The use of reader response in the practice of readers and writers: A case study

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Snapshot

This paper reports on part of a larger study that used both creative and critical research methods to research the effects of textual strategies on reader response to a work of young adult fiction. A novel for young adults was crafted in order to test the hypothesis that that defamiliarizing narrative strategies - such as those formerly associated with modernist novels – could provoke deep reading practice. We hypothesized that literature that that defamiliarizes, both in structural and contextual or ideological terms, imposes cognitive dissonance on its readers and provokes higher order inference making associated with deep reading. To test this, the researchers asked three teenagers to read the purposively created novel and to keep a reading journal progressively documenting their thoughts and reactions during the reading process. Analysis of these journals suggests that complex characters, spatial structure, and the defamiliarisation of narrative traditions all contributed to a deeper reading experience. Furthermore, the efficacy of untagged dialogue in provoking deep reading points to the importance of passages with withheld information and reduced narratorial guidance. This study investigated the reader response of small number of avid or engaged readers. However, the use of reader response diaries in conjunction with young adult fiction may provide a useful tool enabling English educators to analyse their students' developing response to complex narrative strategies.

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It is often assumed that young readers require literature high in 'transportation' to promote reading engagement. Transportation, according to Melanie Green (2004, p.248) involves 'an integrative melding of attention, imagery, and feeling, focused on story events' [...] the feeling of being 'lost in a book'. She sees this as a process that creates 'attachments to or feelings for characters, and making the narrative world seem more real and narrative events more like personal experience' (p. 248). Reading that is high in transportation discourages critical thinking whilst encouraging identification and empathy with characters and is more likely to occur in best-sellers, or what we would call genre fiction (Bortolussi & Dixon 2015, p. 534) – a type that is popular in much contemporary young adult fiction. Literature that transports, therefore, is more likely, in this view to increase the recreational reading associated with increased literacy that can promote success in formal education.

Other theorists of reading, however, point out that there are many purposes behind the desire to read and multiple ways of being engaged with a good book. Marisa Bortolussi and Peter Dixon (2015, pp. 528-9) argue that 'good ... literature makes us think' and that 'deep

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intellectual processing would seem to make for an intellectually stimulating reading experience'. The type of fiction these scholars have in mind – that elicit this pleasurable intellectual response — have characters that are not clearly likable or dislikable; use multiple perspectives; feature unreliable narrators; and raise epistemological questions thwarting identification (Bortolussi & Dixon, p. 532). Contemporary young adult fiction, as Anthony Eaton (2013) points out, has also provided examples of the kind of questioning text that problematizes simple categories of identification. What this suggests is that fiction which defamiliarizes, both in narrative as well as in terms of known context or accepted ideology, imposes cognitive dissonance on its readers. Using techniques such as foregrounding and challenges to existing values and cognitive perspectives, it provokes higher order inference making that educators associate with 'deep' rather than 'surface' reading. Before considering textual strategies that prompt this kind of cognitive engagement, we first look more closely at reader response as a critical method, and how this can track the development in young readers of critical literacy development.

Reader response theory and its use in analyzing the work readers do

Reader response emerged in the 1960s and 70s as literary theorists began to acknowledge the role that readers play in meaning production. Wolfgang Iser (1978, p. 22) argued that there is no single definable meaning of text, rather meaning is a 'dynamic happening' that occurs between text and reader. As text can have no meaning until it is read, it relies upon the reader to use the text to create meaning. In this way, literary texts perform meaning rather than formulate it (Iser 1978, p. 27). This then places responsibility on the reader to be active in the meaning production process. Iser (1978, p. 34) popularized the concept of the implied reader, one who 'embodies all those predispositions necessary for a literary work to exercise its effect.' These predispositions are coded by the text itself, therefore the implied reader is implicit in the structures of the text (Iser 1978, p. 34). These structures rely on the reader temporarily becoming the implied reader of the text in order to create a preferred meaning.

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Much of the work utilizing reader response in studies of creative writing uses Iser's concept of the implied reader (Krauth 2018, Alter 2011). While Iser's work posited a uniform response to the text, others such as Fish, Bleich, and Holland focused their analysis on individual real reader responses (Mailloux 1990). Building on this foundation, empirical research emerged investigating the responses of real readers. (Miall 2011, Oatley 2002). Reader response has since been used to study areas as diverse as the relationship between ideology and translation (Li 2012), the development of empathy (Koopman 2016), and representations of disability (Walker et al. 2008).

What is deep reading?

