

Teachers and Successful Museum Field Trips

by

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H.B.A, University of Toronto, 2010

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A Project Submitted in Partial Fulfillment of the
Requirements for the Degree of

MASTER OF EDUCATION

In the Area of Social, Cultural and Foundational Studies

In the Department of Curriculum and Instruction

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University of Victoria

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Abstract

This project was undertaken to examine teachers' approach to existing field trips, including current opportunities and challenges surrounding museums as free-choice spaces. Observations of the literature revealed a lack of successful strategies, including pre- and post- activities and appropriate questioning. Furthermore, the literature revealed a striking lack of field trip resources for English Language Arts curriculum. In order to address these gaps, a website, Open Book Field Trips, was created as a resource to empower teachers with practical knowledge about free-choice spaces and accessible resources to integrate a field trip to any museum with a poetry analysis and creative writing assignment. The resources are aligned with the British Columbia's English Language Arts Prescribed Learning Outcomes grades 9-12.

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Acknowledgements

I would like to thank and acknowledge so many people who have helped me in this journey. You have all made this experience more important, exciting and worthwhile.

Thank you to my husband, David, for his kindness, hilarity and patience. I'm really happy we're married.

I would also like to thank my family, Mom, Dad, Michael, Glen and Grandpa, whose ongoing support for me is unwavering and unending. It means so much to me.

For my friends and colleagues who have listened and laughed with me, including, but not limited, to Jessica MacLean, Sarah McLeod, Emma Milliken, Elspeth Horn, Brianna Degirolamo and Patrick Tucker. Thank you for all your insights and your laughter.

I would also like to extend sincere thanks to the dedicated professors at the University of Victoria, Department of Curriculum and Instruction. Particularly, my supervisor Dr. Helen Raptis, for her continued encouragement, support and shared love of museums. Helen, I hope I can be as inspiring to my students as you have been for me. And Dr. Graham McDonough, for his thoughtful and insightful feedback on this project. Thank you both for making this project so rewarding and meaningful.

Dedication

For my grandmother, Barbara, the first teacher in the family.

Chapter 1: The field trip

Personal background

“Every experience is a moving force. Its value can be judged only on the ground of what it moves towards and into.” - Dewey, 1938, p. 12

My inspiration for investigating the museum field trip initially came from my own teacher education program at the Ontario Institute of Studies in Education (OISE) at the University in Toronto. We had two afternoon science classes that discussed the value of field trips and an assignment where we developed resources for specific sites around Toronto to be emailed to everyone in the cohort. It is reasonable to understand that the purpose of this activity was to foster the collaborative nature of education, but also to give us new teachers a wealth of resources to draw from. Although I understand the rationale of this activity, I was troubled by it. I wondered why we were taught to make our own resources; why weren't we talking with museum educators? I had worked and volunteered in museums for many years, and I was disappointed to see a lack of invitation from OISE toward some of the world-renowned museums in town. I could not understand why OISE would not want to build on the existing museum visitor experience by connecting its Teacher Candidates with museum staff perhaps through presentations or even a museum visit.

I began investigating more about field trips when I became a Teacher-on-call with the Greater Victoria School District. I looked online to find what kinds of

resources were available to teachers on district websites around British Columbia and from Canadian museums. I was particularly interested in the museums I had worked or volunteered at, including the Royal Ontario Museum (ROM) and the Vancouver Maritime Museum. Although there are many resources available from these sites, there appeared to be little consensus regarding what makes an effective field trip. Many museums websites, such as the ROM, had worksheets aimed at elementary to intermediate level students and consisted of activities such as crossword puzzles and matching activities. I was surprised by the lower-order thinking the activities called for and the lack of connection to the classroom (Krathwold, 2002). The intent of the activities appeared to fulfill the role of occupying students' time and energy, but I wondered how well they connected students to the educational potential of the museum itself. Furthermore, each of the activities were focused on either social studies or science curriculum. As an English teacher, it was disappointing to see the lack of connection to my subject of choice.

These worksheets were startling because of my experience working in museums, which had always been positive and creative. My experience working at the ROM was particularly valuable in my conceptualization of the field trip. At this museum, I worked in two hands-on galleries that promoted visitors (primarily children) to investigate objects kinesthetically. Staff and volunteers in these galleries were always creating new resources and activities for visitors, including a bee-keeping demonstration and a medieval weapons display. This kind of creativity, I felt, was sorely missing from the worksheets. Simplistic activities that were represented in the field trip resources certainly did not reflect the experience I had

at the ROM. I recognized there was a disconnect between the regular museum visit and the visit to the museum on a field trip, but I was unclear what could be done about it.

Another huge influence on my decision to investigate field trips was my first semester in my Masters program at the University of Victoria. Here, I reconnected with John Dewey and his thoughts of constructivism, so deeply rooted in experience and the engagement with that experience (Dewey, 1902; 1938). I came to realize that although field trips were experienced, the worksheets indicate that they did not necessarily build towards anything. As Dewey indicated, the quality of the experience is significant as it should promote the appeal of future like experiences (Dewey, 1938). I questioned how could these worksheets lead to students desiring an experience at the museum in their future. Often, museums did not provide activities to be conducted back in the classrooms to anticipate and build upon the experience in the museum. Furthermore, I wondered: How did the field trip work sheet build towards curricular goals of the classroom, but also towards a comfort and confidence in using museum space? Average visitors to a museum visit because the space is interesting, informal and maybe even provocative, but, certainly, they are not filling in a worksheet as they move through the space (Falk & Dierking, 2000). Rather, I believe the informal experience takes advantage of Dewey's articulation of the learner as autonomous, imaginative and inventive (Dewey, 1902; 1938). The average museum visitor enters the space on their own terms and creatively builds upon their prior knowledge to create new knowledge. My

reconnection to Dewey's philosophy helped solidify my decision to move forward with the study of field trips.

The value of museum field trips

There is no doubt that field trips to museums provide a valuable learning experience for students. The experiences are memorable and the majority of students are able to remember specific events of things that occurred on museum field trips (Falk & Dierking, 1997). Many students are able to recall, years later, where and with whom they visited the museum. Furthermore, Falk and Dierking (1997) demonstrate that experiences to museums on field trips are not at all trivial or focused on the novelty of the setting as have been their criticism. Rather, they are memorable because of their educational and social benefits.

However, it is not only that field trips provide warm and positive memories for students. Rather, field trips have also been shown to contribute to students' knowledge about art, critical thinking skills and historical compassion (Greene, Kisida & Bowen, 2014). Field trips have also demonstrated a strong potential not just for cognitive development, but as motivators for further learning (Hurley, 2006). These facts reinforce the conclusions I have drawn from my personal experience working/volunteering in museums, where I would observe students participating in field trips. Particularly in the hands-on galleries of the ROM, students appeared overjoyed to be "discovering" by trying on costumes or crawling through bat caves. From these experience, I could see the potential and opportunity for field trips to be

powerful educational experiences. Truly, if field trips are conducted appropriately, there is enormous potential for an enriching and rewarding outcome.

Problems with museum field trips today

From my personal observations, I have concluded that there are a number of general problems with field trips to museums. Firstly, museum field trips generally fail to connect to classroom curriculum. The experience is often described by teachers as a “one-off”, not to be discussed or built upon back in the classroom (Kisiel, 2007; Griffin & Symmington, 1997). From my observations, students seem aware of this and treat the experience as unimportant. They often appeared bored and disinterested with the exhibits. Secondly, teachers, perhaps from inexperience or misunderstanding of what constitutes learning in a museum setting, often occupy students with lengthy worksheets or give few instructions and give students free-reign on their space and time (Kisiel, 2007; Griffin & Symmington, 1997). Neither of these scenarios provide the majority of students with the tools needed for a meaningful, engaging field trip. The worksheets are often far too long, include too many “closed” questions and led to boredom. And on the opposite end of the spectrum, the free-time leaves students without any guidance regarding how to use the space, leading again to boredom. Truly, the majority of field trips I have observed do not correspond with Dewey’s description of a quality experience, as they appear to be disagreeable and do not appear to promote students’ desire to return to a museum (Dewey, 1938).

