts of reading is at least as important as teaching them to read individual texts in detail (McConn, 2016).

Mastering Multiple Inquiry Strategies

As we have seen, literary reading requires the reader to elaborate richer mental models of text content than most readers construct automatically the first time they read a text. Literary reading thus requires the development of more reflective, deliberative approaches to reading. We previously identified six classes of inquiry strategies that support literary reading. These strategies present fundamentally different developmental challenges, but all of them require deeper forms of comprehension supported by various forms of elaborative inference.

Deeper reading comprehension emerges when readers make more inferences to build a richer mental model of the situation described by the text (Cain & Oakhill, 1999; Kintsch, 1994). This is as true for literary reading as it is for any other form of reading (Goldman et al., 2015). Readers tend automatically to make the minimal set of inferences they need to yield a coherent interpretation that satisfies the standard of coherence they have adopted (Cook & O'Brien, 2017; van den Broek et al., 2001) and to make additional, elaborative inferences mostly when they are required by the specific reading task they are undertaking (Graesser et al., 1994; Graesser et al., 2017). The number and richness of elaborative inferences that readers make increase steadily as students mature (Casteel & Simpson, 1991). Young children make most

of their inferences from easily accessible information, but as readers mature, they become better at drawing inferences from all the knowledge available to them (Barnes et al., 1996), and they are more likely to modify inferences they have already made in the presence of new information (Ackerman, 1988). All of this is true when people read literature, even if they are taking a literal rather than an interpretive stance (Goldman et al., 2015; Langer, 1995).

Inference-making behavior in children follows a clear developmental pattern. As van den Broek (1997) observed, younger children (around ages 4–6 years) tend to produce inferences about concrete entities and events. Their inferences tend to be very local, focusing on events that happen close together in space and time, typically within the same episode in a narrative. In later childhood, between around 8 and 11 years of age, children become better at making spontaneous inferences about abstract states (including people's goals and motivations) and are more likely to make connections that connect more distantly separated entities and events, that is, across episodes in a narrative. However, until adolescence, children have difficulty linking events into hierarchical structures or generating story themes or other abstract, global inferences (van den Broek, 1997).

However, children can draw richer inferences if they are prompted to do so and are provided appropriate scaffolding or support. For example, students generate elaborative inferences when they are asked to explain story events to themselves (Chi et al., 1994; Duffy et al., 1987; Paris et al., 1977), are asked focused questions (van den Broek et al., 2001), or are trained to use self-questioning strategies (Janssen, 2002; Joseph et al., 2016; McGee & Johnson, 2003; Yuill & Oakhill, 1988). This is important for literary reading because students who make more and deeper inferences, and who thereby elaborate their understanding of the text, are also more likely to generate interpretive inferences (Burkett & Goldman, 2016). Koek et al. (2019) examined differences between two groups of 15-year-olds: a group that had shown growth in literary interpretation ability versus a group that had not. They found that students who showed growth specifically showed an increase in their propensity to question the first interpretation that occurred to them, to delay closure (settling on a specific interpretation as the correct one), and to engage in explicit interpretive reasoning. They argued that these shifts reflect increases in the ability to inhibit automated interpretive processes and formally reason about alternative interpretations.

As a result, there is a close connection between strategies that increase reading comprehension and practices that support close reading. There are a variety of effective reading comprehension strategies (Block & Duffy, 2008; Duke & Pearson, 2009), including (a) predicting how a text is likely to proceed, (b) monitoring comprehension and taking active steps to repair comprehension when it appears to be breaking down, (c) asking questions when the text is unclear and rereading the text to answer them as needed, (d) actively visualizing information as it is presented, (e) reflecting on what the text says and looking for ways to connect it to what one already knows, (f) identifying important ideas and summarizing what the text says in one's own words, and (g) evaluating the ideas presented in the text and trying to synthesize new ideas from them. Recommendations for close reading practices include (Cleaver, 2015; Fisher & Frey, 2014; Frey & Fisher, 2013) the following: (a) reading in multiple passes, with a different purpose or focus for each pass; (b) annotating the text or writing journal entries to identify points of confusion, to identify questions that need to be answered, or to formulate connections between ideas; (c) asking text-dependent questions that cue the reader to identify important ideas, summarize what the text says, evaluate its conclusions, and make connections with what one already knows; and (d) writing summaries and other responses to the text, including text-based arguments.

While close reading comprises more than this, these commonalities highlight the extent to which interpretive reading builds on a foundation of careful, reflective reading practices that are likely to enrich comprehension for informational as much as for literary texts (Alexander et al., 1998). These strategic reading practices depend, in turn, on metacognitive awareness of the reading process, such as the ability to monitor comprehension and detect errors and inconsistencies in the text (Paris et al., 1983; Paris et al., 2016), and the development of self-regulation skills (Flavell, 1979; Zimmerman, 2002).

Metacognitive reading skills appear to develop in stages. Metacognitive knowledge about reading appears to develop relatively early, in the early elementary years, but students' ability to apply metacognitive and self-regulatory strategies is quite limited throughout the elementary grades (Paris et al., 2016). During later childhood, children become more aware of text structure and begin to develop sensitivity to reading goals and strategies (Myers & Paris, 1978), though sensitivity to reading goals seems to mature earlier than control over reading strategies (Pazzaglia et al., 1999), and some forms of strategic thinking (e.g., planning) show strong growth during this period, whereas others (e.g., monitoring and self-evaluation) remain relatively weak (Veenman et al., 2006; Winograd & Johnston, 1982). Fourth and even sixth graders often entirely fail to detect blatant inconsistencies in a text (Baker, 1984; Garner & Taylor, 1982). Complex self-regulation

strategies that depend on accurate comprehension monitoring and error detection typically develop most strongly during adolescence (middle or high school; Baker, 2005), when readers become much more efficient at using metacognitive skills to correct failures in automated reading processes (Walczyk, 1994; Walczyk et al., 2007).

Close Reading and the Development of Metalinguistic Awareness

To perform close reading, readers need to be sensitive to, and explicitly aware of, a variety of linguistic features of the text, and if they are to communicate about them effectively, they need to have a metalanguage that allows them to identify and explain the text features that play a key role in their analysis (Fang & Pace, 2013; Fang & Schleppegrell, 2010; Myhill & Watson, 2017). But these abilities do not emerge quickly, nor do they emerge without support. While children display some metacognitive abilities at an early age (Geurten & Willems, 2016), metalinguistic skills mostly emerge after students have learned to read and write and are participating in academic activities that require them to analyze and discuss their own writing and texts written by others (Camps et al., 2000; Gombert & Gombert, 1992; Myhill & Watson, 2017; Olson, 2009). High levels of achievement in reading comprehension (Baker & Brown, 2002) and writing achievement (Hacker, 2018) depend critically on metacognitive and metalinguistic control and monitoring processes.

Developmental studies have suggested that students increase steadily in their sensitivity to metalinguistic information after they enter school. For instance, Edwards and Kirkpatrick (1999) found that students increase steadily in the accuracy and speed with which they detect errors in a text, with the largest increase in speed and accuracy happening between 7 and 8 years of age. Similarly, Hacker (1997) observed a steady increase in students' ability to detect errors during comprehension monitoring between seventh, ninth, and 11th grades, though much of that increase was concentrated among the stronger students. In a broader set of studies of metacognitive awareness, Veenman and colleagues observed similar trends and were able to show that metacognitive awareness is a separate factor from general intelligence (van der Stel & Veenman, 2010; Veenman et al., 2004; Veenman et al., 2006; Veenman & Spaans, 2005).

Control of linguistic metalanguage develops alongside other aspects of academic language. As students move through school, they shift from a primarily oral to a more academic form of the language that provides rich resources with which to express abstraction, interpretation, and evaluation (Schleppegrell & Christie, 2018). Much of this growth happens naturally, as students and teachers attempt more and more complex literacy tasks, but explicit instruction in domain-appropriate metalanguage also improves student performance, including in ELA (Moore & Schleppegrell, 2014). There also appears to be a natural synergy among school tasks. In particular, interpretive writing tasks appear to have a particularly strong impact on metalinguistic awareness and reading comprehension, though summary writing and creative writing tasks also have significant positive effects (Graham & Hebert, 2010).

Some aspects of metalinguistic awareness appear to develop earlier or more easily than others. Metapragmatic and metatextual awareness are relatively slow to develop; metasyntactic awareness seems to be particularly fragile and unlikely to develop without explicit instruction (Gombert & Gombert, 1992; Myhill, 2011).

