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Minnesota English Journal

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Edited by
William D. Dyer
John Banschbach
Minnesota State University, Mankato

From the Editors

A couple of weeks ago, I was pleased to participate in a wonderfully energizing event. The occasion?—a conference commemorating the 400th anniversary of the publication of the first part of what is arguably the most important book in western culture: Cervantes' *Don Quixote*. Whether you agree that the *Quixote* is the most influential book of all time is immaterial (this is the very stuff of good-spirited arguments!).

What will always matter most to me about the conference was that it revolved around a single book that huge numbers of people readily recognize. Indeed, recreations of that wonderful novel and its characters abound, from frequent revivals of "The Man of La Mancha;" the delightful artistic representations of the impossibly mad and idealistic Don and his equally foolish but more materialistic sidekick Sancho by Salvador Dali, among many others; opera and ballet renditions; and a felicitous appropriation by the Boston Red Sox in the "impossible dream" year of 1967. And, remarkably, only a small percentage of those who know about the book will ever read it. Nevertheless, this much known but rarely read book became the occasion for drawing teachers and students from different cultures, areas of expertise, and relative levels of actual engagement with the text together to celebrate it, some of the cultural elements that contributed to its construction, and the ways it continues to be relevant to us. One

internationally known scholar on Cervantes transfixed her audience with a lecture on parallels between Cervantes' hilarious character and, of all people, Osama bin Laden. In the process of representing the tremendous influence of the Qu'ran on *Don Quixote*, she showed how the book ought to be used as a window (as she asserted that Cervantes had intended it during a time of great intolerance toward Muslims) to begin to respect cultural and religious difference. And, amid so many multi-media engagements with the Quixote, eleven students stood before a packed audience and shared insights about how Cervantes' representation of the many beautiful, talented, and resourceful women in his novel went against the grain of conventional views about women in a male-driven society. Cervantes' women, the undergraduate and graduate students all agreed, were suggesting new possibilities, expressed necessarily in a subversive way within a closed "police" state. Such a little conference, but, indeed, one with something for nearly everyone, and with significant contributions made to it by the university and the larger community. It doesn't get too much better than that. Quixote would have been proud.

So what? Well, as I was reflecting upon the adrenaline rush I was feeling while racing from my own classes with jacket and tie furled behind me to feed off the ideas of folks from very different disciplines than mine and to root hard for the success of the students, I saw a small but important connection with what we've been trying to accomplish in the *Minnesota English Journal* over the past two years. MCTE is a relatively small organization. The *MEJ* is one of several electronic "faces" of the organization, but, I think, an important one. It's not the Quixote, but it is the text that can potentially draw us together, take the measure of who we are and what we're about, and become the occasion (once each year) for sharing new ideas and encouraging meaningful interaction with them. When the *MEJ* does what it can and should, it, like the Quixote surely is, should be all about us. It ought to reflect the diversity of our interests—the full range of issues related to language; composition; reading; theory; pedagogy; literatures; humanities studies; technology; collaborative learning; assessment; and more. It should, as the

Quixote tries to do, be inclusive and inviting, as well as challenging. And it should welcome and make room for responses to issues that enliven us—perhaps by way of a "letters to the editors" page to carry on the thread of discussions initiated within some of our published pieces—but also in a section devoted to "teaching tips and assignment ideas" that attempts to move our scholarly discussions into classroom practice. I don't know that the *MEJ* has ever been or intended to be all of these things. However, we're hoping it will, with your good and great assistance.

In this, our second completely on-line issue, we're far from where we want to be. The nine articles represented in the following pages show considerable variety in tackling some of those issues indicated in the previous paragraph. But we need more of them, written by more of you. These articles need to come from a greater variety of the populations that the MEJ aspires to represent. Those articles should include the conventional ten to thirty-five page scholarly discussions of subjects for constituencies of an organization driven by a desire to teach exceptionally as well as the one-page description of an assignment or teaching strategy or writing prompt.

But we're gradually getting there. The journal that you're about to read is more user-friendly. Several readers complained of an inability to download individual articles without printing the entire journal. Everyone now will be able to do that because the journal exists both as a single electronic entity and separate PDF's for each article.

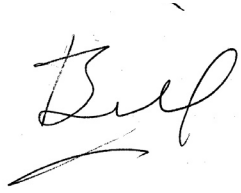
We're also very pleased with the professional "look" and readability of this issue of *MEJ*. Plenty of white on the pages translates into an easier-on-the-eye presentation. And, consistent with our desire to privilege praxis in our pages, we've decided to seek our cover art not from independent and practicing professionals but, instead, from talented and highly-recommended students in Minnesota State University-Mankato's Art Department who can implement ideas consistent with the themes we ply in specific issues while adding valuable credits to their resumes. We'll continue that practice with your approval.

And, consistent with our declaration in last year's editorial to reward the editors' choice of the most well-written and interesting article represented in each new issue of the journal, we're pleased to announce that we'll be sending $250 to Matt Christensen for his essay entitled "A Whodunit Teaching Unit—The Underworld of Victorian London in The Mystery of Edwin Drood." We expect to make this prize a regular feature of future issues of *MEJ*.

In order to move *MEJ* to where we want it, we'll need to solicit more interaction between MCTE's membership and the journal, between our readership and the editors, between those whose ideas and experiences in the classroom ought to be included in *MEJ*'s pages and those who could profit from reading about them. We'll encourage, then, informal and formal pieces, the short and the rather lengthy, the practical and the theoretical, the anecdotal and the formally researched.

We want you to tell us what you think of what you see here. Let us know what you need to see. Send us what you've written about what you care about related to the Language Arts and the English classroom. We promise to respond.

Respectfully,



Bill Dyer
Co-Editor
MCTE Board Member
Humanities Director and English Professor
Minnesota State University, Mankato

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A Whodunit Teaching Unit:
The Underworld of Victorian London and Social Contexts in the Mystery of Edwin Drood

Matthew L. Christensen

I am one of those English teachers who had to come at teaching the long way around. After college, I reluctantly searched for a teaching job and even more reluctantly took on a long-term substitute teaching position at a local middle school. I was the fifth in a long line of long-term substitute teachers (some of whom lasted only a day) to take on this class. I was determined to stick out the job and offer these students some consistency. By the end of the year, we had completed units covering *Romeo and Juliet*, literature of the Holocaust, and poetry. While I felt that I'd accomplished much with this class, I still looked on teaching with dread – I hated classroom management and felt ill equipped to continue. After completing the semester, I vowed I would never teach again.

Cut to ten years later.

I was back in school working on my MA in literature and serving as a teaching assistant for the English department. With ten more years under my belt and more confidence, I began teaching a section of composition. While I still worried about aspects of my teaching, my experience at the university taught me much about myself as an educator. I found myself thinking

about methodology and less about what my students thought of me. By the end of the second year, with a thesis to complete and graduation staring me in the face, I began to look back on my university teaching experiences. I made a laundry list of discoveries about myself. I no longer looked at my students as the enemy – the cold war was over. Also, I realized that I actually enjoyed planning my units and lessons. Perhaps the greatest lesson I'd learned was that I needed to have a personal stake in what I was teaching, that I couldn't fake interest. I initially thought that this was going to be a hurdle for me – my area of literary study seemed at odds with the lightning-fast micro-trends my students were discussing casually in class. Could we find common ground?

My resume of literary interests is woefully stereotypical: I have always been a fan of Victorian literature. I'm one of those annoying people who did not mind reading Dickens in school, who continued to hang on to the Pre-Raphaelites long after everyone else who'd read *Possession* moved on to Vermeer and his pearl earringed girl, and who felt that he could relate to the stereotype of Victorian repression on an uncomfortable level. I'm like the guy stuck in the 1980's who just can't stop wearing thin ties and pinning his acid washed jeans. But even worse, I'm a Victorian wannabe.

I realize that this is a rather strange preamble to an essay on teaching *The Mystery of Edwin Drood*, but I think it is valuable to understanding my approach. When one becomes semi-obsessed with a subject – even if that obsession is still in its early stages – it becomes very easy to attempt the impossible. In other words, because I love reading Victorian novels, I can, in my fevered imagination, envision teaching a work that is not often considered for most classrooms, and be daft enough to believe that one may wish to incorporate it into his or her high school English or college literature curriculum. I am well aware that most people do get a taste of Dickens on the high school level - mine was actually in junior high, when we read *A Christmas Carol* – and I realize that *Edwin Drood* generally doesn't leap to the forefront of one's mind when choosing a Dickens novel for the classroom. Nevertheless, I would invite

you to consider this work seriously. Beyond the fact that as an unfinished work it is a shorter novel, *Edwin Drood* has much to tell us about England at the end of the century. Moreover, it serves as tantalizing fodder for the developing critical thinker – who can resist attempting to answer the unanswered? While I designed this unit for the college level, with a bit of tweaking it could easily be adapted for the high school English class.

The Usual Suspects

This unit is intended to be incorporated into a 200-level general education literature course at a four-year college or university. I envision a classroom made up both of English and non-English majors who are taking the course either to fulfill a humanities credit or a literature credit. The only prerequisite for this course will be that the student has taken both a general composition course as well as an introduction-to-literature course. Because of this, I imagine the classroom will be quite diverse. While students may range from freshmen to seniors, I will assume that most students taking a class at this level have only a rudimentary knowledge of literary analysis. I want, therefore, to approach the literature from a reader-response school of criticism combined with new historicism. This approach allows my students to both interact with the literature on a personal level as well as evaluate the work within the socioeconomic and historical framework out of which the piece emerged.

Having experienced teaching in this type of classroom by interning in a general education literature course, I am familiar with the types of students that may take such courses, their knowledge base, and their comfort level discussing literature. I do not want to assume too much or too little in this regard; thus the work we will accomplish in this unit will largely be focused on discovery. Students will use resources provided in class to become experts on one aspect of the culture being studied. This knowledge will be shared with the entire classroom and connected to the literature so that students in essence teach each other and themselves. To accommodate various learning styles (visual, auditory, kinesthetic), I will use several types of

media. Students will also have an opportunity to use their own particular creative talents in their presentation of their research.

Casing the Joint

This unit was designed for a course entitled "Mystery." I want to explore the idea of mystery in the broad sense, using both fiction and non-fiction texts. Primarily I want the course to attempt to answer the following questions: What is mystery? Why do we enjoy mysteries? What is this insatiable need to know, to figure out? How does this play out in literature? In life? To answer these questions, we will look at various texts that examine mystery. Although the course will include one novel and a handful of short stories that would be considered classics in the genre, I want to challenge my students by presenting them with unorthodox texts that explore the nature of mystery. Texts will include Agatha Christie's *And Then There Were None*; Charles Dickens' *The Mystery of Edwin Drood*; short mystery stories of Poe, Dickens, Doyle and Collins; two film texts, *Picnic at Hanging Rock* and *A Passage To India*; Kazuo Ishiguro's novel *When We Were Orphans* (which uses the mystery genre to explore identity); Lillian Hellman's "Julia" from the memoir *Pentimento*; and several primary source police and press accounts of the Whitechapel murders of 1888.

The title of this two-week unit is "Mysteries of Edwin Drood." By the time the first class of this unit meets, the expectation will be that the novel has been read (for high school classes, I would divide up the novel into reading sections with discussion activities incorporated along the way). Our discussion for the two weeks will center on supplementary material that deepens students' understanding of Dickens' work. Although the main action of the novel takes place in and around Cloisterham, Jasper's (Dickens' "could be" villain) dark associations with the opium dens of London provide fertile ground for exploration. Jasper's journey moves him between the urban and the rural twice in the novel. This move seems to represent a larger issue, one of geographies: Jasper represents an evil that almost

emanates from the larger urban center and into the smaller town of Cloisterham. In order to understand the importance of London in the context of this novel, students will spend the two weeks investigating several aspects of the underbelly of Victorian London society in a variety of media. In addition, students will explore the possibilities mysteries represent by practicing devising stories based on primary texts from items found in *The Times* as well as trying their hands at creating an outline for their solution to the mystery of Edwin Drood's disappearance.

Alibis and Cover Stories

By the end of this two-week unit, I want my students to come away with the following:

- An understanding of the darker aspects of the Victorian culture in which Dickens was writing.
- A beginning sense of how one can approach analysis of a variety of texts (literary, non-fictive, artistic, and cartographical).
- A broader understanding of *mystery*.
- Tools for personal and academic research – investigative skills.

As a final piece, I would have them write an assessment of what they learned from the unit.

Choose your Weapon

For this unit, I've chosen a variety of sources to add verisimilitude and interest to the study of *The Mystery of Edwin Drood*. Each source was chosen in order to engage students in various ways. As a class we will look at several commentaries on Victorian life in London. Peter Quennell's condensed version of Mayhew's fourth volume of *London Labour and the London Poor* focuses on London's underworld, highlighting various classifications of prostitutes, beggars, and swindlers.

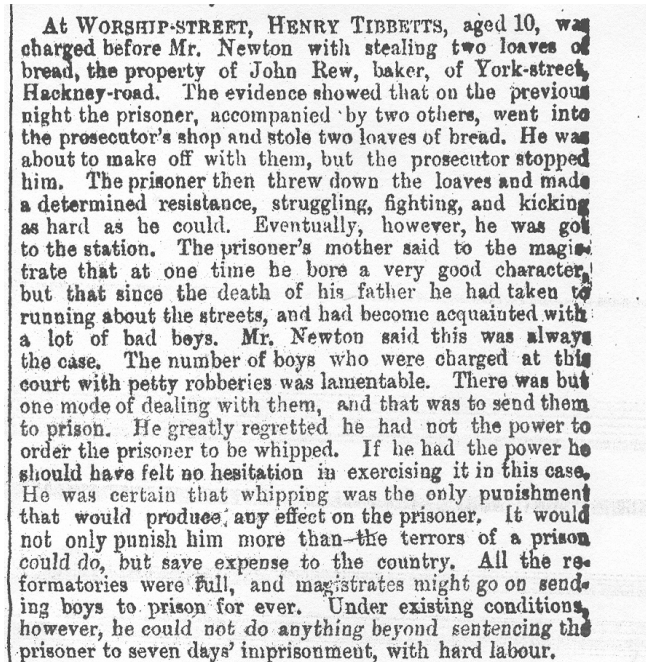
Kellow Chesney's work on the same subject broadens the discussion to include the geographical layout of criminal London. Simon Joyce's *Capital Offenses* looks at geography as a means of exploring character in literature. Students will also use Internet sources such as The Victorian Web and VictorianLondon.org to research several aspects of the darker culture of the city. In addition, students will study sections of maps of Victorian London, tracing Jasper's journey, locating opium dens, and making sense of some of the more prominent dens of iniquity. VictorianLondon.org provides several nice on-line contemporary maps that can be zoomed in on to better get the lay of the land. Maps give us a better idea of the size of this city, allow us

to mark the parameters of crime, and make connections between economic conditions and crime rates. They also give the students a context when discussing both Dickens' novel as well as the locations they uncover in their research.