Relevance of field trips for British Columbia teachers today

As a teacher in British Columbia, I am focused on field trips in this province. Without a doubt, BC is home to many significant and valuable museum institutions that each provide enriching opportunities for field trips. One of the most significant resources available to teachers is the website *bcfieldtrips.ca* which hosts an annual Field Trip Fair in Vancouver, a searchable database of over 500 available programs at over 100 organizations. It also provides a list of transportation options and a blog. Furthermore, BC museum websites each provide teachers with information for how to book a field trip and often provide accompanying resources or guides. In addition, nearly every school district website clearly outlines their field trip policy and regulations. These sites and links clearly indicate that field trips are valuable and, furthermore, are well-used by teachers in this province.

Field trips may also have an increasing role to play in the next few years. As teachers and the public have been introduced to the BC Ministry of Education's new curriculum, certain terms such as "Essential Concepts and Content for Deeper Learning" and "Personalized Learning" would seem to go hand-in-hand with the museum field trip experience (BC Ministry of Education, 2013). The Ministry website states that "deeper learning" occurs when students "solve problems, make decisions, and inquire into real-world issues" (BC Ministry of Education, 2013). Personalized learning is defined as a situation where "student engagement is

learning, giving students choices – more of a say in what and how they learn and where they learn” (BC Ministry of Education, 2013). Surely these goals can be successfully achieved in a museum setting. One can develop historical empathy, thus connect more effectively to our “real-world issues” (Greene, Kisida & Bowen, 2014).

Purpose of project and research questions

The overall purpose of this project is to provide teachers in British Columbia with an accessible resource that provides realistic activities for a museum field trip and that overcome some of the classic problems with field trips to museums. My research questions were: What are the opportunities and challenges for teachers opting to use field trips? What are some strategies teachers can engage with in order to plan meaningful field trips that actively engage with the free-choice nature of museums? And how can teachers support the self-directed nature of the museum field trips?

These questions led to the development of a website, as the literature revealed the need for a concrete resource that bridged several gaps present in existing resources, including a lack of pre- and post- activities and a general lack of understanding by teachers about how to use the museum space effectively. As an English Language Arts at the high school level, I have chosen to design the resource with high school English teachers in mind. Furthermore, the literature established that English Language Arts field trips to museums are sorely lacking, as few studies even address their existence. My personal experience also reveals there is not a

wealth of resources available to English teachers for museum field trips. Overall, this project hopes to provide teachers with an available, practical resource that inspires engaging and meaningful museum field trips.

Theoretical framework

Constructivism

Given the nature of learning on field trips, this research is framed from a constructivist perspective. Knowledge, from a constructivist approach, is made from real-life experiences and prior knowledge which are combined to attain higher-order thinking goals, such as creativity and complex problem solving (Dewey, 1938; Lombardi, 2011). This philosophical framework understands the learner as an active participant in the learning; he or she must experience in order to learn (Glaserfeld, 1989). Constructivism also encourages hands-on learning, experiential learning, and discovery learning, the latter being the philosophical orientation that framed the galleries in which I worked at the ROM. The discoveries, such as the bat cave previously mentioned, made by the ROM's visitors were structured by the museum to bridge their physical understanding and their mental or imagined knowledge (Bruner, 1961).

Constructivism's encouragement of hands-on and experiential learning is a natural connection to field trips to museums (Dewey, 1938/2009). Experiences encouraged by the constructivist framework are a part of many existing exhibits and museum spaces and are readily available for student (or teacher) use on field trips.

Furthermore, studies, such as the one by Mortensen and Smart (2007), which I elaborate upon in Chapter 2, demonstrate the occurrence and value in collaborative and mutually constructed knowledge. Field trips to museums clearly have potential to foster learning within a constructivist setting as there are significant opportunities for participants to make meaning and understanding.

This project heavily relies on the assumption that students learn meaningfully when engaged actively in the field trip , but they also need effective facilitation by teachers. As Dewey argued, education needs to strike a balance between the student's "interests and actions" and the teacher's delivery of knowledge (Dewey, 1902, p.44). The resource that is developed as part of this project is framed by the concept that students, although given parameters, learn when they have choice and freedom to explore and experience.

Furthermore, constructivism's frame of the teacher as a facilitator who supports and encourages students' learning is also appropriate for these studies (Glaserfeld, 1989). Naturally, to actively and positively facilitate, one must step outside the traditional educational model, in which students are subjected to "imposition from above and from outside" (Dewey, 1938/2007, p. 1), and expect students to actively explore, question and reflect (Alesandrini & Larson, 2002). As articulated by Alesandrini and Larson (2002), this can be a challenge for any teacher. However, the field trip provides a significant and tangible opportunity for even the most hesitant teacher to adopt this lens and "learn by doing" (Alesandrini & Larson, 2002, p. 118). Although this project develops, in part, resources for students to use independently, the teacher is always a crucial part of a successful field trip. The

project provides resources for the teacher to effectively frame and guide students during their experience(s). The project is designed within the framework that the teacher acts as a facilitator and is available for consultation and guidance before, during and after the field trip.

Vygotsky's Zone of Proximal Development

This project is also framed by Vygotsky's notion of the Zone of Proximal Developed (ZPD), a theory that children's learning depends partly on their prior knowledge in that specific area. (Vygotsky, 1978) New knowledge is acquired by fitting the information into existing mental patterns (schemata). Vygotsky coined the term ZPD to refer to the optimal space for learning, when a child is challenged by new information, but has support – usually from a teacher – to fit new knowledge into existing patterns. It is crucial that the task be challenging, but not too difficult as to discourage the child entirely. Vygotsky posited that some students will be able to take the new information and fit it into their patterns independently. However, many students will struggle and teachers assist by scaffolding their knowledge, helping the student develop mental schema piece by piece into which to fit the new information.

ZPD and scaffolding inform this project because I have seen many field trips go awry simply because I don't think students (and perhaps teachers) know how to use a museum to its full potential. If teachers could scaffold students' learning and develop a mental schema for how to meaningfully operate in museum spaces, field trips have potential to be powerful experiences for learning. Vygotsky's (1978)

theory also informs this project because I believe the field trip experience can be a scaffold to learning back in the classroom or vice-versa, if only teachers understood more effectively how to bridge the two spaces together. This project aims to promote a challenging, but not overly complex, field trip resource that enables students and teachers to experience a positive and successful museum visit.

Definitions

- *Museum*: A permanent public space designed to facilitate learning. For the purposes of this project, I am referring traditional museums, hands-on learning centres, science centres and historic sites.
- *Free-choice learning spaces*: Spaces entered into by individuals to “satisfy their needs for relaxation, enjoyment, intellectual or even spiritual fulfillment” (Falk, 2005, p. 265). Falk recognizes that these spaces are traditionally viewed as museums, parks or other public institutes, but with advancing technological complexity, the term has resonance with other spaces, such as websites.

Chapter 2: Literature Review

Introduction

The topic of field trips is significant in the education field, since many teachers participate in them, they are generally understood as valuable and worthwhile; and students generally have positive memories of them (Wolins, Jensen & Ulzheimer, 1992; Falk, 2005). Field trips to museums have a special ability to connect students with learning in a context outside their classrooms. Field trips generally demonstrate to students that learning not only exists within the walls of schools, but takes place outside, as well. Museum field trips are also a worthwhile topic because museums have the significant role as places of free-choice learning; the visitor has a large degree of control over her experience (Falk, 2005). The benefits of the experience can be increased dramatically when teachers incorporate appropriate strategies (Griffin & Symington, 1997). Also, from my own personal experiences working in museums, there are significant variations on how teachers use the museum space and connect it to students' classroom learning. As museums are accepted as spaces of free-choice learning and provide ample opportunity for visitors to exercise choice and personal selection over prescribed experiences, I am curious as to how teachers take – or do not take – advantage of this opportunity (Falk, 2005; Falk & Dierking, 2000). My guiding questions for this literature review are: What are some strategies teachers can engage with in order to plan a meaningful field trip that actively engages with the free-choice space? How can

teachers support the self-directed, free-choice nature of the museum during field trips?