While traditional grammar instruction does not always have a positive effect on reading comprehension or writing quality (Graham & Perin, 2007; O'Donnell, 1962), there are consistently positive effects when students are taught metalinguistic and especially grammatical concepts in an applied context where metalinguistic concepts are immediately applied to support meaningful activities in the classroom (Achugar et al., 2007; Myhill et al., 2012; Myhill & Watson, 2017). In particular, there is reason to believe that contextualized grammatical analysis can help readers understand the author's choices (Ehrenworth & Vinton, 2005; Kolln & Gray, 2007; Zuidema, 2012). Contextualized grammar instruction can actually improve students' writing (Jones et al., 2013) and, presumably, their awareness of the language choices made by other writers in the texts they read.

Overall, the developmental literature has suggested that students' metalinguistic awareness and control over academic metalanguage should be important targets for instruction (as, in fact, they are in the CCSS and other educational standards documents). However, the literature has also suggested that the linguistic analysis skills that are critical to close reading of literary texts are not always well supported in current instructional practice (Wilson & Myhill, 2012).

For the most part, metalinguistic skills are general capabilities that can be applied either to literary or informational texts and as such have already been reviewed extensively in previous work. First versions of many of the relevant learning progressions were formerly published on the 2011 wiki of the CBAL[®] learning and assessment tool.³ Revised versions of many of the progressions have since been published in other CBAL reports, most notably O'Reilly et al. (2015) on Building and Sharing Knowledge and Sparks and Deane et al. (2015) on Conducting Research and Inquiry. The following

progressions identify aspects of metalinguistic knowledge and of metacognitive knowledge about texts that can play a crucial role in close reading practices: from O'Reilly et al. (2015), genre differentiation, print cue sensitivity, word associations, knowledge-based inference, discourse fluency and control, multiple meanings, and sentence context; from Sparks and Deane et al. (2015), asking guiding questions; reconciling perspectives; comparing, contrasting, and organizing; and citing and using sources. In addition, the following learning progressions from the 2011 wiki that were not revised in previous publications are relevant: stance-taking and grammatical analysis. These are reproduced in Tables A4 and A5.

Stance-taking strategies are strategies for controlling the social impression created by one's texts or other communicative acts. As such, they support the ability to control voice and tone and enable the writer to make decisions about content and style that are informed by the impression that the writer wants to make on the audience. The hypothesized development of these skills is presented in Table A4. Stance-taking strategies can be wholly unconscious, reflecting the specific persona that a writer naturally projects, but at higher levels of skill, the development of skills for reading between the lines creates a conscious awareness of the ways in which the details of the text inform the reader's perception of the author. This awareness, in turn, supports strategies for manipulating how the author is perceived by consciously selecting specific styles, words, arguments, or other elements of the text and is therefore relevant to Reading Standards 4 and 6. On this progression, interpretive reading begins to come into play when students begin to transition from Level 2 to Level 3.

Grammatical analysis strategies are strategies for separating the formal properties of language from the use of language to communicate. This separation makes it possible to create metalinguistic representations of words, phrases, and sentences; to communicate about them clearly and precisely with other people; and to reason more effectively about how the wording of a sentence affects the meaning it communicates. Viewed in this light, learning grammar (such as parts of speech and sentence diagramming) is designed to create richer mental representations of the text, enabling the reader to pinpoint ambiguities, dysfluencies, and other infelicities; enabling the reviewer to identify what needs to be fixed to make a text clearer and easier to read; and enabling the writer to understand what sorts of modifications will eliminate ambiguities, communicate the meaning more succinctly, or achieve other desirable effects. The hypothesized development of these skills is presented in Table A5.

This use of grammar as a metalanguage for editing and verbal expression should be distinguished from the prescriptive application of grammatical rules to guarantee that a text will be in Standard English. However, many grammatical rules are motivated by editorial concerns, because sentences that violate the rules are often unclear or confusing. This ability corresponds in part to Language Standard 1 from the CCSS, though it may also be recruited to reason about textual interpretation, using the grammatical choices of the author to deepen comprehension and infer communicative intent, which is the application of concern in this context.

Learning how to Infer the Author's Purpose

Literature is an act of communication, and so to interpret a text is to recover the author's communicative intent. Literary interpretation cannot be reduced to this paradigm, but interpretation must consider and respond to the author's purpose (Tierney, 1983; Vipond & Hunt, 1984). By default, the reader must interpret the text in the light of norms for cooperative communication (Grice, 1975), assuming the author's choices make sense in terms of those norms. When they do not, the reader will apply pragmatic principles to infer what the author really intended to communicate (Mey, 2001).

Similarly, if a character in a literary text violates social norms, it is reasonable to assume that the author intended the reader to notice and react to the violation (Beach, 2005). In a nonliterary text, this task is normally straightforward, because the author's purpose is directly aligned with the purpose and organizing principles of its genre. But in a literary text, the inference from text to author's communicative intent is typically indirect. In many circumstances, the words in the text (or, to be precise, the textual choices that the text presents) provide the only information the reader has about the author's intent. Viewed in this light, Rabinowitz's (1998) rules of notice, signification, configuration, and coherence define the kinds of moves a reader must make to reconstruct implicit authorial intent from textual choices. This is the core of close reading, and, as such, its development depends on students noticing the right things in a literary text and then making the right interpretive moves in response.

Though there are a plethora of recommendations about how close reading should be taught (Beers & Probst, 2013; Fisher & Frey, 2011), relatively few empirical studies have provided a detailed picture of how literary close reading skills develop. There is evidence that students can take an interpretive stance when the task encourages them to do so (Burkett, 2015; McCarthy & Goldman, 2015). Applebee (1978) and Galda (1990) are among the few developmental studies

available. Applebee (1978) argued that students' evaluative responses progress through a categorical stage where texts are classified into groups using labels like "adventurous" or "exciting," to an analytic stage that focuses on how the text works, ending with a generalizing stage where the reader is more concerned with how the text relates to life. In Applebee's study, the evaluative responses of 9-year-olds were typically evaluative, while those of 13-year-olds were more analytic. Galda (1990) examined the evaluative responses of students in group discussions of literature from fourth to ninth grades using Applebee's (1978) categories and basically replicated Applebee's results. In fourth grade, all evaluations were categorical. By sixth grade (for realistic fiction) and seventh grade (for fantasy fiction), a majority of evaluations were analytic. By ninth grade, there were no categorical responses; 80% of responses were analytic, and 20% were generalizing. Many (1991) obtained similar results. In Many's data, 59% of fourth-grade students' written responses to literature were strictly literal, whereas only 25% of eighth-grade students' responses were strictly literal. The nature of interpretive responses also shifts as students mature. Beach and Wendler (1987) reported a significant shift in responses to stories among eighth-grade, 11th-grade, and first- and fourth-year college students, from a focus on surface feelings and behaviors to inferred perceptions and social/psychological meanings.

However, attempting an interpretive stance and doing so skillfully are two different things. Rabold (2019) provided an instructive case study. In Rabold's data, high school literature students often noticed an interpretive problem but made inappropriate moves in response to it, reflecting a lack of familiarity with the typical topoi of literary argument. For example, some students reacted to an interpretive problem by claiming that the text did not make sense. Others noticed literary features, yet only offered literal interpretations of the text content. Still others drew on a limited stock of clichés and tried to match the text to a cliché that seemed to fit what they thought the text was trying to say or provided a moral, a "lesson in life," that fitted with the literary work's literal content or tried to connect the work with religious themes and symbols, in the absence of cues that would support such an interpretation.

However, even relatively young students can improve their ability to "read like a writer" and learn how to make inferences about the author's purpose if they have experience producing their own writing, because that process improves their ability to mentally model the decisions that writers made to produce a text (Griffith, 2010; Pearson & Tierney, 1984). Even stronger evidence indicates that high school and college students can learn to attend to significant details in the text and make appropriate interpretive moves as long as appropriate instructional strategies are used. For instance, Levine and Horton (2015) examined an affect-based strategy that taught high school students to evaluate and comment on aspects of a literary text that evoked emotional responses. The result was that students paid more attention to the parts of the literary text that were salient to experts and offered more interpretive comments about character, symbolism, and emotion, though it did not lead them to explicitly reference rules of notice (textual choices made by the author). Similarly, Lewis and Ferretti (2011) taught such literary topoi as ubiquity and paradox explicitly to high school students, as part of instruction in how to write literary arguments, and observed an increase in interpretive moves that referenced textual details based on the targeted topoi. McCarthy and Goldman (2017) provided explicit instruction targeting both rules of notice and rules of signification and found that the students who were instructed in both produced the largest number of interpretive inferences in their essays about literature. At the college level, Wilder and Wolfe (2009) taught literary topoi to students in a course designed for students entering the English major and found that it resulted in higher quality student papers with stronger arguments and much more explicit use of discipline-appropriate literary arguments. There was a much higher frequency of the targeted topoi in the experimental condition than in a control group who were taught to write about literature using more traditional methods.