Another compelling way for students to understand the look of Victorian London is by examining the art that was produced at the time. Works by such artists as Gustave Doré pro-

vide us with clues to the living conditions of London's poorest citizens. Such pictures are peppered throughout his collection of London engravings, providing a sharp contrast to images of London's leisure class also included. Doré's unique position as a foreigner helps the modern student of Victoriana (a foreigner of sorts as well to this fascinating world) see a London many Londoners were most likely unwilling to face themselves.

Excerpts from *The Times* (locally, I could only find editions that went back far enough—1880s—on microfiche in one academic library in St. Paul) allow the class to look at contemporary accounts of cases of criminal activity in the city. On a daily basis, *The Times* recorded arrests and prosecutions under the heading "Police" in the court circular section of the paper (see excerpt). We know little more than what we are given in the short articles (unless, of course, a high profile case was being covered), but this lack of knowledge allows me to develop class activities that stimulate the imagination. In the example here, from the November 2, 1868 edition of *The Times*,



At WORSHIP-STREET, HENRY TIBBETTS, aged 10, was charged before Mr. Newton with stealing two loaves of bread, the property of John Rew, baker, of York-street, Hackney-road. The evidence showed that on the previous night the prisoner, accompanied by two others, went into the prosecutor's shop and stole two loaves of bread. He was about to make off with them, but the prosecutor stopped him. The prisoner then threw down the loaves and made a determined resistance, struggling, fighting, and kicking as hard as he could. Eventually, however, he was got to the station. The prisoner's mother said to the magistrate that at one time he bore a very good character, but that since the death of his father he had taken to running about the streets, and had become acquainted with a lot of bad boys. Mr. Newton said this was always the case. The number of boys who were charged at this court with petty robberies was lamentable. There was but one mode of dealing with them, and that was to send them to prison. He greatly regretted he had not the power to order the prisoner to be whipped. If he had the power he should have felt no hesitation in exercising it in this case. He was certain that whipping was the only punishment that would produce any effect on the prisoner. It would not only punish him more than the terrors of a prison could do, but save expense to the country. All the reformatories were full, and magistrates might go on sending boys to prison for ever. Under existing conditions, however, he could not do anything beyond sentencing the prisoner to seven days' imprisonment, with hard labour.

describing the arrest and sentencing of a ten-year-old boy who stole two loaves of bread, we can make economic inferences as to some of the conditions and causes of criminality.

In addition, I will provide students with a casebook of sorts to the era's most high-profile series of crimes: the Whitechapel murders. This last element is important on two levels. First, it seems to represent the worst of the era – a horrendous product of a society that valued Christian morality, yet failed to put the axiom of "love thy neighbor" into practice on a practical level. Second, it is (like *Edwin Drood*) an unsolved mystery. This latter point allows us as a class to both explore Victorian detection methods, as well as reflect on the nature of mystery itself. The materials we will use here will be newspaper accounts, official police records, letters purported to be written by the murderer himself, as well as crime scene photos. Students will have the case described to them over the course of the two week unit; together we will form a dossier on the case including information on our favorite suspects.

The Game Is Afoot!

I want to briefly explain here the overall flow of the two-week unit, and offer some method to my madness. We will be working under the assumption that at the outset of the unit, all students will have read the novel and have engaged in preliminary discussion of the novel on the previous two class days. Each day the class will examine one or two aspects of the Victorian underworld in London, connecting it to our understanding of the novel. As we progress through the unit, students will be asked to interact with the materials in various ways that will (hopefully) make the connection to the literature more compelling. I want to move from crimes and conditions into social and economic boundaries so that we can make some sense of the world Dickens is describing. The final part of this aspect of class will be to draw some conclusions about literary geography (exploring the major role of place in the literature). Threaded through the two-week unit will be an exploration of Victorian England's most famous

true-crime case (and unsolved mystery), the Whitechapel Murders. Here we will tie this exploration to our study of the Drood case, applying our knowledge of Victorian detection to Dickens' novel. The following section will describe the unit in detail.

Brief Lesson Plans for a Two-week Unit on the Victorian Underworld of Dickens' London

Week 1

Monday

Opener: Read newspaper account of the first Whitechapel murder from *The Times*.

•Students encouraged to take notes on the case as it unfolds.

•Include visual of morgue photo of Polly Nichols (victim #1)

•Introduce the idea of this as a case-building project over the course of two weeks.

Class project: Gustave Doré and artistic depictions of outcast London - Analysis

Purpose: To give students a chance to "read" a piece of art and offer commentary and critique. To help students learn to look at art as a medium for social commentary.

As a class, look at Doré's engraving of the opium den from *Drood*. Compare to Dickens' depiction.

Assignment: Students will choose a piece of art by Doré depicting outcast London. In class we will look at supplemen-

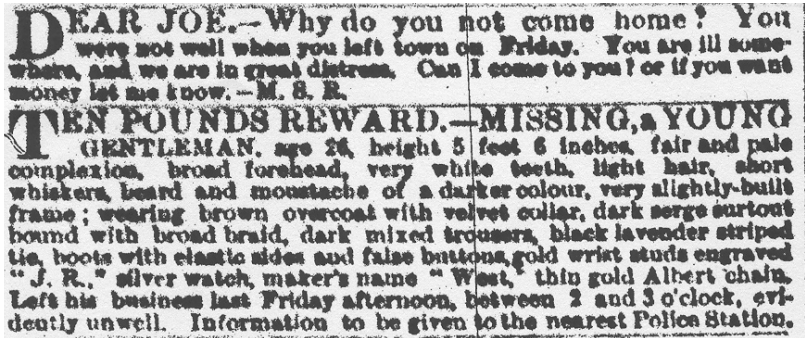
tary texts as well as the Jerrold texts (which accompany Doré's engravings) to determine if the work accurately depicts Victorian London. Students will take images with them overnight and compose a one-page analysis of the painting. In this analysis students will provide answers to the following questions: What aspect of London life does Doré depict? How does he depict it? What role do light and dark play in these pieces? Is there any symbolic meaning expressed? Based on your research, does it accurately portray a cross-section of London life? Compare/contrast to Dickens' written descriptions of London's East End. Is Doré making any social statement? What is it? How successful is the statement in this medium? Due Tuesday.

Tuesday

Collect analyses of Doré engravings.

Opener: Second Whitechapel murder. Read account of official inquest, providing any visual clues that help our understanding. Students again take notes.

Activity: Creative writing project. Using the personal section of *The Times*, students will choose a notice, such as this one from December 25, 1868:



DEAR JOE.—Why do you not come home? You were not well when you left town on Friday. You are ill somewhere, and we are in great distress. Can I come to you? or if you want money let me know.—M. S. R.

TEN POUNDS REWARD.—MISSING, a YOUNG GENTLEMAN, age 26, height 5 feet 6 inches, fair and pale complexion, broad forehead, very white teeth, light hair, short whiskers, beard and moustache of a darker colour, very slightly-built frame; wearing brown overcoat with velvet collar, dark serge surtout bound with broad braid, dark mixed trousers, black lavender striped tie, boots with elastic sides and false buttons, gold wrist studs engraved "J. R.," silver watch, maker's name "West," thin gold Albert chain. Left his business last Friday afternoon, between 2 and 3 o'clock, evidently unwell. Information to be given to the nearest Police Station.

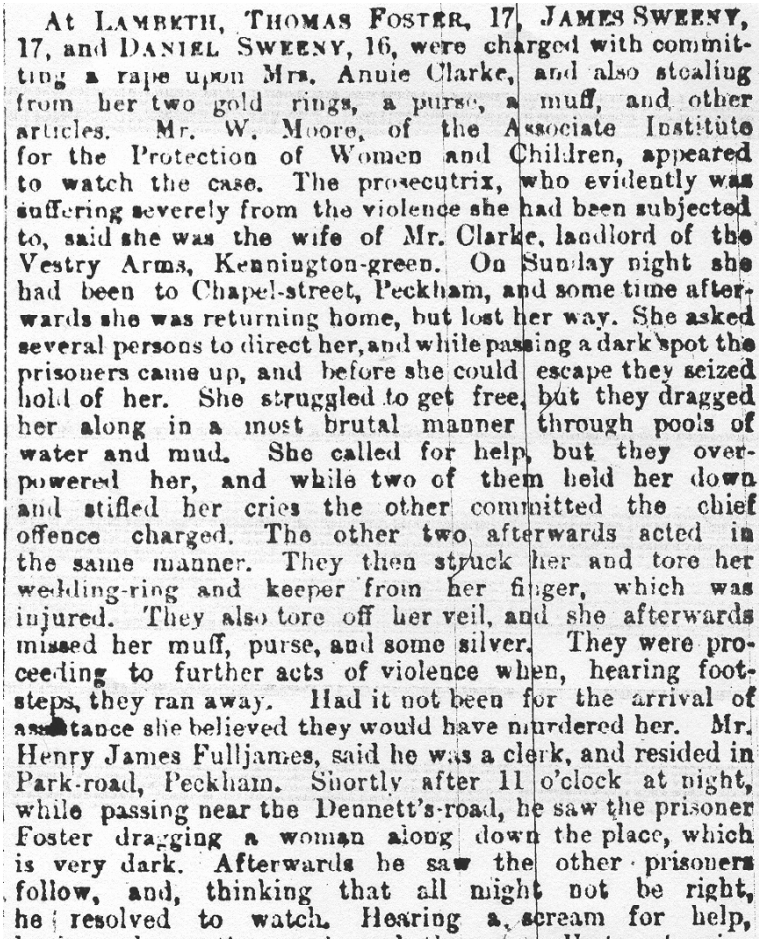
Students will create a short story that they develop out of the bare details of the ad. Students will "research" their mystery in order to provide verisimilitude to the story. In addition, students will choose one aspect of the Victorian underworld - such as prostitution or petty theft - from one of our classroom sources (Mayhew, et.al.), and become an expert on the subject. They must incorporate this element into the plot of their story. The story may be a short mystery, a character sketch, or a fictitious news account of a criminal event. The paper must be at least three pages long, and is due on Monday of the second week of the unit.

Class discussion: Discuss the facts of the disappearance of Edwin Drood.

In class project: Groups write a personal ad for *The Times* in the voice of Jasper, seeking information on Edwin Drood. The ad must include any clues (i.e. objects Drood was carrying on him at the time) that might help identify him, as well as where he was last seen.

Wednesday

Opener: News account of a double event – two murders in the East End in the course of one night. Students keep notes of the facts of each murder. Exploration of conflicting accounts.



At LAMBETH, THOMAS FOSTER, 17, JAMES SWEENY, 17, and DANIEL SWEENY, 16, were charged with committing a rape upon Mrs. Annie Clarke, and also stealing from her two gold rings, a purse, a muff, and other articles. Mr. W. Moore, of the Associate Institute for the Protection of Women and Children, appeared to watch the case. The prosecutrix, who evidently was suffering severely from the violence she had been subjected to, said she was the wife of Mr. Clarke, landlord of the Vestry Arms, Kennington-green. On Sunday night she had been to Chapel-street, Peckham, and some time afterwards she was returning home, but lost her way. She asked several persons to direct her, and while passing a dark spot the prisoners came up, and before she could escape they seized hold of her. She struggled to get free, but they dragged her along in a most brutal manner through pools of water and mud. She called for help, but they overpowered her, and while two of them held her down and stifled her cries the other committed the chief offence charged. The other two afterwards acted in the same manner. They then struck her and tore her wedding-ring and keeper from her finger, which was injured. They also tore off her veil, and she afterwards missed her muff, purse, and some silver. They were proceeding to further acts of violence when, hearing footsteps, they ran away. Had it not been for the arrival of assistance she believed they would have murdered her. Mr. Henry James Fulljames, said he was a clerk, and resided in Park-road, Peckham. Shortly after 11 o'clock at night, while passing near the Dennett's-road, he saw the prisoner Foster dragging a woman along down the place, which is very dark. Afterwards he saw the other prisoners follow, and, thinking that all might not be right, he resolved to watch. Hearing a scream for help,

In class project: Examination of criminal behavior in accounts from *The Times*. Using excerpts from the court circular section of *The Times*, students will examine different aspects and types of Victorian crimes contemporary to the time that Dickens was writing *Edwin Drood*. Students will begin to examine London locations and their relationship to crime. In addition, we will use computer and paper sources to find out as much information about these crimes as possible. We will attempt to find out if any patterns emerge in our study.

Thursday

Opener: Description of the inquest of the fifth and final Whitechapel murder. Students will take notes and we will discuss the crimes as a progression and see if there is any correlation to an increase in the crime rate in London. How might this series of murders represent London at its worst? How do we reconcile it to the accomplishments and cultural advances in other aspects of Victorian society?

Class discussion: Suspects. We will examine the characters in *Edwin Drood* and develop a list of suspects, looking for motive and opportunity as we do so. Students must cite textual material in their defense of one particular suspect.

Workshop: Students will work in pairs on drafts of their creative writing piece. I will circulate and work with them as well.

Week Two

Monday

Creative writing assignment due.

Opener: Letters from Hell. Examine three significant letters purporting to be written by the Whitechapel murderer. What clues can we glean from them?