Using these guiding questions, I searched the online database ProQuest through the University of Victoria Library website. My search terms included “field trip”, “teacher preparation”, “museum partnership”, “teacher guide”, “field trip worksheet”, “free choice learning in museums”, “museum visits” and “school visits”. While I tried to keep the literature recent, I have also included a few studies that date back more than 10 years because of the very focused nature of my guiding questions.

Pre-visit and post-visit museum field trip activities

A particularly important theme that surfaced from the literature is the need for classroom curriculum to be connected effectively to the museum. In my museum work experience, I saw many school groups without a specific purpose. The students were either on tours not meant for their grade, thus not directly related to their class activity, or with teacher- or museum-prepared worksheets, rushing around the multitude of exhibits gathering answers.

Studies show that a majority of museum field trips do not connect with classroom lessons (Kisiel, 2003). The scholarly literature overwhelmingly indicates that it is valuable in advance of the trip for teachers to prepare students for the trip itself and the subject matter (Noel & Colopy, 2006; Narbors, Edwards & Murray, 2009; Tuffy, 2011). This, unfortunately, does not often occur in reality, as students

are often unprepared for the experience and do not anticipate follow-up activities (Griffin & Symington, 1997). It is also discussed and suggested that teachers have follow-up activities about the field trip (Noel & Colopy, 2006; Griffin & Symington, 1997; Tuffy, 2011).

In Constantino's (2008) study, she explored the teacher's role as effective mediator of students' experiences on a field trip to a visual art gallery. The researcher used a case study structure to examine the planning and implementation of a field trip by a grade six teacher, Kate. Data were gathered through observation of the classroom before and after the visit and the field trip itself, semi-structured interviews with the art teacher, classroom teachers and a purposeful sample of students. Student artifacts (worksheet and artwork) were also collected. Firstly, Kate developed a unit based on an exhibit of contemporary sculpture by Spanish artist Juan Munoz. She chose the topic based on the artistic attributes and connections to history and culture, but also revealed her discomfort with the subject because she did not have an art history background.

The unit consisted of nine consecutive 40-minute lessons leading up to the field trip, where students participated in creative writing based on Munoz's installations and drawing lessons (Constantino, 2008). After the field trip, lessons focused on students creating sculptures and planning their own installation. Kate visited the exhibition several times to plan how students would interact with the space. She also prepared using teacher resources from the museum and her own research on the Internet. Kate then led a one-hour guided tour with the class by asking them to look at a specific sculpture grouping and then asking open-ended

and guiding questions to draw out themes and ideas. Students responded positively to the unit and referred to prior lessons leading up to the trip as helpful. Their reflections on Munoz's work indicated understanding and interest in the sculptures. Significantly, Kate's plan and implementation of a field trip demonstrates her comfort with the subject matter and the museum as an informal learning place. Her foresight to prepare the students for the museum trip with introductory lessons (including vocabulary and brief explanations of larger artistic concepts) connected students to the visit. Kate's work to enhance the students' experience through pre- and post- activities resulted in a meaningful integration of the museum into students' (and Kate's) learning. It is interesting to consider the fact that Kate virtually created all her own materials for this field trip. It seems unlikely that the majority of teachers would have the kind of time and energy to create such a plan, even though it proved to be effective and stimulating.

In Tuffy's (2011) study, she established that in order for field trips to be effective, teachers must engage in pre-activities and post-activities. Tuffy's research included interviews with teachers leading field trips at museums and with museum educators at several American and British museums as well as observations of school and public visits to museum galleries. She established that student engagement with the museum is increased when students are given background information and develop relationships with the material before the trip. When students have prior knowledge about the subject matter, they will not be overwhelmed or intimidated by the space. In the same vein, when students have effective follow up, their learning is supported and valued. This study is significant

because it clearly supports the value of teachers making the museum part of the curriculum through pre- and post- activities. Tuffy argues effectively that museums should be an integrated resource, not a separated excursion. However, Tuffy's practical solutions for the field trip involve teachers taking extra time to visit the museum prior to their class visit and the implementation of follow-up activities, which she suggests teachers *may* find on the museum website. Although Tuffy directly acknowledged the disconnection between classroom and museum, the solutions offered were impractical as they were time-consuming and asked teachers to design and implement lessons and activities in an unfamiliar setting.

Griffin and Symington's (1997) study focused on the role of classroom teachers before, during and after museum field trips. Researchers conducted their investigation at two Australian museums: the Australian Museum and a smaller scale science centre. Data were collected through observation of 30 class field trips, and interviews with 23 teachers before, during and after the trip and also with informal student interviews with students during the trip. Results indicate that only half of the teachers interviewed could relate the field trip to students' learning of content or skill. Seventy-five percent of the classes had only been prepared for the field trip by being told what institution they were going to, to bring a signed permission slip and money. Most teachers indicated there would be follow-up activities back in the classroom, but these mostly entailed collection of worksheets completed during the visit. The majority of students did not expect follow-up activities. Only four of the school groups observed were studying in school the subject that was presented at the museum. This study illustrated that field trips to

museums are not usually connected to classroom material. Teachers seemed to lack an understanding of how to support students' learning at the museum; instead their focus was on completion and collection of lengthy, survey-type worksheets

Noel and Colopy's (2006) study involved a quantitative assessment of 47 grade four teachers and qualitative interviews with seven museum site educators. The researchers' teacher survey was guided by questions about how and when teachers intended to use materials provided by the museum during their field trip and what resource characteristics most appealed to teachers. Results indicated that the majority of teachers intended to use curricular materials offered by the sites to prepare for the trip, and 44 of the 47 teachers preferred to receive the material before the trip. Furthermore, half of the teachers surveyed would prefer a short (<45 minutes) lesson plan resource, opposed to multi-day, longer or home-enrichment lessons. In interviews, site educators indicated that student preparation of material to be covered during the field trip is the most valuable tool. It significantly helps students enjoy and engage with the experience. It is clear from this study that both teachers and site educators want students to be prepared for the field trip. A majority of teachers in this study specified they wanted to present a lesson in preparation for the field trip, which indicates they see the value of relating the field trip to the classroom. Unfortunately, this study does not address how many teachers actually do prepare students with such available materials.

Recognizing the museum as a free-choice space

Another theme that emerged from the literature is the fact that teachers overwhelmingly bring the formality and rigidity of traditional classroom practice to the museum field trip experience (Kisiel, 2003; 2007; Griffin & Symington, 1997). Students are rarely provided opportunity to freely engage meaningfully with the space. Rather, students are often provided with a rigid structure, filled with close-ended questions and then, at the end and on the opposite end of the spectrum, given a lot of time to be “free” in the space without the parameters of how to spend their time effectively. Kisiel (2003; 2007) and Griffin and Symington (1997) reveal the majority of teachers prefer close-ended, traditional tools when supporting student learning in museums. Rather than helping students engage with the museum as free-choice, the rigidity of classroom experiences, such as worksheets, are implemented and valued. From my experience working in museum settings, I have seen many visiting school groups use the museum space in this way.

Kisiel (2007), in his study, articulated the specific strategies teachers report using during field trips to local museums and questioned how those align with observed field trip practice. Data for the study were collected through surveys sent to upper level elementary school teachers in the Los Angeles area and were returned to the researcher by mail. The questionnaire was a combination of close-ended, demographic-type questions and open-ended questions. Four hundred questionnaires were sent out to randomly selected teachers and 115 were returned. Data were also collected from an in-depth study with 10 randomly selected teachers

who had already booked field trips to the Natural History Museum of Los Angeles County. With each of these 10 teachers, researchers conducted a pre-visit interview based on the mailed survey questionnaire, observation of the students and teacher during the visit, and a follow-up interview with the teacher. Kisiel concluded that most teachers utilize the structured engagement strategy, which usually involves scavenger hunts or worksheets. Although some teachers also implemented unstructured strategies, such as free time, interviews revealed that teachers were less comfortable with those practices due to time constraints or the teacher's perception of prescribed outcomes of the field trip. Overall, this study articulated teachers' general preference for structured signs of learning was preferred, such as completion of worksheets. This study implied that the majority of teachers may not realize the free-choice nature of learning within the museum.