The developmental patterns reviewed in the foregoing paragraphs are consistent with the hypothesized developmental progression *Reading Between the Lines*, previously published in Educational Testing Service (ETS, 2012) and reproduced as Table A6, and with the learning progression *Rhetorical Analysis*, also previously published in ETS (2012) and reproduced as Table A7.

Learning to Consider Multiple Perspectives

Perspective and point of view are central to literary reading (Oatley, 2011). Readers must consider how their perspectives are the same or different from the author's, and they must distinguish author's and reader's perspectives from those associated with the narrator or with specific characters represented in the text. In literary texts, the relation between perspectives can often be quite complex. Authors do not always mean what they write. They leave it up to the reader to realize that they are writing ironically, metaphorically, hyperbolically, or humorously. Narrators can be unreliable; characters can be

deceptive or self-deceived or can represent perspectives with which the author or the reader vehemently disagrees. The text may even invite the reader to take multiple perspectives that yield conflicting interpretations that must somehow be held in tension (Booth, 1974, 2000). These effects depend on readers achieving what the literature calls *advanced theory of mind* (Baron-Cohen, 2001; Sodian & Kristen, 2016), which develops in later childhood and only fully emerges during adolescence (Dumontheil et al., 2010).

The development of theory of mind and perspective taking have been reviewed in depth in a companion publication (Deane et al., 2019). The general developmental trends can be described as follows (Deane et al., 2019, pp. 71–72):

- Up until about fourth grade, children typically have difficulty switching between perspectives and may interpret situations literally, with limited sensitivity to ambiguity or indirect forms of communication.
- Between fifth and eighth grades, children develop perspective-taking abilities, become much more fluent at interpreting nonliteral language, and become much more sensitive to nuances of meaning, but the cognitive costs of perspective taking mean that they are still likely to default to an egocentric perspective.
- Between ninth and 12th grades, adolescents approximate adult levels of perspective taking and achieve adult-like theory of mind abilities.

Strategies for recognizing irony and other forms of indirect communication are critical literary interpretation skills (Booth, 1974). Given the centrality of nonliteral language to literary reading, it seems likely that the maturation of theory of mind and perspective-taking abilities is a necessary prerequisite to the acquisition of sophisticated literary analysis techniques. However, relatively little literature has specifically examined how students learn to apply perspective-taking skills to the task of literary interpretation. Lee (1993, 1995) presented a case study that focused on an oral communication practice that she termed *signifying*, which is common in African American communities. Lee presented a method for using signifying practices to scaffold this kind of literary interpretation in school. This method models how to notice details that do not make sense if taken literally and uses them to build a nonliteral interpretation (Lee, 2001). Lee's work is important because it highlights the fact that perspective taking and indirect communication show up in a wide range of cultural practices that might not be viewed as literary but that can be used to scaffold literary interpretation skills.

Of course, perspective taking requires readers to let go of their own perspectives and adopt perspectives that they may find threatening, unfamiliar, or uncomfortable (Beach, 1997a). This is an important issue in literary interpretation, because it will affect the ease with which many readers engage in complex forms of literature, where a diversity of perspectives plays a critical role.

Learning progressions for perspective taking are proposed in Deane et al. (2019; table A4), along with several other learning progressions specifically designed to characterize the ways in which the development of theory of mind and social/emotional understanding affects the development of students' ability to interpret and create narratives.

Learning to Take Context into Account

Reading comprehension depends on knowledge of the world. The inferences needed to understand a text are, to a large extent, knowledge based and can only be drawn if the student possesses a large stock of relevant prior knowledge (Graesser et al., 1994; Kintsch, 1988), which constrains the inferences they can easily draw (Kendeou et al., 2003). Students with deeper knowledge develop richer, more coherent mental models of text content (McNamara & Kintsch, 1996), and if students lack critical prior knowledge, they may be unable to learn from a text at all (O'Reilly et al., 2019). It also matters how well people know the knowledge they need to access; people appear to be more likely to draw elaborative inferences if the knowledge they need is highly accessible (Barnes et al., 1996).

The background knowledge that students may bring to bear on a text includes historical knowledge about the context in which a work was written and cultural knowledge about the setting in which a story is placed (Beach, 1995), which can be particularly important when students are reading multicultural literature set in societies very different from their own (Beach et al., 2003; Steffensen et al., 1979). Experts at literary analysis habitually seek rich cultural and historical background for a text and interpret details of the text in the light of that background (Rainey, 2017), practices that may also significantly enrich students' ability to interpret literary texts (Li, 2015). This approach to interpretation is also characteristic of the thinking of historical experts (Wineburg, 1991, 1998) and plays a role in early models of multiple text comprehension and source use (Perfetti et al., 1995) based to a large extent on learning processes in history.

While recommendations for literature instruction emphasize the importance of historical and cultural context (Brooks & Browne, 2012; Montgomery et al., 2007), there is little evidence that students learn to conduct such investigations without prompting and support. In fact, in Witte et al.'s (2012) analysis of levels of text difficulty and corresponding stages in development of literary appreciation, only the last two of their six stages are characterized by attention to historical, cultural, or other kinds of contextual information about literary texts. Only advanced students in the final grades of high school are likely to reach Level 5 or 6 on their scale. Readers at these levels are expected to be comfortable reading complex modern and classic literary texts, even when the texts use unfamiliar languages or styles and address situations far outside their own cultural context.

Learning how to Generalize and Apply Themes

Literature conveys meaningful insights about life. The insights that can be derived from literature vary along several dimensions. Literary texts can provide exemplars or reference points against which social situations or experiences can be judged. A poem may perfectly capture a feeling or mood. A story may perfectly capture a character type, an ideal, a pattern of social conflict or development, or a recurring theme or problem with which readers must often grapple. Concrete situations described by a literary text may be interpreted as symbols or metaphors and applied to situations that appear, on the surface, to be quite different. Making such connections depends critically on the ability to see analogies, recognize metaphorical patterns, and treat concrete exemplars as symbols or instances of abstract ideas (Hofstadter & Sander, 2013).

Children appear to undergo a “relational shift” in their analogical reasoning strategies. Younger children tend to focus on surface features in their judgments of similarity and analogy; older children and adults are more likely to use relational features (Gentner & Rattermann, 1991; Rattermann & Gentner, 1998). This shift may be associated with a gradual increase in relational knowledge about specific domains (Goswami, 2013) and an increase in executive function that provides more flexible, selective attention to relevant features that control perception of similarity (Morrison et al., 2011; Richland et al., 2006). Comprehension of metaphoric language also involves a mapping between concepts based on relational similarities (Gentner et al., 2001) and follows a similar developmental trajectory. The comprehension of metaphor steadily increases during childhood. Children between ages 3 and 7 years are the most likely to interpret metaphoric language literally; after about 11 years of age, children are generally able not only to derive appropriate metaphoric interpretations but to explain them verbally (Rundblad & Annaz, 2010). Finally, during adolescence, the ability to understand and explain metaphors strengthens rapidly, possibly due to maturation of executive function (Carriedo et al., 2016).

However, it is one thing to possess analogical reasoning abilities; it is quite another to apply them effectively to literature. Compared to experts, novices, even high school or college students, tend to focus on literal meaning. They seldom offer spontaneous interpretive inferences when they are reading texts with clear thematic or symbolic interpretations (Graves & Frederiksen, 1991; Zeitz, 1994), even though they may be capable of providing such interpretations when cued (Sosa et al., 2016). That is true even for poetry, where symbolic interpretation is most salient. Regardless of age, K–12 students tend to focus on literal meaning and paraphrase and offer relatively few symbolic interpretations of poems (Harker, 1994; Peskin, 2010). In fact, in one study (Svensson, 1987), only 8% of 11-year-olds, 18% of 14-year-olds, and 42% of 18-year-olds provided symbolic interpretations in their responses to poetry. Effective instruction in literary reading must therefore encourage students to make judgments about characters and themes and recognize interpretive issues in texts, including symbolism (Lee, 2016b).

