

Teaching Methods in Reading Comprehension

(i.e. some of the things I do at TSU)

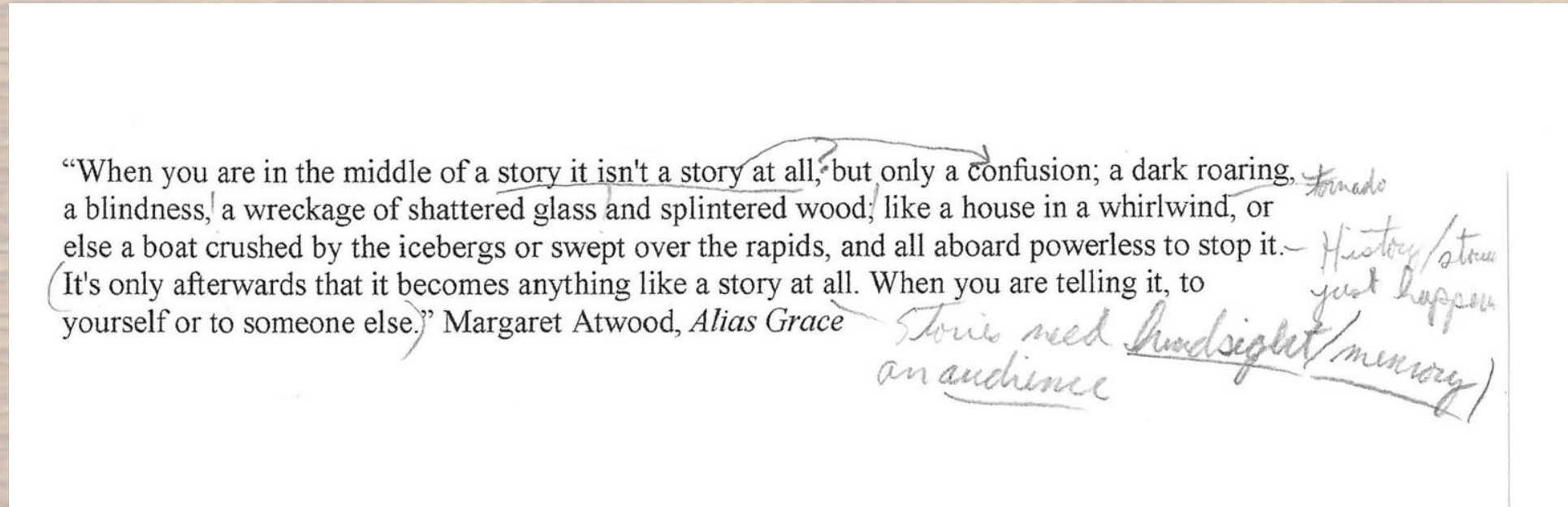
General idea: Create a classroom culture in which students focus on building reading comprehension skills individually and cooperatively.

1. Informal assessments at the beginning of the semester.
2. Modeling and direct teaching of reading comprehension strategies in various ways.
3. Continual encouragement to 'mark up' their reading via in class activities.
4. Cooperative learning: Partner and group focus on short, difficult sections of reading. Less is more.
5. Sustained focus on reading comprehension assessment, both informal and formal, formative and summative.

HIST 1000 Day 1 informal assessment

(similar activity on Day 3)

Get out a pen or pencil. Read the quote I handed you. Mark it up in order to help you understand it.



Introduce yourself to the person next to you and discuss the quote.

- Which parts do you understand?
- Which parts do you not understand?
- What is the author's point?

“When you are in the middle of a story it isn't a story at all, but only a confusion; a dark roaring, a blindness, a wreckage of shattered glass and splintered wood; like a house in a whirlwind, or else a boat crushed by the icebergs or swept over the rapids, and all aboard powerless to stop it. It's only afterwards that it becomes anything like a story at all. When you are telling it, to yourself or to someone else.”

Margaret Atwood, *Alias Grace*

HIST 1000 Day 4

Preparing for the first substantial reading assignment

Active Reading (discuss with partners first)

How do you engage with a text? What do you do besides just read it?

How do you determine which parts of a text are important?