A study already mentioned, Griffin and Symington's (1997) study also sheds light on the formality of classroom learning in the free-choice space. In this study it was observed that most of the teachers focused on students finishing lengthy worksheets based on assignments given out by the venue, later to be marked by the teachers. Generally teachers did not help build connections between exhibits and classroom activity. Furthermore, students expressed their distaste for the worksheets and said they interfered with viewing the exhibits that personally interested them. Significantly, students articulated to researchers that if they were engaging with the space but not answering questions on the worksheet, they were not learning. Yet students desired more control over their experience on excursions to such venues. This study certainly suggests a serious misunderstanding of what

learning looks like. This study significantly illustrates the fact that formality of the long questionnaires students are forced to answer during field trips do not foster learning within the free-choice space. Rather, they actually misled students as to how to use and learn from the museum.

Kisiel's (2003) study focused on the characteristics of typical worksheets teachers use during a museum field trip to a natural history museum. Twelve worksheets were collected from twelve different schools over a two-month period (April and December). Ten teachers were interviewed and eight school visits were observed. Qualitative data analysis was used to analyze worksheets, interviews and observations. Significantly, questions were counted and differences in worksheet styles and strategies were evident. The worksheets were categorized into two themes: survey (lower-order thinking skills, specific answers) or concept oriented (higher-order thinking skills, open ended). A majority of the worksheets were survey format. Teachers reported the goal of the field trip for students was to "see as much as possible" (Kisiel, 2003, p.13) or as a general opportunity to learn outside the classroom. Clearly, the teachers wanted the experience to be valuable for students as each teacher took the time to prepare a worksheet. However, this study strongly demonstrates the good intentions of the teacher, but the lack of understanding of the museum as a place of free-choice learning. Unfortunately, this study, like Griffin and Symington's (1997), only addressed field trips to science-based museums.

Asking the right questions

Another theme that emerged was that the questions that are asked to students during field trips can dramatically affect the experience of the museum visit. Mortensen and Smart (2007) demonstrated that carefully planned, open-ended questions on museum worksheets provide important opportunity for students to connect their prior knowledge and can guide students to use exhibits effectively. Burchenal and Grohe (2007), meanwhile, articulated, in their study, the value of teaching students how to question or critique art. When students are empowered with this ability, they are able to confidently use the museum space independently. Finally, although not directly related to the field trip experience, Hohenstein and Tran's (2007) study reveals the potential for appropriate, open-ended questions on museum exhibit labels to inspire conversation and mutually constructed meaning by visitors. Each of these studies reveals the potential for teachers to support learning in museums by asking the right questions.

Mortensen and Smart (2007) articulated that a well-designed worksheet can enhance student experience and actually expose students to curriculum while on a museum visit. This study built upon Kiesel's (2003) study of 12 museum worksheets and the authors designed a *Chaperone's Guide* for the North Carolina Museum of Natural Sciences. The guide was intended to orient visitors, provide open-ended questions directly connected to the science curriculum that would facilitate dialogue among small groups. The researchers observed 23 control groups and 24 intervention groups, noted their conversation and then coded dialogue. Results

indicated that the use of the *Chaperone's Guide* increased the likelihood the groups would discuss exhibits and connect them naturally to curricular goals back in the classrooms. The study also demonstrated the guide kept students focused and engaged with the museum, as the guide stressed examination of exhibits and their labels. Clearly worksheets have enormous potential to focus students, learning within the free-choice nature of the museum space.

Another study by Burchenal and Grohe (2007) again demonstrated the power of open-ended questions. This study looked at a specific program called "Thinking Through Art" developed at the Isabella Stewart Gardner Museum in Boston. The program was designed to enhance students critical-thinking skills, such as observation, interpretation and problem finding. The program consists of elementary classes participating in multiple visits to the museum where students are asked three questions designed to prompt observations and supply evidence: What is going on in this picture? What do you see that makes you say that? What more can we find? For the purpose of their study, researchers observed two classes who engaged with the "Thinking Through Art" program and two control groups. All four groups were recorded as they discussed a specific art poster and as they participated in an "untour" through which they explored a single museum gallery on their own. Researchers then coded students' conversation with a facilitator through the use of a rubric that outlined seven areas of critical thinking skills. Results indicate that groups who had participated in "Thinking Through Art" demonstrated significantly more instances of critical-thinking skills and they were also likely to provide evidence for what they were thinking. Significantly, this study demonstrates

the power of well-crafted questions to focus students on the exhibits. These students were able to move freely about the museum space. Nevertheless, the “Thinking Through Art” program empowered them to interpret and use the space effectively. If teachers had access to a resource that provided a model for open-ended questions such as these, museum experiences would likely be rewarding and empowering for students.

In Witmer, Luke and Adams’ (2000) article analyzes a partnership between Washington, DC schools and the National Gallery of Art is analyzed and the results, like Burchenal and Grohe (2007), demonstrate the power of asking the right questions. The partnership analyzed by Witmer et al., is titled “Art Around the Corner”, and includes multiple visits to the museum, studio and writing projects, several inquiry-based tours and culminates in a presentation to friends and family on Family Day. Students learn to ask questions about art through repeated guided exposure to museum space. Significantly, one of the goals of the project is “[t]o enhance students’ abilities to analyze, discuss and interpret original works of art” (Witmer et al., p. 47). This article details the results of a 1998 study by Luke, Adams and Falk which revealed that students who had participated in “Art Around the Corner” three years prior, still scored significantly higher in critical thinking skills than those who had not participated (Witmer et al., 2000). After being asked to give their impressions of a painting, students who had participated in “Art Around the Corner” used more description, more detailed vocabulary and provided more support for their ideas (Witmer et al., 2000). This study clearly demonstrates the

potential for field trips to museums as rewarding and potentially when students are asked, and are taught to ask, the right questions.

Although not directly related to the field trip experience, Hohenstein and Tran's (2007) study has significant implications for questions asked in museums. The study used a Vygotskian framework of conversation as a social mechanism from which meanings are mutually constructed, in order to examine conversations stimulated from questions or statements on museum labels. The study took place at a science museum and involved labeling three exhibits (a model Victorian workshop, a bowl from Hiroshima, Japan and a section of a car) with three label conditions: the exhibit's Current Label, Current Label with Added Question "Why is this here?" and Simplified Text with Question. The exhibits were then videotaped under each label condition for approximately 6 hours and 839 episodes were recorded. Qualitative research analysis was conducted and 464 episodes that included conversations were transcribed, coded and analyzed. Specifically, the study sought to understand how the label affected how many open-ended, self-generated questions would be asked in conversation following reading the label. The study's findings indicate that the addition of the question "Why is this here?" to the original label may promote more open-ended questions and explanations. However, the label's effectiveness on this dialogue varied among the exhibits. One conclusion was that guided questions can stimulate visitor inquiry and reflection, but the question must be appropriate and applicable to the nature of the displayed object. Although not directly linked to a school-based educational context, this study demonstrates that if the right questions

are asked, conversation and thus, mutually constructed knowledge, have the potential to arise.

Who plans the field trip? The teacher or the museum?

