

THE USE OF VICTORIAN LITERATURE IN A GED LITERATURE LESSON

by

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(Under the Direction of Donna Alvermann)

ABSTRACT

GED curriculum materials often lack critical thinking skills in the textbooks on which, teachers base their lesson plans. The Literature portion of the GED textbooks includes excerpts from various cultural writings as well as from fiction and non-fictional works alike, but students are not required to analyze the literature. I examine a Victorian novel *Middlemarch* is an appropriate text to include into the GED curriculum in order to teach critical thinking skills. I revisit my college text to rework my subjective interests in the novel, while I create a more objective and useful view of the novel and the power structures inherent in it. I apply the novel to a GED classroom in a day-by-day lesson plan to promote critical thinking through the use of *Middlemarch*.

INDEX WORDS: Literature portion of GED curriculum, Critical thinking, Victorian novel, *Middlemarch*, Implicated reading, Implied reading, Relationship of author/text/reader, Power structures, Feminist pedagogy

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DEDICATION

To my husband, Matthew Hewett, this thesis is for you, thank you for the countless ways
you support me.

To my children, may you be free to pursue your dreams and conquer your fears.

To my friends and family who have supported all of my pursuits.

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CHAPTER ONE

INTRODUCTION

Being a successful reader is an important aspect of being employed, of traveling, managing money, parenting, and renting. These are all things that we actively do on a daily basis. To do them well, whether it is reading instructions, the newspaper, financial documents, a report card, or even a lease, decoding and interpreting the written word is vital. Many adults who are lacking reading skills or a General Education Development diploma, actively join a reading class just to advance their careers or even to apply to a technical college: they read for work, not for pleasure.

Jennifer Sandlin, in an article examines adult literacy workbooks that are prevalent texts in GED preparation classrooms. According to Sandlin (2000), for the past thirty years adult education programs have focused instruction on basic skills that are centered around; real-life tasks (pp. 289-290). The problem with this approach is that it does not situate the adult learner as an active participant in his or her education. Nor does it equip the learner with important information in order to achieve social and financial mobility but instead, encourages the learner to accept the status quo. When the texts used in adult literacy classrooms are examined, the "[...] dominant discourses of the economic, social, and political systems in which this education is embedded are reflected with in it and help to shape it" (p. 290). The adult learners are the recipients of the curriculum that does not speak to them as students but instead as trainees who will be good workers.

These students do not have access to literary or historical texts rather the texts offered are worksheets and simple handouts. Apple and Christian-Smith (as cited in Sandlin 2000) state that the standard curriculum does not contain cultural information (p. 292).¹ Adult learners, who recite standard simple lessons, are not given the opportunity to engage with texts or meet authors who see injustices in their era and seek social change. For these students to be successful readers, they need more than decoding skills they need to be taught how to interpret what they are reading. The words chosen to describe a place or an event are based on another person's ideas. In order to have a grasp of what to do with the text; a reader needs to be aware of how the author is positioning the reader. I will be using the terms, "implied reading" (Iser, 1978, p. 34) and "implicated reading" (Pearce, 1997, p. 8) to refer to concepts regarding how readers engage with the author and text in a reading event.

Guiding Questions

I have two concerns that I seek to discover through the course of this study: What happens when a teacher takes *Middlemarch* (originally published in 1872) a Victorian novel, and uses it to explore how an implicated reader reads such a text critically? How will adult GED students be affected by an implicated exercise involving a historical novel? The inclusion of a piece of historical fiction into a GED preparation classroom will expose adult students to a different era and to a different text than most have ever read before.

Locating the Students

Teaching adult students to use their intellect and to learn decoding skills was a joy of mine as I saw much progress, albeit quite slow. I have greatly enjoyed the act of teaching the

¹ Apple, M.W. & Christian-Smith L.K. (1991). The politics of the textbook. In M.W. Apple & L. K. Christian-Smith (Eds.), *The politics of the textbook*. (pp. 1-21). New York: Routledge. "[...] do not include the historical experiences and cultural expressions labor, women, people of color, and others who have been denied power" (p. 9).

mechanics of reading and I have since become more interested in the process of reading as I have worked with GED students.² After the active decoding process comes the understanding and interaction needed to truly comprehend not only what the author is stating but also what is meant and how a reader fits into this equation. Sadly, I did not see GED students apply the critical thinking that is needed during and after a sentence is read.

Could these same adults be taught not only to decode words but also to "read" how the author positions the reader? Would these adult learners be interested in learning how we are all positioned by what we read often times without knowing it? Reading is indeed a wonderful skill to have and one that is vital to be an active participant in every day life. It is also an interactive process that is missing in adult literacy curriculums that I have taught and, yet, is an essential component to the learner pursuing a GED.

Now that I have experience teaching adult learners, my next goal is to be a better-equipped teacher through critical thinking and interaction with texts read in and out of the classroom. I draw heavily on my own experiences as a learner and a teacher. I seek to present a thorough and applicable means of adopting critical literacy skills as a teacher and implementing them in a reading class of students who aspire to pass the GED and, possibly, move onto a technical school of post-secondary education.

A Most Unlikely Text

I have chosen what may seem an unlikely component in carrying out my desire of teaching critical thinking skills. I use George Eliot's *Middlemarch*, which is a well-known Victorian novel written in 1872, as the catalyst for discussion and interpretation in an adult education classroom. As Iser (1978) states in *Act of Reading*, novels provide an alternate world

² Dalton Community College, Dalton, Georgia. Average basic reading group was 1-5 adults and the GED preparation class size was between 5 – 10 adults. I taught both types of classes from August 1998 to August 2001.

completely created by the author composed of narrator, characters, plot, and the fictitious reader. Moreover, meaning is produced at the intersection of these four elements in a fictional piece.

The British Victorian era was a fascinating moment in history, which can provide an interesting element to a reading event in the GED classroom. During this era, class distinctions were commonplace because they had been in existence for hundreds of years previous. By the nineteenth century, the boundaries between upper, middle and working class were becoming blurred. The increase in factory production by means of steam power allowed many rural people to move to the city, which provided more means to make additional yearly income (Mitch, 2005, p. 27). Education was provided to both city dwellers and those in rural areas, but the necessity of being educated did not always ensure that children stayed in school. Since the Industrial Revolution introduced mass production of goods, most workers had to be educated only in their line of work, which did not include reading and writing instruction (p.29). Once the class system became more fluid those who previously did not have access to a higher quality of life, were then able to provide more extensively for themselves and their children, and this included a solid education with access to a variety of literature.

The nineteenth century opened up a time for women fiction writers to be published, still disguised as men by using male pen names, and for a more diverse audience to read these works. George Eliot crafted several novels, but in particular, *Middlemarch* spoke to her society, which continued to prosper but yet maintained traditional standards for women. *Middlemarch* broached the gender inequalities in the Victorian era, while a greater reading population was able to enjoy her writing, and begin to make changes to the society that only allowed women a small role in their culture (Moers, 1977, p. 39). I find that GED students will have access to Eliot's writing because she maintained an authentic view of her society and all of the variations of people while

writing *Middlemarch*. She was successful in writing novel which upper, middle and working class alike, could read and enjoy. Eliot's concern was not with class issues, but with gender and this is what I emphasize as well.

I have chosen this unique novel for three important reasons. The first reason is because of my love and appreciation of this text. I feel as though I have grown up with *Middlemarch*, and the novel reminds me of ideas I had when I first read it, and the same is true now in my fifth reading. George Eliot has accompanied me on my search for understanding literature and has contributed to my desire for others to experience her writing. Pearce (1997) refers to a significant text in one's life as, a 'bible,' a work that has the reader's devotion in an almost spiritual way (p. 108). I feel a profound attachment to the novel in general and more specifically to a certain character. One of the most important things in teaching is to have a connection with what one is teaching. I feel as though by using this text in an adult classroom there would be a tremendous opportunity for students to recognize a positive relationship with reading and to go on searching for their own interests in books.

The second reason is that this book speaks volumes in the area of contemporary gender inequalities. George Eliot very carefully crafted a novel that bespoke of the injustices of women being groomed for motherhood and nothing else, while their husbands pursued careers and had mistresses. The historical impact of this time period is evident not only on gender issues but from a literary viewpoint, a successful female author producing such an acclaimed work of fiction. She herself was misjudged and treated unfairly, which is one reason why she took a male pen name to continue publishing her works. Eliot cloaked her critique of society in flowery language so that her Victorian readers did not interpret her critique of why women's gifts are often left unnoticed because of their gender. The novel's historical setting will afford an adult reader with

the opportunity to learn about a fascinating time in the past as well as a lovely use of language. *Middlemarch* may be the only novel that some of these students will ever read and it provides a paradigm in how to view others based on who they are on the inside and not based on their gender or any other external difference.

Lastly, *Middlemarch* is a wonderful study in the important and interesting world of critical literacy that views how a reader is positioned. By using this text I can explore, along with students, the importance of reading between the lines and to hear what George Eliot was truly saying. She was critiquing her culture and her times. The students I have taught lack confidence and this can be traced to their lack of reading abilities. I want them not only to take on a difficult text, one that they perhaps cannot imagine being able to read let alone relate to the characters, but to come away with skills to read critically. Tackling such a text with the help of other learners and a dedicated teacher can instill much confidence in these students that can be built and then applied elsewhere in life. By using this text, these same students will learn a life lesson that applies equally to the reading of a newspaper, a lease, a job application, or even a report card. In the process of learning how to read critically, these students will acquire much needed self-confidence as they step out into the world more equipped to deal with the texts all around them.

Implied Reading to Implicated Reading

Reading is a political and gendered event and, therefore, adult students need to be equipped with skills that allow them to interact with the text to decipher the various positionings the author intended - not only to be aware of the politics of reading but also to locate oneself as the active reader interpreting a message that involves explicitly deciphering what the politics are and moving on with the text as an informed reader. Empowering adult readers is what is lacking

in GED preparation curriculums and modeling a reading of *Middlemarch*, a Victorian novel, as an implicated reader could teach critical literacy skills to adults preparing for the GED exam. Incorporating an applicable lesson midst the GED textbooks will provide a much needed component to the GED curriculum. Students will not only be exposed to interesting literature, a different era, but also to reading for pleasure.

Chapter Outline

In Chapter Two entitled, "From an Implied to an Implicated Reading Approach to *Middlemarch*," I offer a brief outline of the theoretical models that contribute to my analysis of *Middlemarch* and which will also inform my methodology of introducing this novel to adult GED students. I will begin with a brief selection of literature, which will establish a need for the study I intend to do here, a discussion of feminist pedagogy, a concise inclusion of Freire as he pertains to adult literacy education, and a theoretical standpoint of "authentic realism" (Mills, 1996, p. 56).

I will also define Iser's definition of an implied reader that he develops in two books. First, *Implied Reader* (1974), Iser expounds on his notion of implied reader by applying it to selected historical novels. Lastly, in *Act of Reading* (1978), Iser describes past notions of how a reader interacts with a work of fiction from the author's perspective. He outlines the process of how the literary concept, implied reader is an active yet undetermined role that the reader engages in during a reading event.

After exploring Iser's ideas, I move on to describe how Pearce (1997) uses Iser's works among others theorists to discuss the roles of author/text/reader in the production of textual meaning.³ Pearce's interest lies in the tension between "implicated" and "hermeneutic" modes of

³ Pearce refers to Iser and to Fish, S. (1970). *Is there a text in this class? The authority of interpretive communities* Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press.

reading. She focuses on the processes of reading which she terms implicated that results in a text-reader relationship; while the hermeneutic approach is more concerned with the mechanics of the interpretation of reading. Pearce introduces one last reader-theory to develop the concept of implicated reading one step further: the role of pleasure in the reading act.

Pearce's method is heavily dependent on the use of the personal in an autobiographical scheme, which I intend to use as an analytical tool to dissect my earlier Eliot readings and writings. I add to my repertoire Kamler (2001) and her experience from *Relocating the Personal*. Kamler focuses her study on bringing personal writing into sites where it would normally not be found such as argumentative writing. Kamler's description of voice and use of the narrative assists teachers to apply personal writing in the classroom. Kamler informs my study as I draw on her instruction of personal writing in an academic text to analyze *Middlemarch*.

In Chapter Three, "Approaching an Implicated Reading of *Middlemarch*" I will peruse my earlier assumptions with Pearce's method of scholarly reflection over old texts while narrating an updated view. I will draw heavily on my senior integration paper to locate biases as well as other flaws in my previous reading of *Middlemarch*. A critique of my original analysis of the text will serve a didactic purpose: I will provide a text to adult learners that I have worked and re-worked through, in order for them to understand the author and to relate to the text. I take students with me in hopes that they will appreciate the experience of learning about Victorian English culture as well as the social issues of the time.

In particular, I need to return to the insufficient critique in my senior comprehensive paper I wrote in 1997 for a Victorian Literature class. My first reading of *Middlemarch* has not satisfied me. At the time I thought I had constructed a better understanding of the novel for myself and for my Victorian Literature professor. She did not have any answers for the questions

I had regarding such a dense text as *Middlemarch* and much to my disappointment, she started out the Eliot portion of the class by announcing that she could not address my questions. I have a deep unrest in regards to my previous views on Eliot's gender issues, which she addresses in this novel. I plan to step back into my previous analysis and to dive deeper into Eliot's story, including: the sharing of herself, her ideology, her views of Victorian English culture, the gender inequalities of her time, and her desire above all to encourage social change in all people. I will analyze my paper from college and reread *Middlemarch*, while I exercise Pearce's (1997) method combining an autobiographical/first-person reading and "re-memories" of these texts with a retrospective commentary (p. 21).

Pearce makes use of four different reader-strategies, of which I will adapt two to my study. The reader-strategies relate to the act of implicated reading by how a reader enters a text to participate with the story. The first strategy is "character-identification," where the reader identifies emotionally, spiritually, mentally with one character to such an extent that the reader is in the text (p. 132). The second is "subject-positioning," where the reader connects with a character's role while remaining objective with the character's actions but to not identify with the character (p. 132). I plan to use these two strategies with my senior paper in preparation to introduce similar strategies to GED students to enhance the reading experience.

As a complement to Pearce, I will include Barbara Kamler and her book, *Relocating the Personal*. Kamler is interested in cultivating personal experiences into a narrative where the writer can be affected in profound ways. Seeing myself embedded in the greater context of my culture and by taking the personal and applying a post-structuralist framework, I can then explore the politics and power relations existent in my personal experiences with *Middlemarch*. My goal is to explore the act of reading from a critical standpoint where I can decipher the power

structures and various cultural positionings that exist in my writings as well as in *Middlemarch*. Pearce will lead me in uncovering my former biases as a college student while Kamler will aid my writing from the personal of my past ideas to the present.

In Chapter Four, "Applying Implicated Reading in a GED classroom" I will make the transition from the personal to the instructive as I relate my findings to a classroom setting. I will begin the chapter by discussing the standard GED curriculum and then I will address why *Middlemarch* would be a beneficial addition to the curriculum. I will take what I will learn from my analysis of my texts and earlier assumptions, to make a more objective understanding of *Middlemarch* for my students. Only when I understand and have fully engaged with a text am I able to bring it to a classroom for instructional purposes. When I started out as a student with this literary work as a time marker, I was not aware of how this text would affect my life. I now approach this text with a student's perspective and more recently a teacher's implicated perspective. I will be approaching the instruction from a personal as well as a professional point of view that includes specific lectures, reading, and journal writing assignments. These tasks encourage students to explore their own connections with *Middlemarch*.