Deep reading skills have been explained by Wolf and Barzillai (2009, p. 32) as, 'the array of sophisticated processes that propel comprehension and that include inferential and deductive

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reasoning, analogical skills, critical analysis, reflection and. Richard Vacca (2002, p. 8), places a similar emphasis on higher order thinking skills to describe what he calls strategic readers. These skills are central to international testing schemes such as the (somewhat contentious) Programme for International Student Assessment (PISA) (OECD). PISA's scale for reading literacy has six proficiency levels. The lowest level requires the reader to 'locate a single piece of explicitly stated information' whilst the highest level requires the reader to 'make multiple inferences, comparisons and contrasts ... integrate information, ... reflect and evaluate' (Thomson, De Bortoli & Underwood, 2015, p. 102). These proficiency levels clearly show the progressive development of reading skills, from decoding all the way to deep reading. As Wolf and Barzillai (2009, p. 34) explain it, as deep reading is practised, readers 'learn to build knowledge and go beyond the wisdom of the author to think their own thoughts'. Such critical thinking skills are pivotal to evaluating information from various sources for its veracity and relevance (Breivik, 2005, p.22).

Why modernist texts as a model?

We began with the assumption that deep reading would be more readily prompted when modernist techniques were utilised in a text. Modernist fiction is differentiated from genre fiction through its foregrounding of epistemological questions (McHale, 1989, p. 9). The epistemological uncertainty generated by modernist representations impacts the way the reader constructs the text in the act of reading. As Virginia Woolf (1966, p. 81) noted of reading modernist texts, '[w]e are at once conscious of using faculties hitherto dormant, ingenuity, and skill, a mental nimbleness and dexterity such as serve to solve a puzzle ingeniously'. Instead of pure transportation, the feeling of being 'lost in a book', Woolf (1966, p. 8) stressed the complex cognitive processes are activated as the book is 'puzzled' out. She saw the development of this new type of novel as 'an encouragement to a more creative, critical consciousness in novelist and reader'.

This critical consciousness includes many of the skills outlined in Wolf and Barzillai's (2009) definition of deep reading: analogical skills, deductive reasoning, critical analysis, reflection, and insight. Virginia Woolf (1966, p. 36) argues that 'creative resistances' are activated, allowing distance from the narrative, thereby breaking the effect of transportation and identification and allowing deep reading to occur.

A note on deep reading as a portable process and skill

It is important to note that deep reading describes a reading-comprehension practice that evokes a set of high-level cognitive and metacognitive information-processing functions. It is not necessarily the typical reading experience when encountering 'deep,' or literary, texts. This means that it points to an ensemble of cognitive skills related to the formation of hypotheses and deductive reasoning, which can be applied to an extraordinary variety of textual types and object domains (Lent & Voight 2019). Intuitively, increasing the difficulty of the text or

object seems likely to elicit increasingly complex efforts towards comprehension. However, the concept of deep reading is not derived from textual complexity, describing instead the degree of sophistication of response (Dorn & Soffos 2005). While some popular presentations of the concept tend to align deep reading with literary texts, as opposed to reading popular fiction for pleasure, for example, or scanning online social media for messages (Carr 2011), deep reading does not, in fact, belong to or spring from any particular textual domain. Instead, in the cognitive-psychological literature on education and learning where the concept originated, it is not opposed to reading for pleasure, but rather to surface reading, which is linked to both surface comprehension and surface learning. It is by no means central to the concept of deep reading that it be provoked by any particular text type. Its relationship to modernist narrative strategies is accordingly something than needs to be empirically determined, and this is a key question raised in this paper. If modernist techniques catalyse the type of reading-comprehension practices associated with deep reading, an examination of modernist textual strategies should provide valuable insights as to how a novel for adolescents can be shaped as a provocation to deep reading. It is to a discussion of these strategies that this paper now turns.

Whilst there are no single set of rules common to all modernist novels, there is, as Lodge (1977, p. 45) notes, a 'family resemblance' between them. Key to this resemblance, according to Lodge, is the lack of 'objective' events due, in part, to unreliable narration, complex characters, and dislocated chronology. This omission of narrative certainty has the effect of encouraging 'introspection, analysis, reflection and reverie' (Lodge 1977, p. 45). This leads to one of the key features of modernism: its moral ambiguity. Emerging out of Victorian literature and reacting against its culturally strong belief in Christianity, modernism presented a more uncertain and ambiguous world, reflecting the changes taking place within society.

> For the modern western world is less sure of its values than most previous cultures with which we are familiar; relativism and subjectivity are facts of everyday experience (Faulkner 1977, p. 15).

Modernism's lack of certainty forces the reader to exercise their own judgement, or suspend their judgement, rather than being directed toward judgements either by the consequences of events or by the narrator's voice.

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Unreliable narration and complexity of characterisation

This uncertainty is evidenced in the use of the unreliable narrator. An example of the effect unreliable narration has on the reader is found in de Reuck's (1993) analysis of the work of modernist novelist Henry James.

> [Unreliable narrators] provide adequate guidance for the receiver only up to a point ... but where their judgements about themselves are concerned, we find them crucially wanting, so that we reinterpret their utterances at such junctions, recasting the presented world to incorporate elements of their inner (psychic) make-up (Reuck 1993, pp. 355-6).