Another theme that emerged from the literature is that there needs to be preparation done for field trips by teachers and museums. Although museums seek out class visits and are generally prepared with staff for such field trips, much of the research indicates the teacher as the official planner of the experience (Narbors, Edwards & Murray, 2012). From my experience, teachers use study guides devised by the museum or gallery, worksheets downloaded from the museum website or engage directly with a docent for a tour. Each of these, from my perspective, demonstrates the teacher's understanding that the museum holds much of the responsibility for the museum experience. I have already indicated that Wilmer et al. (2000) and Burchenel and Grohe (2007) hinted at the power of direct partnerships between schools and museums. Rebar (2012) and Narbors, Edwards and Murray (2009), however, highlighted the lack of teacher training and general awareness of how to prepare for a successful field trip. Brodie and Wiebe (1999) and Tran (2006), however, demonstrate that museum staff do not meet tensions that arise when teachers' expectations are not met during the field trip. Although both museum staff and teachers may be fulfilling their own agendas and desired outcomes, they are not working together. If there were a way for teachers and museum staff to articulate their expectations and desired outcomes, there is potential for far richer, more

rewarding experiences. Coughlin (2010) demonstrated a collaboration of a museum program in her article where teachers were asked what makes effective field trips resources, and then the museum created them. Although it is impossible for each museum and each school district to engage in such an impressive collaboration, Coughlin (2010) demonstrates that the tensions expressed by Brodie and Wiebe (1999) and Tran (2007) may be alleviated by direct communication of expectations.

Rebar (2012) investigated teacher sources of information and knowledge when they plan self-guided field trips. Rebar studied 24 separate field trips to an aquarium and used surveys, interviews with eight different teachers, observations of the field trip and artifacts in his data collection. The field trips observed ranged from grade two to twelve. Rebar found that teachers leading the field trips had some kind of training or past experience that enabled them to feel comfortable leading an effective field trip. A majority of teachers had been informally mentored by an experienced teacher and few had formal training through teacher education or outdoor education programs. What was most significant from Rebar's study was that teacher knowledge surrounding planning and implementing field trips vary dramatically and do not always support meaningful engagement with the museum. Rebar also found teachers rarely reflected on the field trip and ways for improvement. Rebar reports that field trip success was determined by other teachers' prior experience. During informal mentoring, one teacher noted the mentor set the benchmark for what constituted a successful trip. This study articulates that teachers want to improve, but are at a disadvantage due to a serious lack of resources.

This finding echoes an American survey conducted by Narbors, Edwards and Murray (2009) of site coordinators from 38 nationally recognized field trip locations. In their research, only 11 out of 38 site coordinators were asked for follow-up after their class visited. As Rebar noted, and Narbors et al. (2009) echoed, teachers' informal or formal training is not sufficient. Field trips are generally full of missed opportunities within museum space. However, the study prompts the question of where teachers are meant to go in order to improve their practice in this specific area. Narbors et al.'s recommendation to teachers was to better prepare students for the visit through pre-activities and connecting the field trip to contents of current units of study. However, again, the process for how to accomplish these connections was not articulated. Both Rebar (2012) and Narbors et al. (2009) proved that teachers need better preparation, reflection and resources in order to build effective, meaningful field trips.

Brodie and Wiebe's (1999) article shed light on the discrepancies of responsibility for the field trip between museum staff and teachers. Their conclusions are based on data collected over an eight-year period and it was originally presented in a reader's theatre setting where voices of museum tour guides, students and teachers had been recorded, transcribed and were then re-spoken aloud in an open venue. The researchers hoped this format would allow for the "essence" (p.176) of the participant to be captured. Unfortunately, the article did not mention exactly how many field trips were observed or what methodology was used. Its format, however, does provide honest insight into the chaotic nature of the field trip. The authors concluded that because teachers' paradigms and perspectives

vary, it is impossible for the museum experience to meet each teacher's - and therefore each class's - needs. The authors commented that if a teacher's paradigm is not reflected in the exhibit or by the museum staff, the teacher will be dissatisfied with the field trip as a whole. They effectively articulate that teachers and museum staff are not always cooperatively building a field trip, but are often at odds with one another. It raises the significant question of how museums and teachers can work together to outline goals so that the field trip fits within the teacher's expectations.

Tran (2006) evaluated the museum educator's role when leading field trip groups. The study took place at two science museums and data were collected through observation of four full-time, paid museum educators and free-choice interviews with them immediately afterwards. Tran's data revealed that the museum educators' personal goals of the tour were to motivate students to engage more with the museum and with science. Although content knowledge was a desired outcome of their tours, they commented that it was not required for a successful visit, as it should not be a requirement of a single lesson. It is interesting to compare these findings to other studies which indicate curricular connections are goals of teachers when visiting museums, such as Kisiel's (2007). This study indicates a lack of collaboration between the museum and teachers regarding desired outcomes of the museum visit. Tour guides are resources for teachers' field trips, but if they do not share the same goals, there is a strong likelihood the field trip will not achieve its full potential.

In Coughlin's (2010) study, she investigated a specific historical site, a one-room schoolhouse, and the resources museum educators provided to teachers. The

project was developed between the museum, a university professor and school district teachers. The Lutz-Franklin Schoolhouse historical site offered a dynamic experience for students and teachers, through the use of role-play, primary source material, timelines, hands-on artifacts and children's literature. Over the course of four years, as the project developed, interviews were conducted with teachers in order to gather data about the museum resources' effectiveness. The museum carefully planned pre- and post-visit activities to be connected to specific social studies curriculum goals. The museum created two pre-visit lessons, with accompanying resources (including artifacts), to introduce students to the schoolhouse. The field trip itself had students role play former students at the schoolhouse and had them immerse themselves in the one-room school experience. The museum also created a variety of post-visit options for teachers, including a journal entry assignment, class discussion or describing a student's life using primary sources as evidence. With these resources, all teachers surveyed agreed they were able to make strong curricular connections between the site and the classroom. Teachers also described the quality and number of materials as helpful in their instructional preparation. Through this study, Coughlin provided a positive model of the potential for field trips when teachers and museums work harmoniously. However, it is worthwhile to note that although this museum visit was described as a "collaboration", this study demonstrated that teachers know what they want, and when museums ask them and create resources based on their needs, the museum experience is meaningfully and successfully integrated. Much like Mortensen and Smart (2007) discussed in their article, it is questionable how

many teachers outside this study would actually engage meaningfully with this resource.

English Language Arts field trips: Absent from research

A final observation that I made about the literature was the lack of research for Language Arts curriculum, teachers and students. Although English is a required and fundamental course, there is little evidence museums provide opportunity for Language Arts students to engage with their spaces. The studies mentioned in this literature review focus heavily on science-based institutions, including Griffin and Symington (1997), Mortenson and Smart (2007), Kisiel (2003; 2007), Rebar (2002), Tran (2006). Social studies field trips, too, have been a key focus of the literature (Hohenstein and Tran, 2007; Tuffy, 2011). It is troublesome that relevant, dynamic and vital subjects such as Language Arts are relegated to corners of the classroom, while subjects typically identified as “hands-on” reap the rewards of museum spaces. Surely, there is opportunity for Language Arts educators to infuse these vibrant and important experiences into their teaching.

Conclusion

There is no doubt that museums provide an invaluable resource for school teachers and students. Field trips are an exceptional experience and there is potential to make them even more meaningful and powerful. This review has

articulated some of the themes in the literature and it has revealed a gap in resources available for teachers on how exactly they can engage effectively in planning, undertaking and following up on museum field trips.

The literature addressed in this review indicated there is much research to be done with respect to teachers' planning for successful field trips. Overall, a conclusion to be drawn is that teachers are unaware of how to effectively use a museum space and how to integrate the experience into classroom learning (Rebar, 2011; Griffin & Symington, 1997). Many teachers, as demonstrated by these studies, use the museum field trip as a one-time "experience" and do not develop strategies to incorporate it into classroom work. This is what I have observed in my personal work experience in museums. Often, there are students left wandering the exhibit without a purpose. This leads to boredom, which in turn can lead to behaviour problems (Griffin & Symington, 1997). Furthermore, if students experience the museum as a one-time experience, unrelated to the learning at school, museums may be relegated, in their memories, to non-educational, non-engaging spaces.

