HIGH SCHOOL STUDENTS' ATTENTIONAL STANCE, MODES OF READING ENGAGEMENT, AND SELF-INSIGHT DURING LITERARY READING

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Abstract

The primary aim of this study was to analyze the validity and reliability of an instrument capable of measuring high school students' attentional stance, modes of reading engagement, and self-insight during literary reading. For this purpose, a self-report questionnaire was administered to high school students in three Austrian regions (N = 417). First, confirmatory factor analysis was conducted to test the validity and the reliability of the preconceived measurement model. Second, the interrelationships among the validated constructs were analyzed through structural equation modeling. The fit and the validity of the structural model were evaluated, and the mediating effect of expressive reading was tested. The study yielded an instrument with valid and reliable scores that assesses 9 dimensions of high school students' reading experiences. The basic Kuiken-Douglas model (2017) on reading engagement and reading outcome could be replicated. Structural equation modeling indicated that high attentional focus negatively predicted expressive-experiential reading that in turn facilitated self-insight. This implies that students should be allowed leaky attention so that they can work with literary texts in a self-modifying way in literature education. Limitations are discussed.

Keywords: literature education, attention, reading engagement, self-insight, structural equation modelling

1.   INTRODUCTION

According to the French philosopher Paul Ricoeur (1992), insight into the self can only be gained through the "detour by way of objectification" (p. 313). Moreover, he contended that narrative literature is a privileged form of objectification through which self-insight can be achieved. This implies that identity development can be enhanced and, as we will propose, be taught by means of reading literary fiction. Ricoeur's theoretical propositions prompt the questions of (a) how literary reading might yield insight into the self and (b) how such a mode of reading that aims at identity learning can be taught to adolescents in the literature classroom.

The period of adolescence is characterized by identity learning that mainly takes the form of cognitive and affective transformations (Illeris, 2014, 2017). There are mainly two reasons why self-insight is considered a desired reading outcome and fundamental learning objective in the literature classroom. First, identity learning can counteract the sociocultural trends of identity pluralization (Hallet, 2008), identity diffusion (Cote & Levine, 2002), and identity fragmentation (Gergen, 1991, 2009) which complicate the formation of a temporally continuous and socially coherent identity during adolescence. As adolescents have a psychological need of social coherence and temporal continuity (McAdams & McLean, 2013; McAdams et al., 2006), individual identity construction is a major task of high school students that can be supported by transformative reading. Second, agency might be enhanced through identity learning. By reading fiction, capacities are promoted (Ricoeur, 2005), future possibilities of action are revealed (Meuter, 2013), and responsibility for one's actions and responsibility to others is accepted (Hall, 2007).

In addition, there is ample evidence that identity learning and personal development are curricular requirements of literature education in several European countries, e.g., the Netherlands, Portugal, the Czech Republic, and Germany (Slager, 2010; Witte & Sâmihăian, 2013). The present study was conducted in Austrian upper secondary grammar schools. In the Austrian curriculum, the objective of self-discovery is explicitly stated. Students are supposed to reflect on their own identities and their social positionings during the reading process. Furthermore, they are expected to deal with experiences of alterity (*Neue Lehrpläne AHS Oberstufe*, 2021). Therefore, the personal growth model of teaching literature has a strong position in the Austrian curriculum for literature.

2.   THEORETICAL BACKGROUND

We assume that the literature classroom is a possible site of identity learning. It is transformative reading that potentially brings about self-insight (Fialho, 2012, 2019; Kuiken et al., 2004; Sikora et al, 2011; Kuiken et al., 2012; Kuiken & Douglas, 2017, 2018). By engaging in this specific mode of reading from a specific attentional stance, students potentially experience personal development. Although there is empirical evidence that literary reading might offer adult readers insight into the self (for an

overview, see Hakemulder et al., 2016) and that relevant interventions in literature education can promote students' personal development (Schrijvers et al., 2019ab), adolescents' attention allocation and modes of engagement during self-modifying literary reading need to be further explored. Furthermore, the implications of potential findings for the teaching of transformative reading should be considered.

2.1 Transformative reading

Transformative reading potentially changes the adult readers' sense of self. Empirical evidence gives insight into the nature of the self-modifying experience of literary reading. Miall and Kuiken (2002) argue that aesthetic and narrative feelings interact to produce metaphors of personal identification that modify self-understanding. Correspondingly, Kuiken et al. (2004) suggest that a specific type of reading experience termed expressive enactment alters a reader's understanding of everyday life by means of metaphorical self-implication. Djikic et al. (2009) have proven that reading fiction can cause significant changes in self-reported experience of one's own personality traits as measured by the Big-Five Inventory, and emotion change mediates the effect of art on these traits. In addition, Mar et al. (2011) expound on how the narrative evokes and transforms emotions, thus influencing a person's aesthetic experience while reading the text.

In the qualitative paradigm, Breen et al. (2017) explored the intersections of cultural stories and identity via life story interviews. Based on Sarbin's (1997) assumption that arts "provide the 'raw material' for the development of the self" (p. 244), the authors found that personal stories develop through the narrative ecology of the self. Reading fictional stories influences the self's agency (McAdams, 2013: the 'actor', 'agent' and 'author' aspects of the self). Tangerås' (2020) interview study provides evidence that intensive engagement with fiction has the potential to cause self-reflection and change in readers' worldviews. He proposes a theory of transformative affective patterns that cause emotional self-modification. The experience of being moved is assumed to be a vital part of this transformation.

In addition, Schrijvers et al. (2019a) found empirical evidence that literary reading may affect adolescents' identities in similar ways. For instance, similar modes of reading engagements were detected as adolescents compared their own real worlds to the diegesis and empathized with fictional characters (Charlton et al., 2004). The understanding of the lives of others could be advanced through literary reading, which promoted the readers' agency (Rothbauer, 2011). Adolescents were found to explore possible selves by rehearsing and relationally enacting gender roles and opportunities for identification when voluntarily reading fiction (Richardson & Eccles, 2007). Literary reading also enhanced adolescents' transformation through the inseparable processes of cognitive and affective development (Polleck, 2010).

The question arises how transformative reading can bring about self-insight. Brokerhof et al. (2018) propose a theoretical model that attempts to explain how the experience of reading a literary text potentially impacts the self. They elaborate on

three pathways through which cultural stories influence identity: (a) *personal pathway*: Fictional characters become a role model or possible I-position, thus adding a fictional role model or a possible self. It can be assumed that the personal pathway is closely linked to the process of identification. (b) *cultural pathway*: Narrative themes are incorporated in the self, narrative structures of fiction are used for constructing identity. (c) *reflective pathway*: The narrative defamiliarizes readers from their daily routines (Miall & Kuiken, 1994), thus triggering a deeper understanding of the I-positions and an active search for alternatives to dominant I-positions.