A specific learning progression for thematic understanding was proposed by Deane et al. (2019, appendix C), expanding on more general learning progressions for comparing and contrasting texts and appropriating information from sources, proposed in ETS (2012) and O'Reilly et al. (2015). Because these progressions are readily available from other ETS research reports, they are not presented here.

Learning to Read One Text in the Light of another

Readers tacitly interpret new texts in the light of their previous reading experience. These tacit links may be generic, capturing readers' experiences with reading texts of a specific type, but they can also be specific, reflecting ways in which a text stands out as different from other similar texts or reminding them of salient features of some specific work (Beach et al., 1994; Wilkie-Stibbs, 2006). As a result, children's ability to match books with salient similarities, such as salient thematic elements, is strongly associated with the amount of literature to which they have been exposed (Lehr, 1988) and

also to overall ability and the specificity of their memory for text content (Beach et al., 1994). This implies that students may fail to recognize significant intertextual connections due to a lack of sufficient background reading (Roberts, 1969).

When students write stories of their own, they tend to use texts they have read as models (Lancia, 1997; Pantaleo, 2006) and are generally well aware of how their writing relates to works they have read (Cairney, 1990). When prompted to link to a text they have just read or to other texts they remember, they are capable of doing so (Hartman, 1995; Lenski, 2001), and they spontaneously reference intertextual connections during group discussions of literature (Many, 1996), though often at a literal level focusing primarily on such elements as character and plot (McKay, 2006). However, when students attempt to interpret literary texts, they seldom focus on intertextual connections. In one study (Rogers, 1991), fewer than 1% of ninth-grade students commented about intertextual connections in their responses to literary works. Allusions or other strong intertextual connections can cause deep changes in the way a reader interprets a text, but that only appears to happen when the reader's mental schema for the other text is rich and detailed (Beach et al., 1994; Panagiotidou, 2012).

Making intertextual connections can have considerable power as an interpretive strategy, but it requires either deep prior knowledge or a commitment to systematically building analogical mappings between texts, leading to what Perfetti et al. (1995) would term a *document model* that represents both text content and intertextual relationships. This may be why curricular recommendations often suggest that texts should be taught in related groups, arranged to support analysis of themes, issues, or particular cultural conversations (Applebee, 2008; Beach & Myers, 2001; Clarke & Whitney, 2009; Gilles et al., 1994; Hartman & Hartman, 1993; Hartman & Hartman, 1994; Kettel & Douglas, 2003).

Presumably, the ability to make intertextual connections is strongly dependent on building up representations of a wide variety of (potentially canonical) texts in memory, which can be used as the starting point for intertextual reasoning. This kind of knowledge is highly context dependent and likely to interact strongly with other abilities, such as the ability to extract themes, and as such is difficult to model in terms of learning progressions, especially because little information about developmental trends in intertextual knowledge appears to be available. We therefore do not propose specific learning progressions for intertextual knowledge. However, this gap only underlines the importance of intertextual reasoning as a strategy, though one that may only be available to readers who have already acquired a rich reading experience.

Developing an Interpretive Mind-Set

Available information about student attitudes toward literary reading strongly suggests that only a minority of students internalize the norms of literary epistemic cognition before they leave secondary education. This is certainly implied by the developmental patterns in literary reading that have already been reviewed.

Lee (2016a) conducted a longitudinal study using the LECS (Yukhymenko-Lescroart et al., 2016). In this study, curricular units developed by Project READI were implemented at an urban U.S. high school. Significant pre- to post- increases were observed on the Multiple Meaning and Relevance to Life subscales but not on the Multiple Readings dimension, suggesting that at least two of the three dimensions of the LECS were sensitive to instruction. However, in the absence of other, explicitly developmental studies, it is not yet clear when and under what conditions students are likely to develop an interpretive mind-set. Presumably, this development is strongly related to students' exposure to interpretive practices, including interpretive oral discussion and interpretive writing tasks. Here, as with the development of intertextual knowledge, it is difficult to propose specific developmental hypotheses, despite the importance of interpretive thinking as a core literary analysis skill.

Mastering Interpretive Discussion

Studies of reader response patterns (Rosenblatt, 1978, 1994) have focused on the value of student discussion groups as a grounded mechanism for forming an "interpretive community" (Fish, 1980) that engages students in building and justifying interpretations of text (Workman, 2018). One of the most common forms this takes is the literature circle (Eeds & Wells, 1989), where students are encouraged to participate in interpretive small-group literature discussions during class time (Daniels, 1994; McMahon & Goatley, 1995). Participation in literature circles can have a significant positive effect on academic performance (Blum et al., 2002; Sweigart, 1991). Overall, student-led discussions of literature appear to produce positive effects on students' ability to interpret literature, regardless of age (Alvermann et al., 1996; Applebee et al., 2003; Dalkou & Frydaki, 2016; Moss, 2002).

Peer discussion has several benefits. In a peer-led group, students are more likely to encounter disagreements about how a text should be interpreted and are more likely to try to resolve them (Almasi, 1995). This dynamic tends to transform group discussions into explorations of a space of interpretive possibilities (Langer, 1991a). In addition, student-led discussions maximize agency and participation (Chinn et al., 2001), which encourages substantive engagement with the content being discussed (Nystrand & Gamoran, 1991). Group discussion also provides opportunities for the teacher or more advanced students to model appropriate practice (Hall, 2016; Many, 2002). These benefits often extend to students from otherwise low-performing groups, since the small-group discussion format helps keep students engaged and allows weaker students to benefit from the knowledge and expertise of stronger students (Reninger, 2007).

However, high-quality student discussion is not guaranteed. The quality of discussion can be reduced if students have weak reading skills or have not yet mastered effective inquiry strategies. Younger and less advanced students are less likely to offer genuinely interpretive comments or to ask deep, open-ended questions and are less likely to expand on and elaborate a topic (Almasi et al., 2001; Workman, 2018). Classroom social dynamics can also affect the quality of student discussions. When students position themselves in ways that reflect their cultural and social identities, differences in cultural norms, gender and race stereotypes, and other factors can make discussion less productive. Many of these factors reduce student participation or relegate disadvantaged students to more passive roles in the discussion (Andringa, 1991; Lewis, 1997, 2001; McMahon & Goatley, 1995). Finally, when teachers take too prominent a role in discussion, whether by intervening in peer group discussions or leading whole-class discussions, there is a danger that the discussion will be reduced to a recitation-like format in which only the teacher is able to question or challenge the other students (Marshall, 1989, 1995; Nystrand et al., 2003).

To overcome these challenges, teachers may need to train their students to engage in best practices for literary discussion (Applebee et al., 2000; Maloch, 2002). These practices include the following.

Open-Ended Questioning

Discussions are richer and more likely to encourage interpretive talk when teachers ask open-ended questions and train students to generate and ask open-ended questions of their own (Langer, 1992a; Lenski, 2001; Meyers, 2002; Nystrand & Gamoran, 1991; Santori & Belfatti, 2017). However, the questions need to be well designed (Beck et al., 1996; Liang et al., 2010) and focused on deeper interpretive issues, such as the author's communicative intent (McKeown et al., 1993).

This means that teachers need to model appropriate questioning practices (Duke & Pearson, 2009; Hynds, 1992) and provide explicit instruction to make sure that all students will be able to frame deeper questions (Hamel & Smith, 1998; Hanauer, 1999; Janssen, 2002; Janssen et al., 2009). In terms of Bloom's (1956) taxonomy, they need to help students frame application and analysis questions, instead of knowledge and comprehension questions, and ultimately engage them in answering synthesis and evaluation questions. In terms of Webb's (2002) depth-of-knowledge framework, they need to move them beyond recall and reproduction (Level 1) and get them to ask questions that exercise skills and concepts (Level 2), engage them in short-term strategic thinking (Level 3), and engage in extended thinking (Level 4). As long as students remain focused on answering questions from the lower levels of Bloom's and Webb's hierarchies, they will not take an interpretive stance.