In class project: Maps. Maps can tell us a great deal about society, economics, crime, and culture. Using maps of Victorian London and Rochester, we will map Jasper's

journey to London, pin-pointing areas of interest along the way. Students will try and locate the Lascar's opium den in London's East End, as well as areas of interest in Rochester. In addition we will map out the boundaries of crime in the big city.

Lecture: Literary geography. Discuss Joyce's exploration of the importance of place in fiction.

Group discussion: How does Jasper's physical journey mirror his interior journey?

Tuesday

Presentation of creative writing stories. Students will summarize the plots of their stories, share a portion that they are most pleased with, and discuss their area of expertise on Victorian London. Whole hour.

Wrap up: Discuss Dickens' writing process and compare to students' own approach to fiction.

Wednesday

Opener: I will outline for the class three to four major suspects in the Whitechapel case.

Group work: Each group will take one Whitechapel suspect and read through material provided.

Whole group debate: Each group will have a chance to give evidence tying their suspect to the crimes. As a class we will try and determine which (if any) is the most likely suspect.

Discussion of crime in general. Tie in to Dickens' exploration of criminal behavior in his last novel. Is it significant that

his final novel is a murder mystery? How so?

Assignment: For class tomorrow, create an outline that attempts to finish Dickens' novel. Offer the class your theory as to the solution to the mystery of Edwin Drood's disappearance. Each solution must be supported by evidence from the novel as well as contemporary understanding of the culture at this time (i.e. it must be within the realm of the possible).

Thursday

Solutions: Each student will present his or her solution to the mystery of Edwin Drood. As a class we will vote on the solution we think is the best, or formulate a new solution based on the suggestions from the presentations.

Lecture/Discussion: We will wrap up our discussion by examining the nature of mystery in this novel. How does the lack of an ending play on our imaginations? How does our deepened understanding of the Victorian underworld help us to make sense of the novel? How does Dickens explore the underbelly of his culture in the novel?

The Solution

I look now at this unit, developed months ago, and cannot help but smile a bit at the over-ambitiousness of it. In many ways it reads exactly as I composed it – it is idealistic, rigorous, and its success is somewhat dependent on the class into which it is incorporated. Yet the thought of teaching it one day still excites me. I look at this unit as a representation of possibility, both for me and for my students. In the end, I am less concerned with whether my students emerge from *Edwin Drood* with the skills to interpret a piece of art, or understand geographic symbolism, but rather I am much more interested in their experience – using these ma-

terials – interacting with text, exploring, figuring out, thinking.

I also hope that there is another teacher or two out there interested enough (or overly idealistic enough) to implement, adapt, or steal from this unit for their own classrooms – teachers who don't mind jumping in headlong into the depths of possibility, who gushingly model engagement with a body of texts, who are willing to share their own peculiar literary passions with their students with the very insistent belief that they are activating their students' imaginations and critical thinking skills.

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Firebirds and Ice Queens: A Teaching Unit on Russian Music

Chad J. Kuyper

The expectant silence of an orchestra hall. The commanding tap of a conductor's bow on his metal stand. The clean hum of a rosined bow on catgut. These sounds, so infused with excitement and emotion for lovers of classical music, strike the ears of most middle and high schoolers as dreary and uninteresting, inciting memories of being bored at Grandpa's house as he listened to his scratchy Beethoven LPs. Unfortunately, many school administrators share this glum view of classical music and the humanities in general; a course devoted solely to the study of art, literature, and music is a scarce find in any public high school. I know studies have been done on the inherent value of a humanities curriculum, on how after-school music programs decrease juvenile delinquency, and so on. But the best evidence I know for the value of classical music comes from my own life.

When I was in sixth grade, my mother's cousin gave our family their rickety, wooden upright piano completely free, under the condition that my father would fix it up and that my sister and I would learn to play it. My parents instantly accepted. My father refinished the old instrument beautifully, and my mother enrolled us in lessons with the local, beehive-haired church organist. I started my lessons with the usual mix of interest in learning something new and boredom with the drudg-

ery of practice. However, once my fingers started to master the scales and stopped stumbling through the short pieces my teacher provided me, my passing interest in piano music slowly grew into a hobby, which in turn grew into a passion. My teacher enrolled me in regional competitions and, to my adolescent disbelief, I did well. I eventually performed an hour-long solo concert for my Honors capstone project in college. For me, the study of piano transformed from an escape from algebra homework into a deeply fulfilling activity I still cherish today.

When a teacher taps into passion from his or her personal life, he or she makes thrilling teaching possible. Passion is useless, however, without sound methodology. In the humanities classes I've been privileged to teach at college, I've always sought to share my love of classical music with students, to varying degrees of success. First, I've chosen music that I find inherently interesting. All throughout my piano training, I always gravitated to the Russians, to the composers whose names end in *–off*: Gretchaninoff, Rebikoff, and later Rachmaninoff. There was something about Russian music that was different than the others. I couldn't quite put a finger on it; its rhythms were more interesting, the harmonies were more expressive, and the whole flavor was just a bit more fiery than the others. However, while my pulse quickens listening to the finale of Prokofiev's second piano sonata in class, I often note some students staring out the window, gnawing on their pencil erasers, undoubtedly making plans for the evening. Instances of boredom decrease, I've found, when students are told *how* to listen to this music. Just as I must often be told what to look for when staring at a Rembrandt or a Monet, it is my job to equip students with the handholds necessary to appreciate this music.

To that end, I present an outline of a teaching unit on Russian music that I would teach to a high school humanities course, most likely for upperclassmen. I imagine the audience for this course would be an interesting mix. First, a focused humanities course would never be a required course offering in a public school, so the students who register for this course would be learners with a strong interest in the world of humanities.

Second, the learner population would certainly be a mix of musical backgrounds. I imagine there would be several students in the class with a strong musical upbringing, who would be capable of talking about the musical selections using advanced musicological parlance. However, the bulk of the class would be comprised of students who have a passing interest in classical music in general, but do not have the experience necessary to talk about the pieces in advanced terms. As such, the learner outcomes (at least, on a very general level) would be twofold. By the end of the course, the students would be able to appreciate and discuss classical music in general using more sophisticated terms, and be able to describe the distinguishing characteristics of the major composers discussed in the course.

I will outline the major divisions of the unit, the learner outcomes for each division, the course content to be transmitted, and some sample activities. In many of these activities, I will attempt to draw parallels between Russian classical music and contemporary popular music (and there *are* parallels!). Any opportunity for students to see the how music of a century ago influenced what is popular today makes the study of humanities that much more worthwhile. In each unit, I would occasionally ask the students to bring something to discussion in the form of a one-and-a-half to two-page research paper. I will provide possible topics for the students to research for this paper and bring to class. Some units will also focus on one composer. Such units will feature a central work by this composer; I have chosen such works not only because they are indicative of that composer's style, but also simply because they are well-known. I think it would be valuable for my students to come away from my class being able to "talk shop" about the well-known names of classical music. Finally, I've chosen these selections simply for the fact that they are exciting pieces of music. As motivated as they may be, my students *are* still high schoolers, and consideration for their attention threshold must be paid. After all, I'm happy enough they're taking my class; the last thing I want to do is bore them out of it.

Unit 1: Romantic Music 101

Outcomes

- Students will be able to identify the various instruments in an orchestra.

- Students will be able to define the differences between Romantic music and the music of the time periods before it (Classical, Baroque, etc.).

Music: *Brandenburg Concerto*, J.S. Bach; various two- and three-part inventions, Bach; "Rage over the Lost Penny," L.V. Beethoven; Piano Sonata No. 1, Beethoven; *Sleeping Beauty*, P.I. Tchaikovsky.

Content: The aesthetic by which Baroque music must be appreciated is based on structure. The more melodically complex a piece of music, the more beautiful it is (at least by Baroque standards). As such, there is a great emphasis on counterpoint in this style of music—that is, two or three or four melodies all playing at once, overlapping and harmonizing with each other. Classical music ("Classical" here meaning the era of Beethoven and Handel) retains this idea of structure with the advent of the sonata, a highly structured form to which the melodies and harmonic development of the piece must adhere. Introducing this material shows what Romantic music is by first showing what it is not. While Romantic music certainly adheres to certain forms, the emphasis in Romanticism is on the portrayal of an emotion, rather than adherence to a prescribed format. I've chosen the *Brandenburg Concerto* and the *Inventions* as exemplars of the Baroque era for their emphasis on structure and successful marriage of many melodies. Sonata No. 1

by Beethoven is the best example I could find of "sonata-allegro" form, a strict Classical structure (the first melody appears in a certain key, is repeated once, then a second melody appears in the key five notes away from the original one, etc.). Tchaikovsky's *Sleeping Beauty* is an enjoyable contrast between the Baroque and Classical works simply because it clearly focuses on pulling the heartstrings instead of putting forth an impressive structure.

Research Topics: The life of Bach, Beethoven, Tchaikovsky; Sonata-allegro form (very important).

Activities:

•Listen to the *Inventions* at home, then *Sleeping Beauty*. Without analyzing too deeply the use of various instruments, simply relate how the works made you feel. Did one stir you more than the other? Why or why not?

•Bring in a work of literature that adheres strictly to a form (Shakespearean sonnet, Greek tragedy, etc.). Analyze how well it sticks to that format. In your opinion, does the fact that it obeys a certain form make it a better piece of literature? Are you more moved by it? Explain your reactions.

•Bring in a popular piece of music that uses two melodies on top of each other, much like Bach did in his Inventions. It can be anything: the Beatles, Led Zeppelin, Incubus, whatever. We'll listen to it in class, and it's up to you to explain how the melodies work together.

Unit 2: Tchaikovsky, or Bring Down The House

Outcomes

•Students will be able to identify the music of Tchaikovsky by

what makes it distinctly "Tchaikovskyan."

•Students will be able to identify Tchaikovsky's music as distinctly "romantic."

Music: Piano Concerto No. 1 in B-flat minor, *Romeo and Juliet, Eugene Onegin.*

Research Topics: The Petersburg conservatory, Tchaikovsky's bizarre marriage, his relationship to his teacher Nicholas Rubinstein.

Content: Tchaikovsky is the composer most noted for his sense of "pull-out-all-the-stops" Romanticism, a quality I feel is best exemplified by the *Sleeping Beauty* selection covered in the preceding unit, and by his first piano concerto. Some find his style moving, while others find it too obvious and forced; it would be interesting to see which side my students fall on.

Activities:

•Research what a concerto is. What different types are there?

•Listen to the piano concerto. First, how does the piano interact with the orchestra? Do the piano and orchestra take turns playing? Do they play together? How well do they play together? Second, what do you think of his style? Grandiose and moving? Overdone? Tell me briefly why.

•Read portions of Pushkin's *Eugene Onegin* and relate them to Tchaikovsky's opera. (I will have divided Pushkin's work up among groups.) What part of the story is being portrayed in the opera version?

•Bring in a piece of modern popular music that you feel "goes for broke" with emotion. I'm thinking of harder rock

(metal), or pop songs that really pull the heartstrings. Is this effective music to you? What do you like or not like about it?

Unit 3: Rachmaninoff

Outcomes

- Students will be able to see the stylistic departure of Rachmaninoff's music from Tchaikovsky's.

- Students will be able to analyze music on a more complex level.

Music: Piano Concerti Nos. 2 and 3, literature for four hands, *Etudes-Tableaux*.

Research Topics: His musical background, the failure of his *First Symphony*, his relationship with his teacher Sverev, the *Third Piano Concerto*, his huge hands (how big were they, anyway?).

Content: With Rachmaninoff, one can sense a departure from Tchaikovsky's music. Rachmaninoff employs a much more subtle touch to much of his music. Though he certainly has a flair for the dramatic (as can be heard in his *Third Concerto*), Rachmaninoff's strength is the simplicity of his melodies. It is this simplicity that differentiates him from Tchaikovsky, and the opening bars of the second piano concerto illustrate this nicely. Also, some of Rachmaninoff's music is meant to evoke a visual image, which causes some to place him within the "impressionist" composers as well.

Activities:

- Since some of the *Etudes-Tableaux* were inspired by paintings by Böcklin, find some of his work. Which paintings do

you think inspired the music?

•Bring in any visual work you think could have inspired an *Etude-Tableau*. What qualities of the work are portrayed in the music?

•Listen to the *Variations on A Russian Folk Song for Four Hands*. How many times can you hear the original melody played again? How does Rachmaninoff vary the melody? On what registers of the piano can you hear the principal melody?

Unit 4: While We're Talking About Russian Folk Music…

Outcomes

•Students will be able to identify the musical devices that make this folk music distinctly Russian.

•Students will see the musical techniques that Russian folk music shares with other musical forms.

Music: various Russian folk tunes, Gregorian chant, Asian folk music.

Research Topics: Modes vs. Scales.

Content: Russian music is often based on "modes" instead of the traditional "keys" on which most classical music is based (A minor, C major, etc.). These modes (Lydian, Dorian, Aeolian, etc.) are also utilized in Gregorian chant. The pentatonic scale, a scale based on five notes instead of the traditional seven, often appears in Russian folk music as well. This scale, which often appears in traditional Asian music, corresponds to the black keys on the piano, which is why playing on just the black keys gives a distinctly Asian sound to the music.

Activities:

•Find some traditional Russian folk music. React to it briefly. Does it sound like anything else you may have heard?

Unit 5: Stravinsky and His Firebird (Not The Car)

Outcomes

• Students will be able to see the role that a traditional Russian folk tale plays in Stravinsky's suite.

• Students will be able to analyze on a yet more complex level the musical structure of *The Firebird Suite*.

Music: *The Firebird Suite*.

Research Topics: the tale itself, Diaghilev and Les Ballets Russes, Michel Fokine, his friendship with fellow composer Alexander Tcherepnin.