CHAPTER TWO

FROM AN IMPLIED TO AN IMPLICATED READING OF *MIDDLEMARCH*

This chapter contains a brief outline of my methodology, which will provide a theoretical framework that I will use to analyze *Middlemarch* in Chapter Three. I have chosen the terms implied and implicated from Iser and Pearce respectively, which describe the role the reader plays in a reading event. These two terms will assist me in reaching my final goal of bringing *Middlemarch* to the GED classroom.

In order to challenge my previous notions and biases concerning *Middlemarch*, I will approach this study from the standpoint of who I am now and what I am affected by. When I wrote my college paper I was very new to feminist theory. In addition to being more familiar with feminist thought and locating a distinct reading approach now, I am better equipped to revisit and to attune to the power structures I embedded in my text. I intend to uncover how I located myself at the time and unknowingly allowed myself to be situated in the text of my college paper as powerless, which I will expand on in Chapter Three.

First, I will review the literature regarding the studies, which have been conducted, to establish a need for my study. Along with this section, I will discuss my feminist pedagogy and the influence of Freire on this position. Then, I will survey Iser because I find his application of the implied reader is most useful when he explores his own set of historical novels. Next, I will explore how Pearce advances Iser's notion of the implied reader to provide a more sufficient explanation of the act of reading. Lastly, I will refer to Kamler and her use of personal in writing in an academic setting. By bringing in these three authors, my study will benefit from their

influence on the personal aspects of reading, writing, rereading and engaging with the various texts that I will use as teaching tools in a GED classroom.

Absence of Novels in GED Classrooms

Any academic study to be applied to the classroom involves reviewing the need and lack of previous research done in the field to which I intend to add my findings. The majority of the articles and research that have been conducted in the adult literacy field has focused on adult basic education. Studies that touch on subjects, for example: culturally relevant services to students (Quigley 1997), exclusive use of functional literacy and job related subjects (Venezky 2000), technical literacy versus critical literacy (Fueyo 1988), the combination of critical reading skills and social activism (Degener 2004), and a socio-linguistic approach which includes discussion of social norms and “discourses” (Gee 1997).

Similar issues need to be addressed in the GED classroom. The research done in the areas of social and critical pedagogies are influential to the GED classroom and should be applied. In reviewing the literature, more is written questioning, applying and reviewing teaching pedagogies in the adult basic education classroom. The focus still pertains to the functional aspects of teaching GED subjects so that the students will be able to pass the high school equivalency exam. These students are capable of reading on a much higher-grade level than their counterparts in the adult basic reading classes. The time, energy, and determination that these students have can be harnessed to not only teach them how to test well, but to also read critically. This will then not only assist them in their pursuit of a diploma, but also in every day life of reading various texts. GED students will benefit from being exposed to actual literature that provides insight into critical and implicated reading while they experience pleasure from reading fictional texts.

I review four articles relating to my study through similar curriculum shifts, bringing in outside literature to the GED classroom, including popular romance novels, and encouraging adult students' life knowledge to assist in GED lessons. Each of these studies seeks to meet the needs of GED students by either focusing on the importance of literature in their every day lives, or by seeking to understand how these students function so well with skills they have acquired outside of an educational setting. I focus on these four articles to establish both a need for more literature to be brought into the GED classroom as well as literature that have been introduced and how successful it has been.

Kristina Lanier (24 March 1998) describes a literacy outreach effort sponsored by the PEN American Center, the US branch of an international organization of writers, where an author of interest speaks to a group of GED students in Boston. The experiences of how literature has relevance to daily life are one of the important outcomes that GED students cite from listening to guest speakers. In this particular article, Ms. Jen is an author who writes about her experiences as a Chinese-American, speaks to a group of GED students to discuss the process of writing. The group includes many immigrants as well as Americans who each have his or her own reasons and needs for attending GED classes. Ms. Jen focuses on the benefits of these students to meet an author and to see how literature can relate to someone else's similar experiences in life.

Lanier expresses the importance of GED students to be in close proximity to people who have struggled but have become successful writers and readers. Granted the speakers who come for these sponsored lectures are professional writers, it still impacts the students to see another person apply reading and writing in their lives. The speakers are modeling to these students the

enjoyment of reading and the world that is open to each of them when they do engage with a story of some kind.

When Larry Dill (Summer 1997) began to teach Adult Basic Education at Austin Community College, he was instructed to pass out Steck-Vaughn GED books and to help the students pass the GED exam. He started by examining the textbook and decided to supplement his first lesson with some outside recourses on the first reading section, Langston Hughes. Dill brought in a play written by Hughes and had the class read the play together and act it out as best they could. He found that this was a successful way of incorporating the students into the lesson, by using ideas from the GED textbook, but departing from it in order to supplement it. Since Dill's first session with Langston Hughes, he has been interested in developing an alternative curriculum, one that is a college preparatory program, "with a slant here and a slant there toward the needs of the population that you all know so well" (p. 106).

Dill has gone on to incorporate various other works into the classroom, William Shakespeare, George Bernard Shaw, Sophocles, W.E.B. Dubois, Ovid, Charles Darwin, and Toni Morrison. After the class finishes reading each book, Dill has a special presentation of a film, which relates to the work. He reads to them during class, as well as gives them assignments to prepare for the next class discussion. Dill's students are all engaged with the text because they are listening to him read therefore they are able to discuss the readings in class. The students also write papers of analysis and critique for Dill. He writes back to the students just as he would have a conversation with them. He asks important questions which spark deeper engagement with the current text. Dill found that students were encouraged to study because they were learning and interacting with literature. They were not simply sitting in a classroom being lectured to or working alone to attain their GED.

He has essentially marginalized the standard GED curriculum by creating his own schedule of courses. In his day time class, Dill has four hour sessions four days a week, where students will be working with computers, humanities, math, and independent study time. He does not have a timeline for students to achieve their GED or any other ending to his classes. Dill's passion for the literature he provides to his students is one of the most important things in motivating his students - his motivation to learn.

Dill had a very different approach to GED preparation than did the Steck-Vaughn curriculum. He found that the GED pedagogy contributed to, "an educational caste system" (p. 109). He sought to provide a rich continuing education for adult students whether or not they are interested in college. Dill's students are liberated by their introduction to so much literature whether it is Greek Mythology, Greek Theater, studies in Hispanic culture, American Art History, studies in African culture, or mathematics. The exposure that students are getting in Dill's classroom exceeds the experience with literature from the standard GED textbooks.

A study conducted with a group of mature women in a higher education program in the United Kingdom, studied romance texts to identify the romantic discourses that are pervasive in women's personal lives. Christine Jarvis conducted this study while teaching her students from a feminist, transformative standpoint. The research purpose was, "to generate evidence of the development of critical awareness and changes in meaning perspectives" (Jarvis, October 1999, p. 111). Jarvis began the class by summarizing previous critical studies regarding romance literature and the influence of this genre on the lives of the women in the study. She focused on the argument that romantic discourses discussed in a classroom setting can examine the texts and encourage critical reflection regarding the similarities in text and experience.

Through examining the power structures, "the privileging of monogamous heterosexuality", inherent in the romance texts they read in class, the students then examined how cultural significant this study was to their own lives and how they shaped their own experiences (p. 112). Jarvis introduced subversive and oppositional reading strategies as they read the texts as a class. Thus the women were not only reading the texts to debunk power issues within romance novels, but they were being equipped to read critically on their own.

Rebecca Rogers (2004), describes the GED curriculum as being decontextualized and scripted, rather than coming from the adults' lives and focuses on the importance of GED students' life experiences and successes outside of the classroom to affect their learning in the classroom. The importance of this study is to build into adult education curriculums, the learning and literacy experiences of the students who join these classes. The classroom components that are highlighted in adult literacy research are that of: "alphabeticity, fluency, and comprehension" (p. 275). Unfortunately, these skills are taught in a sequential order that are used with children and are not necessarily as helpful with adult learning needs.

Rogers makes a distinction between transformational learning and informational learning. Transformational instruction is built around, "participatory, dialogic, and collaborative" education (p. 276). Informational instruction refers to the preset curriculum and standardized materials. Most adult education classrooms are based on teacher-based lessons where students are to fulfill specific requirements and homework assignments from GED textbooks. Rogers cites examples from students who were labeled "reading disabled" but who achieved management positions and were able to continue adapting to the work environment as it changed. Sadly, these particular students considered themselves to be stupid, while in life outside of the classroom they were highly successful people. These students bring to the GED classroom

a wealth of literacy experiences that they do not even realize that they have. The ability to function in every day life and to do it well, despite having reading difficulties is a success that is not praised in the GED classroom. Students need to be able to acknowledge their successes and their deficiencies so that they can be taught to use their existing knowledge to learn what they are missing.

Each of these studies supports my notion of including relevant discussions, interesting literature, and critical reading into the GED curriculum. Students need to be involved in their education so that they can transfer their knowledge to life outside of the classroom. My choice of literature is an unusual choice, but it can be a successful venture for the students who are interested in learning.

Authenticity of a Reading Event

Lastly, I focus on Sarah Miller's (1996) notion of "authentic realism" to add to my interests of teaching from a feminist perspective (p. 56). This perspective affects the position of reading and how the text is related to the reader. The reading act is taken out of a theoretical place and brought to a personal and more practical location. A feminist reading strategy focuses on the model of relation between text and the world. The critical approach occurs where the author, text, and reader exchange different life views. The affect of women's writing on readers, can allow from political insight to lives and ways that patriarchy limits women, people of color, and other marginalized groups. I focus on the ways that students who have a weak education background are marginalized because of their lack of reading from an implicated perspective. I seek to teach these students a valuable lesson so that when they read on their own they have access to deciphering the power structures in the texts.

Authentic realism grew out of the consciousness raising movement of the 1970's where women were discussing their experiences highlighting the general feeling of patriarchal control over their lives. This movement arose from an increase, "in fictional writing by women which was positioned as highly autobiographical" (p. 57). The texts were written in a first person narrative emphasizing events that were parallel to the author's experiences. The author's choice of words and tone were paramount to the narration. The writing style of these texts, addresses the reader in a more direct way than traditional writings. The first person narration allows for a more effective reading and relating on the part of how we think of ourselves and how our lives are different from the characters. An emphasis is also placed on the pleasure of reading, as the reader is able to access the characters from a straightforward stance where the enjoyment of the reading is very much a part of the reading event.

Feminist Pedagogy

I begin by asking key questions regarding feminist pedagogy in the GED classroom. What makes certain teaching styles feminist? Is it the pedagogy or the content or both combined? I ask these questions so that I can be aware of my teaching style in the classroom and how I interact with my students. In Frances A. Maher and Mary Kay Thompson Tetreault's book, *The Feminist Classroom: Dynamics of Gender, Race, and Privilege* (2001), they highlight four critical themes of interest to practicing feminist teachers as they relate with their peers, their students, and with the course readings in various universities and departments across the country. The four themes are, mastery, voice, positionality, and authority. I find these themes of interest to my approach to teaching GED students an implicated reading lesson.

Mastery in the traditional context has meant, "the rational comprehension of ideas on the teacher's and expert's terms" (p. 17). The hierarchy that exists in the classroom causes

information to be passed from teacher to student through lectures and other methods of teaching to transfer knowledge to students. All of the students are then, "measured by the same external standard and graded in a competitive hierarchy according to his or her approximation of that standard" (p. 17). Students seeking knowledge on their own terms with the assistance of their teacher are more likely to acquire mastery over a subject so that it becomes a part of their construction of knowledge. The dynamics of a feminist classroom come from discussions, student inquiries, teachers listening to student input, and the sharing of student writings. All of these things involve the student in the learning process and make it a more meaningful venture on the part of the student and for the teacher.

Maier and Tetreault depict "voice", as a personal expression within the classroom arena where teachers and students, "fashion their voices rather than 'find' them" (p. 19). The concept of voice assisted in students relating to one another in a diverse cultural classroom setting. Students were more apt to voice their thoughts and then critique their statements within the confines of a secure environment where everyone is heard, and each person is viewed as having valuable thoughts. Students' ability to share their experiences and their own connections to texts, proved important to the development of knowledge and awareness. The classroom is considered a place where identity can be discussed. As discussions extract features of students' identities that shaped their classroom voices, "we must also consider the influence of race, class, and culture" (p. 96). Viewing voice as an important aspect to who we are as individuals in the classroom, assists discussions around literature to delve so much deeper than the lecturing method. I find that this is a crucial aspect to approaching adult students in the GED classroom with an implicated reading lesson. By understanding that each of these students has a personal history and understanding of their culture, allows for classroom discussions to be more applicable to the students' lives.

Positionality is an important theme, where the notion of valid knowledge is concerned. Postmodernist feminist thinkers view knowledge as legitimate, "when it takes into account the knower's specific position in any context, a position always defined by gender, race, class, and other socially significant dimensions" (p. 22). Incorporating awareness and an acceptance of each student's background, culture, race, and gender, is an important aspect that affects classroom discussions. By allowing students to ask questions, to discuss readings and other assignments, opens the boundaries between each student as they learn from one another. Understanding that we each have a distinct background from each other is important to the sharing of perspectives and to the construction of knowledge. When students are given the opportunity to listen and to discuss with others different from them, provides a place where practical learning can happen.

The notion of authority in the classroom has a profound affect on the acquisition of knowledge and the ability of the student to apply this knowledge outside of the classroom. When a teacher relinquishes certain facets of authority in a classroom, for students to be more responsible for their learning, the structure of how knowledge is created becomes more noticeable. The traditional teaching style of lectures and group discussion practices, affects the dynamic in the classroom. Students follow the script that the teacher provides often without giving much thought to the subjects at hand. When a teacher uses his or her authority as a means to facilitate discussion, focus on students' questions, and guide the voices appropriately, the focus turns to the student. The classroom has a different feeling, students are aware of their place in the classroom and that their perspectives matter. Being a part of the process of creating knowledge for oneself is an important feature in learning for practice rather than learning for a test. Life lessons can be taught and applied from the classroom, if the opportunity is taken.

The different aspects of feminist pedagogy in the reading classroom have assisted in how I shape my GED classroom in preparation for an implicated reading lesson. The four themes mentioned earlier, all play crucial roles in my interaction with the texts as well as with my students. The notion of mastery allows me to remember that I am curious about the students' experiences with *Middlemarch*. I know the novel well, but I want to know how others interact with Eliot and her work. Voice and positionality are related by how students are positioned in their background and who they are now. How they use their words to express their thoughts and to participate in class discussions is a very important aspect to my classroom being a space where students are comfortable with their thoughts to share them. Authority is a position that I do not like to inhabit in the classroom. I prefer to approach a learning event as a team with my students rather than from a hierarchical standpoint. I plan to use students' journals and questions as a guide to teaching implicated reading. I want the students to feel as though they are a part of the lesson and it is not simply a means to an end, but a life lesson as well. I incorporate an authentic realistic reading into the reading of *Middlemarch*, as an additional way to interact with the text. I want the students to be aware of different writing styles and how that positions us as readers as well. Eliot chose to write a novel with a main character who, was much like her. I want to know how this affects the readers. I am curious about how this makes the reading more personal or pleasurable.

Paulo Freire, a Brazilian educator and theorist concerned with class politics and literacy in adult education settings, contributed to feminist pedagogy by the nature of his interests in class systems, which inhibit many working people from being educated and finding active means of changing their poor situations. Although Freire was not a feminist, some of his ideas assisted feminist thought as it has come to inform classroom pedagogy. Freire has assisted feminist

scholars and teachers to critically examine one's position in life aside from his focus on socioeconomic status, but also towards gender, educational background, and race.