The reader's re-analysis involves questioning what is known and the basis on which that knowledge is accepted. The thought processes of the reader involve deducing and thinking critically in order to make sense of narrative information.

Lack of reliable narration and a central, moral voice in some modernist literature has implications for characterisation. Characters tend to have ambivalent relationships to ethical conventions and display complex, sometimes pathological, psychological traits (Woolf 1966). Often neither entirely good nor entirely bad, rather, they exist in contradiction (Woolf 1966). Dostoevsky's Stavrogin was the prime example of this, according to Woolf:

> [T]hat contrast which marked Stavrogin's appearance, so that he was at once "a paragon of beauty, yet at the same time there seemed something repellent about him", is but the crude outer sign of the vice and virtue we meet, at full tilt, in the same breast. (1966, p. 86).

This contradiction denies the reader a settled reading experience as events and perspectives need to be questioned and constantly subjected to a process of re-evaluation.

Strategies of impeded form

In his study of modernist novels, McHale (1989) identifies strategies of impeded narrative form. These include dislocated chronology and withheld or indirectly presented information. These strategies are used for epistemological effect. Knowlege needs to be teased out, as the disjunctions in emplotment and perspective provoke the reader into a hypothetical attitude towards both story and character psychology. In a much earlier study, Frank (1945) maps the discussion of dislocated chronology in modernist novels using the metaphor of spatial rather than chronological structure. In juxtaposing past and present, these novels give a solidity to time, accentuating differences between experiences taking place in different time locations. (This strategy was employed in the novel crafted for our case study). Frank uses Proust as an example: Proust believed time was experienced more fully, or purely, when the past and present were juxtaposed. In juxtaposing past and present a clarity is given to time where differences are accentuated as the reader is implored by the very structure of the novel to make comparisons and find meaning in the contrast.

> Habit, that universal soporific, ordinarily conceals the passage of time from those who have gone their accustomed ways: as at any moment of time the changes are so minute as to be imperceptible' (Frank 1945, p. 238).

The manipulation of time into a spatial rather than chronological arrangements defamiliarises the perception of time and of the novel. In juxtaposing time, allowing it to coexist in past, present, and even future, characters interrogate themselves. The spatial dimension of time creates a new space where the reader needs to utilize their analogical and deductive skills in order to understand the characters.

Why not use a pre-existing novel?

The full range of modernist techniques – complex characters, spatial structure, defamiliarisation of genre traditions, and withheld information – are not commonly found together in contemporary YA fiction. Existing modernist novels could have been used, however, few are (1) aimed specifically at an adolescent audience, (2) are contemporary, (3) utilise the techniques we are aiming to investigate, and (4) are an appropriate length. It was decided, instead to craft a novel that fulfilled these criteria in order to balance strategies that engage with those that challenge the adolescent reader. Using an original novel also had the added advantage of providing reader feedback for the author, Michelle McRae, to inform her future creative work. Whilst the novel could be analysed for its assumed effect on the implied reader we felt it was important to test the novel on real readers. What follows is an outline of the design employed and the data gathered through this empirical test.

Methodology: Case study design

Literary studies has employed a number of methods of garnering data on readers: surveys (Burke 2011), analyses of online discussions (Stockwell 2009), and psychological experiments (Miall 2011). In educational research, on the other hand, qualitative methods such as individual and group interviews often predominate (Blackford 2004; Benton 1986, Hubler 1998). Blackford and Hubler use interviews to gain a general reaction to novels and reading, while Benton uses small groups to explore reactions to poetry. In the study which forms the basis of this paper, we chose to use reader journals.

Diary studies have been used extensively in the health and social sciences to research areas such as posttraumatic stress (Chun 2016), language acquisition (Taguchi et al. 2012), and chronic pain (Fisher et al. 2017). They are also used in education studies, both as a learning and diagnostic tool. Baugh (2016) notes,

> Responses reflect the degree of students' personal engagement with the text … Journals also serve as a valuable formative assessment, revealing much about students' basic understanding of the text and how well students apply reading strategies and literacy vocabulary to new contexts (p. 37).

Bartlett and Milligan (2015, p. 91) identify several advantages of diary methods: they provide data 'gathered in real time (or as near real time as possible)'; by collecting data over a 'defined period of time'. Diaries facilitate 'the unfolding of a longitudinal story, related to the topic of interest that is framed within the participants' own words or pictures'. In this study the journals facilitated real time response, limited to the time readers took to read the novel. The novel itself (described below) was the topic of interest, while the diary allowed personalised responses. The diary was able to chart readers' changing views about aspects of the novel, such as character, as their reading progressed.

The use of journals allowed us to track a detailed, contemporaneous reading by a group of readers of a single text – a whole novel, deliberately crafted to include defamiliarizing textual

strategies and ideological schemas. Other studies, such as Koopman's (2016), and Kidd and Castano's (2013), have deployed a variety of *shorter* and differing text types. However, our approach provided a means of gaining immediate feedback on an unpublished long-form text – the creative artefact that formed an integral but separate part of the larger research project.