Content: Stravinsky utilizes a variety of tricks in his bag as a composer to create the images in *The Firebird*. From the dark and ominous opening bars, to the trills and ornaments that depict the graceful fluttering of the firebird's wings, to the heavy pounding chords that signify the ogre's arrival, *The Firebird* is a wide-ranging piece that will hopefully fascinate the students. I've chosen this one as opposed to *Petrouchka* or *The Rite of Spring* because of its accessibility. As much as I enjoy the avant-garde sounds of these works, I want to maintain the interest of my students without hearing "Well, it all just sounds like a bunch of loud, random noises to me."

Activities:

• Find and read a variation of the Firebird folk tale. How do the features of the story show up in the work? What instruments does Stravinsky use to portray certain elements of the story? Focus on specific kinds of instruments (brass, percussion, winds, etc.).

Unit 6: A Few Others – Prokofiev, Shostakovich, Scriabin

Outcomes

•Students will be able to hear the difference between these composers' music and that of the composers from the units before.

• Students will be able to offer a sophisticated analysis of one musical selection.

Music: Piano Concerto No. 2, Shostakovich; *Romeo and Juliet,* Prokofiev; Piano Prelude in E-flat Minor, Op. 11, No. 14, Scriabin.

Research Topics: the life of each of the composers, what makes each of their music distinct.

Content: For this unit, I would split the class into three, and each group would be responsible for presenting its composer to the rest of the class. I would create the groups, attempting to place a variety of skill levels into each group. Each group would be responsible for some biographical information on its composer, identification of its composer's contemporaries, how the composer's music differs from said contemporaries, and an analysis of one of the composer's works, not necessarily limited to those above. I chose these works because they lend themselves well to analysis and comparison (e.g., the

Prokofiev group could compare his *Romeo and Juliet* to Tchaikovsky's, etc.).

Final Projects

- Analyze a work by a composer not covered here (Rimsky-Korsakov, Balakirev, Dagormyzhksy, Tcherepnin, etc.). Present it to the class by comparing it to a work we did cover. How do the works differ? How are they the same?

- Much Russian music creates a visual image in the mind of the reader. Put this image on a canvas. Create a painting, drawing, or other visual medium that re-creates what is portrayed in any work that we covered in class.

- Make a movie based on a Russian folk tale, and incorporate a musical selection into the soundtrack. Re-enact Rimsky-Korsakov's *The Snow Maiden*! Stravinsky's *Firebird*! Find one we didn't cover, perhaps!

An ambitious curriculum, to be sure. The success or failure of the unit will depend in large part on the instructor and the make-up of the students in the classroom. However, the potential positive outcomes for the student are numerous, and exist on a variety of levels. In the sunniest of all my teacher fantasies, students would come away with a profound understanding of Russian music, find themselves thrilled by its passion and complexity, and rush in a joyous throng to the nearest orchestra hall to purchase season subscriptions. Even on a more realistic level, though, students can come away from this unit with a better understanding of the creative forces that helped shape the music they listen to now. The simple study of classical music, Russian or no, also helps students to listen with more attention, to increase their listening attention span, a trait desired by teachers in many disciplines. And for the teacher (this teacher, anyway), the unit offers the opportunity to employ truly passionate

pedagogy. I encourage teachers to take liberally from this curriculum what they find useful, or use its basic structure to create a plan for teaching something that ignites their own passions, that fills their own classroom with the fire of brilliant teaching.

Wrestling With My Book Club Paradigm

Judith E. Landrum

A few years ago at an NCTE Conference, Lucy Calkins delivered a talk on students' response to literature, suggesting that we need to engage students in experiences that parallel adult reading experiences. She said, "When I'm curled up in bed and I finish a good book, I don't lean over to my husband and say, 'Please pass me the shoe box, scissors, and tape so I can do a diorama.'"

As a college teacher, I love Calkins' idea that we should try to give students a literary venue that simulates in ways similar to that of adult readers. Book clubs may be the medium. In every class in which I can moderately justify book clubs--writing, young adult literature, and, of course, literature--my students read and respond to at least one book in small groups. My definition of book clubs follows Daniels' definition of literature circles:

> Small, peer-led discussion groups whose members have chosen to read the same story, poem, article, or book. While reading each group-assigned portion of the text (either in or outside of class), members make notes to help them contribute to the upcoming discussion, and everyone comes to the group with ideas to share (2).

As Daniels suggests, I give students choices; they pick a book or negotiate a book choice with friends. This part always works well. It's the response part, the *talking about the books like adults*, that I wrestle with. In any discussion of literature (including non-fiction) I want two things to occur: first, for students to engage personally with the text, to connect it to their lives, and to feel motivated to continue reading the author or genre; second, through the process of reading, writing, and/or discussing a text, for students to think profoundly--beyond the surface or literal level of a text so that they better understand themselves and others. Regardless of how lively a given whole class discussion may become, I always feel part of the affective domain of reading suffers. On the other hand, during the best of book club discussions, I always feel part of the cognitive domain of learning loses. Therefore, the purpose of this text is to begin drawing some conclusions from my wrestling with book clubs to determine whether or not they should be a part of the classroom, especially at the college level.

Unlike most articles, this one is refining a paradigm rather than defining one. For a process to refine my book club paradigm, I refer to a case study of nine student teachers in which Newell, Gringrich, and Johnson identified three patterns of teaching English: procedural display, routine, and reflective practice. In the *procedural display* pattern, student teachers use the "surface features" of a theory, but they really don't/can't "implement such a theory in practice" (Newell, Gringrich, and Johnson 308-9). In the *routine* pattern, student teachers teach the same way that they were taught, or they teach the same way their cooperating teacher does; in both *routines*, theory and success are often ignored. In the *reflective practice* pattern, student teachers use theory to make and to modify their "instructional decisions"; it is a constant synthesis of theory and practice (Newell, Gringrich, and Johnson 302). Newell, Gringrich, and Johnson conclude that the third pattern, *reflective practice*, is the most successful.

My hypothesis is that, as veteran teachers, our instructional practices regarding students' response to literature also fall into these three categories. So if we want a book club to

work, we have to base its design on some of the related theory about reading and responding to literature. Then, we must engage in *reflective practice* by cultivating the parts of theory that work and weeding out the parts that don't work.

Far too much theory and research has been published on reading and book clubs to discuss or even to outline all of them in a single text. I use the following when designing my book clubs for college students.

Literature circles change students' attitudes toward reading. Unfortunately, unmotivated readers see reading as "something done solely for learning purposes" and unrelated to their lives (Williams 589). On the other hand, letting students choose what they read engages them in reading and motivates them to read (Atwell 31). Plus, "Tutors in the Literacy Project consistently reported that children wanted to take home books discussed by others in the group" (Leslie & Allen 421). The next step, peer conversations about books, correlates to a positive attitude toward reading as well as reading improvement and empowers students by giving them choice and a venue for expression (Manning & Manning 380; Van Horn 753). And, if nothing else, students need social reading experiences with peers and teachers just to enjoy reading and see it as something beyond the classroom (Ivey 375).

Also, book clubs lend themselves to reader response theory since they focus on the reader making meaning from reading a text, rather than the reader making meaning through connecting the text with the author's life. Furthermore, multiple valid meanings can be present in the same text, rather than one valid interpretation exclusively inside the text (Beach 156). According to Rosenblatt, "The creation of a setting for personal response is basic.... The youth needs to be given the opportunity and the courage to approach literature personally, to let it mean something to him directly" (78, 66). This approach to understanding literature encourages different interpretations by students within a book club.

Along with these affective domain objectives, book clubs also can meet cognitive domain objectives. For example, the standards for English language arts, created collaboratively by IRA and NCTE, endorse opportunities for students to choose,

read, and discuss literature together (25). The National Assessment of Educational Progress (NAEP) results state that there is a positive correlation between students (grades 8 and 12) who are asked to explain their understanding and/or interpretation of a text weekly or more often and student reading performance (United States 15). Additionally, "students who reported reading eleven or more pages each day for school and for homework had higher average reading scores than students who reported reading 10 or fewer pages each day" (United States 88). Finally, small groups operate best when students are accountable for their work (Johnson, Johnson, & Holubec 26). The combination of these studies implies that book clubs can enhance students' reading and writing skills, especially if they are required to do some writing about their reading. In addition, some sort of student preparation prior to the book club should increase student learning.

Reflective Practice and Book Clubs

As veteran teachers, one of the first things we do after planning a lesson or an activity like book clubs is to think about all the things that can go wrong with it. At the college level, I see three potential problems. First, students nod and smile in their groups, but don't read the book, or they only read part of the book, and so there needs to be some sort of an accountability measure. Second, if the accountability instrument is too extensive, book clubs become another academic assignment, unrelated to students' lives. Finally, students may only do a surface level discussion of the book and miss some of the subtle nuances of a text or miss some connections between themes, ideas, and so forth.

Thus far, I have tried two book club models, briefly described below. In each model, I tried to create a design which would circumvent the *potential problems*. Philosophically, I prefer the open-ended model; experience and theory, however, have convinced me that the role-assigned model is the better of the two. That much of the paradigm has been solidified. Even though I have used the same approach in very different classes with very different genres,

the success and the student feedback are similar in each class.

The first book club design was completely open-ended. After a book talk on possible book choices, students were divided into groups of three to five students. Most groups were formed because students wanted to read the same book; some were formed because friends wanted to be together, and then they picked a book. I gave students specific days to discuss the book in class and a book completion date, but they determined the number of pages for the days in class when they discussed the book. As facilitator, I wandered around the room, joining each group for a few minutes as students talked about books. Students were not given any other guidance or rules for their discussion. At the end of the discussion time, each group gave the class an informal, one or two minute oral summary of their discussion. In writing classes, the final accountability measure was a collaboratively written book review; in literature classes, sometimes the final accountability measure was a book review, or a short literary analysis paper.

Similar to the open-ended model, students picked their groups, books, and reading deadlines after a book talk for the assigned roles model. Borrowing from the process used in many elementary classrooms (Goatley; McMahon; Pardo), each student took a specific role during the book club discussion, such as leader, historian, wordsmith and so forth. (Role titles and descriptions were modified to better fit college students (see appendix). Group members decided who took which role for each discussion, and they used a grid to keep track of their responsibilities. On discussion days, students prepared their duties prior to class and played their role during book club discussion. At the start of each book club discussion, I suggested that the groups use the data they prepared only as a springboard for discussion, not a guideline for discussion.

Findings

As mentioned earlier, reflective practice includes two parts of curriculum design: first, basing instructional practices on theory or empirical data; second, weighing its suc-

cess in the classroom and making it fit a particular group of students. The findings listed below are standard reactions from my students when I ask them about book club discussions. My analysis appears after the list of student responses.

1. I feel accountable when I have to talk about a book in a group of 2-3 people. If I haven't read it, it's obvious to them, and I feel like a jerk.

2. Sometimes with the assigned role stuff, we start with it, then put it aside and just talk.

3. We really didn't use the stuff we prepared; we just talked about the books.

4. [After doing book clubs] I enjoy reading books more now, because it is for fun, not just for class.

5. [To another group] Is _____ worth reading?

6. I can fill out the assigned role stuff without reading the whole text.

7. The assigned roles are like any other assignment. We get in our group, and each person takes a turn and reads what he/she prepared.

8. Can we read another one?

My perception is that when students get into small groups and chat with no direction, the results are mixed. Some groups get into a deep discussion and ask me questions for clarification. Some talk, but only about the surface of a text. Some never get to the book. One group of women confessed to me after a book club discussion that they never got to the book because they were talking about *boobs*. As a result, for the past few years, I've followed the "assigned roles model' instead of the open-ended model. Despite this, book clubs remain on my syllabi

semester after semester because when given a choice for a book, students sit up straight and appear to get excited about the book they pick to read. In addition, some students read an extra book because another book club liked it, and it sounded good. Like most cooperative or collaborative learning activities, it increases the amount of student participation. But I struggle with the lack of depth during a book club discussion. They may dip beneath the surface-level of meaning, but rarely, if ever, does any group achieve the depth that we reach during a whole-class discussion.

Discussion

After rereading and revising this text numerous times, it became clear that I am wrestling as much or more with *my* goals for book clubs as with synthesizing theory and practice. That's why the "response part" not only didn't work, but couldn't work. As stated earlier, my goal for any literary discussion is for students to respond to literature like adults. Then, as they talk about their reading, they will glean new, profound insights about themselves and others; these experiences will convince them to read stimulating literature frequently. That, I realized, was my mistake. That's not always how adults informally respond to literature.

For example, my best friend, Joyce, is a poet and a voracious reader. Occasionally, we read the same book, and we'll casually talk about it. We talk about the parts we liked, hated, and laughed at. We compare a book to other similar books and discuss its strengths and weaknesses; occasionally, we may discuss themes, archetypes and symbols and other nuances, but usually we don't. It's mostly "the good parts." Besides that, talk about books seems to come up casually in conversations, and occasionally with depth. Years ago, before book clubs were in vogue and I had more time and no children, I belonged to faculty book clubs, and they ran pretty much the same way as my casual conversations with Joyce. When Joyce and I—adults—respond verbally to literature, we don't always reveal new, profound insights that might have come to us as we read. But we are sharing with each other how passionately we care about books,

and giving each other suggestions for further reading, and sharing insights, all of which our students do. I also think we respond deeply on a personal level to books, but don't or can't always verbalize this in a casual conversation. Nonetheless, our discussions, however casual, underscore our love of books and our determination to keep reading stimulating literature.

Students do emulate adult book clubs and adult response to literature, which means their talk vacillates between the text, their experiences, their fears, and even their "boobs." It can and usually does have less of an academic nuance than a typical literature discussion because book clubs better imitate an adult discussion of literature. Furthermore, students have more opportunity to engage and discuss in a small group than they do in a whole class discussion. Most importantly, I believe they respond to literature on a more personal level.

Conclusion

Lucy Calkins scoffed at the idea and value of dioramas because they are an inauthentic response to and assessment of literature, and I agree with her. But in the fourth grade, my daughter loved to make dioramas, and they enhanced her interaction with literature. My son hated dioramas, but he would interrupt me any time, day or night, to read to me "the good parts" of his current book. As a classroom teacher, I am searching for ways to get my students to enjoy responding to literature, become lifetime readers, glean insight about themselves and others via literature, and enjoy reading. And if a diorama worked, I'd use it. But first I must determine what I want the diorama to accomplish and whether or not it can.