A component to Freire's impact on the politics that exist in the classroom, was his notion of "banking" (as cited in Cohee 1988), where "knowledge is a gift bestowed by those who consider themselves knowledgeable upon whom they consider to know nothing" (p. 117). In this concept, the teacher holds the power by being the holder of knowledge who is responsible for filling up the students' empty "receptacle" (p. 117). In order for the students to be filled they must allow themselves to be filled with knowledge and the more they allow themselves to be filled, the better the educator. Instead, of this hierarchical view of education, Freire posed, "problem-posing education, which consists in acts of cognition, not referrals of information" (p. 117), and "co-intentional education" (p. 117). The key to this position on education is through the act of dialogue where the students and the teacher are no longer seen as the one who is taught and the one who teaches, but rather both roles revolve around being taught while also teaching. The students and the teacher share an active dialogue where "they become jointly responsible for a process in which all grow" (p. 67). At the heart of Freire's concept of dialogue, he believed that by entering into authentic conversation, the class politics that exist in students' lives could be addressed and actively fought against. The role that education played was that it was a mutual location for teachers and students to meet to learn literacy strategies while learning the role of power structures that exist in life due to socio-economics.

Freire's critical approach to dialogue and the act of reading is based on his beliefs that humans are primarily social and oppression is a function of race, class, culture, which shape the psychology of an individual. If education allows students an active and critical participation, then students will challenge the oppressive social relations, which have lasting psychological effects

(Endes, 2001, p. 402). The critical pedagogy, which ensues, hopes to empower and to liberate students by changing the consciousness of power in the current society in which the students are struggling. The act of critical reading demonstrates that every text is embedded in a social context that contains political ramifications. Critical literacy assumes that learners are grappling with an oppressive culture and so the understanding of it coincides with critique of it in order to overcome it, by naming it.

Freire's use of dialogue within the classroom between students and teachers did not apply the dialogue to texts. The equal and respectful participation which comes develops from oral communication did not extend to communication through or with texts (Endres, 2001, p. 409). Freire was more concerned with oral dialogue than with text-based dialogue. He discussed dialogue through the teacher to student and student-to-student relationship, which implied "free, active, mutual participation in communication" (Endres p. 409). I depart from Freire at this point because literacy stems from and is related to the spoken word. Texts are still acts of communication, which are dependent on the reader to understand and to either agree or disagree with the claims introduced by the author. I expand on this principle through my use of Pearce's implicated reading whereby deciphering the power structures inherent in a text and development of a subsequent dialogue with the text.

Unlike dialogue, most texts involve strategic involvement. The reader must do more interpretive work to make up for the differences in context. Critical pedagogies tend to consider the text as representing structural power relations rather than perspective. Becoming a sophisticated reader of different kinds of texts is not only about resisting imposition of meanings, as in an implicated reading, but also sympathetically engaging and allowing the text to expand one's perspective. I am not only preparing students for "one political struggle, but for a lifetime

of reading practices that will have personal, interpersonal, and political meaning that cannot be anticipated by teachers or policy-makers” (Endres p. 413). I employ the works of Iser, Pearce, and Kamler to assist me with the text based dialogue, which are the power structures and socio-economic classes within texts.

Feminist pedagogy has similar qualities to Freire’s proposed hierarchy in the classroom, as the feminist classroom is a communal place where epistemological differences are noted and where other differences are acknowledged as well. Socio-economic status does play a part, but not exclusively as it does in Freire’s concerns about education. Freire felt that those who struggled together against oppression would move toward true humanity. But this does not address the different forms of oppression that exist in the classroom. Teachers are affected by race, class, gender, and she has a historical context all of her own. In a feminist classroom, these differences are recognized and addressed so that oppression can be challenged in all of these arenas, within the classroom and outside of it. By understanding that the differences of race, gender, sexuality, age, ability, and educational background exist, assists in the transformation of social relations in the classroom, which ultimately impact life outside of the academy. As students learn the art of reading from an implicated standpoint, they are then able to read outside of the classroom and to decipher the existing power structures as active readers.

Implied Reader

Iser (1974) introduces his concept of the implied reader in his book, *Implied Reader*, when he chooses historical novels based on the social context of when they were written to explore the role of the implied reader. The novels Iser delves into are distinct to him because they have traveled into history in certain spaces where new thoughts are a part of a selective process. A novel does not necessarily reflect the social and historical norms of a time because the

language is a selective process. The world constructed by the author may be in opposition to his or her contemporary culture but this difference is still very important. Understanding the socio-historical aspect of a novel's space in time will assist in the reading process. The term implied reader,

[...] incorporates both the prestructuring of the potential meaning by the text, and the reader's actualization of this potential through the reading process. It refers to the active nature of this process - which will vary historically from one age to another - and not to a typology of possible readers (Iser, 1974, p. xii).

According to Iser, the implied reader has two important aspects that were not included previously by other theorists. The first is the reader's role, which is built into the structure of the text. While the author recognizes that the reader will decipher the textual meaning through the cues provided in the text, the author is aware of the reader but is not intrusive by placing the reader in the structuring of the fictional place. The second factor is Iser's interest in the process of reading from a contemporary and historical standpoint. He is trying to find a common feature between the reader and the movement of time. One is stationary while the other is not. He achieves his goal by locating the position of the reader in relation to the text without causing boundaries to be indistinguishable.

In *Act of Reading*, Iser (1978) continues to use the term implied reader to define and to reposition who the reader is and what the reader's role is as an active participant in a reading event (pp. 30-33).⁴ Iser contends that in order to understand the effects of literature and the

⁴ Prior to Iser arriving at this term other attempts were made to describe and define the reader in relation to the text. Fish's term, "informed reader," for example, was a concept more concerned with the processing of the text by the reader than with the effect of the text on the reader (Iser, 1978, 30-31). Another category of readers from Wolff's standpoint was considered the "intended reader" (Iser, 1978, 32-33). This reader was built into the text as a historically fixed person the author had in mind. The reader could only embody the concepts of the contemporary culture and also to pursue the author's progression of thought to make

responses that inevitably follow, the reader's presence must be acknowledged while the character and the author cannot predetermine the historical context of the reader. Although, texts take on reality by being read, the text must contain some cues so an active reader can construct meaning. The implied reader is included in the structure of the text as well as "the reader's role" being a "structured act" (p. 35).

The textual structure of a novel is a construct from an author's perspective that shapes the fictional world the author creates. The novel is the best example to illustrate the "system of perspectives designed to transmit the individuality of the author's vision" (p. 35). Whereas in non-fictional texts, the author does not have as much creative control over the world constructed. The meaning of the text is accessible to the reader due to knowing the subject. In a novel, meaning is produced at the intersection of the narrator, the characters, the plot, and the fictitious reader as they converge in a general meeting place. The meaning is not explicitly stated in the text; rather it emerges through the reading process while the reader's role is to shift among the different perspectives offered which will evolve into a pattern laid out by the author. While the textual structures are provided for the reader, what the reader does at the meeting place is the structural act of the reader: "The vantage point of the reader and the meeting place of perspectives become interrelated during the ideational activity and so draw the reader inescapably into the world of the text" (p. 37). Therein lies the tension between what Iser identifies as the role offered by the text and the real reader's own disposition. The reader is then positioned to create meaning from the perspectives offered from the text.

Iser informs my choice of the novel as a literary genre, by his discussion and analysis of the author/reader relationship in light of nineteenth century theory. During this era the reader was expected to deduce what part he or she was to play in the make believe world of the novel. It was

then the reader's responsibility to take on a critical approach to the reading for the event to be productive for the reader. The author cleverly "nudged" the reader to make the "right" discoveries (Iser, 1974, p. xiv). The connection I make to *Middlemarch* enters with the main character or hero/heroine of the nineteenth century novel. The reader is able to access and participate with the traditional hero/heroine due to the self-awareness of this character's identity.

The main character's role is unquestioned as it contains a look into an objective world via a believable reality. Iser states the reason why the hero/heroine's role was not questioned was, "because the heroes of the novel were meant to illuminate the naturalistic milieu, the destinies that sprang from it, and the actions that were connected with it," (p. 122) in the form of attempts at social change. Therefore, the main character then ceased to be a reflection of reality and became an unquestioned existence in the mind of the reader.

Nineteenth century authors employed the concept of subjectivity to be the "perfect mediation between self and world" (p. 123). Authors of this time period were using subjectivity as a structural component to frame the theme of the novel. The end result is that subjectivity appears as a historical concept that is no longer valid as the meaning of the novel unfolds.

An important aspect that Iser develops in his book, *Implied Reader*, is that of discovery. Aside from the reader discovering the meaning of the text, he or she also constructs a new world that brings another aspect to the act of reading. Pleasure, or as Iser states, "esthetic pleasure," (p. xiii) offers the reader two possibilities along with the reading process. The first is to be free of the limitations of the reader's own social life that afford a release to the reader. The second is to exercise the emotional and cognitive traits of being human. These points provide an important perspective for the reader; not only is reading for information, but it is also for pleasure. Often in adult GED reading lessons, reading as an act of pleasure, is not included in the curriculum.

Reading is simply an activity that must be done well enough to pass a test with purely functional results. For the sake of adult students, they need to know reading is a world waiting to be explored that they can access and enjoy.

The Implicated Reader

Pearce (1997) uses Iser's work among other theorists to discuss the roles of author/text/reader in the production of textual meaning (pp. 5-6). I focus on how Pearce arrives at the term, implicated reader, by building on Iser's concept of an implied reader. My study benefits from both concepts but Pearce describes an analytic process that I will employ to analyze *Middlemarch* proficiently, and then apply in a GED classroom.

In her book, *Feminism and the Politics of Reading*, Pearce (1997) focuses on the processes of reading, which she terms as implicated, that results in a text-reader relationship. Pearce clarifies the role played by context in a reading event by "[...] reconfiguring reading as an *interactive and implicated process* rather than a *hermeneutic practice*" (p. 15). She explains that the hermeneutic approach is more concerned with the mechanics of the interpretation of reading. Now the reader's "textual other" (p. 17) is not necessarily a character in the text but could be a member of the reader's social set. Pearce identifies the textual "[...] 'other' as absolutely central to a full appreciation of how we come to interact and dialogize with texts in a non-instrumental way" (p. 17).⁵ Pearce is then free to pursue her notion of the "text-reader relationship *as a relationship*" (p. 17). She also makes the point that once the reader discovers the textual other, the reader has the power to decipher the author's code.

A key component to this discussion is the concept of "textual positioning" (p. 11). This is where emotion in the text-reader relationship is categorized in the "[...] context of meaning-

⁵ Pearce makes a distinction from her previous uses of 'other'. Here her 'textual other' does bear resemblance to Lacanian psychoanalytic theory, her term is closely related to Bakhtin's 'dialogic others' (p. 17).

production rather than through engagement of a textual, or contextual, 'other'" (p. 11). Pearce is focusing on this relationship in order to call attention to the politics of reading. She questions who holds the "balance of power" (p. 49). Pearce states that part of the excitement over a reading event is the "dialogic relationship" with a text and not knowing whether this text will position the reader as an "ally or an antagonist" (p. 49).

All texts contain codes or standards for readers to either connect with or to reject. The issues of class, race, gender, age all play a part in relating to the reader. The reader is not simply at the whim of the text; the reader is capable of embracing or rejecting the positioning done by the text. The politics of reading depends on the reader taking ownership and responsibility "for negotiating the terms" of relating to a text (p. 49).

Pearce introduces one last reader-theory to develop the concept of implicated reading one step further: the emotion of pleasure in the reading act. She explains that pleasure is the only emotion described to explain why people read and this is because "interpretation itself is pleasurable" which coincides with the hermeneutic approach to reading theory (p. 9). Roland Barthes (as cited in Pearce 1997) has analyzed pleasure to be dependent on "discontinuities of the reading process" (p. 9). In other words, the reading event is composed of both the words on the page and the natural breaks that occur while reading. Pearce advocates that, "the emotional fabric of the reading process depends very much on an interweaving of textual and extra-textual associations" (p. 9). There is a cue in the text that prompts the reader to connect with a personal or intertextual experience and allow for a break from the text. These are important moments to the interpretation of a work, because through these moments the reader is able to connect the author's world with his or her own experiences.

Pearce's method is heavily dependent on the use of the personal in an autobiographical scheme. She is interested in debunking her previous ideas by using critical hindsight to examine the repositioning done by time, education and political knowledge. Pearce employs a case study on her previous assumptions concerning film, art, a photographic exhibition and two novels. She is the subject of her study as I am of mine. I plan to follow Pearce's method of re-reading previous texts, re-memorying and exploring it all through a narrative that will provide a view of my former biases (p. 2).⁶ Donna Alvermann (1999) also uses this form of analysis by revisiting three of her published articles, in their original form. She uses, re-memory as a tool to access and record her thoughts concerning these three previous articles, before rereading them.

I highlight Pearce's interest in pursuing her relationship with previous textual others. She is troubling her preceding notions by using headings that are distinctly related to the process of a romance. Pearce bases her method on the stages of a romance. I depart from her here by using her method but not her headings. I plan to revisit textual others that will refer more to subjects than to distinct processes of emotion. I am interested in, as is Pearce (1997), about the movement we do in a text how we, "voyeuristically explore our textual others from all angles," so we can identify the script used and participate (p. 25). Pearce explains ways in which she undermined "the dominant ideologies of the texts concerned," and inserted herself into their "gaps and silences" (p. 45).⁷

I have chosen Pearce for two reasons: her approach to reading as an implicated process and her interest with the politics of texts. The concept of an implicated reader is an essential approach to a critical reading of a historical novel in a GED classroom. Pearce uses this term to

⁶ Pearce borrows "re-memory" from Morrison, T. (1988). *Beloved*. London: Picador. Pearce uses the term to mean that she writes down her memories in advance of a re-reading.

⁷ Pearce uses, "gaps" and "silences" from a model of "symptomatic reading" from Macherey, P. (1978). *Theory of Literary Production*. (Geoffery Wall, Trans.). London: Routledge.

inform the text/reader relationship as an emotional and personal encounter. The value of being an implicated reader recognizes the emotion involved with reading in the form of pleasure; thus adding an important element to the critical reading process. Lastly, Pearce is concerned with the textual positioning and the direct correlation to a gendered power structure. This is an important aspect to analyzing *Middlemarch* and to teaching adult students to decipher the power that exists in a text.

Including the Personal

Kamler (2001) is an appropriate companion to Pearce in *Relocating the Personal*. Kamler's discussion of writing describes the sites where personal writing is not usually included in the curriculum and then she applies personal writing to those places. Kamler unites the social, cultural, and political arenas into a personal space. Her goal is to bring the personal to alternative and more theorized ways of reading and writing by, "working against the notion that meaning is ever simply personal, individual or private" (p. 8).

The personal aspect to my analysis will be important to how I frame my writing of my rereading and re-memorying my former work with *Middlemarch*. I will draw on Kamler's instruction of personal writing in an academic text to analyze *Middlemarch*.

Kamler's description of voice and transformation are key components in a discussion of the personal. She defines voice as being situated and embedded in a distinct context at all times. Voice is not a therapeutic maneuver to empower the writer but rather to test former subjectivities and to transform them. This approach contains a semiotic and a textual layer that creates, "a theorized space" (p. 36). Kamler argues that voice in itself is never neutral but is always situated among social relations of race, class, gender, and sexuality that affect writing. By recognizing

that writing is a subjective exercise; writing of self, changes it into a "textual artifact" (p. 54) that allows a wider range of use provided by the simple act of writing.