From an empirical perspective, Kuiken and Sopčák (2021) outline three explanations for how self-modification can take place through literary reading:

> (a) readers expand their sense of possible selves through engagement with fictional characters' experiences (Slater et al., 2014);
>
> (b) readers' response to formal and narrative features of the text motivates exploration of alternative self-concepts (Djikic & Oatley, 2014); and
>
> (c) readers' receptive engagement with formal and narrative aspects of the text affords expressive enactment of metaphoric structures that reveal or disclose a self-relevant narrative world (Kuiken & Douglas, 2018). (p. 305)

We can conclude that empirical findings support the theory of three pathways from the reading of literature to identity learning: (a) engagement with characters' experiences = personal pathway, (b) response to formal and narrative features = cultural pathway, and (c) expressive-experiential engagement with formal and narrative aspects of the text = reflective pathway.

Kuiken and Douglas (2017) and Fialho (2019) proposed two models of transformative reading that might serve as a framework for literature education. Both models are rooted in the traditions of phenomenology (Husserl, 1960, 1983; Ingarden, 1973; Merleau-Ponty, 1962) and reader response (Rosenblatt, 1978; Iser, 1974, 1978; Ricoeur, 1984). Literary reading is conceptualized as transactional process, i.e., text features interact with the reader. Experiential processing of foregrounded text elements (Van Peer, 1986, 2007; Miall & Kuiken, 1994; Hakemulder, 2004) might precipitate changes in the self.

Fialho's (2012, 2019) theory of literariness establishes a relationship between textual properties and self-modifying reading experiences. This relationship is mediated by specific forms of reading engagement. Based on Miall's (2006) dehabituation theory of literature, literariness is defined as a distinctive mode of reading that resides in the transactions between the text and the reader. It is a product of three key elements of response to literary texts: (a) foregrounded textual or narrative features, (b) the readers' defamiliarizing cognitive and emotional engagement with these features, and (c) the consequent modification of personal meanings. Fialho (2019) offers six forms of engagement with the literary text that possibly precede deeper insights into themselves and other: (a) imagery, (b) identification, (c) experience-taking, (d) character evaluation, (e) sympathy, and (f) aesthetic awareness.

Kuiken and Douglas (2017) propose an alternative framework for transformative reading that, in addition to the modes of reading and the reading outcome, comprises the attentional pattern that is specific to absorbed reading. Open Reflection "identifies the attentional substrate" (Kuijpers et al., 2018, p. 5) of the different modes of reading engagement. Sustained yet flexible attention precipitates two forms of reading engagement: (a) Integrative Comprehension, i.e., "a form of inference-driven interpretation that facilitates construction of a situation model", and (b) Expressive Enactment, i.e., "a form of expression-centered engagement that facilitates performative (metaphoric) explication" (Kuiken & Douglas, 2017, p. 240).

Integrative Comprehension implies that the diegesis is distant to the reader (Extra-Personal Space). The fusion of character and reader "is sensed as (non-metaphoric) perspective coordination [which] provides a simile-like—and comparative—frame of reference during a deictic shift to a narrative personae's perspective" (Kuiken & Douglas, 2017, p. 231; Cognitive Perspective-Taking). The correspondence between the text and the real world is evaluated (Generalizing Realism). Integrative comprehension aims at a sociocultural contextualization of the literary text by means of interpretive inferences (McCarthy et al., 2021).

Expressive Enactment, on the other hand, implies that the diegesis is close to the reader (Peri-Personal Space). The reader fuses with a character, and this fusion "provides a resonant felt sense that initiates performative explication of what is 'the same' across self and other" (Kuiken & Douglas, 2017, p. 231), requiring a metaphoric shift to the character's perspective from the reader (Pre-Enactive Empathy). In addition, the semantic categories of the text are blended with episodic memories of the reader (Self-Implicating Givenness). Expressive Enactment aims at a personal contextualization of the literary text by means of expressive explication (Gendlin, 1997).

These two different modes of reading engagement differentially predict aesthetic and explanatory outcomes. Whereas the expressive-experiential mode of reading might trigger shifts in self-understanding (Kuiken et al., 2012; Self-Perceptual Depth), the inferential-interpretive mode of reading potentially mediates changes in social understanding.

We adopted the Kuiken-Douglas (2017) model for our study of adolescents' transformative reading experiences for two reasons: (a) Attention allocation poses a major challenge in the literature classroom. Kuiken and Douglas (2017) address the attention pattern specific to the absorbed reading process whereas Fialho (2019) does not. (b) Fialho (2019) offers a number of possible predictors of the desired reading outcomes, but she is vague on how self-insight is effectively brought about. The Kuiken-Douglas (2017) model, however, elaborates on how self-insight is precipitated by an expressive-experiential mode of reading. The reader is required to metaphorically shift to the characters' perspectives and link up text passages with elements of her episodic memory within a distinctively close mode of reading in order to gain insight into the self. This mode of reading can be operationalized in the literature classroom.

2.2 Teaching transformative reading

There is some empirical evidence that literature education is capable of fostering students' self-insight (e.g., Fialho et al., 2011, 2012). In their systematic review study on interventions in the literature classroom, Schrijvers et al. (2019a) found that a think-and-feel-aloud pedagogy (Eva-Wood, 2004) and the teaching of emotional experiential reading (Halász, 1991) might yield insight into the self. Schrijvers et al. (2016) discovered that students gained learning experiences about themselves from their literature education. Students taught by teachers with a personal-experiential approach to literature education obtained more self-insight than students of teachers with an analytical-interpretative approach. Schrijvers et al. (2019b) have proven in their quasi-experimental study that their Transformative Dialogic Literature Teaching (TDLT) intervention based on Fialho's (2019) model of transformative reading potentially triggered insight into the self. As a consequence, we propose that literature education has the potential to achieve the pedagogical aim of self-insight through the practice of transformative reading.

The teaching of transformative reading on the basis of the Kuiken-Douglas model (2017) stands in the tradition of identity-focused literature education which has tried to promote identity learning through the reading of fiction. The German strand of identity-focused literature education (Kreft, 1977; Frederking, 2001; Frederking et al., 2010) considers literature as tool for psychological development. Identity learning is promoted by means of identification with the characters. In order to enhance personal growth, students are required to (a) subjectively encounter the text and their realizations of preconceptions, and (b) apply the text to their own lives. In the American strand (Beach et al., 2015; Thein et al., 2017), students are supposed to gain a conscious and critical awareness of their positionings in society through the portrayal of values and power structures in literature. Social development is assumed to be achieved through the heightened awareness of how identities are shaped culturally and socially. In conclusion, identity-focused literature education aims at either personal or social development. The Kuiken-Douglas (2017) model of transformative reading is capable of exploring both the students' personal development, i.e., the aesthetic outcome, and social development, i.e., the explanatory outcome. In addition, the modes of reading are addressed more extensively. Modes of self-other relations - identification with fictional characters precipitating personal development and social positionings within the fictional and real worlds precipitating social development - are complemented with different types of embodied space and forms of verisimilitude.