Writing this text has forced me to realize that when analyzing the *talking about books* part of book clubs,

> The teacher . . . . must be ready to face the fact that the student's reactions will inevitably be in terms of his own temperament and background. Undoubtedly,

> these may often lead him to do injustice to the text. Nevertheless, the student's primary experience of the work will have had meaning for him in these personal terms and no others (Rosenblatt 51).

Each student does not engage in an in-depth discussion of literature with her/his peers during each meeting. But some do. Some who read the text wouldn't otherwise. Some volunteer information related to their lives and their reading that could not be shared in a whole group. Some push aside their "role assignments" and "talk" about the book. And some never do.

Writing this article has enabled me to analyze my purpose for a specific instructional practice and its validity: book clubs. Initially, I thought the *response part* of book clubs was ineffective; the real problem was that my expectations were unrealistic. I wanted book clubs to be the panacea for teaching literature, and they are not and probably never can be. Therefore, as teachers we need to continue scaffolding reading experiences for our students, including leading whole class discussion, asking provocative questions, and explaining literary nuances. On the other hand, book clubs do meet several key purposes in the teaching of literature. First, they simulate an authentic, adult-like setting for discussing literature, which even the finest teacher-centered, whole class discussions typically deny. Second, book clubs can provide the setting for an authentic, personal response to literature where multiple responses are not only accepted, but welcomed. Third, it's a setting in which the ethos becomes "get to read" rather than "have to read." In conclusion, we each need to continue wrestling with the purpose, the design, the success, and the amount of all literary experiences implemented into our classrooms--including book clubs.

Appendix: Book Club Meetings

Each member of your book club has an assigned role; each time you meet, have a different role. Come to class pre-

pared for your role; I will check your notes during book club. All notes must be typed. If this is a problem, see me today

If you want to earn bonus points for this class, you may do a separate book club outside of class. See me to set up due dates and additional book options. You may earn a maximum of 10 bonus points.

I. Historian/Predictor

1. Often in groups, certain people supply everyone else with background information or they contextualize the situation. That is your role.

2. Explain to the group five facts related to the subject at hand which you gleaned by doing a bit of research.

3.Often in groups, someone predicts what will happen if the group makes *X* choice or *Y* choice. Your role is to predict what will happen in the novel or what will happen to the characters after the end of the novel.

II. Analyst

1. As you read, pick out what you think are important events, symbols, patterns, and so forth.

2. List at least 5 items you think are important.

3. In a sentence or phrase, state the reason you think it is important.

III. Chairperson

1. Start and end book club meeting.

2. Watch the time and keep the group on task.

3.Summarize the text at the beginning of the meeting (written). Read to group and ask for alterations.

4. At the end of the meeting, list the key points discussed (written). Turn them in to the teacher.

IV. Critic

1. Your job is to make the members of this group (or any other) to think. You do this by asking intelligent questions.

2. Write 2-3 fact questions for the group, which you gen-

uinely want clarified, because you are unsure of the answer.

3. Write 2-3 open-ended questions, which you will ask the group during the meeting. My personal philosophy: the true sign of intelligence is the ability to ask good questions.

V. Applyer (required)

1. Often in groups, one person applies the theory or idea at hand.

2. List at least 10 things this novel suggests about adolescents and / or about education and adolescents.

VI. Wordsmith (We will not do this, but you use this one with students)

1. Find 5 words in the reading which you may or may not have heard before, but did not know the definition.
2. Write each word on a separate line and leave 2-3 lines between words.
3. Guess: In a sentence or so, write what you think the word means.
4. Dictionary: Find the definition in the dictionary; in a sentence, paraphrase the meaning of the word.

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Reading the World:
Supporting the Functional Literacy Abilities of Urban Learners

Dwight C. Watson

As a college professor of elementary education with a focus on literacy development, I was always interested in language acquisition and how young children begin to decode print. While on sabbatical as a literacy coach in an urban elementary school, I noticed that many of the primary grades (K-3) students lacked concepts of print skills such as letter identification, letter-sound relationships, and phonemic awareness. As a primary literacy coach, my role was to model literacy best practices in teachers' classrooms. Chomsky's studies on early childhood language development stated that children are programmed to learn language and that the environment serves as a catalyst for language development (25). As I attempted to engage the primary students in guided reading practices, I observed that the students' prerequisite language development was limited; therefore, I created various functional literacy activities that focused on environmental and contextualized experiences (Irvine & Armento 19). Many of these activities were augmented by the use of a digital camera that I purchased from grant funds I received from the Minnesota Council for Teachers of English.

According to Harris and Hodges, environmental print is defined as "print and other graphic symbols, in addition to books, that are found in the physical environment, as street

signs, billboards, television commercials, building signs [and so on] . . . Environmental print affords opportunities for learners in early phases of emerging literacy to discover and explore the nature of graphic symbols as conveyors of meaning, even when they are not able to read in the formal sense" (73). Environmental print that is specifically intended to convey reading is functional print, such as words on a cereal box, menus, and game directions. The reading of environmental and functional print enables a student to become functionally literate. A person who is functionally literate possesses the reading and writing knowledge and skills which enable him or her to navigate the print of his or her physical world (Heffernan & Lewison 437). Showcased in this article are two activities that were used in a second grade classroom to enhance the learner's functional literacy skills.

Concepts of Print

As primary students learn to decode words through phonemic and phonological awareness activities, they must also be exposed to authentic literature and taught explicitly concepts of print such as directionality, return sweep, use of punctuation, and the differentiation between letters, words, and sentences. According to Clay, "it is not self-evident to a child that left to right along a line, through a book, and across a word are related" (143). These primary students need ongoing practice with these print concepts. They need to not only use the print concepts when reading books and classroom materials, but also to transfer these concepts when

navigating their world and reading for functional purposes. To get students to make this transfer, I generated two opportunities for active engagement with print media beyond textbooks.

Environmental Walks

The school in which I did my sabbatical work was positioned in an ethnically- diverse commercial and residential neighborhood. I wanted my primary students to explore this set-

ting, so we took a walking field trip of the neighborhood similar to the walk outlined by Orellana and Hernandez (613). Before the field trip began, digital pictures were taken of various signs,

billboards, store windows, street posts, and other environmental print postings. These pictures were developed into a slide show and presented to the students as examples of functional reading. Students were asked to read the slides and describe where they might find such print and what was the purpose of the postings. For example, one picture was simply of the word "open" in neon. I asked students where this word would be posted and why it would be in bright lights called neon. The students responded and gave several examples of other neon signs they

had seen. They noted that neon was probably used to bring attention to or to emphasize the importance of a word or phrase.

The next day, the class was divided into groups and given specific scavenger hunt questions. As we walked through the neighborhood, they were asked to identify various environmental postings and to answer their scavenger hunt questions. One such scavenger hunt sheet consisted of the following questions:

- Can you find a dumpster with a caution sign on it? Why should you be cautious? What is the phone number written on it?

- Can you find a blue sign with the number "34" on it? What other words are on this sign? What is the meaning of this sign?

- Can you find a sign with red letters in the window of someone's house? What does this sign say and mean?

- Can you find a sign that says *Fahima Psychic Visions*? What are the business hours of this shop?

• Can you find a small blue box by someone's step that says *St. Paul* on it? What other words are on the box?

The students were excited about this opportunity to use their reading knowledge and apply it to real world settings. The slide show preview enabled them to readily identify the signs on their scavenger hunt sheets, and they were eager to use their pencils and clipboards like field researchers collecting data. The students were able to successfully complete the environmental print task and shared their discoveries with the rest of the class on our return to the classroom. Because many of the students lived in the neighborhood and walked to school, copies of the digital slides were sent home with a parent letter encouraging parents to walk with their children in the neighborhood and have their children identify and discuss some of the print media. The following is an excerpt from the letter that was sent to parents:

> Today, your child took part in a functional reading activity – a scavenger hunt. The purpose of this activity was to increase your child's awareness of reading environmental print. Environmental print

> is the reading of information from signs, billboards, shop windows, and street signs. With adult chaperones, we walked through the school's neighborhood and observed various reading-related print.
>
> We would like to encourage you to continue your child's reading and learning of environmental print. You can do this by asking your child to read and answer questions pertaining to environmental print in your neighborhood. I have enclosed a sample packet of some of the print your child encountered while on the scavenger hunt. You can enhance your child's reading skills by having him or her observe and read similar environmental print in your neighborhood.

This activity was effective because it underscored the importance of linking a school literacy instructional activity with out-of-school influences of urban commercial and residential environments. The effects of this activity were similar to those identified in Neuman and Roskos' article that showed an increase in children's ability to handle environmental and functional print tasks after being exposed to an environmental print-rich play setting (116). When given recipes, students were able to choose appropriate items for cooking play by reading labels, and they could follow directions of make-shift road signs when playing with cars and trucks. After reading this article, I wondered if my students could actually read product labels; therefore, I engaged them in another functional reading activity entitled grocery shopping.

Grocery Shopping

To set up this activity, I went to the store and purchased multiple sets of grocery items that I thought could be packed in a second grader's lunch bag such as juice boxes, pudding packs,

lunch packs (lunchables), string cheese singlets, and snack crackers. After purchasing the items, I brought them to class and presented my students with a real world problem or task. According to Jalongo and Miller, primary students need to apply their budding literacy skills to authentic tasks in order to fully comprehend the utility of their emerging literacy abilities (225, 11). The students' task was to pack an affordable and nutritious bag lunch. The students were to work in teams, read the labels to determine nutritional content, and then select items for their lunch that would have a total cost of no more than $3.00. The purpose of such an activity was to enhance students' functional reading skills by deciphering product labels and to encourage students' addition abilities by generating the sum value of the lunch. Because these items were not individually priced, this task was more difficult. In order to determine prices students had to divide the number of items in a package by the total cost of the package.

Students were given calculators and shown how to divide the bulk prices to determine individual item prices. They could not use the calculators to add the individual items. They had to create addition operations to generate the total price of the bag lunch. For instance, one group packed a lunch of two lunch packets, three puddings, and one juice box. When they added the amount, it was more than $3.00. They also realized they were choosing their lunch according to what they liked and not based on the established affordability and nutritional value criteria. Another group of students realized, when reading the nutritional content on the product labels, that the fruit and vegetable portion of a balanced diet was not available and suggested that the pudding packs be substituted with fruit cups. This activity enabled the students to make many critical discoveries about nutrition and the value of an affordable lunch. The students also learned functional literacy and mathematical skills which will enable them to better navigate their physical world.

After completing this in-class grocery shopping simulation, I scheduled a field trip to the grocery store. I wanted the students to experience the reality of shopping for a specific

purpose with a limited budget. The real-life, authentic task was to shop for a class party on a $50.00 budget. The students' first task was to generate a shopping list. The writing of the shopping list was a functional literacy skill. The students worked in small groups to list items and quantities. The groups shared their items and a composite list was created. The list was then subdivided, and each group of students was responsible for gathering the group's listed items during the grocery shopping trip.

The students went shopping in their groups with an adult chaperone. The students were told that they had a specific total price for their items and they had to stay within their groups' budget or the total party budget of $50.00 would be jeopardized. The grocery trip was a wonderful success. The students were very cognizant of their budgets and all items on the list were purchased for $47.93.

The students learned to shop for on-sale items and generic products as opposed to brand name products. They discovered that juices and sodas in volume sizes were less expensive than individually packaged products, but they had to factor into their budget cups and ice if they wanted the drinks cold. The students learned to compromise and negotiate as they decided on what type of cookies to buy and whether to sacrifice taste for affordability. As a teacher, I realized that these discoveries were priceless and the skills that were utilized could not be replicated as authentically in the classroom.

Conclusion

The urban learners in this second grade classroom were vibrant and engaged by the activities. They had energy, ideas, questions, and observations. Sometimes their energy was a distraction as I tried to teach them to read and write using traditional techniques. But as I discovered, this same distracting energy could be used as an asset if channeled in productive ways. These active, urban learners needed learning opportunities that were grounded in the reality of their experiences. The environmental print walk and the grocery shopping field trip were two such opportunities; with these experi-

ences, the students are now better able to navigate their world.

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Language! Curriculum Modification for a Small Non-Traditional School

Amy LaCross and Alice Rivard

American education today faces a failure of almost epidemic proportions. Record numbers of students are either illiterate or reading at grade levels significantly below their age groups. *Language!* is just one of the many literacy intervention curricula that have emerged in an effort to ameliorate a situation which, despite many schools' best efforts, continues to deteriorate at a frightening pace. Within the context of an educational system polarized by the Whole Language versus Code-Based Instruction debate, *Language!* offers an intriguing compromise between the two pedagogies. Even as explicit code-based phonological instruction acts as a central basis to the curriculum, *Language!* also incorporates creative writing, literature, and grammar.

Language! has been successful in the traditional public school setting, but what happens when this sequential, cumulatively organized curriculum is implemented within a non-traditional setting? How well adapted is this curriculum for older, under-prepared high school students with poor attendance and lives complicated by a variety of factors ranging from drug use, gangs, pregnancy, poverty, poor health or abuse? This article offers an examination of a case study of just such a school which, after having adopted the *Language!* curriculum, discovered the impracticality of implementing the curriculum as it is and successfully modified the curriculum

to meet the needs of a highly diverse, non-traditional setting.

Language! is a research-based curriculum, designed to "teach students all the essential skills of reading, language comprehension, and composition in a systematic, cumulative, sequential curriculum" (Moats xiii). Rather than presupposing student skills, the curriculum begins at the simplest level, that of the phoneme, and advances sequentially to word level, then sentence level and then text. Designed as a three-year program, it focuses on the structure of the English language, looking directly at the rules that govern orthography, phonology, and grammar in the hopes that a stronger understanding of the structure of English will afford greater comprehension and confidence, as well as increased fluency. A typical lesson can include segments on phonetics, orthography, vocabulary, reading, or grammar concepts. Emphasis is placed on repetition and drill through games and in-class exercises. Aside from unit end "mastery" evaluations, little emphasis is placed on worksheets or deskwork.