As Kamler explores the notion of voice she becomes dissatisfied with the cultural connections to the term. Instead Kamler replaces voice with "story," in order to critique writing and the location of self more effectively (p. 45). The concept of story allows a way of seeing experience and locating it in the context of specific situations: cultural, historical which are related to "time, place, gender, race and ideology" (p. 45). A story is a site of struggle both for the writer and the reader because neither is isolated in the making of meaning. A social structure is always intact when writing is discussed, especially from a subjective standpoint.

Kamler demonstrates three very important outcomes from viewing personal writing as stories: a separation between the writer's life and experiences is very clear, the work of writing is more accessible to the learner because the process of writing is evident, and lastly, stories are a "learned cultural practice" (p. 46) so that they can be scrutinized and assessed critically for a more in depth analysis. Transformation, according to Kamler, is better suited to view as "change" (p. 47). Change, "allows us to imagine the possibility of rewriting the multiple and contradictory subject positions we occupy and/or bringing into being new positions to sit alongside the old" (pp. 47-48). Writing is a transformative process, but just as with voice, transformation carries with it assumptions about the writer. The personal act of writing is a site of change to occur where the personal is not empowered but rather given agency; the private act of writing is replaced with the highly specific.

In Chapter Three I will begin with writing a re-memory of my senior paper to locate it in a specific time and context. I will re-read my paper and then I will choose six sections to focus on and to analyze using Pearce's analytic method, Iser's construction of nineteenth century novel

writing/reading, and Kamler's personal approach to my interest in teaching GED students, critical thinking and reading skills. By using Iser, Pearce, and Kamler, to assist me in analyzing my senior paper, I will gain insight into *Middlemarch* from a fresh perspective in order to present it to adult GED students.

CHAPTER THREE

APPROACHING AN IMPLICATED READING OF *MIDDLEMARCH*

In approaching an implicated reading of *Middlemarch*, I will analyze my paper from college and reread *Middlemarch*, while I exercise Pearce's method combining an autobiographical/first-person reading and re-memories of these texts with a retrospective commentary. I will also employ reader-strategies, such as character-identification and subject positioning modeled by Pearce to enter into the text as a participant. As a complement to Pearce, I will include Barbara Kamler and her book, *Relocating the Personal*. Kamler is interested in cultivating personal experiences into a narrative where the writer can be affected in profound ways. Both of these writers will assist me in my examination of my college paper.

I leave the original phrasing intact to assist me in my critique and analysis of my college paper and of *Middlemarch*. A critique of my original analysis of the text will serve a didactic purpose: I will reconstruct the events in *Middlemarch* and in my paper, so that I will better teach my students an implicated reading. Iser will accompany the process of deciphering the history and contemporary culture of *Middlemarch* to explore the relationship between a reader and the time in which the story is read in a GED classroom. I will provide specific reading and writing assignments for GED students in Chapter Four.

Seeing Myself Reading "Myself"

As aforementioned, I begin with a look into the past as I reflect on my senior paper in college. I attempt to return to that place in my history where I chose George Eliot and her *Middlemarch*. The first item that comes to mind is how new I was to feminist theory. I was swept

away by this new form of thinking, something that I knew existed, but I needed to locate feminist theory in my life and teaching practices. George Eliot was a historical example of how a woman could be successful despite the cultural expectations of her time. I identified with her as she crossed uncharted territory with her writing and through her unconventional life. I most definitely was not living an unconventional life, but my environment was that of a small religious, private college. I always seemed to be stretching for something beyond my reach. At the time George Eliot gave me a reason to pursue feminism and literature, two things I enjoyed studying.

I focused on how to understand a deceased writer from a different time. I was fascinated by what this woman was saying and how she was describing her culture. I wanted to uncover something monumental that no one had discovered; to resurrect her capability for juggling her intellect, writing while maintaining her awareness of contemporary social issues. She seemed to me so conscious of the patriarchy under which she lived and yet was not afraid of it. I desired her audacity and fervor to write and to thrive in a time that did not naturally accept a successful woman writer.

George Eliot was not the only woman writing in her era, but I felt a kinship to her because of her desire to see people change and to be more conscious of others. I could identify with the sense of striving against a system that did not acknowledge me to be capable of success based on my talents. I felt the current of a small Christian college to marry, settle down, raise a family, home school the kids, and to knit. I wanted more in life and I think I succeeded in finding it. As a single woman I was most definitely out to change the world, one adult basic reader at a time.

What I remember most when I wrote this paper, were my feelings. I felt proud of myself for discovering some answers to my own questions but even this process seemed incoherent at best. I mostly associate a sense of dissatisfaction to the end result of my senior paper. Once it was completed I felt a relief but I was unhappy that I did not sufficiently explore Eliot's world. What all of these negative emotions come down to was a profound lack of confidence as a writer and a researcher.

What I was learning at the time was the value judgments of my religious culture. I still did not notice how I was allowing those rules to shape how I viewed myself. I was at the cusp of learning where I was positioned but I still had some years in between doing something about it. I needed to find another location from which I made judgments and acted accordingly.

Looking back I see a student who was interested in the notion of empowerment through feminist principles but who still positioned herself as inadequate. I gave the authority of my voice to the power of the institution and what was expected of me in order to graduate. I did not locate myself in my research - at least not as an authority in my life. Always, someone else on the periphery held esteem above me.

This type of thinking is gone now. Through experience teaching and meeting others, I have gained a new respect for myself as an educator and as a student. I am more interested in the process of learning than in the end result. I do not search for the end in a lesson, but rather how it evolves. I tend to revisit old ideas to challenge them and to see how they need to change. I am not afraid to rework and to reread parts of my life that I previously thought were done.

Prior to graduating college, I was concerned with who I was, what this senior paper would entail and how it would change me into an adult, while making me marketable on the job force. Now, prior to my rereading of this paper, I am not focused on myself. I am more interested

in the process of being a good writer, of becoming an even better teacher, and helping adult learners gain access to this text as well as to other texts they will read.

What I remember most about *Middlemarch* is Dorothea Brooke. She was George Eliot's most autobiographical character, which is one reason why she stands out in my mind. This audacious woman who faced adversity in her small town and did not allow gossip to change her course in life awed me. I mostly remember being curious about Dorothea's sense of self. When I reread my senior paper, Pearce and Kamler have equipped me to analyze and structure myself through the text. For example, she was such a strong character who above all else desired happiness in others before herself. She was a martyr in the sense of marrying for the sake of knowledge and not for love, at least not the first time. Dorothea is an interesting character that must have fascinated the readers of Eliot's time as well. How could such an intelligent young woman be so blind to the ways of the world? Did she not realize that she was a female and should not dabble with assisting the poor with housing issues among other things?

An Implicated Revisit to a Personal Text

Now focusing on my senior paper, I highlight six excerpts to better illustrate how I positioned myself as an author through my writing. I will quote the paragraph verbatim and then critique the passage. I return to this paper aware that I am missing from my own text. I did not include myself in my writing by avoiding the use of "I" to express what I thought about *Middlemarch*. I was a removed narrator simply explaining the story as it unfolded and never introduced a direct thought or interpretation of the novel.

Linda Brodkey (as cited in Kamler, 2001) uses the term "I Site" to describe the physical spaces inhabited by every human, that are constructed through individual experiences, social, and historical spaces (p. 3). When I recognize that my writing and therefore my personal

experiences are located in a cultural context with specific discourses, I am then able to critique and identify the "discursive practices that construct the sense of self"(Kamler, 2001, p.3). I am able to view the vocabulary from my past experiences from a more objective standpoint because I know where these words originated. I can explore the roots of the words in my own life. I am now able to return to my past writing and analyze it to decipher my language choices thereby naming the positional structures I created in my text.

I was absent from such an important aspect of my education - my own analysis. I simply parroted what Eliot and outside sources wrote and used so many direct quotes and never arrived at an opinion. The center of this paper lacks any form or function of a literature paper. For example, in the following quote, I tried to draw parallels between George Eliot, the author, and Dorothea, the character:

Both Eliot and Dorothea have interests that took them outside the traditional scope. They desired to gain knowledge concerning academic pursuits and did so. Jenni Calder⁸ makes several points worth noting: Eliot's profound interests were with women who had hopes and aspirations beyond the conventional, women who wanted to achieve things - who were impatient with the aims usually attributed to them (126) because Eliot herself exhibited these longings. She writes about women who are singled out because they are unusual, atypical, unrepresentative-symbolic of the deeper stirrings and frustrations of women's life in general (126). Yet her women characters were not unusual in terms of humanity, history and needs and wants of women in general (126). Dorothea had a 'common yearning for adulthood,' and felt the necessity of being something more than a passive receiver of experience and translates this need at

some point in her life into doing good for others (146). Eliot develops her own understanding and expression of doing good for others on a large scale of writing for and about women. (p. 6)

I begin by noticing the volume of quotations in the paragraph, which is still unclear in its purpose. Jenni Calder was the expert in this passage, whereas I was simply a provider of her thoughts. I notice the fear that is a subtext behind all of the quotations I used in this paper in general, but this passage in particular.

My role as a writer was not to be analytic and to decipher power structures in my own text. Although, the information had been gathered to support my thoughts, I did not add the necessary connections to the text. I placed Calder as the expert to establish a reputable foundation to support the direction I intended to take my study.

At this point in the text, I have positioned myself as an unsure and voiceless writer. I did not have distinct thoughts or establish any sort of relationship with the reader, author or even the reader of my own thoughts. I was simply a repeater of information, which I had thoughtfully gathered from other writers. As a result, I had no authority in this text, which causes an outside reader to feel reticent and skeptical early on in reading my paper.

I did not explicitly state my opinion on the similarities between author and character. I assumed that the reader would make the necessary connections between the quotes. I required much from my readers while not providing enough information to assist in the comprehension process. I positioned myself to be the dutiful student who completed an assignment, but who did not explore the purpose of such a task in making decisions about the content of *Middlemarch* and how I viewed it.

⁸ Calder, J. (1979). *Women and marriage in Victorian fiction*. London: Routledge & Kegan Paul.

I reflect on Kamler's distinction between voice and story concerning the focus of this text. At this revisit, I focus on the story, the "textual orientation" to draw attention to what is written instead of the writer (Kamler, 2001, pp. 45-46). There is a certain amount of laying yourself bare in academics for others to judge, but it is not personal. I was not able to separate the personal from the written word when I wrote this paper. I find Kamler's work on relocating the personal to be so important to this revisit because of my renewed sense of how the personal is important in an academic setting. In the attempt to keep myself out of my writing, I allowed others to judge me by criteria that I did not provide.

I did not connect Dorothea's story to my life to demonstrate the personal affect her character had on me as it evolved through the novel. I had a bond with this female character but did not articulate what it was that I related to or why. The lack of an explanation over the connection I felt with Dorothea was absent. I refer to Pearce's notion of character-identification in order to tease out what the connection was between me the writer and Dorothea the main character of interest in another section.

Role of Religious Terms

To continue in the vein of religious expectations and beliefs, I jump ahead to a paragraph from my closing thoughts from my senior paper. I chose to end my paper with a reflection upon how it applied to religion. In order to have this paper considered for grading, I had to insert an application to religion, which I did just that: inserted a section at the very beginning and the very end.

As followers of Christ, we have a responsibility to view one another as made in the image of God and to act accordingly. Therefore, we see that each human being contains uniqueness and a design. Our different genders are an

addition to our individual diversity. We all have different things to contribute to the world whether it is a perspective, idea, or an occupation. Eliot's motive for writing Middlemarch was simply to present us with the realization that the contributions we can make in our society are endless, and they are truncated when we do not allow or recognize the works done by people simply because of a gender difference. (p. 19)

I notice how different I have become from this struggling student who wrote this last paragraph. Here again, I reiterated all that I have been taught in the church and at school. There is not, however, a change to my spirituality only different words to determine it. I feel now as I felt then that there are important aspects to what attracts me to faith, but I am better able to define it now. Then, I thought I had the vocabulary and experience to define God and to describe my relationship with the Divine. While spiritual, it was much more formulaic and dependent to a degree on my interpretation of how I thought Dorothea related to God in her world.

I find that upon reading this last text, I appealed to a removed God, one who was very much like Casaubon. I saw him as an aging man who held the power to my degree of happiness. A decrepit man who was not interested in the everyday goings on of life that was meaningful and removed from scholarship.

Now, I can equate Ladislav with a newer and improved version of God. I forget the earlier problems with his character and instead focus on his vitality, his love for his wife Dorothea, how intense and sensitive he is and mostly how good he is at communicating. I find that this change has been brought about partially by returning to this novel and reflecting on my old reading and interpretations. This is a necessary component of good literature, I connect with the text in such a way, that I can return to it like an old friend. The text allows me to remember

my past ways of thinking and I can delight in those changes.

Loss of Self-Mirrored in Passage

The religious background of my upbringing and education affected my reading of the text. I turn now to the idea of submission and how this relates not only in religious but also in a relational context. Submission is a term that I have grown accustomed to in school and in my childhood home. The role of submission is an important concept for women to learn; they are under the authority of God, the church and husband. I find many parallels to Dorothea's situation and the expectation of her submission in her culture to the cultural expectations in the lessons I learned while in college. The balance of power was based on gender in both situations. I recognize the interplay of submission and the success of fundamental Christianity, but I no longer agree with the authoritarian view of how men, women, and God relate.

The following passage reiterates my feelings of subservience and of my writing style to describe Dorothea's relationship that I had previously evaluated as a poor choice.

Unfortunately, Dorothea does not give herself credit for who she is as a person, when instead Casaubon is much more of a failure in his responsibilities to the marriage. All he has had experience in and passion for is studying and gathering information for his book. He does not have a frame of reference to draw from in order to be a worthy husband of Dorothea. Dorothea is an incredible woman as she makes Casaubon's life comfortable, but she still feels inadequate: "Surely I am in a strangely selfish, weak state of mind,... How can I have a husband who is so much above me without knowing that he needs me less than I need him?" (Eliot 87). Dorothea convinces herself that Casaubon is right. She discounts herself and her feelings because she assumes that her husband, the male

in the situation, is correct. She has a lot of work to do in separating herself from this mind set and really discovering who she is as a woman, a wife, and a part of society. A beautiful thing about Dorothea's character is that she does come to a point in her life when she thinks about her personhood and individuality. Her dysfunctional marriage brings her to that place through the course of many revealing events. (p. 12)

In *Middlemarch*, I related to Dorothea's character more so than any other character in the novel and to take it further, in most other fictional books I have read. In this sense *Middlemarch* was my bible⁹, as I had a profound sense of reassurance in relating with Dorothea despite her irrational rationalities. I saw so much of myself in her that it evoked much discomfort because it was so easy to critique my similarities evidenced in another person. At this particular portion of the novel, I realize this is where I moved Dorothea away from my criticism to where I came to relate with her as if to ease her pain.

My textual other I can now identify as Dorothea and I notice a relational development entering into her character from this point on until her decision to remarry.¹⁰ Now that I have named my textual other, I can approach the novel through a more emotional and personal way in order to locate the underlying involvement that I have with Dorothea.

I echo Pearce's (1997) similar relationship with a fictional character, Waldo, in *The Story of an African Farm* (p. 131).¹¹ Pearce (1997) uses this novel and character to illustrate the reading-strategy of character-identification, which she cites as the character, Waldo whom she

⁹ A reference from Pearce (1997) introduced in Chapter One, "[...] the Bible is itself the quintessential symbol of the consecrated text: something that is not only an 'aid' to worship, but to be worshipped for itself" (p. 108).