A primary theme that emerged from the literature was the connection of field trips to the museum space through pre- and post-visit activities. Research demonstrates that with the implementation(s) of such visits to museums are more rewarding, comfortable and effective (Constantino, 2008; Noel & Colopy, 2006). However, as demonstrated by Tuffy (2011) and Giffin and Symington (1997), teachers struggle to understand how the museum should be integrated. Tuffy (2011) articulated the need for teachers to locate the field trip within the larger learning context with pre- and post-activities. And Griffin and Symington (1997)

demonstrated the dangers of the field trip when it is not well-prepared; students do not engage meaningfully with the museum space and do not understand how to appropriately participate. Although each of these studies indicated that learning within the classroom and during the field trip must be more closely fused, most of the research points to the teacher taking extra time, like Kate in Constantino's (2008) study, to design, create and implement the activities.

There is no doubt that teachers continue to value and support traditional, formal activities, such as the flowed-format worksheets, during their time within the museum space (Kisiel, 2003; 2007; Griffin & Symington, 1997). However, as demonstrated by Griffin and Symington (1997), this may be teaching students that engagement with the free-choice activities without pre-planned curricular supplement is, in fact, not learning at all. The interest of teachers to keep students focused and on-task influences how students perceive learning generally. Later in life, if they are to participate in free-choice activities, such as the Internet or museums or documentaries, will they see that as learning? Or will they need to fill out a survey-like worksheet in order to feel satisfied they've learned something? This literature review reveals a need for teachers to access a resource that informs them of the potential of free-choice on field trips. Instead of working against the museum's design as a free-choice space, teachers could make their experience less strenuous through recognition of what free-choice learning looks like and how to best support it. This literature also calls into question how teachers are educated about field trips. It would be a worthwhile study to investigate how teachers gained,

interpreted and applied their knowledge about using worksheets to engage students in field trips.

The literature revealed the unbelievable potential of well-crafted, open-ended questions in museums. This demonstrated that it is not necessary for teachers to simply forget worksheets and let students wander throughout the museum un-guided. Such activity is not supportive of free-choice learning because it does not help students learn to engage with the informality of the space. Rather as Mortensen and Smart (2007) demonstrated, a worksheet can actually empower students' ability to engage with the galleries. However, the worksheet must be carefully constructed and balance close-ended, lower order questions with open-ended, higher order ones. Burchenel and Grohe (2007) and Witmer et al. (2000) demonstrated that with support and opportunity students can internalize appropriate and engaging questions during museum visits. And, lastly, Tran (2006) demonstrated that when museum exhibit labels ask the right questions, visitors construct conversations and knowledge meaningfully. Each of these studies demonstrated that if teachers can ask and teach students to ask appropriate, informed questions, field trips can connect to prior knowledge and lead to significant discoveries. Other gaps in this particular theme are students' opinions. It would be interesting to interview students from the Burchenel and Grohe (2007) or Witmer et al. (2000) studies to investigate whether their critical thinking skills have translated into some degree of confidence in the museum space.

The literature also revealed the value of direct communication between teachers and museums about field trips. Brodie and Wiebe (1999) and Tran (2006)

articulated the frustration felt when teachers and museum educators don't align philosophically regarding the purpose of the museum visit. Although positive models for partnerships exist and are possible, as demonstrated by Coughlin (2010), Burchenel and Grohe (2007) and Witmer et al. (2000), it is unlikely that every school district and local museum will be able to build such strong relationships due to the amount of current work both industries face and, perhaps, from pre-existing ideas regarding spheres of influence. In my experience, schools and museums and their respective employees, both guard their professional territory and, perhaps, would feel uncomfortable treading into another's domain.

A final observation from the literature is the distinct lack of research centered around Language Arts. Granted, field trips loan themselves much more easily to "hands-on" subjects such as science and social studies. However, surely there is potential for Language Arts teachers and students to access and reap the rewards of field trips.

This literature review has given insight into how teachers can engage with the free-choice space of the museum. However, it has also revealed significant gaps and it has ultimately led to more questions and further ideas for research. The literature revealed a need for a resource that incorporates teachers' and students' needs and instills confidence in the use of museum as a free-choice environment. According to the literature, a teacher resource is needed which:

- empowers teachers with information about museums as free-choice spaces

- empowers teachers with basic information for logistical planning such as check lists, supplies, permission slips
- provides connections to English Language Arts curriculum
- provides rationale for the field trip as well as pre- and post-activities that:
 - naturally build towards the field trip
 - provide opportunity for reflection upon the experience
 - are integrated into the curriculum
- provides rationale and a template for worksheet(s)
- provides a template for a worksheet that:
 - includes appropriate questions for the free-choice setting
 - could be applied to many museum spaces
 - includes closed and open-ended questions
 - functions to encourage dialogue and conversation

In closing, this review of the literature has provided the rationale for the project described in the next chapter.

Chapter 3: Open Book Field Trips

Introduction

In order to address the lack of resources addressed by the literature review, I have constructed a website titled Open Book Field Trips. My goal was to develop a friendly, accessible resource to inform BC English Language Arts teachers about how to use museum spaces and provide a few resources to engage practically with any museum space. I chose to integrate the museum field trip with a poetry activity, which aligns with BC's Prescribed Learning Outcomes. The website contains several resources, including:

- A brief lesson plan outlining pre-activities, the field trip and a post-activity
- Notes to Teachers, including sample permission forms and supplies list
- A Prezi outlining the free-choice nature of museums
- Pre-activities
 - A simple PowerPoint about expectations and goals of the field trip
 - A choice in poetry activities. Teachers can choose from:
 - An ode
 - A sonnet
 - A tanka
 - Each poetry option includes a Prezi and a Close Reading poetry analysis activity
- Field Trip Field Notes: A worksheet to be used by students on the field trip
- Post-activities

- A template for students to write their own poem based on an object they analyzed in their Field Notes

Website address

<http://www.openbookfieldtrips.com>

Chapter 4: Conclusion and Discussion

Discussion of research questions

My research questions, as stated in Chapter 1, were:

1). What are the opportunities and challenges for teachers opting to use field trips?

2). What are some strategies teachers can engage with in order to plan meaningful field trips that actively engage with the free-choice nature of museums?

3). And how can teachers support the self-directed nature of museum field trips?

These questions led to a literature review that revealed the ample opportunity for the development of a resource. Specifically, the literature revealed the gaps in pre- and post- activities, the need to recognize the museum as a free-choice space, the need to ask the right questions during field trips, the lack of agreement over who plans the field trip and the fact that field trips related to English Language Arts are hardly every discussed, particularly at the secondary level. I strongly feel that my project addresses these issues and creates a space for teachers to effectively plan exciting field trips that connect directly to BC's Language Arts Curriculum.

Two articles were of particular interest to me, which helped set the direction for the project. Mortensen and Smart's article (2007) highlighted the potential for museum worksheets to provide students with an ability to "read" the museum space and locate themselves within it, and also to investigate objects of their choice by

using their own knowledge and information provided by the exhibit. This article demonstrated the ability for a worksheet, which I had previously personally abhorred in museum settings, to be a true key to unlocking interest, creativity and learning within the museum space. It was this article that sparked the idea to create a worksheet for teachers to use in BC museums that could be translated into an activity back in the classroom.

The second article of particular interest was the seminal piece by Griffin and Symington (1997) which discussed the observations and discussions of high school students on a typical field trip to a museum. The lack of enthusiasm and understanding of how to learn from the museum were astonishing in this study. It inspired me to create a resource that would help teachers and students build a more engaging, meaningful experience within the museum space.

Addressing the gaps in the literature

The website I created directly addresses the gaps in the literature regarding pre- and post-activities. Within the website I have created a series of activities to be chosen by the teacher. These activities are intended to blend the experience of the field trip with the learning back in the classroom. The pre- and post-activities revolve particularly around reflecting on a student's chosen object by creating a poem, either an ode, a sonnet or a tanka. Before their visit to the museum students will learn briefly about one of these forms and analyze a famous poem. During the field trip, students will study and investigate an object of their choice by looking for

labels, examining titles and investigating surrounding objects. Students will then brainstorm ideas for their poem. Back in the classroom, the website provides poetry worksheets for students to use to create their own poem about their object.

