ABSTRACT

This qualitative teacher-action research study examined the observed and reported experiences of teacher and students when the Question-Answer Relationship strategy was used as a bridge to student-generated questions in order to increase critical thinking skills in a tenth grade honors American Literature classroom. The study was completed in an urban high school in eastern Pennsylvania with 22 participants. Methods of data collection included student-generated questions, various types of student journals, student surveys, interviews, and classroom observations. Methods of analysis included analytic and reflective memos, narratives, coding, binning, continual review of student work, and construction of theme statements. During the course of the study, upon completion of reading a given set of chapters in an American classic novel, students posted questions on a WIKI. These questions were then analyzed according to levels of critical thinking being indicated. Additionally, students occasionally wrote journals to reflect on topics pertaining to the novel. These, too, were evaluated for evidence of critical thinking. When reading a difficult text, students needed to think critically to make meaning, and the vast majority of the students were able to pose high-level critical thinking questions of their own. Metacognition aids students’ critical thinking and enables students to transfer newly acquired
skills to new learning opportunities. The lack of background knowledge and the misreading of difficult texts may hinder the development of higher-level critical thinking skills.