Stories We Tell Reviews and Interviews

Review #1

By A.A. Dowd; May 9, 2013 12:05 AM

The Onion AV Club, <http://www.avclub.com/review/stories-we-tell-97490>

Director: Sarah Polley
Runtime: 108 minutes
Rating: PG-13
Cast: Documentary

Basic +
intriguing
explanation

On paper, *Stories We Tell* sounds like an epic overshare: Sarah Polley, the Canadian actress who directed *Away From Her* and *Take This Waltz*, turns her camera on a network of close and distant relatives, encouraging them to ramble on about the complicated relationship between her parents. “Who fucking cares about our family?” Polley’s sister asks early on—and it’s tempting, at the onset anyway, to share her skepticism about the universal appeal of the project. Yet there’s much more to *Stories We Tell* than navel-gazing. Polley’s fledgling foray into documentary filmmaking is also an investigative mystery, a real-life soap opera, and—most compellingly, perhaps—a searching “interrogation” (the director’s word) of the hows and whys of storytelling itself.

2 best
film
so

How often
didn't different
people

From the opening scenes, in which the interviewees break the fourth wall to address their interviewer, it’s clear that this will be an especially self-reflexive glimpse into personal history. While his daughter, the filmmaker, watches from behind the glass of a sound studio, British-born actor Michael Polley reads passages from his memoir. These eloquent musings will blend with, and occasionally contradict, the testimonials of the film’s other talking heads. The narrative they’re collectively relaying is a whirlwind, decade-spanning romance—the tale of how Michael wooed and married a fellow thespian, the stage actress (and later casting director) Diane MacMillan, with whom he fathered several children. There’s a big twist lurking at the heart of the story, a revelation that sent shockwaves through the entire family. Though Polley has spoken publicly about this identity-shaking discovery, *Stories We Tell* may work best for those who go in blind, and stumble onto the secret organically.

Memory

Haunting every frame of the film is Diane, who died of cancer two days after Sarah’s 11th birthday, but lives on through rhapsodic remembrances and grainy fragments of celluloid. Polley examines her mother with a certain ambivalence, celebrating her infectious spirit, while also acknowledging the ways that her often-impulsive behavior rocked the foundation of the family. Mixed in with the real home movies of Diane are authentic-looking recreations, shot on Super 8 and featuring actress Rebecca Jenkins as the deceased. Likely designed to provide visual accompaniment to some of the anecdotes, this staged footage also speaks to Polley’s point about the unreliability of memory. Jenkins isn’t playing the real woman, but an impression of her, conjured up in the minds of those whose lives she touched. While one interview subject insists that Diane knew she was dying, another swears up and down she had no idea. The truth, the film suggests, is lost in time.

#1
Memory

Discrepancies are the point in *Stories We Tell*, which seems most concerned with the way the past is distorted by those remembering it, and how the desire for ownership of a story creates multiple versions of “what really happened.” If there’s a dominant voice here, it belongs to Michael, whose candid reflections provide the film with a sturdy emotional backbone. Sarah, on the other hand, leaves most of

HIST 1000 Day 5

Going over the reading assignment

Stories We Tell Reading: Work in groups to summarize a specific paragraph of the reading and choose someone to report to the class.

1. P. 1, paragraph starting “Haunting every frame ...”
2. *P. 2, paragraph starting “It is a work of some audacity ...”*
3. P. 3, paragraph starting “Stories We Tell is a challenging ...”
4. *P. 3, paragraph starting “If I seem to be dancing around something ...”*
5. P. 5, paragraph starting “She orders brunch ...” Focus on the questions on the bottom.
6. *P. 5, paragraph starting “Michael Polley is the film’s ...”*
7. P. 7, paragraph starting “But there was one puzzle ...”
8. *P. 8, paragraph starting “Whatever the friendly difference ...”*

Assessment

Informal: Occasional short, in class reading comprehension activities in which they answer question about a reading assignment and turn it in.

Formal: Reading comprehension questions on every unit test. Same format every time, but different types of passages (primary and secondary):

1. Passages we have read together as a class and gone over.
2. Passages that the students have gone over jigsaw-style in groups, and then we went over as a class.
3. Passages that we have not gone over in class but clearly discuss a concept that they should be familiar with from class.

Informal Assessment
Rivonia Trial Speech by Nelson Mandela
Comprehension check

Get out a sheet of paper. Put your name on it. Ten minutes to read/re-read this speech and answer these questions (not graded).

Answer these questions:

1. Did you read this speech before this class? Yes/No
2. *This speech is split into discussions of two “features” of Black African life in South Africa. What are these?*
3. Please summarize an argument he makes to support the first of these features and a fact that he uses to support this argument.
4. *Please summarize an argument he makes to support the second of these features and a fact that he uses to support this argument.*

Formal/Summative Assessment

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Choose the two answers below that are the most true about this passage:

The lack of human dignity experienced by Africans is the direct result of the policy of white supremacy. White supremacy implies black inferiority. Legislation designed to preserve white supremacy entrenches this notion. Menial tasks in South Africa are invariably performed by Africans. When anything has to be carried or cleaned the white man will look around for an African to do it for him, whether the African is employed by him or not. Because of this sort of attitude, whites tend to regard Africans as a separate breed. They do not look upon them as people with families of their own; they do not realize that they have emotions - that they fall in love like white people do; that they want to be with their wives and children like white people want to be with theirs; that they want to earn enough money to support their families properly, to feed and clothe them and send them to school. And what 'house-boy' or 'garden-boy' or labourer can ever hope to do this?