¹⁰ I borrow Pearce's use of "textual other" to name the portion of this implicated reading where I "enter" or "participate in" the text as I relate on a personal level with Dorothea (p. 17).

¹¹ Pearce uses Olive Schreiner's novel in her analysis of the reading process – implicated reading. Schreiner, O. (1993). *The story of an African farm*. New York: Bantam. (Original work published in 1899).

comes closest to identifying with, in an "authentic realist sense" (p. 110). I highlight this form of reader-strategy, as it will be an important tool to employ when teaching adult GED students the value of relating with characters in a text but specifically in *Middlemarch*. I will apply two different reader-strategies in my lesson plans in Chapter Three. I will adapt the strategies for a GED classroom setting after I employ them here.

In Pearce's experience with character-identification, she relates most with Waldo, so as other characters come in contact and relate with Waldo, they are in fact relating to Pearce. I cite this example as one of Pearce's texts used in *Feminism and the Politics of Reading*, to model what Pearce has expressed in how she has related to a character in a personal text. The identification that we as readers attune to in certain characters is an emotional and a meaning-producing event.

Similarly, I self-identified, and continue to do so with Dorothea's character. I participate with this text to the extent that others are relating to me through Dorothea's character. I feel emotion based on others direct dealings with Dorothea or what was stated out of range of her person. I am able to accompany Eliot as she depicts the world of Middlemarch the town, but I am also taking clues from each character as to how they relate with Dorothea. Just as Dorothea's character was affected internally by her thoughts and daily experiences a correlation develops between submission and loss of self for her character as well as for me, the writer.

Repercussion of Loss of Self

In the previous quote, Dorothea had gone through a process of submitting to the authority of her husband and how that affected her. Now that she has done so, she was driven even further in despair as she realized her husband was not the intelligent and capable man she thought she had married.

In the next passage, I again, relate with my textual other, Dorothea. I carry over this reading strategy because of the importance of continuing the connection I have with Dorothea and what comes of it as our "relationship" progresses throughout the novel.

As Dorothea sees herself in a reflection of a man she once thought was great is difficult to realize. Now nothing in her life brings her joy and completeness. The premise Dorothea married on is a black hole with nothing to invest in. He did not need her help as much as she had first anticipated because he did not want her to know the truth. The book is an extension of who Casaubon is and his attempts to write a book were a failure and he knew it. He worked harder to quiet the voices that told him so. Now life slips through his fingers, and he sees everything in a different light "There are some kinds of authorship in which by far the largest result is the uneasy susceptibility accumulated in the consciousness of the author -- a melancholy absence of passion in his efforts at achievement, and a passionate resistance to the confession that he had achieved nothing" (Eliot 406). The dawning of realization settles upon Dorothea as she understands the failure of Casaubon's never-to-be-book. "Dorothea felt the pang at the thought that the labor of her husband's life might be void,..." (Eliot 205). The ugly realization finally strikes Dorothea in a very personal way, "what have I done - what am I -..." she says (Eliot 415). (p. 15)

Again, we see the echo of losing a sense of self in connection to another. Dorothea apparently needed to learn through this loveless marriage that she was her own person. As I reread this text I am amazed by how much I identified with Dorothea's growth into herself through a horrible marital experience. I could relate with Dorothea's loss of self through her

marriage, but my sense of submission was in the realm of religious expectations I felt while in college. It is rather scary to read oneself into a novel that reflects so much of one's reality and as I do so, I also exemplify a re-memory of my first reading of *Middlemarch*.

The parallels between my life and Dorothea's were similar in the emotional aspect of how we dealt with the authority figures in our lives. Fear was a factor in the writing process as well as in the reading process. As a reader I was not actively deciphering the author's positioning techniques, so as a writer, I was very timid. Eliot as a remarkable woman who had a mind of her own first described Dorothea's character. Dorothea chose her own direction in life regardless of what her society assumed. Through Dorothea's choice to marry Casaubon, she began to unravel her sense of self. She no longer felt self confident in herself or her ideas. She allowed herself to be replaced by someone else's ideas. This was where fear entered into a relationship so easily and silently. Dorothea feared her life, as it is an unhappy and joyless experience that seemed to stretch on into the future with no sign of relief.

The fear that accompanies submission is a reprisal from the act of surrendering the self to another. My senior paper is evidence of this surrender to a higher authority. My words were for my authority to view me as just and to pass me, with the hope that I learned something along the way. I find that this surrender is bittersweet. I do not relish feeling afraid of the supposed lightening bolt from on high, yet I needed to know this fear in order to see where I stood in relation to it.

My writing then and my writing now are important demonstrations that writing is personal, as Kamler states. Writing is autobiographical in that we write from ourselves, from our experiences and from our culture. Once I debunk my old language and approach to writing, I can

write from a more personal standpoint without it being a therapeutic experience. My evolution as both a reader and a writer will provide a didactic model for my GED students.

At the time I was living vicariously through Dorothea's character to such an extent that I simply identified with her and did not analyze her or her situation. By taking Pearce's concept of character-identification further, I see that identifying with a character is an important aspect to reading as it denotes a connection with the text: the connection, which allows the reader to be a part of the text by relating with a character. Implicated reading is a part of the character-identification process by the simple act of being emotionally involved enough to take on the character's experience as personal. This process allows the reader to be engaged with the text to the point of being in the fictional world and participating in it. As I have stated previously, Dorothea is a character that I have identified with, which is rare. This novel has certain parallels to my life and had I not discovered it, I would not have been able to challenge myself as a reflective reader.

Rediscovery of Self

Further in the novel, Eliot painted Dorothea's life with more turmoil on her journey to becoming a secure woman once again. At this point Dorothea had chosen to marry for love after her first husband's death, despite the lack of financial security. Eliot represented different perspectives of Dorothea's decision not to remain single but to marry once again, in the following passage:

Citizens of Middlemarch cannot understand this relationship because it is composed of two distinct people who choose to be together and who work as a team instead of a master and servant. Dorothea never regrets giving up position and fortune to marry Ladislaw (Eliot 809). They were bound to each other by a

love stronger than any impulses (Eliot 809). The love that Dorothea experiences is an element entirely missing before. We can assume that Dorothea is fulfilled despite the opposition society.

On the other hand, 'Many who knew her thought it a pity that so substantive and rare a creature should have been absorbed into the life of another only to be known as wife and mother' (Eliot 809). In the end Eliot brings the readers back to her original point and the foundation from which Dorothea is created. Eliot returns to square one as a reminder of society's failure to encourage women to flourish to their utmost potential: 'those determining acts in her life were not ideally beautiful. They were the mixed result of young and noble impulse struggling amidst the conditions of an imperfect social status... For there is no creature whose inward being is so strong that it is not greatly determined by what lies outside it' (Eliot 811). The crux of Eliot's critique is in this last sentence. Dorothea is the picture of strength and perseverance, but it only carried her so far before she is 'absorbed into the life of another only to be known as wife and mother.' What are the possibilities that Dorothea's pursuits and ideas as a single woman would have been condoned by society or her family? She would have gone on through life being pressured to be married, and when she does marry for love she is told that she should have remained single. Society presents a dialectic to itself. These opinions are voiced by Celia, society's spokesperson. (p. 17-18)

I explore my self-identification with Dorothea. I now use Pearce's (1997) subject positioning to relate to Dorothea's position in life, while I rejected to her feelings or thought processes. At this point in my reading and reflecting, I am unsure of how to feel towards

Dorothea. Previously I found it effortless to connect with Dorothea, but since her husband's death she lost me. She represented such strength and disregards to her culture's ideas of womanliness, by the pursuit her own interests and then she made a decision that was out of character for her. I anticipated Dorothea to live alone for the rest of her life and to use her financial excess to assist the less fortunate in the town of Middlemarch. Dorothea made a decision to remarry a man who was very new to the responsibilities of a family. I felt betrayed by Dorothea the first time I read *Middlemarch*. I could not wrap my mind around how this strong woman could make such a "weak" decision. Did she not think she was capable of happiness on her own? Did she genuinely love Will Ladislaw? Was she tired of living in solitude? Was she really interested in a family? When did she decide that she wanted to be a wife and mother? Part of the draw of Casaubon was his age and his mental abilities, not his husbandly qualities or his passion for fatherhood. I was angry with Dorothea for making such a huge choice, as to marry after I thought she had established herself in her world.

In this instance, I felt betrayed because I could not fathom the ending of the novel to be happy. I was with her when she was in pain and despondent but I could not relate with her in her happiness. This is the point where I was dissatisfied with Eliot for creating a character just like every other female who had promise while and in the end decided to marry and raise a family. I felt a similar pressure from my religious upbringing. I did not strive to marry and to achieve motherhood. I wanted a heroine who was unlike any other, one who could stand up to her culture and declare her rights as a human not to marry and to be happy. I was under the idea that in order to enjoy life I had to struggle. Eliot did provide a lesson for me, one that I fumbled with for years. I could not leave Middlemarch until I understood more of Eliot's reason for creating Dorothea's life as she did.

This passage does not allow the reader know what my opinion was to marriage in general and in particular Dorothea's marriage. I took Eliot's words but I did not provide any clue as to what I interpreted Eliot's perspective was concerning marriage, the place of women in a marriage and in society. I had an idea of what I thought Eliot was trying to say, but I could not come to terms with the difference between her feminist perspective and this character she created who ended the novel as a wife and mother. Now it is so obvious how much I de-emphasized marriage and family, I was attempting to find that model to emulate and Eliot provided her for me, I just did not understand it at the time.

As a reader I was very capable of emotionally pulling away from Dorothea because I did not understand or agree with her decision to remarry. She no longer lived parallel to me because I had no experience that made me wish to change my direction in life. I found it easy to stop and ponder what Dorothea/Eliot tried to express. I knew that Eliot would not allow this eager and intelligent character to dissolve into normalcy, or could she, to prove a point?

I am still skeptical of Dorothea's decision to marry Will simply because the depth of their relationship intensifying so rapidly. Yet, I allow Dorothea to realize her natural desire to be a wife in a much more compatible relationship which would embrace children. Having a more traditional life does not make her weaker; this is something I did not understand. I was looking at her through the same lens that her culture saw her and critiqued her through.

By being a passive reader, I had inadvertently become a critiquing member of Dorothea's society because I was disappointed with her choices in the end. I was upset with her for not being an advocate for the women in the world who did not want a traditional life. Little did I know that my life would parallel Dorothea's in ways that I could not anticipate?

Dorothea went on to be another version of her in a more intimate relationship and possibly with children. I can envision this Dorothea as an even richer and more interesting character since she had an unsuccessful marriage under her belt as well as tenacity to be different. What would Dorothea's children be like? How would she instruct them and care for them in an everyday manner? These are just a glimpse of what I wonder now as a reader who can once again identify with Dorothea. I now find myself relating to her and her choices in a much different way. I am no longer judging her, but rather, understanding her decisions. I am now a wife and a mother myself, but I do not feel that this is by any means a sign of weakness or of poor choices.

The point of subject positioning is not to return to a place where I can once again identify with Dorothea, but instead to analyze and to explore her reasons for her actions. While I identified with her, I could still wonder about what she was doing with her life, but I did not halt to chastise her or to have a conversation with her. Pearce (1997) states that, the reader has substantial "power/freedom" in establishing his/her relationship to a text once the prospective "other" has been identified, s/he can then engage in "dialogue" through many simple or complex means (p. 132). My ability to now approach a reading and a familiar character through implicated means assist me in recognizing that I do have agency when dealing with a character. I do not become the character and follow along with her choices; I can identify with her but not be her. I am able to critique Dorothea through a removed means to come to a conclusion that may have personal implications.

Why She was Created

The next passage is my attempt to articulate Eliot's analysis of her contemporary culture's view of women. This section is rather dramatic as I explain Eliot's reasoning for creating Dorothea and her process leading up to her decision to remarry.

Eliot laments the fact that there have been many Dorothea's who have lived and died and not given an opportunity. She also leaves the reader with a lesson in how to change this tragedy that occurs much too often. Eliot appealed to all people not excluding any member of society in her novel. She understood the impact and the burden placed upon women. Even though she was a successful novelist she was still a woman and treated as such in various circles. (p. 19)

I find this section of my senior paper so fascinating because of my effort to settle my ending thoughts and to find a purpose for Dorothea's existence. Here I did not have a solid idea of what Eliot was hinting to her readers. If Dorothea was Eliot's most autobiographical character, how did this affect her choice to end the novel with a new marriage and a normal life for her main character? Eliot's life was anything but normal and I think she must have missed the freedom that comes with marriage and family. She would no longer be looked upon as an adulteress while she continued to live with her partner, George Henry Lewes, as a legal couple.

Ironically, after Lewes' death in 1878, she promptly married a friend, only to pass away months after the ceremony, at the age of 61. Eliot may have regretted her decision to live with a man and not to have a family with him. Instead, she created in her most autobiographical character, the ending she herself wanted. A happy union recognized by all with the ability to then raise a family and to be recognized as a wife and a mother.

I will never have answers to my questions about how Eliot felt as a woman living during

the nineteenth century, but I am able to relate with her through her texts. She has been successful and grabbing my attention and my emotions as I have become better acquainted with Dorothea.

I myself have made “traditional” choices of marrying; raising a family while I stay at home with my child. I would probably be just as shocked with my future self as I was with Dorothea. I found her to be naive at times and felt that the ending was not Eliot’s finest moment. The end was where my Victorian Literature class was stumped. Why turn around and choose a normal life of marriage and motherhood? My answer has developed along with my life. Feminism does not dictate what choices I make as an adult. My life can look very traditional yet still remain conscious of feminist issues. I find that my earlier notions were just as naive as I thought of Dorothea's.

This chapter explores my relationship with to the text and self-identification to Dorothea provides the necessary progression, personal and literary, that will inform my use of *Middlemarch* in GED classroom. Chapter Four explores specific approaches and writing assignments based on my rereading of the text, which will help students to trace their own involvement in the text.

CHAPTER FOUR

APPLICATION OF IMPLICATED READING IN A GED CLASSROOM

In this chapter I set out practical ways to teach *Middlemarch*, through realistic educational means, I explore themes relative to these GED students' every day lives. I include guiding questions which, by nature, should be adapted to the realities of the classroom that are themselves, affected by the diversity of any classroom setting; by race, socioeconomic factors, gender, age, personality and prior educational experiences. I emphasize that the Victorian era and my use of *Middlemarch* are my choices to expand GED student's literature study into a more implicated practice. I have chosen to bring this era and one of the novels of this time to a GED classroom in order to demonstrate a need for other forms of literature to be included in the study of prose.

I make the transition from the personal to the instructive as I relate my findings to a classroom setting. I take what I learned from my analysis of my texts and earlier assumptions, to make a more objective understanding of *Middlemarch* for my students and myself. Only when I understand and have fully engaged with a text am I able to bring it to a classroom for instructional purposes. I now approach this text with a student's perspective and a teacher's implicated perspective. I will be approaching the instruction from a personal as well as a professional point of view. My goals may seem ambitious but they are practical, and from a pedagogical standpoint, important for students to participate in a rigorous learning environment.

Of particular interest are the questions that arise from when I use a historical novel with a group of adult learners; there will be some trepidation. Why should *Middlemarch* supplement a

traditional GED curriculum? Will the concept of implicated reading, albeit from a feminist perspective, challenge a GED student? How will these students apply the concept of implicated reading in a classroom discussion? How will male students relate with an implicated reading of *Middlemarch* which studies period life through the lens of a woman's perspective?