Janssen's (1998) taxonomy of approaches to literature education and Witte's and Sâmihăian's (2013) paradigms of teaching literature are helpful to further position the teaching of transformative reading as conceptualized by Kuiken and Douglas (2017) within the field of literature education. Teaching expressive-experiential reading is a reader-oriented approach aiming at personal development, thus fitting into the personal growth paradigm of literature education. Teaching inferential-

interpretive reading, however, is a context-oriented approach aiming at raising social awareness, thus fitting into the social paradigm of literature education. Teaching transformative reading must not be confused with the text-oriented, structural analysis approach aiming at developing aesthetic awareness. Although teaching expressive-experiential reading and inferential-interpretive reading depend on close reading strategies, transformative reading does not have text-based interpretation, but contextualization of text meaning as its purpose. In conclusion, different teacher approaches generate different learning outcomes (Schrijvers et al., 2016; Janssen, 1998). We assume with Kuiken and Douglas (2017) that a reader-oriented approach in the personal growth paradigm precipitates insight into the self whereas a context-oriented approach in the social paradigm does not.

The theory of transformative reading cannot, however, be simply transferred to the educational context. Following Koek et al. (2019), a theoretical framework cannot be extrapolated to an educational context without empirically testing the adequacy of the model to the literature classroom. As outlined above, the theory of transformative reading was mainly developed on data from expert adult readers. We have to take into consideration that adolescents lack the considerable reading experience of adult readers, that they are obliged to read literary texts, and that the literature classroom is a specific community of practice (Wenger, 1998) in which a social group with shared commitment and shared competence engages in collective learning with the aim to fulfil a predominantly prespecified educational objective. Therefore, it is uncertain whether adolescent high school students experience self-modifying literary reading the same way as expert adult readers do.

Therefore, the assumption that transformative reading on the basis of the Kuiken-Douglas model (2017) is capable of bringing about self-insight through expressive-experiential reading has to be empirically tested in the literature classroom. For this purpose, the present study aims to determine the validity and reliability of existing measures with students in grades 11 and 12 of grammar schools across Austria in order to provide a psychometrically sound instrument capable of measuring aspects of the attention allocation during literary reading, different modes of literary reading, and the transformative reading outcome. In addition, the interrelationships of the validated constructs are tested in order to understand how the curricular objective of self-insight can be attained in the literature classroom.

2.3 The current research model

First, we tried to replicate the Kuiken-Douglas (2017) model as far as the two modes of reading are concerned. Second, we selectively adopted the aesthetic reading outcome of self-insight as the model was supposed to measure transformative effects of literary reading on the learners. Third, we favored an approach to the measurement of the students' attention allocation that differed from the Kuiken-Douglas model in order to be able to capture sustained and flexible attention components separately. Total attention is defined as the combination of sustained attention and

attentional flexibility (Kuijpers, Douglas & Kuiken, 2018). Kuiken and Douglas (2017) include one second-order factor, i.e., Open Reflection, in their structural equation modeling to capture the integration of sustained concentration and flexible attention during absorbed literary reading. The Story World Absorption Scale (Kuijpers et al., 2014) is incapable of measuring aspects of sustained and flexible attention independently because, as Kuiken et al. (2021) have pointed out, its attention dimension that is supposed to quantify sustained attention shows some overlap with the attentional reorienting aspect of the Open Reflection construct on the ASQ (e.g., "When I finished the story I was surprised to see that time had gone by so fast"). Therefore, we used two attention constructs with discriminant validity taken from the Narrative Engagement Scale (NES; Busselle & Bildandzic, 2009).

We assume that the attentional stance on the literary text during transformative reading is receptive and focal. On the one hand, attentional receptivity is defined as willingness to be affected by the aesthetic object (Levinson, 2016). Kuiken and Sopcak (2021) specify attentional receptivity as "the reflective openness to an unanticipated 'something more' or 'something else' within an imaginally present text world" (p 325). As openness is dependent on a "situated commitment to 'dwelling silently' in the world of the text" (ibid.), the creation of and the shifting to the narrative world as measured by NES Narrative Presence can be regarded as a precondition for the reader's attentional receptivity. The shifting of the deictic center to the diegesis is an instance of flexible attentional reorienting. Attentional focus, on the other hand, is conceived of as sustained concentration on the object which is complemented with flexibly shifting attention among focal and unexpected text meanings during literary response (Kuiken & Douglas, 2017). Analogously, Nanay (2016) conceptualizes aesthetic attention as focused with regards to objects and distributed with regards to the object's properties. NES Attentional Focus is supposed to quantify aspects of sustained focused concentration on the text object while flexibly distributed attention among text properties and meanings is not approached in the given study.

By drawing on neuroscientific findings about the attention system (Petersen & Posner, 2012; Posner, 2012; Zabelina et al., 2019), the philosophical idea of the attentional stance is given a biological foundation. Knowledge from the domains of cognitive neuroscience and the humanities is synthesized so that we may more adequately understand the attentional pattern specific to transformative literary reading. Three brain networks with delimitable brain processes are relevant for the analysis of this attentional pattern: "Alerting is defined as achieving and maintaining a state of high sensitivity to incoming stimuli; orienting is the selection of information from sensory input; and executive attention involves mechanisms for monitoring and resolving conflict among thoughts, feelings, and responses" (Posner, 2012, p. 19). Moreover, the executive functions of inhibition and shifting (Zabelina et al., 2019) are helpful in understanding the allocation of attention during transformative reading. Attentional receptivity is executed by the alerting network. Shifting between the reader's real world and the diegesis is hypothesized to be a prerequisite for this receptivity. Sustained focus, on the other hand, is assumed to be contingent

on executive inhibition. When attention is flexibly distributed among stimuli during literary response, the orienting network and executive shifting are co-activated.

In conclusion, we assume that the executive functions of inhibition and shifting are relevant for the attentional stance which regulates the allocation of attention to the literary text during transformative reading. NES Attentional Focus and NES Narrative Presence address the attentional stance by measuring (a) the degree of inhibition, and (b) the shifting to the narrative world as a precondition for alerting receptivity.