Nelson Mandela, speech at the Rivonia Trial, April 20, 1964

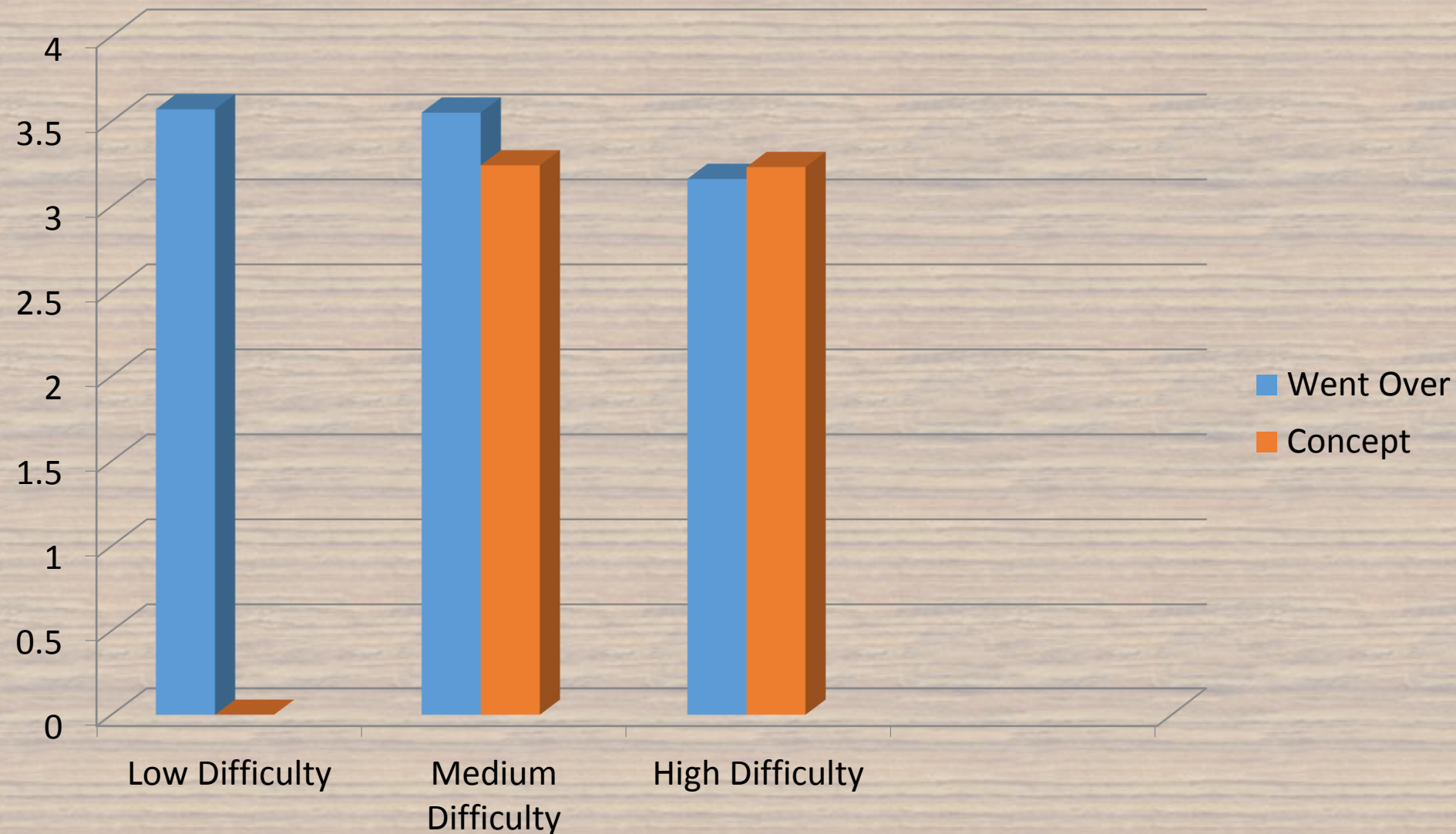
- ☐ A) Mandela argues white people in South Africa view blacks as a separate and inferior breed.
- ☐ B) Mandela is arguing that black South Africans are a separate breed from whites.
- ☐ C) He argues that the blacks in South Africa could not possibly support their families with the lowly jobs available to them.
- ☐ D) Mandela is arguing that blacks are superior to whites because they would never act in such a racist manner.