Collaborative and Supportive Turn Taking

Student groups are more likely to produce rich, interpretive discussions if the classroom culture is supportive and collaborative (Lightner & Wilkinson, 2017) and students are taught how to take roles that facilitate an open-ended discussion that gives all students a chance to contribute (Nystrand & Gamoran, 1993). The value of group discussion can be limited if some students dominate the more active roles (Marshall, 1989), which can be generated by various mechanisms, including cultural assumptions about race, class, and gender (Lewis, 1997, 2001); similarly, in whole-class discussion, discussion is less productive when the teacher dominates the discussion, giving the interaction a recitation-like structure (Chinn et al., 2001).

Negotiating Possible Interpretations

Students may need the teacher to model key moves in literary argumentation, such as using textual evidence and encouraging other participants to elaborate and explain proposed interpretations (Applebee & Langer, 1983; Langer, 1992b; Many, 2002). Morocco and Hindin (2002) provided a particularly rich explication of the actions that students must learn to perform while negotiating interpretations of literature, including asserting an interpretive claim, elaborating an interpretation, questioning assumptions underlying a claim, challenging or supporting an interpretive claim with textual evidence or evidence from lived experience, revising claims in the light of objections, and testing alternative claims against the text. Given the developmental patterns for interpretive reasoning reviewed earlier, only the strongest upper-grade students seem likely to master these skills independently without explicit instruction. But there is considerable evidence that students across a wide range of grades can improve their interpretive discussion skills through a combination of collaborative discussion, explicit instruction, and scaffolding (Murphy et al., 2009; Nystrand & Gamoran, 1991).

In work formerly published on the CBAL ELA wiki,⁴ a hypothesized learning progression was proposed for discussion skills. This progression, which is consistent with the literature reviewed, is presented in Table A8.

Learning how to Write about Literature

When students write about literature that they have read, they engage in deeper thinking and interpretation and thus achieve higher overall performance (Boscolo & Carotti, 2003). This is true with in-class writing assignments (Marshall, 1987); formal, submitted essays (Newell, 1994); and ungraded journal assignments (Wong et al., 2002). It is not clear from the literature at what age these benefits begin to accrue, but most of the studies focus on literary argumentation in the middle and high school grades. Like interpretive discussion, writing in response to literature draws on interpretive inquiry skills and is therefore subject to the developmental constraints outlined earlier in this review.

Annotation, Note Taking, Response Logs, and Journals

One of the key benefits of textual annotation and other forms of immediate written response is that they give the reader an opportunity to notice aspects of the text that should be analyzed in greater depth on another pass. This may include “questions, memories, guesses, reflections, comparisons, thoughts and feelings, comments and connections” (Ekstam, 2018, p. 11).

From the early grades, close reading is associated with annotation practices in which the reader physically (or digitally) marks the page. This kind of markup, typically introduced in the earlier grades, focuses on deepening comprehension and understanding text structure. Practices recommended by Adler (1940) continued to be recommended (Fisher et al., 2014), including underlining major points, placing asterisks next to particularly important statements, circling key words or phrases, and writing short notes in the margins.

As students reach upper elementary and middle school and begin to produce longer written responses, journaling and response log practices become more common, which can help students to engage more deeply with the text while providing teachers with evidence about students’ depth of understanding (Pantaleo, 1995; Wong et al., 2002). Beach (1983) recommended that readers pay particular attention to characters’ violations of social norms in their responses, because norm-breaking behavior often leads directly to a key interpretive issue. Beach and Myers (2001) expanded on this framework by recommending that students use journal entries not only to note their immediate questions and responses but to identify and analyze concerns, issues, and dilemmas raised by the text. Levine and Horton (2013, 2015) showed that training students to notice and comment on emotionally charged locations in the text also helps them to identify interpretive issues. Beers and Probst (2013) offered a coordinated set of strategies for identifying important turning points in a piece of fiction, including (a) *contrasts and contradictions* (where the reader should stop and ask why the character is doing something unexpected), (b) *aha moments* (where the reader should stop and consider how the story will change, now that a character has achieved a critical insight), (c) *tough questions* (where the reader should try to address difficult questions that characters ask of themselves), (d) *words of the wiser* (where readers should stop and consider how a “wiser” character’s advice will affect their interpretation of the text), (e) *again and again* (where readers should try to determine why an element is frequently repeated), and (f) *memory moments* (where readers should try to understand why a character’s memory is important enough to the story to justify the author stopping the action).

Text-Dependent, On-Demand Writing Tasks

As students develop metalinguistic awareness and genre knowledge, they grow in their ability to understand, analyze, and respond to the text. These abilities are exercised in the practice of asking and answering questions, whether orally or in various forms of on-demand writing (Fisher et al., 2014, 2015). However, many of these writing tasks do not actually require students to frame a complete interpretive argument. Instead, they exercise specific supporting skills. Some forms of text-dependent writing focus on literal comprehension, such as those that ask the writer to provide a summary or synopsis or identify important points or key supporting details. As Fisher et al. (2014, 2015) put it, these forms of text-dependent writing focus on “what does the text say?”

Other forms of text-dependent writing exercise students’ metalinguistic skills. They require textual analysis but do not ask students to apply those skills to justify an interpretation. For example, the writer may be asked to supply textual evidence to support an elaborating inference, recognize and explain figurative language, analyze the effects of word choice, and analyze text structures. If these writing tasks primarily function to deepen comprehension, they are focused, as Fisher et al. (2014, 2015) put it, on “how does the text work?”

On the other hand, if a text-dependent writing task draws on an interpretive inquiry strategy, such as inferring the author’s purpose, considering multiple perspectives, taking context into account, generalizing and applying themes, or reading one text in the light of another, they are focused, as Fisher et al. (2014, 2015) put it, on “what does the text mean?” or if they examine the real-world implications of that meaning, on “what does the text inspire you to do?”

On-demand writing tasks, by their very nature, are one-off events that force students to demonstrate their ability to answer a specific question (Thompson, 2018). By placing them in specific positions in a sequence of multiple readings, responses, and discussions, teachers can make on-demand writing tasks meaningful, because they have a purpose within the larger cycle of reading and rereading, discussion, writing, and rethinking possible interpretations. This is a common strategy in ELA instruction (Blau, 2003; Cleaver, 2015; Gallagher, 2004). For example, in a close-reading cycle with three reading stages, Sisson and Sisson (2014) recommended that elementary students be given literal comprehension tasks after the first reading, structural analysis tasks after the second reading, and an interpretive task (typically, thematic analysis) after the third reading. Fisher et al. (2014, 2015) made similar recommendations, though they recommended a fourth stage in which students are asked to consider not only “what does the text mean?” but “what does the text inspire me to do?”

The major developmental constraint on using on-demand textual analysis writing tasks would appear to be whether students understand task requirements, whether they have the necessary metalinguistic skills, and whether they have learned how to use those skills to support specific forms of interpretive inquiry. When they do not, or if they have not been taught to analyze task requirements (Philippakos, 2018), they may fall back on writing strategies that enable them to produce a response without doing the needed higher order thinking (Applegate et al., 2006).

Extended Literary Argumentation

An extended literary argument requires the writer to analyze texts globally, looking for patterns that invite specific readings. As our previous discussion suggests, students are most likely to succeed on extended literary argumentation tasks if they are operating within a dialogic environment that stimulates them to notice particular patterns and themes and to reflect on them to come up with a well-supported, defensible interpretation (Brady, 2018). Participating in group discussions of literary works provides an opportunity for the teacher and the more advanced students to model particular literary argumentation moves or topoi (VanDerHeide, 2018), though explicit instruction in the topoi of literary interpretation can also have a positive impact on student performance (Lewis & Ferretti, 2009, 2011).

As preceding portions of this review suggest, extended literary argumentation emerges from a long, reflective process in which the writer reads and rereads texts, engages in many different forms of interpretive inquiry, and uses discussion and written response to gather the information they will need to identify text patterns and come up with interpretations (Beach, 1997b). This process depends on a willingness to revisit existing interpretations and consider new ones and therefore on a specific set of epistemic beliefs, including the value of multiple readings and the potential validity of multiple interpretations. Students whose beliefs about writing are consistent with these practices are more likely to write successful literary arguments (Nagpal, 2019). Because literary argumentation depends on a willingness to revise and rethink

interpretations, writers are also more likely to produce strong arguments when the teacher uses feedback and revision to encourage students to do the necessary reflection (Newell, 1994).

However, literary argumentation is demanding, requiring high degrees of linguistic and metalinguistic knowledge, high levels of strategic control, and a willingness to engage in practices that require substantial effort and demand high levels of analysis and reflection. Students may be able to engage effectively in oral literary discussion, where many of these processes are scaffolded by the social situation, before they are able to carry out the task independently (Sosa et al., 2016).