The given research model encompasses three dimensions of literary reading: (a) the attentional stance, (b) two distinct modes of reading, and (c) self-insight as reading outcome. Figure 1 reports the hypothesized theoretical model. As far as the structural model is concerned, we postulate the following hypotheses:

> H1 Expressive Enactment is significantly influenced by Narrative Presence.
>
> H2 Expressive Enactment is significantly influenced by Attentional Focus.
>
> H3 Integrative Comprehension is significantly influenced by Narrative Presence.
>
> H4 Integrative Comprehension is significantly influenced by Attentional Focus.
>
> H5 Self-Perceptual Depth is significantly influenced by Expressive Enactment.
>
> H6 Self-Perceptual Depth is not significantly influenced by Integrative Comprehension.
>
> H7 Expressive Enactment mediates the relationship between Narrative Presence and Self-Perceptual Depth.
>
> H8 Expressive Enactment mediates the relationship between Attentional Focus and Self-Perceptual Depth.

3.   METHOD

3.1 Research objectives

The primary aim of this study was to test the validity and reliability of a model that is supposed to measure high school students' attentional stance, their mode of engagement and possible self-insight during literary reading. In addition, the relationships between the attentional stance that is specific to transformative reading, two distinct modes of reading engagement, and the aesthetic outcome were investigated.

3.2 Participants

The sample comprised 417 Austrian students attending grades 11 and 12 of public grammar schools: 225 female (54.0%) and 192 male (46.0%). The sample was evenly distributed between students from rural (n = 211) and urban areas (n = 206).

Figure 1. Hypothesized theoretical model
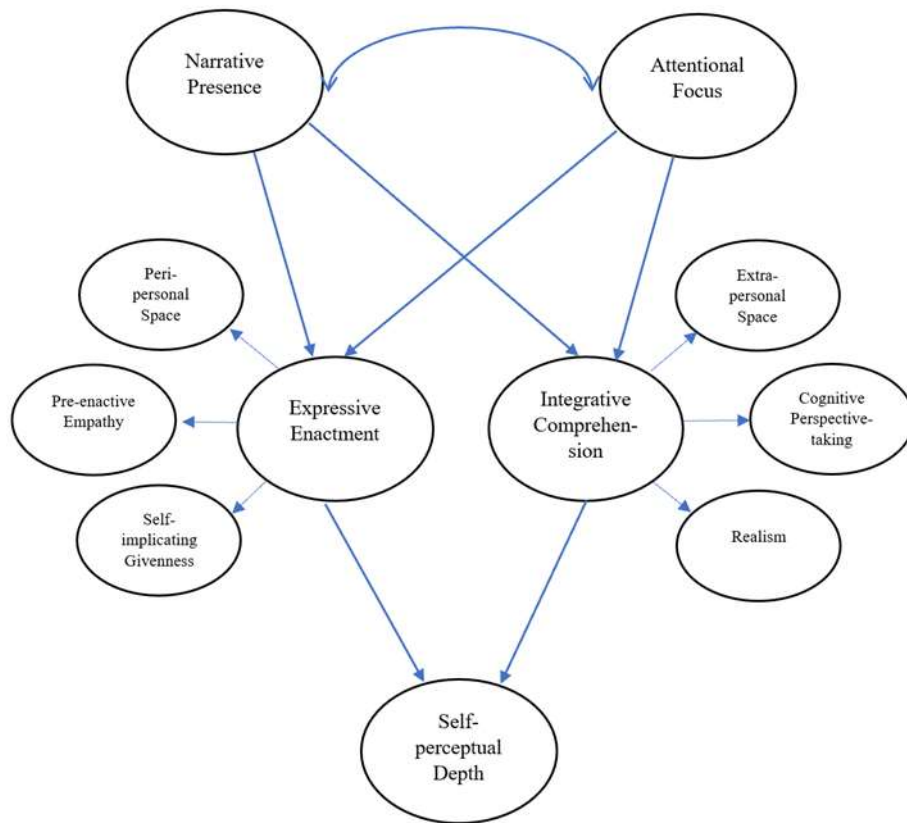
3.3 Procedure

The items of the instrument were translated into German and administered during the 2019/20 school year. Upper secondary students in grades 11 and 12 participated in the study. The sample was drawn from the population of 135 grammar schools in the regions of Burgenland (96 students), Carinthia (115 students), and Vienna (206 students). Representatives of the regional education authorities selected schools and classes to participate in the present validation study. Consequently, students were not selected based on their competence in literature education.

The questionnaires were administered online via the EvaSys survey tool, and the data were automatically transferred to SPSS and AMOS for computation.

3.4 Instruments

For collecting quantitative data, various five-point Likert-type scales ranging from 0 (i.e., "not at all true) to 4 (i.e., "extremely true") were used. The self-report questionnaire comprised 36 items.

In order to measure readers' distribution of *attention*, the subscales Attentional Focus (ATF 1-3) and Narrative Presence (NAP 1-3) from the Narrative Engagement Scale (NES; Busselle & Bilandzic, 2009) were applied. Attentional Focus measures the level of readers' distraction, whereas Narrative Presence explores the sensation that the reader has left the actual world and entered the diegesis.

The Expressive Enactment (EXE 1-10) and Integrative Comprehension (INC 1-13) subscales from the Absorption-Like States Questionnaire (ASQ; Kuiken & Douglas, 2017) were employed to measure alternative conceptions of absorbed *reading engagement*. Whereas INC items examine the process of inference-driven interpretation (cognitivist perspective), expression-centered explication (phenomenological stance) is studied by means of EXE items. Each type of reading comprises various mini-scales: (a) Expressive Enactment: Set 1. Peri-Personal Space, Set 2. Pre-Enactive Empathy, Set 3. Self-Implicating Givenness; Integrative Comprehension: Set 1. Extra-Personal Space, Set 2. Cognitive Perspective-Taking, and Set 3. Realistic Conduct, Affective Realism. The first set of mini-scales measures embodied space, the second set different modes of self-other relations, and the third set the verisimilitude of the textual events.

In order to measure experiential *self-insight*, the Self-Perceptual Depth subscale (SPD 1-7) from the Experiencing Questionnaire (EQ; Kuiken, Campbell & Sopcak, 2012) was applied. These EQ items quantify the specific and situated aesthetic effects of reading a particular literary text.

Although Kuiken, Campbell, and Sopcak (2012) consider cluster analysis the most appropriate analysis procedure for data gathered by the Experiencing Questionnaire because they contest the context-independent meaning of individual subscales, they state that the EQ is compatible with more familiar methods, e.g., factor analysis (p. 27f.).

Before completing the items adopted from the NES, the EQ, and the ASQ, participants read Arthur Schnitzler's "The Son".

3.5 Data analysis

Analysis of Moment Structures (AMOS) Version 29 was used for (a) assessing the validity and reliability of the measurement model, and (b) testing the validity of the hypothesized structural model. A two-step model-building approach was carried out in which the measurement model fit and convergent validity are assessed first using confirmatory factor analysis and the structural model is tested subsequently, including an assessment of the significance of relationships (Hair et al., 2014). This

procedure was adopted because "valid structural theory tests cannot be conducted with bad measures" (Hair et al., 2014, 643).