A novel for adolescents was created using narrative techniques associated with 'deep reading', such as complex characters, defamiliarisation of narrative traditions, untagged dialogue, and multiple narratorial perspectives. Diary data was then collected to assess extended individual response to the created long-form fiction. By approaching the research in this way, we specifically tested our theory that 'deep reading' can be encouraged through the epistemological questions raised in texts that use the traditional features associated with modernism.

The novel was entitled *To my other self* (*TMOS)*: it was specifically crafted to raise epistemological questions in the reader through the modernist features discussed above. Told in alternating chapters – which follow different timelines – *To my other self* juxtaposes sections featuring two versions of the same character-narrator. One narrates the life of Colin Maloney at sixteen, the other his life at twenty-one. Sixteen-year-old Colin has plans for his future. This future includes making Hannah Westwood his girlfriend. As their relationship progresses Colin becomes increasingly obsessive, which culminates in Colin's physical assault on Hannah – he punches her in a fit of jealousy. Distraught at discovering that he is capable of such violence against someone he loves, Colin attempts suicide.

Juxtoposed with this, is the narration of twenty-one year old Colin, who is struggling to understand how his life went down the path it did. Five years on, while Colin is still dealing with the fallout from decisions he made as a sixteen-year-old, he sees Hannah Westwood on a news report, threatened with jail after commiting a crime. The next day he finds himself with a four-year-old son he never knew existed. As the stories unfold in sequence – creating a 'spatial form' – the older Colin must come to terms with who he is, the choices that he has made, and the choices that can still be made to turn a life from one of subsistence to one of hope.

Participants

Three adolescent readers were recruited to read the novel and complete the reading journal. All were seventeen years of age, as this is the target audience of the novel. Participants all lived in the outer suburbs of Melbourne. There were two female readers and one male: Emma, Luke, and Lara (pseudonyms). As the demands of the research required that participants read the novel in under a month and keep a journal, this inevitably self-selected for highly engaged, and skilled readers – often described in the literature as 'avid readers'. Avid readers are generally the most widely read and therefore are able to compare and discriminate more effectively. Participants were asked to write their thoughts as they read. These could include: predictions, impressions, emotions, and connections.

Instruments and Coding Frame

The manuscript was provided in print form, given research that suggests that the digital form adds another variable that could affect deep reading (Wolf & Barzillai 2009). On receipt of the journals, comments were transposed into a single document with identifiers omitted and pseudonyms given. A thematic analysis of the responses was then undertaken using a coding frame according to the higher order thinking skills identified by Wolf and Barzillai (2009, p. 33) in their discussion of deep reading. These were inferential and deductive reasoning; analogical skills; critical analysis; reflection and insight. The codes for shallow reading were derived from Melanie Green's work on transportation (2004). As mentioned in the introduction, Green (2004, p. 248) defines transportation as 'an integrative melding of attention, imagery, and feeling, focused on story events'. It is characterized by 'negative cognitive responding, creating attachments to or feelings for characters, and making the narrative world seem more real and narrative events more like personal experience'. Green's research found that reading that is high in transportation discourages critical thinking whilst encouraging identification and empathy with characters. The codes for shallow reading were identification; affective empathy; comprehension and mechanics.

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Discussion

Complex characters

Participant Emma (pseudonym) offered an interesting case study in the way that complex characters influence interpretation and thought. Complex characters are those that contain contradictions. In *TMOS* these contradictions are emphasised due to the spatial form of the novel which juxtaposes two timelines. The spatial form reinforces the need to reassess characters as the reader is impelled to view and contrast the same character in a different time. Emma spoke about the three main characters: Colin, Colin's mother, and Hannah.

Emma formed initial judgements on the characters and yet her perceptions were constantly undermined by the text. This undermining made her reassess the characters and form new opinions. In forming new opinions, critical analysis, reflection, and insight were being activated. The text was effective in effecting this change in judgement in regards to the characters both of Hannah and Colin's mother but not Colin. The continuing empathy with Colin may be a result of the fact that the text is written from Colin's point of view. Emma seemed to identify strongly with Colin. She used terms such as, 'I can relate', 'it's sad', 'I feel terrible for Colin', 'I would feel rejected if I were Colin'. The most negative thing she said about Colin was, 'he keeps trying to please her [Hannah] it's almost annoying.' Whilst the goal of *TMOS* was to have the reader initially identify with Colin, aiding engagement, it was hypothesised that this shallow response may transition to increased reflection on the text as reading progressed. For Emma this simple identification with

Colin remained, despite the scene where Colin punches Hannah. This may, in part be due to the novel being written in first person with Colin as the focalising character. Character focalisation is a typical strategy for positioning readers to align with characters (Bal 1985).