With such an emphasis on in-class participation and cumulative learning, it is not surprising that student attendance is a major factor in the curriculum's success rate. According to Jane Fell Greene, *Language!* was initially tested with "45 incarcerated students ages 13-17, who were compared to a non-treatment control group in the same correctional program" (qtd. in Moats xiv). In such a setting, attendance certainly posed no significant problems and as the results of the study show (students, on average, improved their reading and writing skills by three grade levels), the curriculum was highly successful.

Indeed *Language!* can cite numerous studies which highlight its success. With over 40 study sites in nine states, laudably, *Language!* has undergone the most rigorous of evaluations in order to assess its own strengths and weaknesses through statistical analysis ("Implementation"). Across the board, it has only the most encouraging results to report. Indeed, with pre-and post-tests typically reporting leaps in student test scores and grade level skills, *Language!* has proven itself an extremely valuable and effective curriculum. However, it is interesting to note that none of these test sites, though intentionally varied by demographics,

took place in a small, non-traditional school setting where attendance is also handled in a non-traditional manner.

City Academy, a small urban charter school on the East side of St. Paul, Minnesota, was created to serve a population of students who, for a variety of reasons (incarceration, drug problems, and gang issues are just a few examples), were unable to attend and graduate from their mainstream public high schools. Typically, these students struggle to attain basic literacy as well as grade level performance, much less competency, in other subject areas. The challenges involved in teaching students from this population are numerous and complex. One could not possibly assume that teaching these students only involves academics. Rather, in order to teach academics, a teacher must provide opportunities for students to learn a wide variety of personal and social skills.

The structure of City Academy helps to provide these opportunities by allowing teachers to work with students individually, keeping class sizes small (typically 10 or less), providing student "advisers" who guide students through an individualized graduation plan, and creating a safe, communal setting for students. Within this safe and supported environment, the responsibility for a student's education is placed entirely on the student, especially responsibility for student conduct and attendance. In order to graduate, a student needs to accomplish a set of academic and developmental standards. How that occurs varies widely from student to student. There are many ways to graduate from City Academy.

Within this highly differentiated environment, a standardized curriculum is somewhat troublesome. *Language!* was certainly no exception. The very first, and ultimately the largest, hurdle to the success of *Language!* was student attendance. Typically when students begin to attend City Academy, their attendance is highly erratic. Rather than penalizing students, the school aims to encourage and reinforce students' success. Often it takes several months, or sometimes more, and much encouragement and personal attention and effort to accustom a student to attending school regularly. However, with *Language!* it proved extremely problematic for students to be dropping in and out of such a se-

quentially-based, group-centered class. Furthermore, the progress of students who were regular attendees was hindered by students who needed to catch up on what they'd missed while absent.

Another major problem with *Language!* was the apparent simplicity of subject matter. Initially many students were offended by having to spend a class period with words as simple as *cat*, *bat*, and *hat*. The J & J readers were particularly resented in the beginning for their large print and simple, childish stories. Also troublesome was the vocabulary used throughout much of the first half of Level 1. While certainly relevant to the decoding level of the students, words like *tat* or *lad* or *din* felt archaic and far outside their experience.

It was also very difficult to convince students of the legitimacy of in-class, group-based activities. Long acclimatized to reams of worksheets and deskwork, students were utterly unaccustomed to spending an entire class period in activity and then leaving without (in their view) any tangible accomplishment. This also proved problematic for absent students who, upon reporting for missed work, would have to be informed that there was no work they could "make-up;" rather, they had missed in-class activities (which in reality were extremely valuable opportunities to learn and practice) but which students could not conceive of as meaningful or important.

In the first year of implementation, *Language!* was run according to its specifications for the first half of the school year. The teacher who taught it had been trained for five days at an official training session. Students were tested and were placed in three separate classes according to need. For the classes who scored higher on the pre-tests, the first few weeks were accelerated in order to reach each student's tested level. For students who scored lower on the pre-tests, classes were taught at the pace dictated by the lesson plans provided by the curriculum which emphasize much repetition and practice. Despite the best of efforts, the curriculum failed to retain student attendance. By mid-school year, it was clear that several modifications would have to be made to the curriculum.

First a higher-level grammar component was incorporated. This grammar component was designed by the *Language!* teacher to complement the grammar strands dictated by unit; however it outstripped the depth and complexity indicated by the *Language!* lesson plans. Like much of the *Language!* curriculum, the grammar component was largely taught through game and in-class activity; however it also required written exercises. These written exercises were used not only as comprehension checks but also as opportunities for practicing skills. This grammar component helped to appease students' embarrassment over what more than one student called "baby work."

In an attempt to further appease students' frustration with the apparently simplistic level of the class, many of the lessons were abridged and accelerated. As for the J & J readers so disliked by the students, the teacher found it helpful to make them into a game as well, causing comprehension to be a means, rather than an end. By concentrating primarily on decoding, playing games like backwards reading or speed reading, students could stop feeling embarrassed over reading simple stories and just enjoy playing around with the words instead. Invariably, they still comprehended the story, but they felt less pressure over the fact that they thought the story itself was childish.

It was also necessary to create more flexibility within the curriculum to accommodate students with poor attendance. Admittedly, there is not much that can be taught an absent student; however, by loosening up the structure of the *Language!* classes, it was possible to make students' in-class time more meaningful and relevant, even if they had missed several previous class periods. By continuing with regular class-wide routines like the phonics drills, fluency builders and spelling activities advocated by *Language!*, students coming irregularly to class could still participate and learn while students who regularly attended benefited from the repeated exposure to these activities. However, instead of continuing whole-group activities for the entirety of the class, it was found extremely helpful to divide the class up into smaller groups. The regular attendees were then provided with a project to complete either in their group or individually.

These projects were created to correspond to strands taught by the respective unit. They ranged from word games and writing or reading assignments, to grammar games and assignments. While these students were busy, it afforded the teacher time to address the concepts absent students had been unable to learn. Rather than simply dividing the class period in half in order to accommodate these different groups of students, the period was varied into multiple segments, weaving back and forth between whole group activities and small group projects.

In conclusion, *Language!* is an extremely valuable curriculum. Not only its scientifically researched basis and construction, but also its significant integration of Code-Based and Whole Language literacy strategies are a model for other literacy curricula. Taken as designed, it is perhaps best suited for mainstream public high schools. However, there is no reason why it could not be successful in a non-traditional, small school setting, provided it is accompanied with thoughtfully designed modifications matched to specific student and school needs.

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The Prydain Chronicles as Myth and Realism

Michael O'Hearn

Lloyd Alexander's *Prydain Chronicles* obviously fall into the modern fantasy genre, as they were written in the 1960s and contain the magic and monsters essential to such a work. But is fantasy nothing more that sorcerers and dragons? Nikolajeva points out that the genre is often cast aside as "purely formulaic fiction" (138). And certainly that is the case in poor works of fantasy, but poor works of realism can be deemed just as hollow. Alexander's work performs at the highest level of fantasy, a level too accurate in its portrayal of adolescence and psychological growth to be dismissed.

Schaafsma sees fantasy in terms of mythology, ritual, and spirituality: "fantasy performs the function formerly carried out by myth and religious ritual" (61). She contends that fantasy "constructs a bridge between the natural and the supernatural, the human and the nonhuman, the objective, material world and a subjective, spiritual realm" (62). Consider the key concern of fantasy, the transformation of the hero, through which he learns of his place in a "larger order" (Schaafsma 64). The idea of a larger order, and the spiritual relationship of an individual to it, is a key concern of myth and religion.

This concern has been carefully elaborated by Joseph Campbell, who suggests that the hero's journey is a search for self, and at the same time a search for God and the world.

Of the "hero-path," he says, "And where we had thought to find an abomination, we shall find a god; where we had thought to slay another, we shall slay ourselves; where we had thought to travel outward, we shall come to the center of our own existence; where we had thought to be alone, we shall be with all the world" (25). This is the purpose of myth—to guide the spiritual journey. This too is the purpose of fantasy.

Myth, fairy tale, and fantasy share the use of imagined landscapes, magic, and frightening creatures to explore the subconscious. Nikolajeva calls fantasy a "mindscape" which brings forth the "protagonist's inner world" (152). Similarly, Bettelheim states, "In fairy tale, internal processes are externalized and become comprehensible as represented by the figures of the story and its events" (25). Prothero says, "Myth teaches meaning, not by realistic logical explanation but rather by imagination and metaphor, entering the back door of the mind through the imagination" (33). Fantasy, fairy tale, and myth function in the same metaphorical way.

There has been some work to draw distinctions rather than show similarities between these three fictional modes, but none of it discredits the premise that fantasy, fairy tale and myth are, at heart, psychological in nature. For example, Nikolajeva claims that a key factor in defining a work of fantasy versus myth or fairy tale is the "presence of the Primary and the Secondary world" (142), the primary world being our own world, the landscape of realistic fiction, while the secondary world is the place of magic, the fairy tale world. The key, she suggests, is the movement from normal to magical world, the modern "clash between the magical and the ordinary" (139). But by such a definition, no book of the *Chronicles* qualifies as fantasy, as there is simply Prydain, the land where Taran was born and lives throughout his adventures.

More important to consider are the ways in which the definitions of fantasy, fairy tale, and myth seem to mimic or overlap one another, and therefore justify the evaluation of the *Prydain Chronicles* as myth. For example, in book one of the *Chronicles, The Book of Three,* Taran begins his journey by chasing the escaped oracular pig, Hen Wen, into the forbidden forest beyond

Caer Dallben where he has spent his entire young life (Alexander 23). Bettelheim, in discussing the nature of fairy tales, states that "being pushed out of the home stands for having to become oneself. Self-realization requires leaving the orbit of home, an excruciatingly painful experience fraught with psychological dangers" (79). Campbell suggests that in myth the journey begins with the crossing of a "first threshold" beyond the "hero's present sphere, or life horizon," beyond "parental watch" and the "protection of his society" (77). He also suggests that it is often a "blunder" of "merest chance" that leads to this crossing (51). This, of course, is very much the case as Taran charges into the forest because a pig has escaped his care. And one can logically relate Nikolajeva's assertion that there are two worlds in fantasy to Taran's crossing into the forest—not two worlds, but two zones (142).

Again, the important point here is that myth, fairy tale, and fantasy share the same thrust, which is to represent the dangerous journey into the self, and the discovery of the spiritual connections between world and self, as a fantastic adventure. This is the justification for interpreting the *Prydain Chronicles* as if they were myth.

Campbell's model of the hero's journey provides the best system for such an analysis. It follows the outward physical elements in the journey and connects them to the corresponding psychological processes. Under Campbell's model, the hero will follow a number of identifiable steps along the way.

The journey begins as the hero is "lured, carried away, or else voluntarily proceeds, to the threshold of adventure" (245). For a hero who has answered the call, he may be helped across the threshold by "some little fellow of the wood, some wizard, hermit, shepherd, or smith, who appears, to supply the amulets and advice that the hero will require" (72).

The threshold is the "entrance to the zone of magnified power," the "limits of the hero's present sphere, or life horizon" (77). This zone is often desert, jungle, deep sea, and the like, as these "regions of unknown . . . are free fields for the projection of unconscious content" (79). There may be a "shadow presence that guards the passage" (245).

"Once having traversed the threshold, the hero moves

in a dream landscape of curiously fluid, ambiguous forms, where he must survive a succession of trials" (97). Some of the forces the hero encounters in the zone of magnified power will assist the hero on his journey (246). He may also be assisted by the "advice, amulets, and secret agent of the supernatural helper whom he met before his entrance into the region" (97).

As the hero nears the end of his adventure, "he undergoes a supreme ordeal and gains his reward" (246). The reward may be the hero's union with a goddess-mother figure or his atonement with a father figure, and likely the acquisition of some boon (246). Then the hero must return. "If the powers have blessed the hero, he now sets forth under their protection . . . if not, he flees and is pursued" (246). Still other times, he is rescued: "the world may have to come and get him" (207). Either way, he must cross back over the threshold and reenter the world while "the transcendental powers must remain behind" (246). This return is also a test, as the hero must "survive the impact of the world" (226). He must bring back the "boon that restores the world" (246). The boon represents some form of enlightenment. The hero's final test, then, is to teach what he has learned (218).

The stages of the hero's journey may be summarized as follows:

- Call to Adventure
- Helpers and Amulets
- Crossing the Threshold
- Tests
- Helpers
- Final Test
- Flight
- Return
- Elixir

Campbell's model of the hero's journey provides a highly structured approach to interpreting a work of fantasy, a work that, like myth and fairy tale, uses fantastic images to represent a journey into the self. Such a journey is about breaking through inner fears and misconceptions to transform the self,

to reach a new stage of life. In Taran's case, his transformation is twofold: he becomes a man, and he becomes a king.

The remarkable achievement of *The Prydain Chronicles* is that readers can see step-by-step the changes that occur in Taran. There is a process that takes place outside the subconscious. Readers can see the outward signs of Taran's maturation, changes in his behaviors and attitudes. This is perhaps where we can see that *The Prydain Chronicles*, while sharing many key attributes of myth, are still a modern narrative form, highly detailed and full of richly realized characters. And in this regard, in addition to the *Chronicles* being a superb work of the fantasy genre, we may also consider Alexander's work as something closer to realism.

In *Worlds Within,* Egoff points out the relationship of the *Prydain Chronicles* to the realistic fiction that becomes prominent in children's literature of the era. The 1960s was a time when the family structure of the previous decade was "shattered," resulting in more working mothers and single-parent families and, for children in many families, increased responsibility and anxiety (Egoff 174). Divorce, drug addiction, alcoholism, sex, and child abuse were now acceptable topics of adolescent literature (Egoff 175). But at the heart of these issues as they played out in literature was a "search for identity" (Egoff 175). And, according to Egoff, "It is in its main theme—Taran's search for identity and his maturation—that the Prydain series breaks from earlier fantasies" (177). Alexander's search for identity likens the *Chronicles* to works of realism from the same period.