Because the learning progressions we have developed, both in this report and in previous publications, were designed to crosscut reading, writing, and thinking skills, they also provide learning progressions for writing. In particular, we may note the following connections.

Markup, Note Taking, Response Logs, and Journals

The deliberation and expression strands for the Clarification and Incorporation progressions in ETS (2012) cover many of the key analytical techniques deployed when a literary essay uses textual patterns to make inferences about author's craft and communicative intent. Similar skill progressions appear in the key practice Conduct Research and Inquiry (Sparks & Deane, 2015), involving skills for asking guiding questions, testing hypotheses, reconciling perspectives, evaluating sources, and synthesizing research results.

Text-Dependent Online Writing Tasks

The deliberation and expression strands for the Verbal Inference, Stance-Taking, and Outlining progressions in ETS (2012) cover many of the key analytical techniques deployed when a literary essay uses textual patterns to make inferences about author's craft and communicative intent.

Extended Literary Arguments

The expressive (writing-oriented) strand on the Rhetorical Analysis progression covers patterns of growth in writing extended literary arguments. Certain other progressions capture methods used to build literary arguments. In particular, (a) the deliberation (critical thinking) strand on the Reading Between the Lines progression covers many of the key analytical techniques deployed in extended literary arguments; (b) the interpretive (reading analysis) strand on the Comparison progression in ETS (2012), revised to the Comparison and Contrast progression in O'Reilly et al. (2015), covers many of the key analytical techniques deployed when a literary essay focuses on thematic analysis; and (c) the deliberation (critical thinking) strand on the Appropriation progression in ETS (2012) covers many of the key analytical techniques deployed when a literary essay focuses on intertextual relations. However, literary writing emphasizes specific rhetorical moves or topoi, such as ubiquity and appearance versus reality, that are not likely to be emphasized in other disciplines, limiting the generalizability of general analysis and synthesis skills to literary interpretation.

Strategies for Assessment

Everything we have considered so far suggests that it may be difficult to assess students' ability to build and justify literary interpretations. It is a challenging skill; few students master it fully, and it is best exercised over many rounds of reading, rereading, discussing, responding, and reflecting about literary works.

Historically, of course, literary interpretation has barely been assessed, at least in assessments of reading comprehension and in other large-scale assessments (Applegate et al., 2002). Hillocks and Ludlow (1984) proposed a taxonomy of reading questions, scaled by difficulty. Their scale included skills at the literal level (basic stated information, key details, stated relationships) and skills at the inferential level (basic implied relationships, complex implied relationships, author's generalizations, and structural generalizations). Author's generalizations and structural generalizations were the most difficult types of questions and the most interpretive in nature, but the question sets that Hillocks and Ludlow analyzed fell well short of the range of possibilities we have already considered.

While efforts have been made to include aspects of higher order thinking in reading inventories (Manzo, 1995; Manzo & Manzo, 2013), and reform efforts like the CCSS emphasize the importance of close reading, assessing interpretive reasoning still appears to be a significant challenge (Lee & Goldman, 2015). One of the fundamental issues is that literary

analysis is built around what Pressley and Afflerbach (1995) termed *constructively responsive reading strategies*—effortful, focused strategies that are mobilized and combined by the reader in response to specific reading goals (Afflerbach & Cho, 2008). As a result, an assessment of literary analysis must be conceptualized not as an assessment of text comprehension but as an assessment of whether readers have mastered a specific set of reading strategies and are able to mobilize them when needed.

It is difficult to find examples of this kind of assessment. One noteworthy attempt can be found in Koek et al. (2016). This paper offers an assessment of Critical Literary Understanding that is intended to capture salient aspects of literary reasoning. It combines focused, multiple-choice questions on literary passages with short-answer questions that require the test taker to justify their answers and samples a range of tasks that require the reader to engage in inductive and deductive reasoning, clarification of meaning, and judgments of credibility. While this instrument has good measurement properties and seems to provide evidence of growth in literary reading skills, it primarily measures the ability to perform local interpretive inferences and provide short justifications of those inferences. It does not directly measure the ability to discuss literature, construct extended literary arguments, revisit interpretations, or read a text for different purposes. As a result, it may not cover the literary analysis fully, especially since readers are not given the opportunity to build and justify whole-text interpretations.

The problem, of course, is that literary interpretation is a complex, iterative performance skill with many component parts and interactions. So are other key practices reviewed in earlier studies, including Building and Sharing Knowledge (O'Reilly et al., 2015), Discussing and Debating Ideas (Deane & Song, 2015), and Conducting Inquiry and Research (Sparks & Deane, 2015). This complexity, and the importance of the sequence of tasks that supports effective performance, suggests that it may be very difficult to measure the construct of literary interpretation in a traditional assessment.

In earlier publications, the author and colleagues have advocated the use of scenario-based assessments to assess complex performance tasks (Deane et al., 2018; Sabatini et al., 2014). The key feature of SBAs is that they assess both component skills and integrated performances, integrated within a scenario that contextualizes all of the skills being tested in a task sequence that models the key practice (Deane et al., 2018; Sabatini et al., 2014). A similar approach may be in order here. By taking students through a series of tasks that reflect different phases of the practice, and exercise different literary analysis strategies, it may be possible to get a reasonably accurate picture of whether students can do literary analysis without support (most likely, a small percentage in the K–12 population) and where students are in developing the strategies, skills, and attitudes toward reading that are necessary prerequisites to independent performance.

If we envision literary analysis in this light, there are three key elements:

1. The overall structure and content of the assessment should require students not only to build textual interpretations but to consider multiple interpretations and revisit their interpretive decisions in the light of new evidence.
2. The sequence of tasks should exercise students' ability to apply literary analysis strategies in multiple modalities (reading, writing, and conversation) and, in so doing, move students through multiple phases of interpretation and analysis, along the lines suggested in Figure 1.
3. Component tasks should exercise a variety of specific strategies designed to accomplish such goals as deepening comprehension, inferring the author's purpose, considering multiple perspectives, connecting text to context, generalizing and applying themes, and continuing interpretive conversations across multiple texts.

There are as yet no concrete, publicly available examples of this kind of assessment, though some designs, such as the draft literary reading assessment described in Deane et al. (2008), have many, but not all, of the features outlined herein.

Currently ETS assessment development staff are working to produce this kind of scenario-based assessment as part of ETS's *WINSIGHT*[®] assessment product family. In future work, it may be feasible to examine how the resulting assessments function and to learn more about student performance and growth in this key practice.

Notes

- 1 This process is sometimes referred to as involving the “suspension of disbelief,” though as Gerrig and Egidi (2010) have argued, suspension of disbelief is a normal consequence of text comprehension. Readers typically must make a significant effort to distance themselves from the world portrayed by a text and approach it from a more critical stance.

- 2 There are also studies that focus on specific subdimensions, such as absorption. For example, Kuijpers et al. (2014) proposed and validated a story world absorption scale using items that address such constructs as transportation, emotional engagement, mental imagery, and attention.
- 3 <https://web.archive.org/web/20170706214345/http://elalp.cbalwiki.ets.org/home>
- 4 <https://web.archive.org/web/20170706214345/http://elalp.cbalwiki.ets.org/home>

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Appendix: Learning Progressions With Links to the Common Core Standards

This appendix provides a detailed mapping out of the skills covered by the key practice, Building and Justifying Interpretation of Texts. It provides a series of learning progressions that present hypothesized skill sequences, justified either in this literature review or in prior work, or in some cases presenting learning progressions proposed elsewhere. Many of the learning progressions included here were originally published in a preliminary form on an ETS wiki site which is no longer publicly available and are therefore published here.