A Standard GED Curriculum

To better situate the following lesson plan into an authentic GED setting, I will describe in detail what a standard curriculum entails. I site my experiences as well as guidelines from the GED Administrators' Manual. I begin with my experiences teaching GED preparation with standard curriculum expectations for Dalton College in Dalton, Georgia, Shaw Industries in Eaton, Georgia, and Rocky Face Head Start Program in Rocky Face, Georgia. Of the three aforementioned employers, the expectations were the same among each place. My duties rested on assisting each student who ventured through my door or who was referred to me. It was my ability to arrange classroom management and organization according to my individual style and students' needs.

According to the American Council on Education, my responsibility as a GED teacher in the state of Georgia was to provide the following for my students: test students' reading and math grade levels, correspond materials to students' needs and interests, evaluate progress of each student every three months, maintain records on tests and instruction provided, counsel students to reach individual goals, and to provide one-on-one or small group instruction (ACE, 2002, p. 79). Despite these specific roles of mine as a teacher, I had freedom to meet these goals and to organize my classrooms in order to do my job well and to assist my students to pass the GED test.

Once a new student arrived to my class, I would immediately take information from, what grade the student dropped out of school, to what subjects were most difficult while in school, what aspects of school were the most complicated and most enjoyable, does the student read on his/her own time, and what does the student like to read or learn about.

I would then discuss the specifics of the GED exam. It is a test, which has five different sections, which each take from forty-five to ninety minutes to complete. The sections are: writing skills, part one (usage, mechanics), writing skills, part two (writing an essay), social studies, science, language arts/reading, and mathematics. Students must achieve a score of 430 or better out of 800 points, in order to pass each test (ACE p. 15). Upon completion of each test, the student receives a GED certificate of completion and is then able to apply for college or for certain jobs which require a high school diploma or a GED.

The next step for a student is to take a TABE (Test for Adult Basic Education) test, which calculates the reading, language, spelling, and math grade levels where the student was functioning in order for me to place them in an appropriate GED textbook. Each subject has a textbook that takes the student through each of the sections tested on the GED exam. Depending on the students' TABE test scores and their feedback from my intake questions, I would then provide the corresponding materials in the appropriate subject areas that they needed in order to prepare for the GED exam.

I would re-test each student every three months to make sure that they were progressing as well as to have a chance to discuss the individual goals of each student. The time spent re-testing students and having time to get feed back from them was valuable in helping me tailor a program for each student so that he/she could reach her goals by making them attainable. Students were also able to take practice GED exams from their textbooks to assess how they

were grasping the material. These tests also assisted me in maintaining current records on each student's progress.

In regards to class time, if more than one student during a class time had difficulty in the same area of: reading, math, science, writing, social studies, I would provide group instruction and then assign homework to be discussed the next class period. My instruction whether to individuals or small groups was primarily academic instruction with some test-taking strategies. I would follow through the textbooks provided and I would work through the entire book to ensure that each student achieved an understanding of the course material.

Contemporary's GED textbook on *Literature and the Arts*, went through the following eight chapters: literal understanding, inferential understanding, analyzing style and structure, nonfiction prose, prose fiction, poetry, drama, commentaries on the arts. I will go into greater detail regarding the goals and contents of each chapter in the next section. I found that the prose fiction chapter was lacking critical thinking skill building lessons. The basics of a fictional piece were discussed, such as the setting, plot, point of view, characterization, and theme. Each subsection had multiple-choice questions to answer, which had many different excerpts from various fictional works. The textbook lacked a cohesive element to locate the literature in a historical context, which I found to be confusing as the language differed in each multiple-choice question due to the fictional piece selected.

Why Should *Middlemarch* Supplement a Traditional GED Curriculum?

In my experience as a GED teacher, I have had class sizes ranging from one student to eight students, from one to three hours two times a week. I structured my classroom to focus on the subject areas where my students lacked experience or knowledge to bring them to the point where they could successfully pass each of the five sections of the GED test; social studies,

science, math, literature, and writing. I would conduct a lesson regarding the next section of skills to be worked on in each individual subject area. I worked with students one on one and in small groups, depending on when students were able to come to class.

My most successful teaching experiences were when I taught a small group of five women twice weekly at the Head Start School in Rocky Face, Georgia. Class meetings were for three hours, which allowed for much more work to be accomplished. All of the students were working toward attaining their GED, had dropped out of school at some point in tenth or eleventh grades, and were stay at home moms. I structured class around their various strengths and weaknesses. For example, one particular student, Angie, was very good with math. She was able to help the others who did not understand the math problems by explaining how she figured out her answers. Another woman, Jill, was really interested in literature and read frequently on her own, so she was able to help the other women with basic comprehension techniques.

The class time was devoted to reviewing homework and any questions beginning with one of the five subject areas, that all of the students struggled with and then discussing the next lesson. I moved through all of the subjects dependent on how many women needed to work on a particular subject. Both Angie and Jill did not need to study all of the subject areas and were able to take the remaining class time to work on their homework. I then broke the group into even smaller sub-groups to focus on the science and math portions of the GED test with my other students. The three hours I had with these women went very quickly but were incredibly productive.

I model my syllabus and my lessons on implicated reading in the literature section by referring to this group of women I taught for one complete school year. They were a unique group in that they were all women and stay at home moms of school aged children. They

inherently had more time than most other GED students I have worked with in the past. I became frustrated with the textbooks and sought outside resources to bring to my classroom to assist these women in learning about how not only to take and pass the GED, but also to enjoy reading in other aspects of life. I would often bring in a newspaper or magazine article that I knew would be of interest to them and we would have discussions together to begin our class time.

In the first chapter, I cited Sandlin's (2001) study regarding Adult Basic Education texts, which brought attention to the hidden agenda in functional literacy texts. An earlier article by Sandlin (2000) touched on how adult education repeats the same hidden curriculum (of consumers) as are found in kindergarten through high school. The purpose of these two studies was to approach the textbooks from a socio-political standpoint in which to examine the power structures inherent in these texts. Sandlin examines two publishers, Steck-Vaughn and Contemporary, who produce workbooks and textbooks for teachers of adult basic reading and GED, which are used exclusively for educating adult learners. Sandlin's focus in both studies is the adult basic reading texts and how students are taught basic lessons of cleanliness, how to move to a new apartment, and other lessons that are patronizing to these learners. These two publishers are the only texts that GED teachers have access to as far as GED curriculum and teaching resource options. These texts are divided into subject areas where I highlight the Literature textbooks.

I examined one GED textbook for this study, which is Contemporary's *GED Book Four: Literature and the Arts*. The content areas covered in this text are: style, structure, non-fiction prose, poetry, drama, and commentaries on the arts (Romanek, 2001, p. xvii). The lessons within this text focus on these content areas in various chapters which discuss how to find the main idea of a paragraph, drawing conclusions from details, understanding nonfiction prose, understanding

fiction elements, setting, plot, theme, characteristics of poetry, comparing drama and prose, and suggestions for reading commentaries. Each section focuses on these various skills with examples from different types of literature which best teaches the specific skill.

The students read each passage, which is at most four paragraphs, and they will then answer five to six multiple-choice questions. The students are reading for comprehension and not to examine the text. Since the GED is timed, the readings need to be quick, details need to be noticed, and basic inferences need to be made. No test that is reprinted in this GED test is a work where the student becomes familiar with the text and the author. Three main abilities that are useful besides just reading the excerpts are: comprehending ideas, which a student will encounter sixty percent of the time, analyzing ideas, for twenty-five percent of the time, and applying ideas for a total of fifteen percent of the time (p. xviii). The first three chapters focus on these three major thinking skills (p. xviii).

Within these content areas the literature choices are percentages based on three categories of literature. The popular literature forms half of all the reading selections, one quarter is composed of classical literature, and the last quarter is made up of commentaries about Literature and the Arts (p. xvii). Popular literature is composed of contemporary fiction, non-fiction, drama, and poetry. Excerpts from Amy Tan's *Joy Luck Club*, "Presidential Image Making" from *American Photography: A Century of Images*, (1999), *Angels in America, Part One*, by Troy Kushner (1993), and "The Pigeon-Hole" by Mabel Segun from *Conflict and Other Poems* (1987). These selections of contemporary works are chosen from a variety of cultures, as this textbook boasts, and represents a variety of perspectives.

The classical literature is composed of exceptional fiction; non-fiction, drama, and prose, which have, deserved a place in literary history. The excerpts are from: *The Great Gatsby* by F.

Scott Fitzgerald, *The Autobiography of Malcolm X* by Malcolm X, *Death of a Salesman* by Arthur Miller, and *Ballad of the Landlord* by Langston Hughes. This selection represents a wide variety of writers, experiences, and eras. All of these writers were American, two of which were Black, all of which were male authors. The general representation of this genre chosen to fulfill this portion of the GED, are predominately male authors, few of which are people of color, or women.

The commentary portion of these writings is composed of writings about literature and the arts (p. xviii). For example, "On Form, Not Plot, in the Short Story", "A Black Athlete Looks at Education" by Arthur Ashe, *America's Forgotten Folk Arts* by Frederick Fried and Mary Fried, and *Singers and Sweethearts: The Women of Country Music*. These selections also represent a variety of backgrounds and subjects, which is consistent with the goal of this particular GED textbook.

I find that what is missing is the relational quality of relating to a text. These students will not experience an average high school English class, where they read a book from beginning to end and discuss what they think about what they have read. My interest is to create an environment for these adult students to be able to connect with the same text that they will become very familiar with over a period of time. Including an actual text into the GED classroom will provide beneficial class time to explore different aspects of reading a text and becoming familiar with it.

Application of *Middlemarch* in a GED Classroom

I locate this implicated reading lesson in the context of a standard GED classroom as I have described previously. Specifically, I place the following lesson plans after the fifth chapter of prose fiction. Placing a complete novel after learning the different elements of fiction would

serve the purpose of building on these previous lessons as well as allowing the students to apply their knowledge to a specific text. *Middlemarch* would provide a text for the students to go beyond the surface elements of setting, plot, point of view, and theme, and to learn how to read from an implicated perspective. By this point in *Book Four: Literature and Arts*, students would have already spent approximately nine weeks on the first five chapters of the textbook including the chapter on prose fiction. This would allow for a three-week lesson on implicated reading to round out the existing curriculum, prior to re-evaluating the students' progress with acquiring knowledge of literature at twelve weeks. The additional lesson that I have prepared would serve the purpose of introducing students to real literature as well as to the possibilities of enjoyment that come with reading and developing a relationship with a text.

Attached is a syllabus found in Appendix A, which outlines, in general, the following information I will provide, but in a format that I would give to my students. I begin by describing the classroom setting where such a course would be held in a GED setting. I lay out the class perimeters on frequency of class meetings, length of each class, and discussion topics in a very specific and structured course outline.

According to the syllabus in Appendix A, the implicated reading portion of class time would be held two days a week for one hour each day. This class would be three weeks long, totaling six sessions to read and to discuss *Middlemarch* through an implicated reading perspective. I would begin the session by discussing how we read and how we comprehend what we read, to actively reflect on how the process works. How does one know when a text is understood? How does this affect how one prepares for the GED? How does this affect how one reads outside of school whether it be a magazine, deciphering directions, a novel, the newspaper, a lease, a letter, or any number of every day reading options? The similarities of reading

strategies needed for fiction and nonfiction, in order to interpret the imposed agenda and politics are striking, and this should be discussed in class. Bringing this to mind is an important activity to open the minds of these students to begin learning about how to read from an implicated standpoint.

I will bring Pearce (1997) into the discussion at this point to explore two concepts central to my study: the pleasure that can be discovered from the act of reading as a relationship between reader and text develops and the textual positioning created by the author in relation to the reader. Each class session I will highlight two specific concepts concerning to what extent a reader identifies with a character. The first notion is, character-identification, where the reader identifies so completely with a character that he or she becomes the character while reading. The second notion is, subject positioning, the reader connects with a character but remains objective regarding the character's actions. The depth of relating to characters will be an ongoing discussion topic. As I have previously applied Pearce to my study and to my own writing, I plan to implement similar activities into this GED classroom. I will incorporate Kamler (2001) by having students write in brief paragraphs describing their lives, etc. to which we will refer and analyze in relation to *Middlemarch*.

I begin my class exploring the idea of an implicated reader by highlighting the first concept on this first day. The second portion of introducing implicated reading will be something that I will introduce on the second day of class once the students have had some experience with *Middlemarch*, and will be more informed of the language of the novel, the time period, the storyline, and their budding relationship with George Eliot and her work. I will continue this subject on the second day of class.

Day One:

After the opening discussion of the first class of this additional literature section, I will begin to discuss how each reader develops a relationship with every text, often times without knowing it. Reading a short story as well as reading directions elicits a response from us as readers. Understanding this relationship is an essential starting point to emphasize with these adult readers. I use the example of reading directions on how to assemble a swing set. I would ask students how do these directions make you feel? Are they clear? Do they create more questions than they answer? Do you find that you are on your own to assemble the swing set or do you feel well prepared with the directions to build a competent structure? Are the authors of the directions assuming that you have background knowledge regarding building, using a hammer, screwdriver? Are the authors assuming that you know what certain tools you will need and if they need to be powered or not? All of these questions run through our minds as we use these specific directions to construct a swing set that we want to be safe for the children who will be playing on it. Our frustration level or our elation over how difficult or easy the task is demonstratives how we relate with a text and with this example set in particular.

What are other examples of directions that were both very explicit and assisted you in completing your project or those that were entirely too frustrating to understand? Input on this common experience as parents, employees, and homemakers, allow the students to explore ways in which they struggled or were successful in building something they had purchased or were told to construct. By discussing a shared experience and then relating it back to the reading relationship emphasize that we create a relationship with all reading we do knowingly or not. I purposely chose an example that had to do with directions, something that every student could relate to in their every day life. I also chose this example because it emphasizes that with all

forms of reading, whether for fun or for work, we develop a natural relationship with each text we attempt to understand it and to use it as is necessary, according to our individual agendas.

The segue into why I have chosen to use *Middlemarch* as an accompanying text, will be through the natural flow of discussion from having a relationship with a text to how pleasure can result from a reading experience. I would like to begin by asking my students what specific texts they have found pleasure in reading and have either reread them or think of them fondly. Perhaps they will identify with a children's book, or an article in a parenting magazine. Identifying this emotional connection to something read, will allow me to describe my relationship with *Middlemarch* and why I have chosen it to be a small component in this GED curriculum.

I will summarize my experience with *Middlemarch* throughout some informative years I had in college. I highlight the several times that I have read this text, and how I feel my relationship has changed each time I have read it again. I refer to Chapter One where I have described my relationship with this novel in greater detail, to which I will add how I relate differently with this reading from my previous readings. I began by reading this novel because it was required reading. I found that the novel was particularly interesting to me because of how I could relate to one of the main characters, which is a major relationship change I have encountered while reading *Middlemarch* numerous times. I find that as I may still relate to Dorothea in some ways, I find that most of our similarities lie in her choices at the end of the novel. The choices to have a family and to live a life that may appear to be conventional but can still produce intellectual fruit.

I will delve into the general plot of *Middlemarch*, so these students will be somewhat familiar with the storyline as they read the text on their own for homework. I plan to highlight only one portion of this novel for reading and for discussion, as the entire work is much too

dense for GED students to attempt to read. I concentrate on the characters of Dorothea Brooke, Edward Casaubon (known to all as Mr. Casaubon), and Will Ladislaw (known as Ladislaw) and only their story as they unfold. I begin by introducing a part of the homework to the students to begin to read as a group. Each class time I will photocopy the pages that they need to read so no one needs to purchase the book. I begin with the first chapter, of the first section, "Miss Brooke".