Unlike Emma's relationship with Colin which was largely identificatory and empathetic, her relationship with Hannah began positively before becoming strained. Emma began with a positive attitude to Hannah, using terms like, 'I think I like her and I haven't even met her' and 'very fun person'. She then began to empathise with Hannah, 'I would be so furious if I was Hannah' and 'I feel terrible for Hannah'. Towards the end the identification between Emma and the character of Hannah began to break down as Hannah argues with Colin and her fidelity is brought into question. 'I could feel trouble with Hannah from the start, you never talk to anyone like that', 'Prediction: Hannah cheats on him with Daniel. I hate Hannah you don't do that', 'Hannah had those condoms for a reason. She was lying to Colin.' Emma clearly came out in support of Colin, despite Colin punching Hannah. Emma liked and empathised with Hannah before changing her judgement due to new information.

As with her relationship with Hannah, Emma's perception of Colin's mother changed during the course of the novel. All of the comments related to the mother were negative until the last,

> [S]he should be trying to help him, 'I'm so annoyed with his mum', 'I'm on the verge of hating Colin's mum. I wasn't fond of her before now. I really don't like her', 'His mum should feel guilty and I think she is in the wrong.

Later Emma reappraised, 'Colin's mum seems familiars (sic). His mum is caring.' This last comment seems at odds with those that have come previously; however, the reading context needs to be taken into account. The first set of comments were made in reference to the older narrator's storyline whilst the last comment referred to the younger storyline. Contradiction and complexity is evident in the characterisation of Colin's mother. In the older storyline, Colin's mother is overbearing in her concern for Colin and yet she distances herself both from Sam and Hannah. In the younger storyline, Colin's mother has high expectations of Colin but is supportive of his relationship with Hannah. The two contrasting representations of Colin's mother need to be reconciled into one impression. As progressively more information is added allowing her motivations to become clearer, her composite representation is understood in its complexity. The spatial form of *TMOS* encourages the reader to reassess opinions and judgements. Each time a judgement is reassessed, deep reading occurs as the reader measures up what they know, assesses its veracity, and compares it with competing information.

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Complex characters, aided by the structure of the text, compelled Emma to reassess her judgements and opinions of characters. The novel's revelation of other aspects of Hannah's character and the novel's closure which denies her the happy ending, prevented Emma from empathising and provided distance for more critical analysis. In Emma's case, using characters

that contained contradiction and complexity aided in producing deep reading as she applied critical thinking to the reading process. She had only deep reading comments, and no shallow, in the final third of the book. This coincided with more critical thought addressed towards Hannah, as evidenced by her comments that exhibited a loss of identification with Hannah.

The effect of spatial structure

The spatial structure of *TMOS* offered additional cognitive challenges to the readers as they were forced to recontextualise information. Lara commented, 'I like how the flashback chapter and the present chapter relate together – "don't let demons win" and "the demons circle".' This repetition of words within different contexts encourages analogical thinking as the readers take words, phrases and meanings and are forced to recontextualise them. Recontextualisation also occurs as new information is progressively revealed. An example of this is Lara's response to Colin punching Hannah and running away, 'I understand why he thinks he failed so badly with Hannah now.' The use of the word 'now' alludes to the fact that this had been an unanswered question in her mind. She had understood previously that Colin felt he failed with Hannah but this action which occurs near the end of the book completed the picture as she was now aware of the motivation behind the feelings. Information being revealed in alternate timelines triggered Lara's inferential and deductive reasoning and clearly exhibited a developing Theory of Mind, that is, the ability to understand another person's actions through the lens of their thoughts, beliefs and feelings (Zunshine 2006, p. 6).

The effect of defamiliarising narrative traditions

TMOS sought to defamiliarise narrative tradition through subverting common genre patterns. Two of the three readers (Emma and Lara) commented on the book being unlike other books that they had been exposed to.

> 'The idea behind it is great and it's different – an idea I haven't come across at all' (Lara). 'I haven't read a novel which is written like this yet it was really different how you mixed the past with the present' (Emma) 'I think most teens would love reading the book because it is not clichéd' (Emma). Luke commented in a similar vein, 'definitely not what I was expecting and had me in shock for a while.'

A book that seems unfamiliar will exert a greater cognitive load on the reader since they need to continually reassess characters and alter predictions as further information is revealed. Emma alluded to this constant reassessment, 'The book was very unpredictable to be honest the only prediction I got correct was the one that Mia and Colin would get together.' This defamiliarisation seems to be balanced with engagement as all three readers recorded a

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positive reading experience. 'I loved the book it was so interesting … I read it in one week, a real page turner' (Emma). 'Very sad and depressing but the book had me hooked and I enjoyed reading it' (Luke). 'I loved it' (Lara).

This case study suggests that exposure to less formulaic texts may provoke more critical thought while reading.