The changes in Taran's understanding of life are so gradual and true to life that we cannot ignore this aspect of Alexander's work in his main character. In the *Chronicles,* the hero's journey, central to works of fantasy, symbolically represents the journey into the self, and there is also the realistic presentation of Taran's maturation to adulthood.

If Campbell's model provides guidance in evaluating the hero's journey, then what is the model by which to judge Taran's growth throughout the five books? In part, the answer is intuition. Each person has his own idea of what it means to be an adult. But in looking for something more con-

crete, more structured, the answer can be found in the discipline of developmental psychology, which is concerned with the progress of an individual through the various stages of life.

Adolescence is a process, rather than a state, through which an individual takes on adult responsibility (Rayner 104). During the process, the individual will often undergo what Rayner calls a "life crisis," which occurs when "structures of adaptation and deference are no longer adequate to assimilate new demands" (105). In simpler terms, the youth is looking for his proper place in the world. Such a crisis will often involve "anxiety, perplexity, and impulsive action" (Rayner 105). This is similar to Campbell's idea of crossing the threshold. Campbell gives the example of Pan, a threshold guardian who instills panic, or strong anxiety, in those who cross his path into the zone of amplified power (81). The similar elements of the life crisis and crossing of the threshold show that both approaches—mythology and psychology—are dealing with the same process of change, but one route follows the symbols, while the other follows behaviors.

The first component of adolescence is a focus on the self, which is in "a great state of flux" (Rayner 113). This is the frame of mind from which all other steps of development flow. The adolescent is looking to test his identity in society (Rayner 113).

He breaks his idealized view of adults, particularly parental figures and their "beliefs, way of life and their discipline" (Rayner 110). This is the first step in building his own outlook. At the same time, he may become the devoted admirer of older people, particularly of the same sex (Rayner 112). "Through their example, a young person can find the way to new perspectives of action and thought outside the limits of his family" (112).

The adolescent also experiences intellectual growth. The ability to think abstractly (in algebraic terms) develops, which leads to increased concern for the future (Rayner 107). This new thought process leads to an inclination toward planning, considering alternate possibilities. Also tied up in this abstract thinking is increased ability to see oneself from another's point of view and the ability to "incorporate a variety of out-

side judgements into [his] self-concept" (Craig and Specht 155).

Psychologically, another key aspect of adolescence is sexual development, which is beyond the borders of Alexander's work. But part of sexual development is finding a mate, a love interest. There is a tendency to fall in love with one who possesses a strength where we are weak (Rayner 129). There is a strong desire for one's love interest to recognize some ability he believes he possesses, but is unsure of (Rayner 133). Looked at this way, the impulse to love one's opposite can also be characterized as a movement toward inner growth.

Finally, because of an adolescent's focus on the self, on his own change, he will often move through the world without regard for everyday tasks or the feelings of others (Rayner 123). This may lead to a reputation for thoughtlessness and irresponsibility not uncommon in adolescents (Rayner 123). But these are important aspects of "adult maturity," and by adulthood others will come to be dependent on the adolescent, often in his role as worker (Rayner 123). Work choice, then, is central to one's development of identity (Rayner 120).

In summary, we can break down the adolescent search for self into the following components:

- Rejecting parental figures.
- Gravitating toward role models.
- Thinking abstractly: planning and seeing other points of view.
- Seeking a mate.
- Showing concern for others.
- Taking responsibility for the completion of tasks.
- Choosing a work identity.

The hero's journey and the journey through adolescence are parallel, two ways of describing the same transformation—myth below the surface, and developmental behaviors above the surface. The hero's journey and the development psychology models can be applied to each book of *The Prydain Chronicles* and also to the series as a whole.

When we meet Taran, in *The Book of Three*, he is an

assistant pig-keeper in the care of the 379-year-old wizard, Dallben, and Coll, a farmer and pig-keeper. Coll is teaching Taran to make horseshoes, but Taran wishes to forge a sword. He grabs up a strip of hot iron and, over Coll's protests, begins to hammer out a sword which, not surprisingly, he turns into a strip of twisted iron (Alexander, *Three* 11-12). Immediately, Taran is shown to be impulsive, lacking in regard for the advice of his guardian and at odds with his chosen work identity. In the opening scene, three of seven behavioral factors are at work. In other words, Taran is a rebellious teen.

During the same opening chapter, Dallben is introduced as Taran's primary guardian and, in mythic terms, his first helper. Dallben explains the dangers present in Prydain, gives warnings and advice. He even explicitly sets out the threshold for Taran's adventure. "You are barely at the threshold of manhood . . . So, you must not leave Caer Dallben under any circumstances, not even past the orchard, and certainly not into the forest" (Alexander, *Three* 17). This jibes with the behavioral model of maturation to manhood as well as the mythic model concerning a physical boundary.

As mentioned earlier, this is exactly how Taran's adventure begins. He blunders into the forest, where immediately he encounters the Horned King, who acts as both threshold guardian and ultimate test in *The Book of Three*. Taran's reaction is one of panic, which as Campbell suggests is often the case upon crossing the threshold. Taran hides, "terrified" (Alexander, *Three* 25). And he is in fact cut by a blade of one of the Horned King's horde, an indication of the real danger that lies beyond Taran's familiar home (Alexander, *Three* 26).

Soon after, Taran meets Gwydion, high prince of Prydain and a fierce warrior. He is another helper, an early indication that Taran will not have to make his journey unaided. Gwydion also serves as Taran's first and primary role model. He is everything Taran aspires to be. And yet at the same time, this first encounter provides another look at Taran's ill-conceived expectations of identity. Taran is disappointed to find that the prince is not

outwardly the hero he had expected. "Taran still stared in disbelief at the simple attire and the worn, lined face. From all Dallben had told him of this glorious hero, and from all he had pictured himself—Taran bit his lip" (Alexander, *Three* 27). It does not, however, take long for Taran to begin to admire Gwydion.

As the *Book of Three* goes on, Taran comes upon helpers and tests, which are often one and the same. How Taran treats these various helpers and what they show him about himself provide insight into Taran's maturation. The tests bring out the best and worst of Taran's traits.

The strange creature Gurgi is both a helper and a test. He provides a test of Taran's character, rather than a physical obstacle to be overcome. How will Taran treat a seemingly weaker, less civilized creature? And early on, Taran does not pass this test. His first reaction to the hairy, straggly creature is one of impatience and disgust (Alexander, *Three* 40-41). And later, when Gurgi runs from the evil Cauldron-Born, Taran calls him a "miserable, sneaking wretch," though Gurgi's presence would have been little help (99). It is only later, after Gurgi has been wounded and nobly suggests the companions go on without him, that Taran sees the error of his judgement (Alexander, *Three* 121). Taran tells Gurgi, "You won't be left in the woods, and you won't have your head chopped off—by me or anyone else" (Alexander, *Three* 121). This incident is a first, strong sign of Taran's concern for others. It comes slowly, but once Taran sees what is right, he is kind and loyal. That is growth.

We see a similar characteristic of Taran in his relationship with Gwydion. When the two (along with Gurgi) are attacked by Cauldron-Born, Taran stands with the prince to fight, though he has been commanded to flee (Alexander, *Three* 56). The two are captured and then imprisoned by the sorceress Achren. Later, when Taran believes Gwydion dead, he takes on the prince's task of getting word to his kingdom of Don. "My own quest," says Taran of finding the pig, Hen Wen, "must be given up. If it is possible after the first task is done, I mean to return to it. Until then, I serve only Gwydion. It is I who

cost him his life, and it is justice for me to do what I believe he would have done" (Alexander, *Three* 111). Here, in a test of Taran, we see his loyalty to a task and to his role model Gwydion, and his idealism. Throughout the *Book of Three,* Taran continually makes mistakes and then works to right them.

His relationship with Eilonwy is a perfect example. She aids Taran in escaping from Achren's dungeon after he and Gwydion are captured by the Cauldron-Born, but she accidentally frees the bard and king Fflewddur Fflam instead of Gwydion as Taran has asked of her. For her effort, Taran calls her a "traitor and liar" and accuses her of complicity with Achren (Alexander, *Three 92-93)*. But moments later, he apologizes. And moments after that, he is ready to head out alone in shame, but she won't allow it. It is the earliest sign of an awkward youthful courtship, always vacillating between endearment and blunder. There is an exchange, after Eilonwy fails in an attempt to cast a spell against the Cauldron-Born:

> He gave Eilonwy an admiring glance. "It doesn't matter. They're gone. And that was one of the most amazing things I've seen. Gwydion had a mesh of grass that burst into flame; but I've never met anyone else who could make a web like that."
>
> Eilonwy looked at him in surprise, her cheeks blushing brighter than sunset. "Why, Taran of Caer Dallben," she said, "I think that's the first polite thing you've said to me." Then, suddenly, Eilonwy tossed her head and sniffed. "Of course, I should have known; it was the spiderweb. You were more interested in that; You didn't care whether I was in danger." (Alexander, *Three* 126)

This pattern continues throughout *The Book of Three,*

with Taran moving in and out of Eilonwy's good graces.

We can see from the above examples Taran's movement through adolescence—his rejection of parental figures, gravitation toward a role model, concern for others, taking responsibility for a task, and seeking of a mate. We can also see his progress through the hero's journey—his call to adventure, crossing the threshold, helpers, and tests.

There are numerous other pieces of the puzzle that have not been highlighted. Of his behavioral development, there is planning as he guides his companions toward the Royal House of Don after Gwydion's apparent death, and he certainly sees other views of himself, which are constantly thrust upon him by Gwydion and Eilonwy.

Other aspects of the hero's journey in *The Book of Three* are the additional helpers of Fflewddur Fflam, the dwarf Doli, the nature lord Medwyn, and King Eiddileg, who at first is a test, but then supplies Doli as a guide. The primary amulet is the ancient king's sword Dyrnwyn, which Eilonwy finds while leading Taran from Achren's dungeon. Other significant tests were Taran's nursing of a fledgling Gwythaint, a fierce bird cruelly used by Arawn, recovering the oracular pig, Hen Wen, and the final test, an encounter with the Horned King, during which the Horned King is slain. It is important here that Taran does not actually defeat the Horned King. Gwydion does.

In the framework of the journey, then, Taran does not accomplish much without the explicit help of others. But in the end, he sees this. "I have no just cause for pride," he says, "It was Gwydion who destroyed the Horned King, and Hen Wen helped him do it. But Gurgi, not I, found her. Doli and Fflewddur fought gloriously while I was wounded by a sword I had no right to draw. And Eilonwy was the one who removed the sword from the barrow in the first place. As for me, what I mostly did was make mistakes" (Alexander, *Three* 217).

And so while Taran's return to his home in Caer Dallben is not accompanied by a boon to "restore the world," he does come armed with new insight into his place within the world

(Campbell 246).

Taran carries forward this insight into *The Black Cauldron*, book two in the *Prydain Chronicles*, and into each successive volume of the series. In each book, we see the hero's journey repeated, and in each book we witness his maturation through adolescence, sometimes repeating lessons, sometimes learning new ones.

In *The Black Cauldron*, Taran's call to adventure is no blunder, but a task assigned to him by the enchanter Dallben and Prince Gwydion, both helpers in Campbell's model, and the latter a role model as set out in the developmental psychology model. In this task that he is assigned, to aid the retreat of a war party, Taran is split off from his role model, Gwydion, but finds another in Adaon, son of Prydain's chief bard. And as plans go awry and Taran's party takes on the greater task of finding and destroying the black cauldron, Taran faces a number of tests from both within and without the party and himself. He finds a treacherous rival in Prince Ellidyr, must face the powerful witches at the Marches of Morva, and survive the Huntsmen of Annuvian. But, more difficult than any of these tasks, he must deal with the death of Adaon and surrender, for the sake of his task, a broach given to him by Adaon which bestows great wisdom upon its wearer.

Later, in a similar incident, which represents both a challenge in Campbell's model and a step toward adulthood in the developmental model, Taran swallows his pride for the sake of his task. He agrees to give Ellidyr full credit for recovering the black cauldron, which Taran himself has obtained, in exchange for Ellidyr's help in delivering the cauldron to Gwydion (Alexander, *Cauldron* 190).

In addition to Adaon and his broach, Taran encounters other helpers, most notably Gwystyl, of the race of fair folk, who is stationed not far from Annuvian and who is deceptively shrewd. He helps the companions escape the Huntsmen and also provides the magical bird Kaw, who will travel with Taran throughout the *Chronicles*.

The above examples are not exhaustive, but serve to reveal the presence of key elements of the hero's journey and

Taran's march through adolescence within the *Black Cauldron*. Similar analysis could be successfully applied to each of the final three books in the series. Instead let us look at the *Prydain Chronicles* as a whole, which combined follow the hero's journey more faithfully than any one of the books.

The Book of Three serves as our primary call to adventure. When Taran enters the woods beyond Caer Dallben, it is his first step into Campbell's journey and the only moment in the series—though he ventures from his home to woods many times afterward—that Taran meets the threshold guardian. In fact, the key challenge for Taran, the final test, is the slaying of the Horned King, who serves as the guardian. Along the way, Taran picks up the key helpers of his ongoing adventures: Fflewddur Fflam, Prince Gwydion, Gurgi, Doli, and Eilonwy. Dallben and Coll also serve as helpers, although they are met prior to Taran's crossing of the threshold. The sword Dyrnwyn, which does not reveal its full powers until the final book in the series, *The High King,* is also gained during this first adventure of the *Prydain Chronicles*. The sword serves as the singular amulet of the overall story, and its appearance early in the story shows that important elements of a single, extended hero's journey occur throughout the *Chronicles*.

The Black Cauldron, *The Castle of Llyr*, and *Taran Wanderer* serve as tests within the extended hero's journey. *The Black Cauldron* is concerned with destroying the magical cauldron that provides Arawn Death-Lord with his army of undead. Just as there are many sub-challenges to defeating the threshold guardian in *The Book of Three*, there are sub-challenges in destroying the cauldron. Within *The Black Cauldron*, these sub-challenges serve as the tests leading up to the final test. But in the extended hero's journey of the *Prydain Chronicles*, these sub-challenges are simply components of the one test, that of destroying the cauldron.