Done

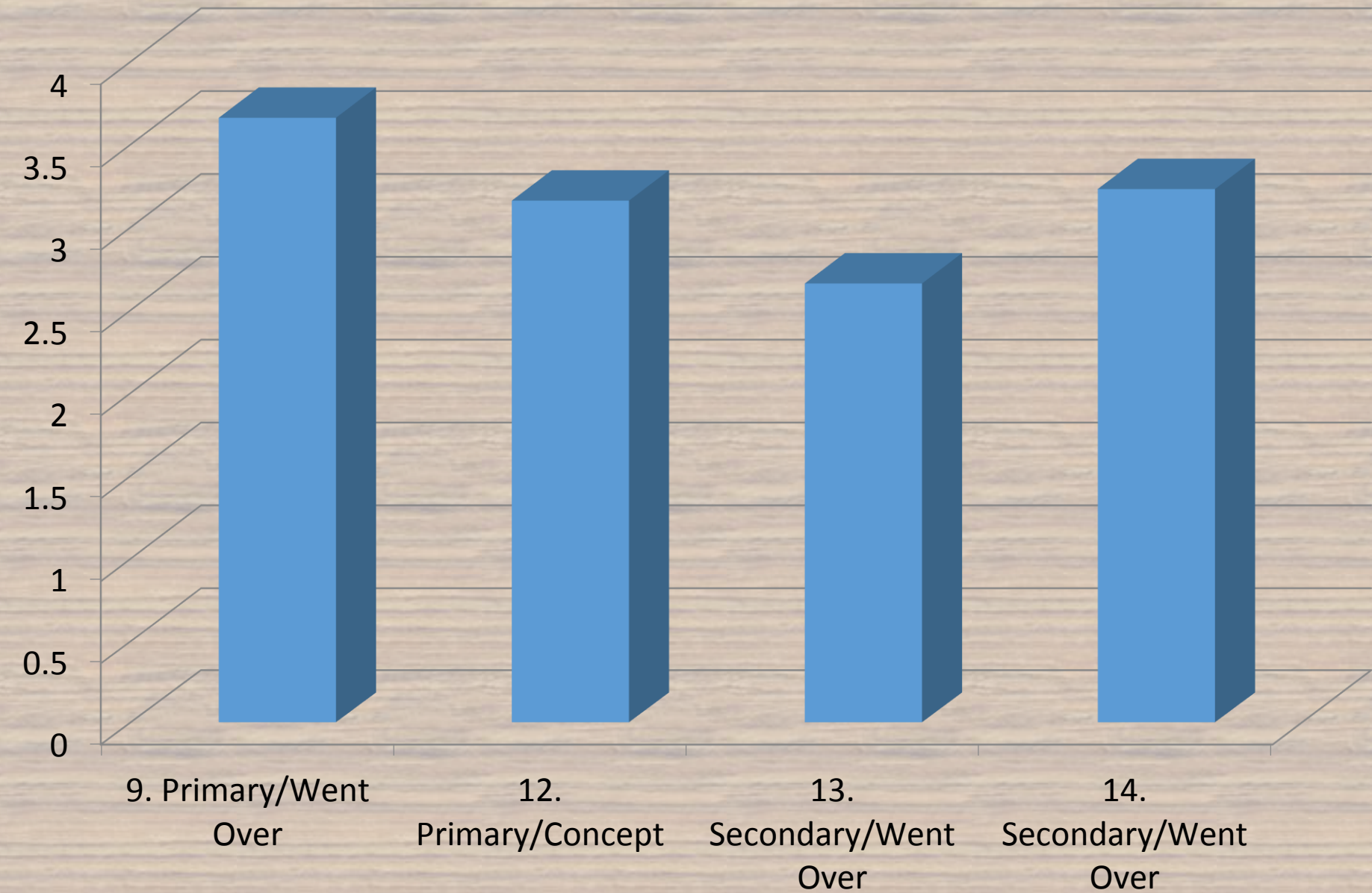
grading the question, it would appear as:

Elearn helps with the data, but it does not mean much beyond helping me improve the fairness of my assessments and my teaching in general

Quiz 1: Performance on questions, aggregated for reading difficulty level/split into whether we explicitly went over the passage or if we went over the concept but not the passage.



Quiz 1: High Reading Difficulty Questions, disaggregated



That's it. Questions/comments?