Adolescents exposed to a wide range of diverse books having a greater chance of encountering unpredictable texts. Diversity, in this sense, refers to thematic concerns, to structure, and to the story itself. In her study of novels that elicit high levels of transportation, which corresponds with shallow reading, Green (2004) acknowledges that these books most often fall into the category of best-sellers. This case study suggests that exposure to less formulaic texts may provoke more critical thought while reading.

The effect of withheld information

An example of how withheld information contributes to deep reading is found in reader responses to untagged dialogue passages. In contrast to action or descriptive passages these contained a greater ratio of deep to shallow comments.

Table 1. Frequency of shallow and deep comments for three types of narrative

Narrative Type	Shallow	Deep
Untagged dialogue	14	19
Action	12	8
Description	9	5

When the reader comments were coded as deep or shallow and then cross-matched with the type of narrative on the corresponding page of text some interesting patterns began to emerge. Unlike other types of narrative, untagged dialogue or unattributed dialogue elicited more deep comments than shallow. We posited that this is due to a greater amount of withheld information within passages with straight dialogue and reduced narratorial guidance. This withheld information produces greater levels of ambiguity and enforces a higher cognitive load on the reader; this is discussed in more detail below.

…withheld information produces greater levels of ambiguity and enforces a higher cognitive load on the reader…

The responses to action passages contained 12 shallow comments and 8 deep. An example of this is when Colin kisses Hannah after their date. Emma commented, 'Ok now that was very

fast they kissing already, I feel excited for Colin.' This comment shows affective empathy as she was feeling an emotion along with the character. Empathy is coded as a shallow response. In response to Colin quitting his job after his boss told him that Sam – his newly discovered infant son – shouldn't be there, Emma stated, 'I wasn't expecting that to happen but finally we can say Colin wants Sam.' Emma's futural interpretation, the script she was trying to follow, was thwarted by this narrative event, and therefore needed to be reassessed. She also utilised her deductive reasoning, a deep reading skill, in order to extrapolate that Colin's action in standing up for Sam and giving up a job, meant that Colin wanted and perhaps newly valued his son (i.e. rather than simply aiming to get Sam out of his (Colin's) life as soon as possible). Action passages were found throughout the text and elicited a fairly even split of shallow and deep comments indicating that action passages do not necessarily elicit only one type of reading.

Descriptive passages also showed a trend toward shallow over deep comments with 9 shallow and 5 deep. Descriptive passages as defined by Bal (1985, p. 130) are 'textual fragments in which features are attributed to objects'. A fragment is considered description when this function is dominant. An example of a descriptive passages in *TMOS* is Colin describing his bedroom.

> I go home, grab a bowl of cereal, devour it, turn some music on and lie on my bed. It's my favourite part of the day. My parents are still at work and my brother Kev isn't home from uni yet. I can do whatever I want but right now I don't want to do anything. My mind is full. I stare up at my posters: Star Wars, Alt J, Foo Fighters. I feel like a different person now than the one who walked out of here this morning. I feel older. I get up and start ripping down posters. These posters belong to the person of yesterday, not the one of today. Posters in the bin I take another look around my room. My desk is cluttered with old papers and things I thought were important; old tickets to concerts, photos of me and my friends being idiots, anything written to me from a girl. From a guy and they would almost immediately be thrown out. From a girl they mean possibility and so I keep them. Until now. Now I pull over the bin and start throwing things out. Anything I don't absolutely need is gone. It's time to be a different me, an older more assured me, a me Hannah will want.

Mieke Bal (1985, p. 130) argues that description inserted into a text requires 'motivation' from the actor. This motivation can be brought about through speaking, looking, or acting. In this passage the actor, Colin, is motivated by action as he cleans his room. This allows the opportunity to ascribe features to the room (theme) and, walls and desk (sub-themes). The posters describe the walls while the desk is 'cluttered with old papers'. These features given to the sub-themes combine to describe the main theme. Motivation through action also incorporates narrative elements into the description. Nevertheless, in this case, the descriptive features remain dominant. This passage, while describing the room, also stands as a metaphor for the change that Colin is undergoing as a result of meeting Hannah. The responses to this passage included comments such as, 'I know the feels – ha ha. Just enjoying being alone (Emma)' and 'I love the band alt-J' (Luke). Both of these comments showed some identification and empathy with Colin but did not engage higher order thinking skills.

Where descriptive passages showed evidence of more shallow than deep reading, passages with untagged dialogue engaged the readers in more deep than shallow reading. There were 14 shallow comments and 19 deep.

Below is an extract from one of these passages:

> I ring Mum. She picks up on the second ring, efficient as always.
> 'Mum. I need you.' I launch straight in, scaring the shit out of her. There isn't time for a prelude this time.
> Are you okay right now? I'll call your psychologist.'
> 'Mum! Stop and listen.'
> 'Okay.' She says quietly. I hate yelling at her.
> 'So I just got a call from DHS.'
> 'DHS?'
> 'They told me that Hannah has a son, my son. He's four and he's on his way to my place now. I don't know what to do.'
> 'But how did this happen? I don't understand. I mean I thought...'
> 'Mum I had no idea about this.'
> 'Are you sure. Is this why...?' And like that we're back where every conversation over the past five years has inevitably led.
> 'No Mum,' I say emphatically.
> 'Because I never really understood.'