Table A1 Control Over Reading Purpose

Learning progression level	Description
1	Readers at this level focus on literal comprehension and read all texts using similar processes
2	Readers at this level can switch between a few basic stances toward text, including reading for pleasure (an aesthetic stance) and reading for information (an efferent stance)
3	Readers at this level can hold multiple representations of the text in mind, including a representation of the text's exact wording, a representation of its literal meaning, and a representation of the situation it describes and use that information to read for various analytical purposes, such as editing and textual interpretation
4	Readers at this level can flexibly adopt different perspectives (moral, psychological, cultural, etc.) and interpret the text in the light of their chosen perspective
5	Readers at this level can adopt a specific critical lens and build a textual interpretation using the critical tools that that perspective affords them

Table A2 Levels of Fiction Reading

	1 (very limited)	2 (limited)	3 (neither limited nor extended)	4 (somewhat extended)	5 (extended)	6 (very extended)
Literary competency	Cannot read, understand, or appreciate very simple literary works	Can read, understand, and appreciate very simple literary works	Can read, understand, and appreciate rather simple literary works	Can read, understand, and appreciate literary works of a medium level of difficulty	Can read, understand, and appreciate complex literary works	Can read, understand, and appreciate very complex literary works
Type of reading	Experiential reading	Identifying reading	Reflective reading	Interpretive reading	Literate reading	Academic reading
Function of literature	Entertainment	To recognize own experiences and find self-affirmation	To discover the world and expand own horizons	To discover deeper meanings and aesthetic enjoyment	To become immersed in literature and cultural history	Intellectual development
General demands for engaging with the book	75–150 pages without difficulty	75–150 pages without difficulty	75–150 pages without difficulty	150–250 pages without difficulty		>400 pages without difficulty
General demands for engaging with the book						
General knowledge	Knowledge of everyday situations—home, school, and society	Some understanding of human nature to explain the inner lives of more or less familiar people in more or less familiar situations; basic general historical and social knowledge (e.g., persecution of the Jews in World War II, integration)	The ability to put oneself in unfamiliar situations and cultures and to identify with the complex emotions of fairly unfamiliar people		The ability to reflect on (culturally) different or (historically) dated views, norms, and values	The ability to reflect on abstract, intellectual worldview or view of humanity
Domain-specific (literary) knowledge and experience	Distinguishes between reality and fiction	Simple genres (crime, social issues, war, etc.)	Distinguishes between popular literature and narrative theory (instrumental)	(Aesthetic) judgments; theory of story analysis and text interpretation	Literary-historical knowledge (movements, historical context) and/or autobiographical knowledge (oeuvre), literary style	Broad cultural interest and basic knowledge (Bible, mythology, literary canon, world literature, philosophy, art, etc.)
Familiarity with literary style	Everyday language	More nuanced, some unknown words	Nuanced and somewhat varied vocabulary (less every day, a little more remote from student)	Varied vocabulary that is often far removed from the student's language use		Both varied and sophisticated vocabulary (subtle), poetic, as well as old or outmoded usage
Vocabulary						

Table A2 Continued

	1 (very limited)	2 (limited)	3 (neither limited nor extended)	4 (somewhat extended)	5 (extended)	6 (very extended)
Sentence structure	Simply structured, short sentences	Many long but clearly structured sentences		Many long, fairly complex sentences	Complex and less accessible sentence structures (e.g., comparative constructions)	
Stylistics	Redundant, literal use of language (clichéd)	Predominantly literal but also figurative language		Language with several layers of meaning (metaphors, irony, symbolism)		Both language with several layers of meaning (metaphors, irony, symbolism) and experimental use of language
Familiarity with literary techniques						
Perspective	Single perspective		Multiple perspectives but changes are clearly marked	Unreliable perspective	Unreliable and/or multiple perspectives with changes not clearly marked	
Story line(s)	A single story line with few gaps and a closed ending		Both a main story line and some clearly marked secondary story lines and gaps (also open endings)	Several story lines not clearly marked, with gaps	Complex structure with several unmarked story lines; also old (classical) or old-fashioned structure	
Chronology	Chronological structure with few jumps in time		Chronology is interrupted by clearly marked jumps in time	Not chronological with jumps in time that are not clearly marked (e.g., framed story)		
Action	Emphasis on plot/action (almost no description, thoughts)	Emphasis on plot/action but to some extent also thoughts, descriptions, and dialogs	Both events and relatively many descriptions, characters' thoughts, and dialogs	Both descriptions and expositions and/or reflections		
Familiarity with literary characters						
Number	One main character and a few secondary characters	Well-rounded characters who undergo logical development	A few main characters and a few secondary characters	Well-rounded characters who undergo unpredictable development	Many main characters	Literary (abstract) figures
Character	Simply developed, sometimes stereotypical characterization	Well-rounded characters who undergo logical development				
Relations	Almost no change in relationships between characters	Changing relationship between characters			Relationships between characters develop and change constantly (and sometimes very subtly)	Complex relationships that are difficult to fathom

Note. Reproduced from Witte et al. (2012).

Table A3 Levels of Development of Poetry

Level	Typical pattern in grade range	Description
1	3–4	Poetry is not distinguished from prose
2	5–7	The reader distinguishes poetry from prose but tends to interpret poetry and prose similarly
3	8–12	The reader has begun to be sensitive to the formal devices in poetry and tries to build an interpretation that assigns the text a poetic meaning but may have difficulty forming coherent symbolic interpretations of a poem
4	12 and above	The reader has fully internalized the interpretive conventions of poetry and is fluent at deriving symbolic interpretations from the cues provided by poetic language

Table A4 Grammatical Analysis

Level	Interpretation	Deliberation	Expression
1	Recognizes and labels basic building blocks of grammar (words, phrases, sentences); recognizes major parts of speech—noun, adjective, verb, adverb; recognizes inflectional suffixes and labels their functions (present or past tense, progressive, comparative, etc.)	Deploys word substitution strategies to identify words with similar grammatical properties; deploys grouping/division strategies to identify natural grammatical units, such as phrases and sentences	Discusses text using basic metalanguage for types of words and their organization into phrases and sentences
2	Recognizes and labels grammatical categories critical to understanding the grammatical organization of sentences (auxiliaries and the full system of verb tenses; comparative and superlative constructions; possessives; pronouns, and articles); distinguishes between necessary elements and modifiers; recognizes and labels core sentence patterns (declarative, interrogative, etc.); recognizes and labels subcategories critical for basic sentence structure (transitive and intransitive verbs, subjects and objects, passives, attributive and predicate adjectives, etc.)	Deploys grammatical head identification strategies to identify the key words around which phrases are built and recognize which words modifiers are describing; deploys reduction strategies to identify the kernel sentences around which more complex sentences are organize	Uses grammatical labels to identify and discuss editing issues connected with word-level grammatical features (consistency of tense, pronouns without antecedents, proper use of possessives, proper punctuation of declarative and interrogative sentences, etc.)
3	Recognizes and labels grammatical categories necessary to understand complex sentences (clauses, the difference between main and subordinate clauses, coordination vs. subordination, coordinating and subordinating conjunctions, gerunds and participles, relative clauses, subject and object clauses)	Deploys sentence diagramming strategies to map out the structure of complex sentences graphically	Uses grammatical labels to identify and discuss editing issues connected with precision of meaning, emphasis, and clarity in complex sentences (e.g., dangling modifiers, ambiguous sentence structures, dense, or tangled syntactic structures)
4	Recognizes and labels a variety of transformational relationships among sentences that support alternative surface realizations of the same propositional content	Uses grammatical analysis strategies to identify editing choices that depend on the grammatical manipulation of alternative sentence patterns	Uses grammatical labels and concepts to analyze the flow of sentences in a text and identify places where the syntactic choices do not match theme/rheme organizational structures that are implied by the discourse context

Table A4 Continued

Level	Interpretation	Deliberation	Expression
5	Applies grammatical concepts such as ellipsis and presupposition to identify and label hidden discourse dependencies in texts	Uses grammatical analysis strategies to recognize and unpack ways in which presuppositions and unstated information are hidden and other aspects of content are highlighted, by specific syntactic choices	Uses grammatical labels and concepts to identify and discuss presuppositions, unstated assumptions, and other rhetorical features that emerge from the grammatical structure of text

Table A5 Stance-taking

Level	Interpretation	Deliberation	Expression
1	Can read a text and extract a general impression of the persona of its narrator or commentator, or of embedded characters, and identify their purposes	Can apply register-shifting strategies in which one adopts the register most appropriate to a social role and purpose of a specific persona	Can imitate the characteristic speech patterns and style displayed by another person
2	Can identify specific words and phrases in a text that directly support the social impressions that it creates	Can apply style-shifting strategies in which one modifies syntactic and lexical choices to create a desired tone	Can write in a consistent style while avoiding linguistic choices incompatible with that style
3	Can identify subjective, stance-taking elements in a text that indicate attitudes (on the part of the author or a persona adopted by the narrator) toward the subject matter being addressed	Can apply perspective-shifting strategies in which one adopts a desired persona that defines the perspective from which the text is written	Can write in a generally consistent voice reflecting a consistent persona, attitude, and perspective
4	Can identify slanting and other attempts to manipulate the reader by manipulating the features of style, tone, and voice	Can apply slanting strategies that exercise fine control over register, tone, and voice to achieve specific effects on the audience	Can write from a generally consistent stance while avoiding linguistic choices that would undermine the intended effect
5	Can identify and recognize the impact of symbols, catchphrases, and other elements drawn from a larger discourse	Can apply symbol manipulation strategies that use images, catchphrases, or other elements drawn from a larger discourse to trigger stock emotional and social responses	Can consistently adopt the stance, voice, style, and tone consistent with specific roles in a wide range of specific discourses