The sections I have assigned for homework involve snippets of various chapters that I deem important to the plot and to our class discussion. So, by starting to read the first section of homework in class, I will be able to introduce the students to one of the main characters, Dorothea Brooke. I will begin by reading two pages of the assigned nine pages. We will stop to discuss what we have read about the description of Dorothea and who the students think she is. I will have each student read a couple of pages and after we will stop and discuss how their assumptions are changing, how they view Dorothea compared to her sister Celia. I will ask at the end of the reading aloud, which sister seems to be the most attractive, which one is the most intelligent, which one would you like to know?

As we discuss this first section of their reading homework and I model questions that I would like them to ask themselves as they read, I will then discuss the journal assignments that will go along with the readings. The purpose of the journal is for the students to write their thoughts about what they are reading with the help of a couple of questions. The journal is primarily for the students to flesh out how they view the characters in the text and to examine how their relationship with the text changes as they read. The guiding questions for this day of class will be: Can you identify with a character so far? Why or why not? How do you picture the town of Middlemarch to look like, feel like, smell like, the weather, and any other sense you may want to write down?

Day Two:

I will begin the day with discussing how the reading went. I want to know how they feel reading this novel. Was the reading difficult? Was it enjoyable? What was difficult about it? What was enjoyable about the reading? What were the most frustrating and interesting things that you experienced while reading? I want to explore the students' reading experiences and to call attention to their developing relationship with this novel. It is important for the students to recall what we discussed the first class regarding our dialogue about how we relate to the text that we read, in particular *Middlemarch*.

I turn our discussion to the journal entries that the students entered for class. Since the questions that I set aside for my students to ponder and to respond to, I would be interested in what the students' responses are as a teacher. I would also like the students to share their experiences with each other so we can begin cultivating a relationship with the novel as a class.

I would like to focus on the character that each student relates with, does not understand, or even the possibility that a student cannot relate to a character. I would like to share my experiences with reading *Middlemarch*, and how I relate with or identify with, Dorothea the most out of any other character. She is the character that I felt that I could relate to the most. I felt like we had similar ideas and naiveté, especially regarding how a marriage relationship would function in theory.

I would go on to discuss how the students envisioned the town of Middlemarch and what it would be like to live there. I would then compare it with Athens and the time period we live in. I would create a chart on the board beginning with Middlemarch and going through with each student's observation or idea of a Middlemarch. Then we would apply the discussion to where we live now and how they are different and similar. Once this group activity is finished, I will go

on to tell my students about the time that *Middlemarch* was written. I want them to begin thinking about the differences not only in physical ways, but to delve into how society functioned similarly or differently than ours does now. I will address how women were viewed and thus groomed to be wives and mothers. I will discuss why the author of this book, who is a woman, chose or needed to take a male pen name. I will also address, the lack of technology, the strict social structures, gender roles, and limits placed on certain people. I want my students to then compare Victorian England with present day Athens. How do we feel about the similarities and the differences? Do we notice them on a daily basis? How might this affect how we read?

I will transition our class time to read part of the homework assignment for the following week. I will begin with the first nine pages to read in class. This section finds Dorothea and Mr. Casaubon in Rome on their honeymoon. While Mr. Casaubon is away conducting studies for his book, Dorothea is alone for much of the time. After six weeks of marriage, Dorothea is beginning to question her marital choice and feels a great sadness over whom she has married and her disappointment in realizing he was not everything she thought she wanted in a husband.

We will read this section much like we did during the first class and take turns discussing the reading as we change readers. This section of the book is an important time in the development of the characters, as Dorothea realizes much of what her family tried to warn her about while it is too late to change her decision to marry. The next chapter that the students will read places Mr. Casaubon's nephew, Will Ladislaw, in a more positive light as Dorothea continues to run into him in Rome, while out on her own and Will treats her with respect and compassion for being alone on her honeymoon. This causes quite a stir in the Casaubon household as will gradually unfold.

The journal questions that I leave them with for this next reading will focus more on the relationships in the book, since we have placed the book in its time and geographical location. How does Dorothea relate with Will and with Mr. Casaubon, respectively? How does Will and Mr. Casaubon relate to Dorothea? What are the similarities and differences that you see between the men and how they treat Dorothea?

Day Three:

During this class period I intend to get more to the heart of being an implicated reader as we explore the three characters that have begun to evolve and to show us who they really are. I focus this class time on the protagonist, Dorothea. She is a central character in this novel and has a unique relationship with the men in her life, Ladislav and Mr. Casaubon. It is through Dorothea that I begin to frame what an implicated reading is and model how it is carried through. I will start by discussing the journal entries that each student made after reading the assigned homework, since they focused on the three characters exclusively.

In this section of the novel, Dorothea has been positioned in two new relationships, one with her husband and the other with her husband's nephew. My journal questions revolved around how Dorothea relates with these two male characters and how they relate to her. I am asking my students to notice the subtleties of how Dorothea is positioned and how she allows herself to be positioned by these two men. For example, Dorothea refers to her husband as Mr. Casaubon, which expresses a removed and respectful air when their marriage is discussed. Dorothea's idea of marriage and Mr. Casaubon's ideas of marriage were similar prior to their union.

As they begin to live with each other it becomes painfully obvious that Mr. Casaubon's life is focused solely on the book he is writing, which develops into nothing substantial or even

publishable. Dorothea had illusions of assisting Mr. Casaubon with his various translations, as she hoped to be a student of her husbands. What develops is the awareness that Mr. Casaubon's book is a failure as is his life; he knows it but does not want Dorothea to know it. In attempts to shield her from this truth, he relates to Dorothea as if she is a porcelain antique that cannot bear any pressure or she will break. Eliot creates dialogues between these two characters to demonstrate the distance to which Mr. Casaubon treats his wife as an object to which Dorothea becomes angry.

Do these students notice where Mr. Casaubon places Dorothea in his life? If it is not explicitly written, will they become aware of the subtleties of this marriage that positions these two people at great odds? By discussing what they noticed regarding this relationship in particular I wish to draw attention to the importance to reading and interacting with this novel to understand who these characters are.

Moving on to Ladislav's relationship with Dorothea, it is so obvious that theirs is much more of an equal rapport. Ladislav refers to Dorothea as Mrs. Casaubon, which she quickly asks him to call her Dorothea, which he promptly does. As Will becomes acquainted with Dorothea through appropriate visits to see Mr. Casaubon, who is preoccupied and unable to speak with Will, how he relates to Dorothea is with the utmost respect. The reader hears how he holds her in high esteem and cannot understand why she married his archaic uncle. Since Dorothea's marriage, she is simultaneously becoming familiar with two men who are complete opposites. The reader is able to see that Ladislav is more interested in and respectful of Dorothea than is Mr. Casaubon.

I want to call attention to how women were treated in Victorian England. The status or lack of status they held as participants of society. Mr. Casaubon demonstrates a very

conservative and deep-rooted sense of who his wife is to him and what sphere she should occupy in his life. Whereas, Ladislav spends time talking with Dorothea, getting to know her, all the while realizing how fascinating she really is. She is not a conventional woman during her time at all. Ladislav notices this and is able to appreciate these differences and to encourage them.

Throughout this discussion, I will place emphasis on the tenets of implicated reading: the textual positioning that the author is imposing on the readers, and how we as readers are developing a relationship with this text. In my interpretation of *Middlemarch*, I view Eliot as wisely juxtaposing society's notion of marriage through Mr. Casaubon, with a more progressive view through Ladislav's character, to demonstrate how absurd it is to treat women in general or one's wife as an object. Eliot is silently making Mr. Casaubon appear to be a disappointment to him, Dorothea, to society, and to us as readers. As an author Eliot positions Mr. Casaubon, when he first enters the story, to be a very well respected member of society, who is much older than his years, who is intelligent, and who is naturally authoritative. As we get to know him through his relationship with Dorothea and her developing friendship with Ladislav, we see that he is really not respectable at all. The further we become acquainted with Mr. Casaubon, the more we realize that how he portrayed himself to Dorothea prior to his marriage is not consistent with who he really is. Eliot provides the reader with insight into these three characters' minds as they relate to one another and learn how to converse with one another.

I will begin by reading the next section of homework as we take turns reading and discussing what we read. This next section is very important to the plot as Dorothea vocalizes how unhappy she is in this marriage and how she goes on with each day. Soon after she realizes and shares her disappointment with her family, Mr. Casaubon dies an untimely death. He leaves Dorothea with a will that arranges her life after his death as he did in life. The journal questions

are as follows: How are you relating to this story so far? How does your gender affect how you relate to this story and to any particular character? How do you think you would relate if you were a man/woman (your opposite sex) reading this story?

Day Four:

The purpose of this particular class is to explore gender stereotypes that students have about the opposite gender, by using their journals indirectly in the discussion. By starting class with a summary of what the homework was read, this allows the class to reflect on the events of the novel while interjecting their personal ideas about *Middlemarch*. I want these students to see the relationship between a text and what we can learn from it. Perhaps many of these students have never read a novel and had no idea that literature could be interesting and something that can affect our every day lives.

The readings for homework reflect a very submissive and unhappy time in the novel. Dorothea is trapped in this marriage. Her husband falls ill and his doctor tells her that he may live fifteen more years if he does not have too much mental anguish. Dorothea is torn at this point, she wants to care for her husband but she is also pondering life without Mr. Casaubon. She would be much more free to resume projects that she had begun prior to her marriage. Eliot has some wonderful insights into these characters' souls. As readers we are able to judge these characters based on their thoughts and their actions. This is a unique and omniscient place in which to watch a story unfold. The narrative allows the reader to become uncomfortable for a young wife to ponder an early death for her husband, as we might have already done for her. Human nature is written beautifully into this tale, so that we can identify with the emotions these characters express and hide.

I would like to know how the students reacted to certain sections of this novel that may have either hindered them or allowed them to relate further with any of the characters. I would also like to explore how these students view the opposite sex identifying with this text. Do the men consider this a woman's novel, where the events revolve around relationships? Will the men encounter the text through the lens of a woman's perspective? Do the women consider that being a man would open another way to relate to Mr. Casaubon's character? What discussions will come from these questions?

I plan to facilitate the discussion by allowing each person to have a chance to share their opinion and to even defend how they view this novel and exercise. The importance of such a provocative discussion will lend itself to assisting us in identifying ourselves separately but not according to gender. We as individuals, all relate differently to this novel, as we do to absolutely everything that we read, hear, and discuss. I want these students to understand the positions where we are entering this discussion so that we have openness to one another in understanding how we each relate or do not relate to this text.

I end this class time with a group reading of the next section for homework, so I can lay the groundwork for the upcoming events in the novel. The next homework assignment deals with passages that affect the outcome for all of the characters. Since we left Mr. Casaubon as a slight invalid, there is a sense of foreboding as to what is going to happen with his health. The journal entries for this homework section revolve around how Eliot is giving the reader hints about what will transpire. How do you feel as you read this section of the novel? Did you anticipate what was going to happen with Mr. Casaubon? What do you think is going to happen next in the story?

Day Five:

I begin the class discussion on what the students have written in their journals since the last class period. I have asked that they be specific and honest in how they view the novel, because this is how they will learn the lessons I have created with this three-week hiatus from the regular GED curriculum. I have given the students freedom to explore how this text truly makes them feel. In return I would like to know how or if they do relate to a character or any part of the story. It is important for them to verbalize why they have connected or not connected with the text and its characters. This exercise will demonstrate the importance of their position as readers when they read anything. How they feel or what they think about what they read is important and they should not neglect their place in the reading event. By not enjoying this novel, is never an excuse to stop reading, but to keep going to discover items that are interesting, or more items that are displeasing. Just as we interact with other classmates, we need to give texts a chance by hearing all of what was written, so we can draw more complete conclusions.

I open the discussion by how I relate with Dorothea at this point in her life in the novel. She is a young widow who was in a loveless marriage for eighteen months, and now she is on her own. Mr. Casaubon saw to it that she would have her physical needs met, but which would be taken away if she were to marry another - his nephew Will Ladislav. Even from the grave Mr. Casaubon attempts to control Dorothea's life through his financial successes while his jealousies live beyond him.

I do not necessarily relate with Dorothea's experiences, but I can empathize with how she felt in such a tumultuous time in her young life. Despite this novel being a fictional story, I learn lessons from the choices that others make even in novels. Dorothea truly thought she was making a good decision marrying Mr. Casaubon, only to turn out a horrible but short union. At this point

in the story, the first time I read it, I wondered what my choices would be like after such an experience. Fortunately, I have had full freedom to pursue relationships with others and to ultimately choose who I married. How would I feel if I were in a similar situation? This is a question that I cannot fully answer, but I can still ponder, as I try to understand the mind of so many women who lived during this era. Empathizing with a character's plight is an exercise in relating to fictional and to real others. It is important to learn about history and to wonder what life would have been like, so that the past is not lone events in the record of our world.

The next portion of our class time will be used discussing if we accept or reject what the author is shaping for us: a story of a young woman who had limited choices in her decision of whom she would marry, and who ultimately ended as a widow. How does this story make us feel as we read it? Do we find it hard to imagine or do we relate on some level to any one of these characters? Examining our existing relationship with the text, provides an ongoing assessment of our roles as readers and how important that position is. Every author factors in the reader, but not every reader needs to agree with the politics in any given text.

We will then read the first assigned reading together as a class, discussing it as we read. I will explain as necessary, what is transpiring in the lives of Dorothea and Ladislav, after Mr. Casaubon's death. This portion of the novel that we will read together has Dorothea questioning the will that Mr. Casaubon left behind. He was very specific that she was to be impoverished if she marries another man. Dorothea inquires on the details of where she is to live, how she can function on a daily basis, as well as what her relationship with Ladislav should be at this point. She is also dealing with the death of her husband and the responsibility of his dreary house. This is an interesting portion of the story as Dorothea begins to rekindle her independence as a single widowed woman.

The journal questions will highlight all of the possibilities and the consequences of what the ending of the story could be. What do you think will happen to Dorothea and to Ladislaw? What do you want to happen and what do you not want to happen in the ending of this novel? What do you think of the story so far from the beginning and so close to the end? The next class will be to discuss the ending of the book. These questions will prepare the students to begin the process of finding their own endings and how they feel about the ending that Eliot wrote.

Day Six:

The last day of class will be a time for closure with this text. We will begin by discussing what we think of this novel and moving to how they think the novel will end. I am asking this question often so that the students will naturally wonder what they think as they read this novel and to allow themselves to have an opinion. I want them to read this novel fully knowing how they feel about the story and how this affects their relationship to the story. I am curious how the students' ideas of the ending will differ from the actual ending.

We will then read the last two excerpts from the novel that I have set aside for us to read together. I want to read the ending with the students to have a chance to see what their reaction is to the text, before they have chance to think about the actual ending. Until this point, they have been considering what they think the ending will be and now they will know what it is. The actual ending that we will read will be thirteen pages. The loose ends are tied rather quickly compared to the labored decisions in the novel to this point.

Dorothea and Ladislaw meet upon his return from a short trip, during which they both realized that they had serious feelings for one another and needed to address their emotions. They have a very tender visit in Dorothea's current home. Ladislaw explains how much he respects and loves Dorothea but understands that if she were to even consider marrying him, she

would be impoverished and they would live a meager life. He expresses all of the facts with great candor and turns to leave, when Dorothea takes her turn to respond. She finally understands what marriage was meant to be, not an intellectual meeting of the minds, or a husband to be a type of father, but someone whom she loves and genuinely wants to spend her life with. They reach the decision that they will marry one another despite their impending poverty. In the end happiness wins over financial stability.