The withheld information, the lack of narratorial guidance, and the multiple perspectives, all of which are features of modernism, are found in this passage and lead to more instances of deep reading. Firstly, there is very little mediation from Colin as character narrator. In this page of text there are two instances where Colin helps to unpack or shape the story through his own commentary; 'efficient as always' and 'And like that we're back where every conversation over the past five years has inevitably led'. The rest of the text is almost purely dialogue with just a few indicators of tone such as 'quietly' and 'emphatically'. The sparseness of commentary allows the reader an unmediated view of the action, allowing the reader to form their own opinions.

These gaps in the narrative invite the reader to question, surmise, and engage their deductive reasoning.

Cognitively in a passage such as this the reader is simultaneously engaging multiple thought processes. Firstly, they are monitoring events as well as who is speaking and to whom. This ensures that comprehension is accurate. They then need to read between the lines and look for what is not spoken, the subtext. This passage adds to what is already known about Colin's mum, principally that she is over-protective, efficient, and prone to panic. The intrigue in this passage is found in mum's response to Colin's news. 'But how did this happen? I don't understand. I mean I thought...' The reader is never given the end of that sentence nor for the one that follows, 'Is this why...?' The reader given information to represent how Colin's mother reacts to events but not enough at this point in the narrative to fully grasp her motivations. These gaps in the narrative invite the reader to question, surmise, and engage their deductive reasoning.

Emma commented regarding this passage, 'Why does his mum keep saying that she will call a psychologist? She should be trying to help him herself.' Luke noted of the continuation of this conversation on the following page, 'Why can't his mum help more?' The full context of this passage is not realised until the reader finds out that Colin's mum offered to pay for an

abortion and that Colin attempted suicide. Once these events are known it is likely to cause a retrospective reassessment of this passage.

We suggest that dialogue engages deep reading skills for a few different reasons. Firstly, it is largely unmediated by a narrator. Secondly, the reader has more to monitor as they constantly alter perspectives, thereby exercising Theory of Mind to a greater extent. Thirdly, dialogue by its very nature contains more gaps that the reader must fill with their own deductive and inferential reasoning. As the literature on modernism suggests, withholding information encourages ambiguity.

...dialogue by its very nature contains more gaps that the reader must fill with their own deductive and inferential reasoning.

Conclusion

Despite similarities between the readers, and the fact that they all processed the same text, each reader provided differing emphases in their comments. These comments were shaped by the reader's world view, experiences, and their level of acuity. Each reader exists in a different location on an individual cognitive path and it is therefore impossible to predict a generalised response to a text. In the context of this research, these responses exhibit the effect of the novel's textual strategies on these specific readers.

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TMOS was successful at both engaging adolescent readers and provoking deep reading. The readers' comments suggested that both the complex characters and spatial structure contributed to deep reading as they encouraged ambiguity and forced the reassessment of judgements. Passages of untagged dialogue provoked deep reading, arguably due to the lack of narratorial guidance, the amount of withheld information, and the alternating perspectives of the different character speakers. Defamiliarising narrative traditions also produced deep reading as readers were forced to reassess judgements and predictions.

Reading modernist texts, as Virginia Woolf (1966, p. 81) asserts, 'We are at once conscious of using faculties hitherto dormant, ingenuity, and skill, a mental nimbleness and dexterity such as serve to solve a puzzle ingeniously.' (Adolescents, as our paper suggests, benefit from this same opportunity). The use of a custom-crafted text using modernist strategies shows that writing deploying complexity, ambiguity, and diversity can have traction with adolescent readers, while stretching their cognitive skills and expanding, or modifying, both their world view and narrative expectations. For literacy specialists, the alignment of cognitive skills with deep reading reveals the importance of encouraging deep reading in students. Reading involves a developmental journey and as such book selection is both vital and an ongoing challenge.

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...books should incrementally increase the cognitive challenge on the reader offering further opportunities to enhance their higher order thinking skills.

Ideally books should incrementally increase the cognitive challenge on the reader offering further opportunities to enhance their higher order thinking skills. An awareness of the strategies within books that are more efficient in producing deep reading such as complex structures, dynamic characters, dialogue, and ambiguity might aid educators and librarians in recommending books to individual readers.

The insights gained through this empirical study can also be used to inform writers' practice as the textual strategies that produced deep reading are balanced with strategies to increase engagement for this cohort. The novel was written for a specific audience and purpose – young adults – and to assess whether modernist techniques can promote deep reading. The reading journals, when analysed, were able to show when deep reading was occurring for each of the participants. For the writer, this gave insight into the balance required between ambiguity and narratorial guidance for this cohort and the specific structures, such as untagged dialogue and a spatial relationship to time, that can encourage deep reading. The information gathered through the reader journals can inform the writer's future work for this cohort. When writing with a specific aim, this reader response methodology reveals how reader journals can give insight and illustrate potential responses that can inform writing practice.