Confirmatory factor analysis was conducted to determine the validity and reliability of the congeneric measurement model which was theoretically prespecified. In order to establish measurement model validity, (a) goodness-of-fit, and (b) path estimates and their statistical significance were assessed. Reliability was examined by investigating construct reliability (CR) and internal consistency (Cronbach's alpha values). The congeneric model was revised on the basis of (a) standardized factor loadings of items on the latent constructs, and (b) modification indices. Above all, the theoretical implications of changes to the original measurement model were considered.

Structural equation modeling was carried out to assess (a) the goodness-of-fit of the structural model, (b) the significance of the hypothesized causal paths, and (c) the variance explained by each path. As the chi-square test was expected to be significant due to its sensitivity to sample size (Byrne, 2016), the overall model fit of the research model was assessed by means of different goodness-of-fit indices: (a) the Standardized Root Mean Square Residual (SRMR; cut-off value <.05), (b) Comparative Fit Index (CFI; >.95), (c) Tucker-Lewis Index (TLI; >.95), and (d) Root Mean Square Error of Approximation (RMSEA; <.05). Structural model fit was compared to CFA model fit which provides a useful baseline to assess structural fit. In a post hoc analysis, the SEM model was respecified on the basis of (a) path estimates, (b) standardized residuals, (c) modification indices, and (d) theoretical implications of possible changes. Various within-construct error covariances were considered. Path coefficients and loading estimates of the Respecified SEM Model were examined to make sure they had not changed substantially from the CFA Revised Model. In addition, the mediating effect of the modes of reading was explored through a mediation analysis (Collier, 2020).

Due to missing values, the data had to be imputed to obtain modification indices.

4.   RESULTS

4.1 Suitability of the data

According to Tabachnick and Fidell (2007), a sample size of 417 can be considered as good. A missing data (pairwise) correlation matrix was analyzed. P-P plots that compare the expected cumulative probabilities of the residuals given they are normally distributed with the observed cumulative probabilities of the residuals (Kelley & Bolin, 2013) were inspected for each variable. We can infer that the data were, overall, normally distributed. Mahalanobis Distance ana-lysis with a cutoff level of α = .001 detected 16 multivariate outliers. These cases were excluded from the subsequent analyses.

The collinearity diagnostics revealed that all of the predictors met the assumptions (Tolerance >.10, VIF < 10).

4.2 Measurement model

This study combined nine latent constructs, namely Attentional Focus, Narrative Presence, Peri-Personal Space, Pre-Enactive Empathy, Self-Implicating Givenness, Extra-Personal Space, Cognitive Perspective-Taking, Realism, and Self-Perceptual Depth. Table 1 reports the fit indices for the Congeneric Model and the Revised Congeneric Model. The goodness-of-fit indices prove adequacy of the measurement model.

Table 1. Comparison of Goodness-of-fit measures between the CFA Congeneric Model and the CFA Revised Congeneric Model

Fit index	CFA congeneric model	CFA revised congeneric model
Chi-square		
Chi-square	1278.92	747.08
df	558	398
χ2/df	2.292	1.877
p	< .001	< .001
Absolute Fit Measures		
RMSEA	.057	.047
LO 90	.053	.042
HI 90	.061	.052
PCLOSE	.003	.842
SRMR	.064	.055
Incremental Fit Indices		
CFI	.92	.95
TLI	.91	.95

Initially, the items of the latent variables Realistic Conduct and Affective Realism (ASQ; Kuiken & Douglas, 2017) were integrated into one factor that we called Realism due to the lack of discriminant validity between the two original latent constructs from the ASQ. In addition, the two original constructs are theoretically close, and the CFA model thus becomes more parsimonious.

Based on the standardized factor loadings (cut-off value <0.7), the standardized residuals (>2.5) and the modification indices (>4.0), the following revisions to the congeneric model were considered. Although item INC 1 ("While reading what made this story memorable, I felt like I was watching the character(s) who were visibly there in front of me") did not meet the cut-off level for standardized factor loadings, the item was retained because of the three-indicator-rule for each latent variable to satisfy statistical identification requirements (Hair et al., 2014).

Five items were deleted because of low standardized factor loadings (see Appendix B for deleted items). Through the revision to the original congeneric model, the flow of events from the perspective of each different character, similarities in emotions and actions between fictional characters and real people, the enduring effect of literary reading, and the implications of literary reading for the reader's temporal identity are no longer measured. These changes to the original instrument can be

theoretically justified. First, perspective-taking and characters' feelings, concerns, and actions that seemed similar to those of people from real life are extensively addressed by the other items of the Cognitive Perspective-Taking and Realism scales. Second, the enduring effect of literary reading can more accurately and sensitively be quantified through a recurrent measurement of the reading outcome via the revised Self-Perceptual Depth subscale. Third, the transaction of memories with the text elements that might impact on the reader's temporal identity is also captured by the Self-Implicating Givenness construct.

Table 2. Confirmatory factor and reliability analysis

Construct	Item	Standardized Factor Loading	*SE*	CR	Cronbach's alpha
Attentional Focus	ATF1	.867	**	.914	.914
	ATF2	.881	.045		
	ATF 3	.901	.044		
Narrative Presence	NAP1	.753	**	.809	.808
	NAP2	.778	.071		
	NAP3	.763	.071		
Peri-Personal Space	EXE1	.778	**	.845	.841
	EXE2	.786	.069		
	EXE3	.843	.067		
Pre-Enactive Empathy	EXE4	.736	**	.863	.859
	EXE5	.881	.074		
	EXE6	.766	.070		
	EXE7	.740	.066		
Self-Implicating Givenness	EXE8	.828	**	.863	.857
	EXE9	.881	.055		
	EXE10	.756	.051		
Extra-Personal Space	INC1	.540	**	.848	.820
	INC2	.916	.150		
	INC3	.923	.147		
Cognitive Perspective-Taking	INC5	.783	**	.852	.851
	INC6	.825	.058		
	INC7	.823	.061		
Realism	INC8	.707	**	.818	.817
	INC9	.815	.071		
	INC11	.715	.068		
	INC12	.668	.071		
Self-Perceptual Depth	SPD1	.779	**	.864	.863
	SPD2	.682	.055		
	SPD3	.760	.057		
	SPD4	.773	.065		
	SPD5	.743	.064		

*Note. SE: standard error; CR: Composite Reliability; **: Items constrained for identification purposes.*

Data concerning the validity and reliability of the instrument showed adequate psychometric properties of all hypothesized constructs. In convergent validity (Table 2), standardized factor loadings for all items except for INC 1, INC12, and SPD 2 (see

Appendix A for item content) were above 0.7. All loadings were statistically significant. Composite reliability (CR) and internal consistency (Cronbach's alpha) were above the recommended limit of 0.7 (Bagozzi and Yi, 1988; Hair et al., 2014).