The final chapter allows the reader to be privy to all of Middlemarch's responses to Dorothea and Ladislav's union. Some people found it difficult to understand and chastised Dorothea for her choice. Others simply let it be because they have made life choices that they regret, only to wish Dorothea and Ladislav a happy marriage. The finale is where I want to call all the attention to discussing. It is important to have read the ending of the story, but the finale is where the purpose of the ending is explained.

The finale explains that Dorothea and Ladislav went on to have a happy life together filled with children and for Ladislav, a purposeful position in Parliament. Ladislav worked on righting wrongs that existed in their society. Eliot created this story and these characters as a demonstration of the kinds of women who have lived quiet lives, but have chosen what was best despite what their society told them to do. Dorothea's life affected other's lives around her, and her children went on to work in politics and to continue to the righting of wrongs. Hers is a story that does not exist in history books, but still carries an important message. As a woman, or any member of society, the choices that we make are important and can bring about change in the lives of others. Only by small changes can the big changes happen, and the policies that will make those big changes occur by often time's small choices.

At this point my students will journal about how they view the ending of this novel. Did Eliot express her ideas well? Did she hide the story and its purpose too much? What do you think of this novel? How does the ending make you feel?

The closing discussion of this class will be to discuss these answers. I will finalize the essential points that I want these students to walk away from this exercise knowing. The importance of the relationship as a reader to a text is one where the reader holds the power. As a reader we can agree or disagree with a text and not take the written word as fact or truth. We are able to question what we read, and in order to do so; we need to interact with the text. The second aspect of being an implicated reader is to find enjoyment in what we read by interacting with the text. The written word can be a wonderful place to explore thoughts, the world, and other perspectives, or simply to lose us in an interesting story. We have the power to find literature that we enjoy reading and we need to do so for our benefit.

Expecting the Unexpected

Preparation for the unexpected events is imperative for a teacher of adult GED students. Class sessions are missed and homework is not completed due to extraneous circumstances. These students generally have a lot of responsibility regarding, job, family, home maintenance, and other things that require their time and attention. I have created some alternative homework assignments and class discussions if class time or homework is either missed or incomplete.

Since the time frame of the class is twice weekly for three weeks, I foresee students being motivated to do the work because of the newness of a lesson that departs from the standard GED textbooks. While time is short, it will cause the class time to be very precious and in each class we will cover specific details of the novel. Each lesson will build on the one before it and are important for the flow of the course work. Every teacher has a syllabus that is an ideal format for

a class. However, the readings and the class discussions or lectures often are shifted and sometimes deleted because of time constraints. Also, having more than one student in my proposed class allows for more classes to be missed and readings not read, so that someone may be behind in every class and I do not wish for this to happen. I do know that there will be unavoidable events despite any efforts I have to prevent class time from being productive.

I will use the first part of class time each day to review how the plot is unfolding and go over any questions students have about an event or a character from the reading. I plan to incorporate in class journal time for students who are having difficulty doing their work at home. I will set aside some time for students to reflect on basic questions such as how they are relating to the text, what they like/dislike about what they are reading. I will use basic questions that will allow students to still have a chance to engage with the text.

If students miss two classes or two homework assignments, I will continue the work with them on their own. I do not wish to take time away from students who are working hard. Every student is so different and some students lack the motivation to come to class and to do their work. Often times I have encountered students who attended classes because an outside influence pressured them to get their GED. I had trouble keeping these students focused on the task. They did not see the benefit of working hard and studying in order to pass the GED test. While other students that I have had, have worked so hard and have asked for more homework so that they could practice the GED test prior to taking it. Many students are successful with obtaining their GED and this directly affects how much time they desire to set aside for working to reach that goal.

The separate class work that I am proposing does concern a topic that I think is important and overlooked in the GED curriculum. The reading for the sake of passing a test is productive,

but does not carry on a benefit as does teaching an implicated reading process. It is so important for these students who may never be in another classroom setting to be exposed to reading and exposing the politics of texts and to know that reading can be enjoyable.

An important point I want to stress, is that what I am proposing for GED teachers is to bring in texts to the classroom which they have spent time reading and have developed a relationship with, as I have described in Chapter Two. The purpose of exposing students to a real novel, that is important to the teacher, is for students to be a part of a reading project where the teacher has actively engaged with the chosen text. The teacher is able to model an implicated reading to the class, and through this can explore the politics in every text. Students are not provided with the skills to engage and to decode the power structure in texts. I believe that approaching a GED class with real textual experience is an important and necessary element to learning how to read and to be a successful reader.

CHAPTER FIVE

EDUCATIONAL IMPORTANCE

Upon arriving at this point in my study, I must qualify my work thus far by stating that I have not had the opportunity or the joy of implementing this study in a GED preparation classroom. I look into the future with hope that I will one day be back working with adult education students where I can use my study with adult students. I look forward to examining how such an idea can or cannot work by using outside literature inside the GED classroom. As I reflect on this study I am struck by two essential ideas which hold true for any teacher of adult literacy: the importance of teaching critical thinking skills and the significance of being courageous to add to the existing curriculum.

First, critical thinking skills will always serve the students in their reading and writing pursuits after the course is finished. The importance of learning to view the world through a critical lens is an important aspect in good literacy training. When students understand what is written has power structures and an agenda imbedded into the text, then they will be more apt to question what they are reading and to view the text critically. The purpose of the GED preparation class is for students to pass the GED exam, but also, to be successful in their daily lives as readers.

Secondly, GED teachers have so much freedom in which to supplement or to remove lessons or literature in order to best teach the students preparing for the GED exam. Unlike other teaching fields, GED teachers are able to completely adjust the curriculum to meet the needs of the students. By taking advantage of the opportunity to include outside literature in the

classroom, the teacher and the student both benefit in the experience of something new and refreshing. While maintaining responsibility for the learners, the teacher is able to choose from a wide variety of literature and to enhance existing lesson plans by using texts, which are both interesting and enjoyable to read.

As I imagine a GED classroom where I implement my study, I foresee taking time away at the end of the GED Literature second chapter, Inferential Understanding, in order to incorporate an implicated reading lesson using *Middlemarch*. I imagine students who are skeptical of any deviation from the normal GED activities, yet curious if the new lesson would be more interesting. I envision some resistance and confusion over why *Middlemarch* would be required as well as journaling, which would replace the standard reading of four or five passages, per section, and answering five to ten multiple choice questions for homework. By making the goal of the implicated reading lesson clear, I would hope that students would continue to do their homework and to remain interested in the unfolding of their relationship with a text that is most unlike their standard GED materials.

I picture a few students being very interested in the addition of reading and responding through journaling to a new lesson format as well as to new literature introduced. I imagine other students not being interested in the extra work that would be required via the sections of *Middlemarch* and the responses. I also foresee students not understanding the agenda of this text and not identifying with the gender issues. I would continue working with these students using *Middlemarch*, but there comes a point for students when they need to be allowed to choose what direction they want their learning to travel. For these students, I would adapt my lesson plans to the texts that they are reading in their GED textbook and I would attempt to continue the implicated reading and response of those readings through journaling and discussion with me. I

know that some students will simply be uninterested in anything that feels different or takes them away from the progress they feel as they move through the GED textbooks. The Victorian era, alternative literature, issues of gender inequality, a Victorian novel, and reflecting on the reading activity, are all things that can be intimidating and uncomfortable to adult literacy students. If a student is open and interested to an alternative lesson incorporating all of these elements, then I will provide a means of exploring literature while preparing for the GED. I do not expect every student to be interested or changed through my proposed lesson plan. Instead, I want students to know that learning can come in many forms, it can be enjoyable, and each text has a distinct agenda that we can discover.

My relationship with *Middlemarch* is not so flippant as to be affected if students do not learn from it or relate to it as I have and still do. If students do not enjoy *Middlemarch* as I have, that is to be expected and it is not personal. More than anything, this text is an example of how one can develop a relationship with a text and how enjoyable that can be. *Middlemarch* is just one novel in a sea of other literature that can be interesting, enjoyable. It is one novel that I have chosen to use in a GED classroom, while there are so many other novels, which could be brought in as well and could be even more successful. How will students know that they do not like a portion of history or literature if they are never exposed to it? For students to be able to express why they do not like a reading experience is just as important as why they do like a text. Understanding the relationship between the reader and the text is important in developing as a reader and discovering what is enjoyable to read and what is not. The journey of evolving into a reader is full of trial and error. I happen to have found a wonderful relationship with *Middlemarch* that I intend to build on for years to come. I do not have the same expectations for

my students in regards to *Middlemarch*. Instead, I would like them to discover their own relationship with texts that have meaning to them.

I hope the text I have created will be an enlightening tool for other GED teachers who have pondered adding to the GED curriculum or those who already have. I hope that this text will be an encouragement and a blueprint for other studies to be done with real literature used in the GED classroom. This study augments the studies previously cited as another source for GED teachers to find ideas from as they teach and prepare students to take the GED exam. Whether the students are adult English women learning how to critique romance literature from a feminist, transformative standpoint (Jarvis, October 1999), adult learners who are being exposed to Shakespeare, George Bernard Shaw, Sophocles, or W.E.B. Dubois (Dill, Summer 1997), GED students in Boston listening to a guest lecturer discussing her writing as well as giving instruction on how to write (Lanier, 24 March 1998), or by using life experience as a tool to teach (Rogers, 2004), each of these studies has opened a door for other educators to pursue ideas and alternative means for teaching. In each of these studies a critical thinking component was incorporated, which is an important aspect of these lessons.

As I have arrived to feminist pedagogy through Freire's work with adult literacy learners, I have sought to approach and to frame my study from a feminist standpoint. Freire's use of critically examining the politics of life inside and outside the classroom, has informed my feminist approach in the classroom, by tying in with the awareness of classroom politics and the politics of a reading event. I found four important aspects to creating and maintaining a feminist pedagogical approach to teaching in Maher and Tetreaults' book, *The Feminist Classroom: Dynamics of Gender, Race, and Privilege* (2001). The critical themes of mastery, voice, positionality, and authority in regards to the classroom structure, were topics I built into my

lesson plans. I used discussion as a major component of each lesson so that the teacher would not be placed in a hierarchical position and thus assume an authoritative role. Instead, I crafted the lessons into a mutual giving and learning event between students and teacher and between students and students. Freire's use of dialogue in the classroom echoes this understanding of students and teachers both being in a position to learn from one another while maintaining an awareness of classroom politics and structure. I departed from Freire after establishing the importance of dialogue with texts used in the classroom to bring about a critical learning experience through this textual discourse with assistance from Pearce and Kamler. I hope for other GED teachers to benefit from Freire, Pearce, and Kamler's work to apply the pertaining principles to a GED setting as I have shown here.

My study has an additional ingredient included, which are the day-by-day lesson plans. The previously mentioned studies of Jarvis, Dill, Lanier, and Rogers, contained information and ideas, which teachers can apply to the classroom, but they did not contain a practical means of applying these ideas. I chose to include supplemental material in a format that could be easily adapted to fit the needs of the students in any GED classroom. I have provided an approach to teaching critical reading skills through an outside source that will allow teachers to build upon my design, if not to implement my study exactly as I have created it.

My goals as a teacher and as a writer have been to provide alternative ideas for GED teachers to use to teach critical reading skills, or implicated reading strategies, by means of outside literature. My hope is that students who are given the opportunity to experience literature not included in the GED curriculum, or at least have literature that they can build a relationship with, will discover the tools to decipher the power structures inherent in texts and to find pleasure in a reading activity.

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APPENDIX – PROPOSED SYLLABUS

GED LITERATURE PORTION: A READING LESSON FROM A VICTORIAN NOVEL

Purpose:

For GED students to supplement their existing Literature study from the GED textbook. Implicated reading is a form of reading to decode the underlying politics of a text as well as to develop a relationship with the passages. An outcome of implicated reading is the enjoyment gained from a successful reading of any form of literature. This alternate class will last for three weeks, twice weekly for one hour each session.

Text: *Middlemarch* by George Eliot, Signet Classic edition, published by Penguin Group, 1964.

Description of Assignments:

- ♦ Class time discussions will revolve around homework readings, questions you have, subjects relating to the readings, journal entries, and readings in class.
- ♦ Reading Assignments will be photocopied portions of the pages you need to read for homework. We will read certain sections in class and discuss before you are expected to read on your own for homework.
- ♦ Journal Questions will accompany the readings. Each class time will have corresponding questions that you will need to answer after you do the assigned readings. These questions will assist you in understanding the novel and to examine your relationship with what you are reading.

Day 1:

- ♦ In class discussion:
 - ♦ How we interpret how we read.
 - ♦ Introduction to *Middlemarch*
 - ♦ Brief outline of plot of novel
 - ♦ Read first section of homework together as a class and discuss readings
- ♦ Reading Assignments:
 - ♦ Pages: 9-17, 18-25, 43-46, 185-189, 189-190
- ♦ Journal Questions:
 - ♦ Can you identify with a character so far?
 - ♦ How do you picture the town of Middlemarch to look like?

Day 2:

- ♦ In class discussion:
 - ♦ Discussion of journal entries
 - ♦ Comparison between Athens and Middlemarch
 - ♦ Historical context of *Middlemarch*
 - ♦ Read first section of homework together as a class and discuss readings
- ♦ Reading Assignments:
 - ♦ Pages: 191-200, 200-208, 208-222, 266-271
- ♦ Journal Questions:

- ♦ How does Dorothea relate with Ladislav and Casaubon?
- ♦ How do Ladislav and Casaubon relate to Dorothea?
- ♦ What are the similarities and differences?

Day 3:

- ♦ In class discussion:
 - ♦ Journal entries
 - ♦ Protagonist - Dorothea and her relationships
 - ♦ Women in Victorian England
 - ♦ Read first section of homework together as a class and discuss readings
- ♦ Reading Assignments: 271-279, 279-285, 350-362
- ♦ Journal Questions:
 - ♦ How are you relating to this story so far?
 - ♦ How does your gender affect how you relate to this story and to any particular character?
 - ♦ How do you think you would relate if you were the opposite sex reading this story?

Day 4:

- ♦ In class discussion:
 - ♦ Journal entries
 - ♦ Role reversals: men as women and women as men
 - ♦ Read first section of homework together as a class and discuss readings
- ♦ Reading Assignments: 376-381, 405-416, 454-468, 468-472
- ♦ Journal Questions:
 - ♦ How do you feel as you read this section of the novel?
 - ♦ Did you anticipate what was going to happen to Mr. Casaubon?
 - ♦ What do you think is going to happen next in the story?

Day 5:

- ♦ In class discussion:
 - ♦ Journal entries
 - ♦ Accepting or rejecting politics of the novel - agree/disagree
 - ♦ Read first section of homework together as a class and discuss readings
- ♦ Reading Assignments: 473-482, 521-528, 612-618
- ♦ Journal Questions:
 - ♦ What do you think will happen to Dorothea and to Ladislav?
 - ♦ What do you want to happen/not want to happen in the ending?
 - ♦ What do you think of the story so far now that you are almost to the end?

Day 6:

- ♦ In class discussion:
 - ♦ Journal entries
 - ♦ Read last portion of novel together as a class, pp. 780-787
 - ♦ How does this ending differ from what you anticipated happening?
 - ♦ How has your relationship with this novel changed?
 - ♦ Read Finale of novel together as a class, pp. 808-811
 - ♦ How would you write the "Finale"?
 - ♦ What are your closing ideas and thoughts about the novel?
 - ♦ Closing discussion of implicated reading