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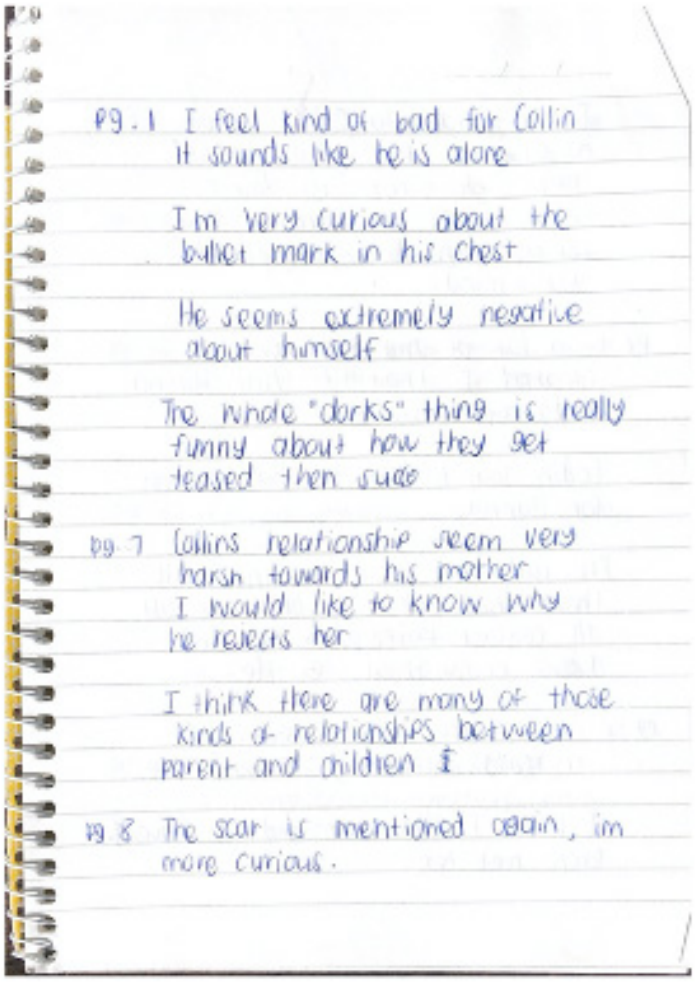
Appendix 1: Code sheet

Category	Main Code	Description	Example
Shallow reading	Identification	Comments where the reader recognises aspects of themselves in the protagonist.	'I know the feels- ha ha. Just enjoying being alone' (Emma, p. 25).
	Affective Empathy	Comments where the reader feels an emotion on behalf of the protagonist.	'I feel kind of bad for Colin it sounds like he is alone' (Emma, p.1).
	Comprehension	The reader shows an understanding of plot points.	'A lot of my confusion is cleared I thought that Hannah had been run over. Colin sounds like he had feelings for Hannah' (Emma, p. 9).
	Mechanics	Comments regarding punctuation, style, and the form of the writing.	'The sentence "you want to light the fire Sam" doesn't make sense' (Lara, p. 303).
Deep reading	Inferential and deductive reasoning	Comments where the reader is extending meaning beyond what is found in the literal text.	'deep imagination means Hannah is clearly important to Colin' (Luke, p. 10).
	Analogical skills	Comments that show that similarities are perceived in different situations.	'I'm not sure what someone can do that can make you reject a pregnant 15 year-old girl...I guess I can relate my mum was 17 with me and was kicked out by her mum and my gran' (Emma, p. 155).

	Critical analysis	Comments where a judgement, opinion or argument is expressed by the reader.	'Colin talks himself up but he is not really that 'tough' when meeting Hannah's guy friends' (Luke, p. 128).
	Reflection	Comments that show that there is increased consideration or contemplation of a part of the text.	'enjoy your freedom' is interesting- when we are young we want to move on with life; when we are older with more responsibility, we long for the freedom of being young' (Luke, p. 88).
	Insight	A deep understanding of the internal nature of things.	'It touched on many ideas that are relevant to teens it also revealed how our expectations for the future are bound to change. It demonstrated how many teens are, we get so consumed with infatuation and lust we fall in love with the idea of someone' (Emma, end).

Appendix 2: Reader diary: Sample



pg. 1 I feel kind of bad for Collin
It sounds like he is alone

I'm very curious about the
bullet mark in his chest

He seems extremely negative
about himself

The whole "dorks" thing is really
funny about how they get
teased then sucks

pg. 7 Collins relationship seem very
harsh towards his mother
I would like to know why
he rejects her

I think there are many of those
kinds of relationships between
parent and children ☺

pg 8 The scar is mentioned again, im
more curious.