4.3 Structural model

4.3.1   Hypothesis testing

Six hypotheses were proposed for the study testing the direct effects of the two aspects of attention on two distinct modes of reading engagement and of these distinct modes of reading engagement on the aesthetic reading outcome (H1-H6). In addition, H7 and H8 were to test the indirect effect of the attention constructs on self-insight through the mediating effect of expressive reading. As far as direct effects are concerned, results from the structural equation modeling (Table 3) suggest that all hypotheses except for H4 were supported. Narrative Presence predicted both Expressive Enactment and Integrative Comprehension. Contrary to our assumptions, Attentional Focus did not facilitate the inferential-interpretive mode of Integrative Comprehension. It is noteworthy that the regression of Expressive Enactment on Attentional focus was significant and negative. The hypotheses that Expressive Enactment facilitated Self-Perceptual Depth whereas Integrative Comprehension did not were confirmed. The coefficients of determination of the endogenous variables were high. Goodness-of-fit indices were acceptable.

Table 3. Structural model test results

Hypothesized relationships	Standardized Estimates	*SE*	Result
Narrative Presence → Expressive Enactment	.966	.088	Supported
Narrative Presence → Integrative Comprehension	.765	.056	Supported
Attentional Focus → Expressive Enactment	-.199	.046	Supported
Attentional Focus → Integrative Comprehension	.049	.024	Rejected
Expressive Enactment → Self-Perceptual Depth	.688	.065	Supported
Integrative Comprehension → Self-Perceptual Depth	.040	.116	Supported
Squared Multiple Correlation (R²)			
Expressive Enactment	.787		
Integrative Comprehension	.624		
Self-Perceptual Depth	.512		
Model Fit Statistics			
χ^2 = 980.330, df = 421; SRMR = 0.078; CFI = 0.93; TLI = 0.92; RMSEA = .058			

In order to improve goodness-of-fit indices, a post hoc analysis was conducted that yielded the following results. In the specified SEM model, the paths between Attentional Focus and Integrative Comprehension as well as between Integrative

Comprehension and Self-perceptual Depth were deleted due to statistically insignificant factor loadings. Moreover, within-construct error covariances were established between the following items based on standardized residuals, modification indices, and theoretical plausibility: (a) EXE4-5, (b) SPD1-2, (c) SPD2-3, and (d) INC11-12 (see Appendix A for item content). As with the original Kuiken-Douglas model, the error terms of the second-order factors Expressive Enactment and Integrative Comprehension were correlated as both constructs represent modes of reading engagement. Through the specification process, goodness-of-fit indices could be substantially improved without compromising the theoretical integrity of the research model (Table 4).

Table 4. Comparison of goodness-of-fit measures between the SEM model and the specified SEM model

Fit Index	SEM Model	Specified SEM Model
Chi-square		
Chi-square	980.330	858.28
df	421	418
χ2/df	2.329	2.053
P	0.00	0.00
Absolute Fit Measures		
RMSEA	.058	.051
LO 90	.053	.046
HI 90	.062	.056
PCLOSE	.004	.323
SRMR	.078	.072
Incremental Fit Indices		
CFI	.93	.94
TLI	.92	.94

The closeness of the fit of the Specified SEM Model to the fit of the CFA Revised Congeneric Model indicates the adequacy of the research model (Hair et al., 2014, p. 662). Loading estimates of items on their respective factors in SEM are supposed to not have changed substantially from the CFA model to guarantee stability among the measured indicator variable and to support the measurement model's validity (Hair et al., 2014, p. 656). Only minor differences in standardized factor loading between the CFA Revised Congeneric Model and the Specified SEM Model were discernible due to the establishment of within-construct error covariances. We can conclude that comparisons between the CFA Revised Congeneric Model and the Specified SEM Model prove the adequacy of the research model.

4.3.2   Mediation analysis

The indirect effect of the attentional pattern on self-insight was measured through the mediating effect of Expressive Enactment. The mediating effect was tested while running structural equation modeling in AMOS 29 with bootstrapping at 5000, and the significance of indirect effects was examined using the bias-corrected percentile

method (Collier, 2020). Self-Perceptual Depth measuring self-insight during literary reading was found to be affected by both Narrative Presence and Attentional Focus indirectly through the mediation of Expressive Enactment (Table 5). Therefore, H7 and H8 were supported. As the relationships between Narrative Presence and Self-Perceptual Depth as well as between Attentional Focus and Self-Perceptual Depth were non-significant, the influence of the attentional pattern on self-insight was fully mediated through expressive-experiential reading.

Table 5. Test for mediation using a bootstrap analysis with a 95 % confidence interval

|	Relationship	Direct effect	Indirect effect	Confidence interval		*p*-value	Result
				low	high		
H7	Narrative Presence→ Expressive Enactment → Self-Perceptual Depth	-.052 (.124)	.643	.428	.987	<.001	full mediation
H8	Attentional Focus → Expressive Enactment → Self-Perceptual Depth	-.028 (.044)	-.104	-.188	-.036	.001	full mediation

Note. Unstandardized coefficients reported. Values in parentheses are standard errors. Bootstrap sample = 5,000 with replacement.

5.   DISCUSSION AND CONCLUSION

This study yielded an instrument with valid and reliable scores that can assess high school students' attentional stance, modes of engagement, and self-insight. Confirmatory factor analysis proved the validity and reliability of the proposed measurement model which comprises nine dimensions of high school students' reading experience. Attentional Focus and Narrative Presence constitute dimensions of attention as directed toward the text during literary reading. ASQ Expressive Enactment and Integrative Comprehension are considered distinct modes of reading engagement with the literary text. Expressive Enactment involves Peri-Personal Space, Pre-Enactive Empathy, and Self-Implicating Givenness while Integrative Comprehension encompasses Extra-Personal Space, Cognitive Perspective-Taking, and Realism. Finally, Self-Perceptual Depth constitutes the self-modifying aesthetic outcome of engagement with the literary text. The nine factors all show satisfactory convergent validity, composite reliability, and internal consistency.

Structural equation modeling proved the adequacy of the structural model. We confirmed that both modes of reading are immersive (Kuiken & Douglas, 2017, p. 240) as they were significantly precipitated by Narrative Presence. Whereas Attentional Focus significantly influenced Expressive Enactment, Attentional Focus was not predictive of Integrative Comprehension. Finally, the finding that Expressive Enactment, but not Integrative Comprehension, predicted self-insight (Kuiken & Douglas, 2017, p. 238) could be replicated (Figure 2).