Table A6 Reading Between the Lines

Level	Interpretation	Deliberation	Expression
1	Can distinguish literal from nonliteral meanings of words and disambiguate the intended meaning from context	Can guess the meaning of new metaphors and metonymies that follow established patterns such as “anger is fire”	Can produce a wide variety of conventional nonliteral uses of language appropriately in context, including conventional metaphors and metonymies
2	Can distinguish literal and nonliteral meaning well enough to recognize that both can be present and can interact to determine the actual meaning an expression has in context; thus, can recognize puns and distinguish literal meanings (“It’s hot in here”) from indirectly conveyed meanings (“It’s hot in here” → “Please open the window”)	Has mastered the fundamental metalinguistic vocabulary needed to discuss nonliteral meaning, including terms such as metonymy, metaphor, personification, sarcasm, simile, understatement; can apply disambiguation strategies based on recognizing potential nonliteral meanings and evaluating their fit with the purpose and context of the text	Can produce original puns, similes, or metaphors and use them appropriately in a larger context (e.g., paragraph) to develop and present ideas
3	Can distinguish literal from indirect or implied meaning at the level of a whole text and can therefore infer when a text is not intended to be taken literally	Has mastered the metalinguistic vocabulary needed to discuss multiple layers of meaning in a text, such as allusion, caricature, euphemism, hyperbole, irony, parody, and satire; can apply interpretive strategies that detect such modes as irony and satire by detecting incongruities that do not make sense if one assumes a literal interpretation	Can produce texts based on extended conceits (i.e., an allegory, an extended system of metaphors, or similar forms of analogical reasoning) or texts that illustrate such modes as irony and satire
4	Can recognize multiple layers of meaning in a text and interpret details in light of the whole	Can apply analytic and interpretive strategies that build up multiple layers of meaning by attending to figures of speech, unusual lexical and stylistic choices that license indirect implications, and other nuances of meaning as well as other details of the text that can be used to license inferences about how it should be received	Can produce literary texts that make sophisticated use of figures of speech to develop multiple layers of meaning (symbolism, allusion, etc.)
5	Can recognize when a text instantiates a particular genre or draws upon a particular discourse and interpret it in line with the conventions of that genre	Can apply analytic and interpretive strategies that depend upon linking details and structural elements of a text to motifs and themes developed in other literary works	Can produce literary texts that exploit the conventional elements of literary genres (themes, motifs, characteristic plot patterns, etc.) to layer on additional elements of meaning

Table A7 Rhetorical Analysis

Level	Interpretation	Deliberation	Expression
1	Is capable of precisely ascertaining the literal, explicit meaning of a text	Can apply clarifying strategies based upon close examination of the meanings of words, the precise meaning created by syntactic choices and the arrangement of sentences	Can produce notes or commentary on a text that elucidates its literal meaning and content and elaborates on or summarizes its explicit content
2	Is capable of interpreting figurative language effectively and thereby ascertaining its literal import and applications	Can apply analytic strategies based upon identifying and elucidating figures of speech	Can produce a commentary (or essay explicating the content of a text) that includes explanations of how figurative language contributes to the overall meaning and impact of the text
3	Can separate the author of a text from the voice in which the text is written and thus distinguish in detail between what the author intends to communicate and what the text purports to communicate, in the voice of a narrator or commentator; can identify how the author has chosen to address the audience or respond to other participants in the discourse	Can apply analytic and interpretive strategies that take the author's purpose and stance into account alongside the general social context and not assume that the literal obvious meaning will always be privileged	Can write an analysis that addresses nonliteral meaning and the author's purpose and stance toward the audience and other participants, not just a synopsis of the literal content, and uses evidence from the text to support the interpretation it advances
4	Can attend simultaneously to multiple layers of meaning in a text and build up a complex interpretation that depends on the juxtaposition of details and the building up of implications that depend on the cumulative effect of the writer's decisions about wording, content, and rhetorical structure	Can apply analytical and interpretive strategies that depend on considering multiple possible interpretations and evaluate the strength of evidence supporting each one	Can present an explicit, extended analysis of multiple layers of meaning in a text in essay form, building a detailed interpretive argument in which details from the text and evidence about the social context and purpose of the text are woven together to present a convincing interpretive case
5	Can interpret a text in the light of a larger discourse (or genre) to which the text belongs, considering such things as the positions taken by other writers or use of themes and motifs in other works from the same tradition	Can apply analytic strategies that depend on analysis of the features and strategies of a specific genre or discourse and can build up a general argument from many different works	Can present an explicit, extended literary analysis in which the interpretation of the text is driven by its place in a larger discourse and in which the arguments consider how the text responds to that larger discourse

Table A8 Oral Discussion

Level	Interpretation	Deliberation	Expression
1	Recognize and respect cues that indicate when it is appropriate to take a conversational turn; recognize interruptions, irrelevant responses, or other violations of conversational norms	Be able to identify and describe the topic of a conversation and recognize topic shifts; distinguish among types of conversations and be able to identify who takes on roles appropriate to each (e.g., directed vs. free discussions)	Speak clearly and audibly and at a reasonable and understandable pace when taking a turn in a conversation; ask and answer questions or respond to previous speakers with relevant information
2	Recognize when a conversation has gone off on a tangent; recognize when a participant has failed to understand a particular point in a conversation; identify and correctly interpret cues indicating what topics interest other participants	Be able to summarize the gist of a conversation and describe the contributions of each participant; understand the idea of negotiating the topic of a conversation; distinguish among a variety of specific modes of conversation and discussion (e.g., casual conversation, informational discussion, collaborative discussion, lecture) for different purposes and be able to describe the purpose and explain the expectations for each mode	Modify speaking patterns to maintain clarity and comprehensibility in different situations (one on one, small group, addressing larger group); produce responses that sustain and develop a topic over multiple turns; use questions and other conversational cues to help other participants stay on topic or to shift topic when necessary; take or relinquish the leading (topic-setting) role in a conversation or discussion when appropriate
3	Recognize where a particular conversational turn falls in a hierarchy of goals and subgoals established for a particular conversation; recognize conflicts between participants about conversational goals and subgoals; model the goals and interests of conversational participants and interpret specific conversational contributions in terms of those specific goals	Understand the concept of negotiating specific rules for turn taking/conversational organization and be able to carry out a meta-conversation discussing how a specific conversation should be structured	Master presentational techniques appropriate to specific modes of sustained spoken effort (such as eye contact, projection, and control of pace in a public presentation); produce responses that elaborate upon topics and subtopics as appropriate in an extended conversation or discussion; respond appropriately to cues from other participants to contribute to a sustained conversation with coherent series of specific goals and subgoals; respond to conflict between participants about conversational goals with appropriate repair and negotiation moves

Table A8 Continued

Level	Interpretation	Deliberation	Expression
4	Identify the specific genre or mode of interaction under which a conversation or other communicative event is operating; make appropriate inferences about the purpose, content, and goal of a specific communication by placing it in the context of the discourse form that it instantiates	Be able to describe and follow formal conventions and rules for communication in a variety of modes, such as conventions for gaining the floor or closing debate in formal deliberation	Demonstrate the ability to participate appropriately in a variety of different types of informal and formal modes of communication, including conversations, forums, discussions, and presentations, following the conventions appropriate to each, and demonstrating the ability to carry out the full range of rhetorical moves appropriate to each (such as rebuttal and modification of claims in debate)
5	Make appropriate inferences about the purpose and implications of a specific conversation or communication in the light of disciplinary and other specific institutional practices	Be able to describe and differentiate the practices characteristic of particular discourse communities such as scientific disciplines and explain and formulate strategies for communication appropriate to such specific social contexts	Demonstrate the ability to select appropriate modes of interaction depending on context and purpose, including both formal and informal modes of presentation, and coordinate many such interactions to achieve larger goals

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