I chose to connect the field trip to poetry for two main reasons. Firstly, I believe it gives English teachers, whom the literature indicates do not use museums for field trips, familiar ground from which to launch into new territory. From my experience as an English teacher, I have seen poetry be used to connect various units and concepts. For example, poetry is commonly used to discuss significant days such as Remembrance Day. Poetry is powerful and English teachers understand how to use it to unearth connections between people, places and experiences. Secondly, poetry provides students with the natural opportunity to reflect on their chosen object personally. As poetry is often written about significant people or experiences, the activity of writing a poem about an object a student is drawn to, seems natural and straightforward. This clearly powerful and familiar format is an excellent tool to bridge the unfamiliar teacher between their classroom objectives and the museum space. Teachers can use poetry's flexibility and potential for personal expression to give meaning and depth to the students' museum field trip.

The website also immediately addresses the need for teachers to recognize the museum as a free-choice space, as highlighted effectively by Griffin and Symington (1997) and Rebar (2011). In order to inform teachers, I embedded a Prezi presentation within the website on one of the first pages. I hope that by its inclusion near the beginning of the website visit, teachers will be able to frame their

understanding of the activities with the free-choice concept (Falk, 2005). The Prezi is brief and highlights only the most important facts about free-choice. I chose this limited format because I didn't want teachers to become overwhelmed or disinterested by museum jargon.

The need for asking the right questions during field trips is another gap revealed by the literature clearly addressed by this project. Taking into consideration the powerful questions asked in articles such as Burchenal and Grohe (2007), Hohenstein and Train (2007) and Mortensen and Smart (2007), I developed an easy-to-use worksheet designed to help students move through the museum space independently. It asks questions which are intended to help the student locate themselves within the museum space, highlighted as a major concern by Mortensen and Smart (2007). It also asks students to carefully consider an object of their choice, its accompanying label, its placement within the exhibit and surrounding objects. In doing so, I hope I empower students to independently and actively engage with the museum and reflect on their interest to a particular object.

One of the more challenging gaps in the literature to address was the lack of agreement over who plans the field trip. This is an ongoing question and one that I fear will never be resolved. Museum staff and teachers are both working with similar goals; however, time constraints, schedules and the day-to-day activity make it a challenge to see how these two parties will coordinate effectively. Narbors, Edwards and Murray (2009) indicate that, clearly, many teachers do not use the museum to its full potential in large part because the museum does not provide concrete steps for teachers to engage more fully with the spaces. And Rebar (2012)

points out, many teachers simply plan their own trips using more experienced teachers as their guide and do not heavily rely on museum resources. Brodie and Wiebe's (1992), albeit flawed, study demonstrates the absolute chaos that can arise from the misaligned goals of museum staff and teachers for a field trip. Although I cannot hope to relieve all the tension and miscommunication between museums and teachers, I hope that this website provides teachers with enough insight into the free-choice nature of museums and their potential for connections in the classroom to contribute to positive, healthy relationships between museums and schools.

The last gap addressed in my literature review was the need for field trips centred around English Language Arts. As an English teacher myself, it is imperative that museums be seen as more than destinations for history and science. There is ample natural opportunity within museums for students to discuss, write, listen, interpret, evaluate and read. This gap was significantly addressed by my project as I closely connected to activities with the BC Language Arts curriculum by focusing on poetry as a post-activity for reflection and expression about the personal experience.

Overall, the project responds to the research question by providing an accessible, free, ready-to-go resource that can be integrated into their desired location. It was important that I provide information regarding the free-choice nature of museums, so that teachers understand how to approach the field trip experience. The creation of the Prezi embedded within the website allows teachers to peruse the main concepts at their leisure in an easy-to-use format. This information empowers teachers to help students use the museum space to its full potential. It also allows the teacher to understand the goals of the worksheet, which

allow students to choose an object, spend time studying it and then reflect on it during a post-activity.

I am confident that the website I designed for this project provides answers for my research questions. When teachers use this resource, they will undoubtedly be engaging with the free-choice nature of museums and by following the activities outlined will be supporting their students in the space.

Reflections of theoretical frameworks

Without a doubt, this project was framed by Dewey and Vygotsky's concept of the ZPD. Their currents of thought emerged over and over as I developed and implemented the activities on the website. Of particular inspiration was Dewey's (1938) concept of the quality of the experience as something that should make learners want to return and build upon the field trip helped me focus the Field Notes. I kept this worksheet personal and open, so that students could choose an object they responded to and build upon it. I hope that experience will inspire students to return to the museum and learn more about similar objects or their larger context. I also envision it may inspire students to continue their learning about that object (or its larger context) outside that particular museum setting – perhaps virtually or in another museum location. Any of these situations would be exciting and, I believe, an indication that the Field Notes were successful in creating an excellent quality of experience that promoted learning.

Secondly, Vygotsky's (1978) ZPD concept took me in several significant directions. Not only do I hope the lessons and activities I have created scaffold

students' understanding of how to use the museum space, but I also hope the website scaffolds teachers' understanding of how to build a successful field trip. The activities for students were imagined as opportunities for individuals to take in many parts of the museum and find one object they connect with. They are then tasked with an investigation and reflection on this object. I hope this scaffolds students learning by taking them into an unfamiliar, potentially intimidating and overwhelming setting and teaches them how to interact with it. Furthermore, the website acts as a scaffold to help teachers understand what learning looks like in a museum setting, through the Prezis and the activities. I hope both these scaffolding scenarios help teachers build, and students experience, more authentic and meaningful museum field trips.

Website rationale

I chose to format my project as a website primarily because of its accessible nature. I wanted to provide teachers with a resource they could access anytime and any place. I decided to use WordPress as a publishing platform because it has themes which are responsive and can be accessed on a computer, phone or tablet. It was vital that the website be convenient and efficient because I know from personal experience how hectic teaching can be. I also wanted to design a website with parts that could be used altogether or in part. I wanted English teachers unfamiliar with field trips to gain confidence in the setting and understand its potential. However, I also recognize that many teachers may feel comfortable and bring their own ideas

about activities, in which case I hope they use parts of the website, such as the worksheet or the Prezi outlining free-choice spaces.

I spent time deciding on how to present the information to teachers. The literature revealed the need for a resource that informed teachers of the free-choice nature of museums; however, I was concerned that the information could be overwhelming (Kisiel, 2003; 2007; Griffin & Symington, 1997). In the day-to-day life of a teacher, with all the day-to-day activity, the last thing I would want to hear about is museum jargon. If I were to be confronted with complex theory and a multitude of jargon, I would tune out, thereby resisting this change. I carefully outlined the main themes of the free-choice space and chose to use a Prezi, a user-friendly, interactive presentation, to present the information to teachers. My hope is that the information is easy to understand, relevant and engaging.

The poetry lessons were designed to be short and applicable to a variety of units. I tend to use poetry throughout the year, as it is applicable to many units of study, including short stories, creative writing and drama. It is my experience that poetry is an exceptional tool for discussion, analysis and creative expression. It was important to me to design a series of lessons that connected creative writing with analysis in order to give substance and relevance to the field trip. Often I've seen poetry relegated to the sidelines of the curriculum, as it has a reputation for being clichéd, as students write certain forms of poetry, such as the haiku, year in and year out. Poetry as a form of writing to capture a person's most concise and powerful thoughts, is often lost with such repetitive exercises. I wanted to create an activity that provided an opportunity for students to write a meaningful poem about

something that inspired them in the museum. I wanted this experience to give them parameters while they are in the museum, opportunity to engage directly with at least one object and to, later, reflect on that experience authentically in the form of a poem.

I chose to present three forms of poetry because I wanted teachers to have a choice in what was best for their students. Tanka, which I designed for grades 9-10, is the simplest format. It connects beautifully with the well-known Japanese poetry form, the haiku. I believe it also could be used by teachers who may have another idea in mind for the field trip, but are looking for a quick post-activity. Tankas should not take too long to write and would be an easy addition to an existing plan or guided tour. The also created a sonnet option, which was designed grades 9-12. It is a particularly relevant option as it naturally ties to Shakespeare and drama. It can also be modified, based on one's class, to include requirements such as iambic pentameter and half rhymes for older, or more advanced, classes. Thirdly, I designed an ode option designed for grades 11-12, in order to provide teachers with a more complex option. My goal in creating these options were to provide teachers with options in order to suit their needs best. The literature revealed that teachers are willing to connect field trips to the classroom and I hope these poetic options provide motivation and inspiration to do so (Constantino, 2008; Witmer et al., 2000).