Figure 2. Tested theoretical model (specified SEM model)
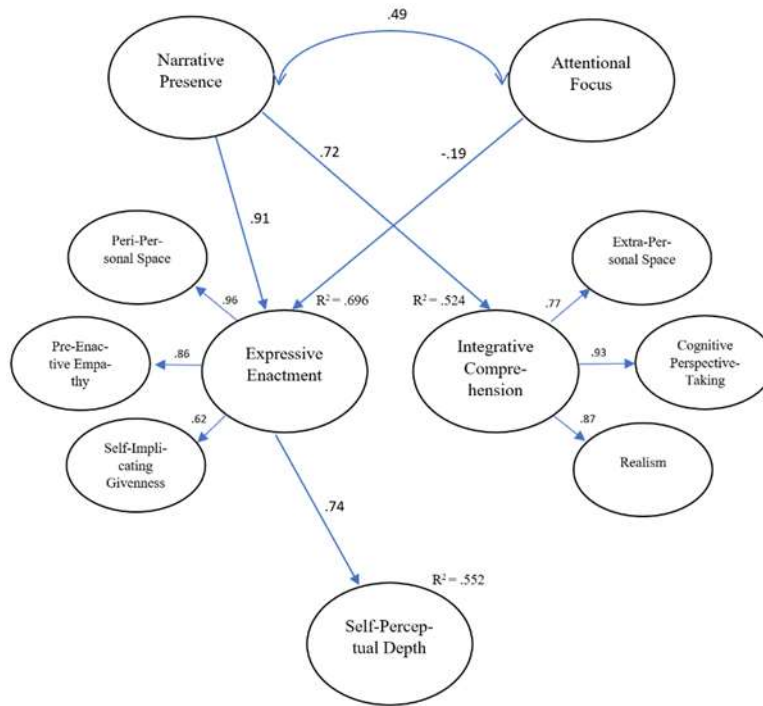
Kuijpers et al. (2021) postulate that "'imperviousness to distraction' is unsurprisingly a central behavioral correlate of absorption" (p. 289). More precisely, absorbed attention is described as "as a deep form of concentration sustained over a longer period of time while, at the same time, a person who is absorbed exhibits a sustained readiness to shift attention; that is, *within the reach of the attentional object* (i.e., the book that is being read) and *without breaking concentration* (Kuiken & Douglas, 2017)" (Kuijpers, 2021, p. 277; our emphasis). It is remarkable, however, that Attentional Focus negatively predicted Expressive Enactment during transformative reading. This indicates that an exclusive focus of attention on the literary text might disrupt expressive-experiential engagement with the text. Diderot (1754/2001) already redefined distraction as a positive mindset during the creative process: "Distraction has its source in an excellent quality of the understanding, an extreme facility in allowing the ideas to strike against, or reawaken one another." According to Diderot, mind wandering enhances the making of connections of ideas which is so important during expressive explication (Phillips, 2015). Jacobs and Willems (2018) consider the reading of fiction and mind-wandering to be similar experiences as they are both forms of meaning making. However, the crucial difference between the two mental activities is that reading fiction is externally guided whereas mind-wandering is

internally guided: "It is the narrative that imposes a discourse model upon us, whereas during mind wandering […] the situation model is generated 'from within' based on our memories and experiences" (Jacobs & Willems, 2018, p. 150). The current research suggests that the transformative reading transaction is not exclusively guided by the text's discourse model, but also, in analogy with mind-wandering, guided from within as the Self-Implicating Givenness construct which measures readers' connections between the text and the episodic memory is a strong predictor of self-insight. We can conclude that not only mind-wandering is linked to personal memory (Raichle et al., 2001), but also the transformative reading of fiction. This is in line with Dixon and Bortolussi (2013) who emphasize the "importance of readers' 'engagement' for drawing on their […] personal memories to achieve the construction and integration of the situation model of a text" (p.3). Therefore, we can conclude that internally-guided mind-wandering is productive for the transformative literary experience.

There is some support from cognitive neuroscience that mind-wandering might enhance creativity. Zabelina (2018) expounds on three theories of how attention is linked to creativity. The concept of "leaky" attention proves useful in the case of distraction leading to fruitful engagement with the text. Leaky attention is "of particular importance for some forms of creativity, specifically for making connections between ideas" (Zabelina, 2018, p. 164). The process of making connections, which is essential during the creative engagement with literary texts, i.e., Expressive Enactment, might be facilitated by a certain degree of distraction measured by the Attentional Focus subscale.

What is measured in our research model, as far as attention is concerned, is the attentional stance that comprises a filter (Attentional Focus) and the shifting to the narrative world (Narrative Presence). Attentional Focus measures the quantitative aspect of attention, i.e., how much external attention (Chun et al., 2011) is directed at the literary text. Therefore, it is indicative of attention's sustainability, but not informative regarding how attention is directed at the text. Narrative Presence, however, tackles qualitative aspects of attention allocation by measuring the temporary shifting of the reader's deictic center to the world of the text on a continuum from distance to proximity. In an act of intentionality, the diegesis is created (Westerman, 2018), and in the transaction of the reader with the text, attention flexibly shifts between the world of the reader and the newly created world of the text. The assumption of Kuiken and Douglas (2017) that it is total attention that is predictive of Expressive Enactment could be confirmed. The intensity of external attention on the object, however, differentially predicts the mode of engagement. Whereas some degree of distraction facilitates Expressive Enactment, the filter function seems to be irrelevant to Integrative Comprehension. From this we can infer that total inhibition is central to absorbed reading (Kuijpers, 2021), but not to transformative reading.

There are limitations to the given study. First, the reading experience is dependent on the literary text assigned for reading and on the students involved. Therefore, the study needs to be replicated with different materials and populations.

Second, the present study deals with attentional and experiential components of the reading process. Despite their indisputable relevance in the field of education, aspects of mental imagery were not covered as the present project focused on attentional shifting to the diegesis after having been created during engagement with the text, not on the imaginative creation of the diegesis itself. Attitudinal and dispositional aspects of the reading process need to be addressed as well.

Third, the given research model only captures the attentional stance, not attentional response. Inhibition and shifting processes are measured, but the way text elements determine the allocation of attention need to be researched in future fMRI studies. (Phillips, 2015; Phillips et al., 2017). In addition, it could not be finally clarified whether the reader, as a result of the distraction from the world of the text, diverts resources into internal attention to episodic memory or external attention to some other stimulus from the real world.

Fourth, self-reporting questionnaires cannot fully capture affectively laden constructs such as expressive-experiential leading and self-insight. This limitation could be mitigated by complementing quantitative studies with the qualitative analysis of interviews and artefacts (Grandits, 2022), learner reports (Schrijvers et al., 2016), or think-aloud responses (Fialho, 2012).