I built this website in order to respond to the needs addressed in the literature. Although it needs time to mature, I believe it achieves the goals I set out to accomplish. I intend it to be user-friendly, accessible and flexible based on a teachers – and a class' – specific needs. I hope teachers will recognize their own

potential to conduct English Language Arts field trips, either using these resources in full or in part.

Reflections on the Process

Selecting the topic

Throughout my experience in this program, I changed my mind about my project topic countless times. Every class I took, new and exciting ideas flowed from assigned articles, assignments and enthusiastic discussions with instructors and peers. I have been fortunate to be surrounded by such vibrant ideas and thoughts. However, consistently my passions for museums surfaced, and with the encouragement of my supervisor, I followed them.

I have always had a strong affection for museums. I feel comfortable within them and it took me a long time to recognize that many others do not. I hope that this project allows students and teachers to begin to feel the incredible potential and warmth that exist within museums. They, truly, are special places we can go to peruse and reflect upon themselves, cultures and societies. Although there are always important and relevant criticisms about museums and their need to evolve, museums still have a special ability to house stories and the potential for connection with the world and with ourselves (Gregory & Witcomb, 2007; Watson, 2007). It is the affection, coupled with my experience working at the Royal Ontario Museum

and volunteering at the Royal British Columbia museum, that have, in part, given rise to this topic.

It is also my experience as an English Language Arts teacher that lent effortlessly to the development of this project. As I analyzed the relevant literature, I was disappointed, but not surprised, by the lack of connecting surrounding English Language Arts to field trips. Typically, research (and resources!) focus on Social Studies and the Sciences for field trips. However, I believe that English is an ideal perspective from which to view the museum. British Columbia's curriculum highlights students' ability to evaluate texts, compare ideas and write personal texts (BC Ministry of Education, 2007). Many of the Prescribed Learning Outcomes can be exercised and experienced during a field trip to a museum!

Challenges

Although I felt my literature review led me towards something very exciting, the process of this project had a series of unforeseen challenges. Firstly, I was overwhelmed by creating a website. Although the content management system, WordPress, that I used is designed to be intuitive and user-friendly, it was overwhelming to create. Small frustrations, such as the embedding of my Prezis, often led me to question my ability and my choice to develop this resource.

The second challenge was the creation of a resource that was clear, organized and flexible. I found myself trying to "sell" the resource to potential English teachers, who I felt may be hesitant or even resistant to the idea of going on a field trip, let alone connecting it with poetry! I worked and reworked the website and asked for

feedback from friends and colleagues for which menu and design format worked best. I received feedback from a number of people that the website contained too much text. However, with limited text, my attempts to explain and rationalize the designed field trip are at risk of being misunderstood. The challenge to balance what is required for clear understanding without being seeming overwhelming to the viewer is certainly a challenge and, I'm sure, a work in progress.

I was also challenged with creating lessons that would appeal to teachers. Although I know what I would want, Noel and Colopy (2006) demonstrated that the majority of teachers would prefer short lessons and not multi-day units to go with their field trip. I wanted to address how the museum field trip would integrate realistically into the English classroom, but it was a challenge to imagine all of the scenarios without creating a "unit". I hope that the poetry connection can be easily integrated into existing units.

The biggest challenge for me to overcome was the conceptualization of a worksheet, which I had formerly perceived as unnatural in the museum environment. I felt vindicated when I read Griffin and Symington (1997) who articulated the disastrous effects of close-ended, questionnaire-format worksheets. However, I was shocked to learn of their potential, particularly in Mortensen and Smart's (2007) study about the *Chaperone's Guide*. Not only did it help orientate students, but it had them discussing exhibits and connecting it naturally to their learning in the classroom. It was a challenge to develop a worksheet because of my previous bias, and because I wanted to have the same effect as Mortensen and Smart (2007), but I needed to keep the worksheet open enough for any museum setting.

Current Feedback

From the colleagues and friends to whom I have shown the website, the feedback has generally been positive. I have made slight adjustment to the quantity of text used on some of the pages, and it was articulated by a colleague that the page looked inaccessible due to the volume of content. It was also suggested that I include an “Ask a Question” page on the website in case any teacher needs clarification or perhaps other resources or information. I have since added this feature. I will continue to ask for feedback from colleagues as this website grows and develops. It is vital that it remain current and is as user-friendly as possible. I want this project to continue to be accessible and helpful to teachers around BC.

Next Steps

I will continue to work and build on this website. It will undoubtedly take time to develop into something substantial, but these are more future directions.

1). I will conduct a field trip with my own class later this year and I will be able to post a few exemplars of student worksheets and poems. I hope this will give teachers concrete tools to conceptualize and then evaluate their own students’ work.

2). With this added information, I will ask colleagues to use the website to conduct field trips with their class. If they are willing, I will ask for their feedback and potentially some other exemplars to post onto the website. I will also ask them to give a brief synopsis of their field trip (timeline, museum location) and build a

database online that details which museums and activities worked well. I will also ask for feedback regarding the general use of the website and activities and update them as necessary.

3). When the website is more fully developed with these student exemplars and field trip database, I will hopefully conduct a professional development workshop in my school district. At this workshop, I hope to highlight the free-choice nature of museums and how to use these museums. I would also encourage teachers to plan their own field trip using this website or their own creativity. Truly, my goal is not to have teachers exclusively use my website and its activities; rather, to use it to see the potential for their own field trip whether it uses my poetry exercises or not. If I can encourage teachers to see the museum as a free-choice space and as a resource for their subject, whatever it may be, I will be more than satisfied.

4). I also hope to develop a related worksheet for use with online museums. Museums all around the world are creating virtual exhibits which are making the museum experience more and more accessible to students in all parts of our province. The addition of a modified worksheet that asks students to navigate through a digital museum space and find and investigate an object has exciting potential. I am sure that the pre- and post- activities would continue to be meaningful and engaging within these additional spaces.

Future research directions

I strongly believe this is a significant area of study for future research. The articles I have read have provided significant insight into this field, but have also demonstrated how much opportunity remains for further investigation. One direction of particular interest is teacher preparation and follow-up plans during different kinds of museum field trips, including self-guided or tour-guided. Griffin & Symington (1997) articulate that students were disconnected from the museum, but their study only examined self-guided tours. It would be valuable to conduct a study into tour guide-led field trips, as well. Noel and Colopy (2006) concluded that the majority of teachers intend to use available resources, but how many actually do? How do teachers prepare students for guided tours compared to self-guided tours?

Another area for further research would be to investigate existing teacher preparation for field trips in teacher preparation programs across the country. This study could analyze course outlines to see how much time is allocated to teaching pre-service teachers how to conduct a field trip. As Rebar (2012) articulated, there is rarely any formal training for teachers regarding field trips and most teachers learn informally from one another. I am curious as to how this lack of direct education impacts teachers' confidence in conducting field trips. It would be a worthwhile study to investigate how teachers gained their knowledge about using worksheets to engage students in field trips.

Final thoughts

There are few experiences in my education which have provided such a deep sense of fulfillment as this project. I am grateful for the opportunity this program have afforded me. Although it was filled with challenges, I am satisfied by this final result and I know that it provides me with a platform from which to grow and expand.

I truly feel that my research questions led me to the development of a meaningful project. I feel my website responds effectively and efficiently to the gaps presented in the literature and I hope it will continue to grow and develop as it is used by myself and hopefully others. The gaps in the literature that were most salient for my practice were the lack of English Language Arts field trips and the need for pre- and post-activities. I hope the resource I've created provides current teachers with an opportunity to engage with museums in ways they hadn't thought of yet. Museums have a special place in my heart and I hope this project leads to teachers and students sharing my enthusiasm and appreciation for these important places.

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