Finally, future research projects must take other variables that might influence students' responses to literature into account in order to obtain a fuller insight into the process of absorbed reading, e.g., personality traits, reading habits, reading motivation, personal bias, social desirability, and attitudes to teachers.

The model established in this study has educational implications. First, the curricular objective of self-insight can be accomplished by having students engage in expressive-experiential reading, thus gaining self-insight along the reflective pathway (Brokerhof et al., 2018). Participants' scores on Peri-Personal Space (M =1.69, SD = 1.11), Pre-Enactive Empathy (M = 1.03, SD = .99) and Self-Implicating Givenness (M = 1.28, SD = 1.05) were substantively lower than on Extra-Personal Space (M = 2.10, SD = 1.15), Cognitive Perspective-Taking (M = 2.54, SD = .97) and Realism (M = 1.77, SD = .93). Thus, students in Austrian grammar schools were reluctant to extend their peri-personal space to the narrative world and more readily adopted an inference-driven interpretation of the empathetic shift than an expression-centered explication. As far as the phenomena of verisimilitude are concerned, participants tended to seek consistency between their interpretation-driven situation model and their schema-driven world knowledge, rather than explicating the interplay of text semantics and their personal memories. Therefore, students' readiness to engage in expressive-experiential reading needs to be fostered. A reader-centered personal growth model of literature education may lead to self-insight. Students must be provided with a genuine reading experience in which the text is close to them, so that they metaphorically fuse with characters and connect the world of the text to their own memories. Stimulating such connections might facilitate the given curricular objective as well.

Second, attentional flexibility seems essential for engagement with literary texts that is supposed to promote insight into the self. Three forms of shifting are relevant for the process of transformative reading: (a) shifting between external attention to the text and the internal attention to the episodic memory, (b) shifting between various external stimuli, i.e., text properties, and (c) shifting between various internal stimuli, i.e., episodic memories. As a result, the executive function of shifting must be trained (Meltzer, 2007) in the literature classroom. Students must be allowed "leaky" attention so that they can make connections between text elements and their episodic memories during literary reading.

In conclusion, the proposed nine-factor instrument might serve as a valid and reliable measure of students' attentional stance, modes of reading engagement, and self-modifying insights. In addition, SEM results indicate that interventions that aim at self-insight should foster students' shifting to the narrative world, allow for some distraction, and engage students in expressive-experiential reading.

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APPENDIX A

List of questionnaire items with their source of adoption

Construct name with items of measurement	
Attentional Focus	*Source: Busselle and Bilandzic (2009)*
ATF1	I found my mind wandering while I was reading the story. (-)
ATF2	While I was reading the story, I found myself thinking about other things. (-)
ATF3	I had a hard time keeping my mind on the story. (-)
Narrative Presence	*Source: Busselle and Bilandzic (2009)*
NAP1	While reading the story, my body was in the room, but my mind was inside the world created by the story.
NAP2	The story created a new world, and then that world suddenly disappeared when the program ended.
NAP3	At times while reading the story, the story world was closer to me than the real world.
Peri-Personal Space	*Source: Kuiken and Douglas (2017)*
EXE1	While reading what made this story memorable, I could almost feel what it would be like to reach, move, or change position in relation to things (objects, characters) in the world of the text.
EXE2	While reading what made this story memorable, the situation described there created an atmosphere (i.e., a mood or feeling) that, for a moment, surrounded everything, including me.
EXE3	While reading what made this story memorable, the things described in the world of the text seemed bodily present, as though they could not only be seen but also heard; not only heard but also within reach, not only reachable but also touchable, etc.
Pre-Enactive Empathy	*Source: Kuiken and Douglas (2017)*
EXE4	While reading what made this story memorable, for a moment I felt like I "was" the character whose experience was being described there.
EXE5	While reading what made this story memorable, it seemed that, although we are not the same person, the character portrayed there and I were "in the same place".
EXE6	While reading what made this story memorable, my feelings were as "close" for me as they were for the character whose point of view was being presented there.
EXE7	While reading what made this story memorable, it seemed like I was almost "in" the bodily position (e.g., posture, bearing) of the character whose experience was described there.
Self-implicating Givenness	*Source: Kuiken and Douglas (2017)*
EXE8	While reading what made this story memorable, I used memories of my own experience to understand what one of the characters was feeling.
EXE9	While reading what made this story memorable, recalling experiences in my own life helped me to sense what one of the characters was going through.
EXE10	While reading what made this story memorable, I noticed that events in my own life seemed to mirror what one of the characters was facing.
Extra-Personal Space	*Source: Kuiken and Douglas (2017)*
INC1	While reading what made this story memorable, I felt like I was watching the character(s) who were visibly there in front of me.
INC2	While reading what made this story memorable, I could see (in my mind's eye) the same physical setting (or location) that was there for the character(s) to see.

INC3	While reading what made this story memorable, I could almost see the setting (or environment) that was there at that moment.
Cognitive Perspective-Taking	*Source: Kuiken and Douglas (2017)*
INC5	While reading what made this story memorable, I could understand why each character did what s/he did.
INC6	While reading what made this story memorable, I could understand the feelings of each different character.
INC7	While reading what made this story memorable, I could imagine the predicament that each character was facing.
Realism	*Source: Kuiken and Douglas (2017)*
INC8	While reading what made this poem, short story, or novel memorable, the characters' feelings, attitudes, and concerns resembled those of people in the real world.
INC9	While reading what made this poem, short story, or novel memorable, the characters' intimate personal reactions seemed very life-like.
INC11	While reading what made this poem, short story, or novel memorable, the characters' actions within the unfolding narrative seemed realistic.
INC12	While reading what made this story memorable, the fictional actions described there resembled the actions of people in the real world.
Self-Perceptual Depth	*Source: Kuiken, Campbell and Sopcak (2012)*
SPD1	After reading the story, I felt sensitive to aspects of my life that I usually ignore.
SPD2	After reading the story, I felt like changing the way I live.
SPD3	After reading the story, my sense of life seemed less superficial.
SPD4	After reading the story, I considered a view of life that seemed more fully 'real'.
SPD5	After reading the story, I felt that my understanding of life had been deepened.

APPENDIX B

Deleted items

INC4	While reading what made this poem, short story, or novel memorable, I could understand the flow of events from the perspective of each different character
INC10	While reading what made this poem, short story, or novel memorable, the characters' feelings and concerns seemed similar to those of people I know in real life
INC13	While reading what made this poem, short story, or novel memorable, the characters' actions seemed similar to those I observe in real life
SPD6	This poem continued to influence my mood after I finished reading it
SPD7	This poem reminded me of how my past is still with me