The same can be said of *The Castle of Llyr*. The final test here is the protection of Eilonwy and the defeat of Achren, who once ruled Prydain and who bestowed Arawn Death-Lord's powers upon him. Along the way, Taran and company face challenges such as an encounter with a giant cat and his

giant master. The cat, Llyan, later becomes a helper to the group. Another challenge faced here is the clueless and kindly Prince Rhun, whom Taran sees as a rival for Eilonwy's love, but whose bumbling turns him into an inadvertent magical helper.

In *Taran Wanderer,* Taran's quest is of his own choosing. He sets out to learn his parentage. Discovering himself is a key test for Taran as without that knowledge he cannot be a leader of men as he must become in *The High King*. Among the sub-challenges of this test are a sheepherder who falsely claims to be Taran's father and a king who offers to take Taran as his son and heir. These are among the toughest challenges Taran faces in all the *Chronicles*, the former because Taran must come to terms with his lowly station, and the later because he must refuse a royal station, though he greatly desires it, because he knows it is not his true place in the world.

In *Taran Wanderer*, he meets a number of unique helpers in the Free Cammots. Among these are Llonio, Hevydd the Smith and Dwyvach Weaver-Woman, Annlaw Clay-Shaper, and Llassar the shepherd. Each of these characters helps Taran to see himself. The importance of these helpers grows in *The High King,* as Taran is asked by Gwydion to rally the men of the Free Cammots for a final battle with Arawn Death-Lord. Taran has been moving closer to leadership since *The Book of Three*, and in *The High King* he experiences the full burden of leadership, as men may suffer under his choices. This is perhaps Taran's most difficult test within the *Prydain Chronicles*, but the final test, the supreme ordeal of the *Chronicles*, is the defeat of Arawn Death-Lord and his deathless cauldron-born. Both of these feats are accomplished by Taran with the power of the sword Dyrnwyn. At this point we see the climax of the hero's journey attained.

To review, in *The Book of Three*, Taran hears a call to adventure and the threshold is crossed, the threshold guardian defeated. In *The Black Cauldron*, *The Castle of Llyr*, and *Taran Wanderer*, Taran faces the tests of destroying the cauldron, saving the Princess Eilonwy, and finding himself. Finally, in *The High King*, the final test is faced, Taran becomes a leader and defeats Arawn Death-Lord. Throughout these ad-

ventures, various helpers and amulets are encountered and smaller tests are surpassed. In *The High King*, the three remaining steps of the hero's journey occur: flight, return, and elixir.

Though, by Campbell's definition, flight occurs when the hero seeks to escape the magic realm, in *The High King* the Sons of Don leave Prydain and take all that is magical with them, including Dallben and Taran, if he so desires. "All enchantments shall pass away and men unaided guide their own destiny" (Alexander, *High King* 280).

The return, then, occurs when Taran refuses to go to the distant land, where life is eternal: "There are those more deserving of your gift than I, yet never may it be offered them. My life is bound to theirs. . . . I cannot restore the life of Llonio Son of Llonwen and the valiant folk who followed me, never to see their homes again. Nor can I mend the hearts of widows and orphaned children. Yet if it is in my power to rebuild even a little of what has been broken, this I must do" (Alexander, *High King* 290). In making this choice, his final test, Taran is then crowned high king of Prydain.

Taran's ascension to the throne is part of the elixir to heal the land. It gives him the power to apply what he has learned. The other elixir is the craft secrets which Arawn had stolen from the people of Prydain long ago, and which Gurgi unknowingly saved when the dark realm of Annuvian was destroyed. "Here are the secrets of forging and tempering metals, of shaping and firing pottery, of planting and cultivating. This is what Arawn stole long ago and kept from the race of men. This knowledge is itself a priceless treasure" (Alexander, *High King* 298). Hence, each step of Campbell's hero's journey is played out across the five books of the *Prydain Chronicles*.

In terms of Taran's development through adolescence, there are steps of his maturation present within each book, but also we can find a focus within each book corresponding to key components of the developmental psychology model.

In *The Book of Three*, the elements of the developmental model that stand out are Taran's rejection of parental figures and gravitation toward role models. He has no desire to remain in

the role that has been chosen for him, an assistant pig-keeper. He wishes to be a warrior. And as he spends time with Prince Gwydion, he begins to learn what a true warrior is. In *The Black Cauldron*, the completion of a task drives Taran, and he is willing to sacrifice his pride and most valuable possession to that end. In *The Castle of Llyr*, the focus is on Taran's seeking a mate. The plot is built around trying to rescue Eilonwy, while at the same time trying to save Prince Rhun, who is Taran's rival for the princess's love. In *Taran Wanderer*, Taran looks for himself, but does so by seeking out a work identity, sampling various trades of the Free Cammot folk. And, finally, in *The High King*, Taran's concern for others is at the forefront. It is first visible in his straining under the weight of commanding troops, the responsibility for people's lives, and later when he chooses to stay in Prydain to help rebuild the land when the easier thing to do would be to join the Sons of Don on their journey.

In Alexander's *Prydain Chronicles*, we see Taran's growth into manhood played out in a story of action, monsters, and magic, a story that functions as all myth functions—as a metaphor for subconscious changes in the mind that mirror one's physical development. At the same time, Alexander has written a story of realism, one that presents the literal changes in behavior and attitude that one experiences on the road to adulthood. This dual presentation of Taran's growth makes the *Chronicles* both myth and realism, and yet more than either. It is the completeness of this presentation that makes the *Prydain Chronicles* so satisfying.

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Making Connections: Books for Harry Potter Fans

Faith H. Wallace

Epic fantasies are not new. Look at the popularity of J.R.R. Tolkien's *The Lord of the Rings* or C.S. Lewis' *The Chronicles of Narnia*. Even the idea of a boy wizard going to wizarding school appeared in Ursula Le Guin's epic *Earthsea*. The *Harry Potter* phenomenon, though, has so invigorated the genre of fantasy for young adults that new titles are being produced too quickly to follow. While each story has its own unique twist or quest, these stories sometimes share similar themes or characteristics (e.g. themes of choices and good versus evil, the inclusion of magical or mythical creatures and the ability to speak to various creatures), fostering strategic reading. That is, "*strategic reading* refers to thinking about reading in ways that enhance learning and understanding" such as when readers make connections, draw inferences, and pose questions (Harvey & Goudvis 16).

Encouraging students to read widely in the young adult fantasy genre (while many are still riveted by the *Harry Potter* series) may be a way to encourage students to read strategically, specifically enhancing their ability to make connections within and across texts. Readers make connections between what they already know and what they learn (Braunger & Lewis 30). As they read "to better understand their reading", they may compare story events, lessons, themes, or perspectives (Harvey & Goudvis 80). Reading widely within the young adult fantasy

literature can also provide readers with background knowledge about the genre including style, format, themes, and characteristics that will support strategic reading. In this essay, I illustrate two connections among new young adult fantasy, particularly with regard to the magical and mythical creatures of the *Harry Potter* series and the role of family members as villains. I also show how these connections can foster strategic reading.

I. Making Connections: Magical and Mythical Creatures

We meet strange and interesting magical and mythical creatures within all of the *Harry Potter* books including house elves, dragons, trolls, goblins, hippogriffs, and centaurs to name just a few. In fact, J.K. Rowling published *Fantastic Beasts and Where to Find Them* as a compendium of the creatures Potter and his friends encounter. What is interesting, though, is that Rowling gives each species a distinct personality and plight in the wizarding world. Take, for example, dragons. These creatures are seen as dangerous and forbidden, yet Harry must steal the dragon egg from a dragon during the TriWizard Tournament in *Harry Potter and the Goblet of Fire*, where the dragons are used in sport.

This portrayal of dragons is similar to the way dragons are described and used within Lene Kaaberbol's young adult novel *The Shamer's Daughter*, the first novel in a series about a young girl, Dina, who has inherited a special gift – the ability to read a person's soul, see the truth, and make the person feel shame for his or her misdeeds. It is this gift that puts Dina in a precarious position. Dina's mother (with the same gift) must declare an innocent boy, Nico, guilty of terrible crimes. When she refuses to do so, she is locked away and declared a witch. Dina is faced with the same choice, but even being hunted as a witch doesn't stop her from trying to find and free her mother, escape the teeth of venomous dragons, and find a way to save Nico. The dragons in the Dragon Pit are described more as overgrown, poisonous lizards than magical, mythical creatures. The dragons are enslaved and used as a form of law enforcement that Dina and her mother must escape. While not as sophisticated as the *Harry Potter* novels, this young adult series is imagi-

native and has a strong female protagonist with a unique gift.

On the other hand, the dragons in *Eragon,* by Christopher Paolini, are companions and confidants possessing great wisdom and knowledge. When Eragon discovers a stunning blue stone in the middle of a forest, his life quickly begins to change. Instead of living his quiet life as a poor farm-boy, he becomes a Dragon Rider (the last one), learns the ancient language of magic, and saves an elf from torture – all while trying to find the murderous Ra'zac who destroyed his home and took his uncle's life. Eragon's journey is filled with amazing magic, strange creatures, and unforgettable characters; readers will be treated to an imaginative world as they too learn the new language of magic. Paolini, a teen himself, plans Eragon's story as part one of the *Inheritance* trilogy. Comparing and contrasting how dragons are portrayed and utilized across various texts will foster strategic reading in that readers must consider themes and purpose for particular characters within each book. Since dragons are a popular topic in epic fantasies, there is no shortage of texts to explore. For example, *Dragon Rider* deals with similar themes as *Eragon*, and because of the popularity of dragons as characters in fantasy, there are also nonfiction informational texts to provide a historical perspective, deepening a reader's background knowledge, on the dragon character such as *Dr. Ernest Drake's Dragonology: The Complete Book of Dragons* by Duguld Steer and *Dragons: A Natural History* by Karl Shuker.

Fairies are also popular creatures within epic fantasies. Like dragons, fairies are portrayed and utilized in a variety of ways across texts. The enslaved house elves of *Harry Potter* would sound familiar to characters in various texts where fairies are considered a race of magical creatures that are bound to certain "houses" doing the bidding of the owners of the house. In some cases, the fairies rebel as in the sophisticated young adult novel *The Blue Girl* by Charles de Lint and the lighthearted, uncomplicated series *The Spiderwick Chronicles* by Holly Black and Tony DiTerlizzi, but the house elves of the *Harry Potter* series have yet to fight their enslavement.

Some modern fantasies take "twists" on traditional fairy

folklore. Artemis, the boy genius of Eoin Colfer's *Artemis Fowl* series, believes he can do anything – including something that no one else has done: steal gold from the Leprechauns. The only problem is that Leprechauns are not actually small green men. Leprechauns are, in fact, members of L.E.P. Recon: Lower Elements Police, Reconnaissance Unit. In stealing this gold, Artemis has to outsmart fairy technology, fairy magic, and one tough fairy, Holly Short. Colfer incorporates taken-for-granted myths and legends and adds flair and a lot of laughter to them. The adventures of Artemis and Holly continue in *Artemis Fowl: The Artic Incident* where the team must stop The Lower Elements from being taken over by a gang of Goblins. Then, in *Artemis Fowl: The Eternity Code*, Artemis uses fairy technology to make money on the stock market, but the plan backfires and the entire Lower Elements may be at risk. Artemis Fowl fans may also enjoy the companion text *The Artemis Fowl Files* containing interviews and short stories. While these books seem more like fun and games, Colfer uses the humor to make statements about society. For example, Holly Short is the first female fairy allowed on the L.E.P. Recon. This is a running theme throughout the texts, making Holly a target for harsh criticism by her superiors. Her involvement with Fowl only makes things worse for her.

Discrimination and mistreatment of others, either masked within humor in *Artemis Fowl* or tackled head on in *Harry Potter*, is a common theme in these young adult fantasies. Readers are challenged by authors to think about tough issues in a way that makes them more accessible when they make connections across texts. How are these magical creatures similar in various storylines and how are these creatures used to make a statement about society and the treatment of others? What other magical creatures suffer mistreatment in young adult fantasies and why? These questions can be explored when students make connections across texts.

II. Making Connections: The Villain in the Family

Making connections across texts can also provide an opportunity for readers to make predictions. We have quite a

bit of information still to learn about Lord Voldemort, the deatheaters, and the prophecy, but perhaps we can use our background knowledge (or our connections) about other young adult fantasies to narrow down the possible outcomes for remaining *Harry Potter* books. For example, in many young adult fantasies, a major "bad guy" often turns out to be a relative of our heroes. This happens in *Pure Dead Magic*, *The Children of the Red King* series, *The Shamer's Daughter*, *Eragon*, *His Dark Material* series, and *The Old Kingdom* series among others.

In *Pure Dead Magic* by Debi Gliori, the first of three in this hysterical series, there doesn't seem like anything else could go wrong at the Strega-Borgia home. First, Signor Luciano has disappeared. This means Signora Baci must hire a nanny for her three children (Titus, Pandora, and Damp) since she is busy studying advanced witchcraft. In the meantime, Pandora, ten years old, accidentally shrinks her baby sister, Damp, using a disposable wand she stole from her mother. Then, Titus, twelve years old, uploads Damp onto the Internet. While they try to save their baby sister, a group of villains with a terrible mission breaks into the house. This evil-doing was orchestrated by Signor Luciano's brother Lucifer who is greedy for a large inheritance. With a little magical intervention from the nanny and some help from Tock the crocodile, the Strega-Borgia clan survives the ordeal and hopes never to hear from Lucifer again. The series continues with *Pure Dead Wicked* where the Strega-Borgias must deal with the ramifications of the children's science experiment in cloning, a magical Scottish army, and a pregnant dragon while trying to save their castle from ruin. *Pure Dead Brilliant* is the third installment and is the most complex, engaging, and laugh-out-loud adventure. All of the Strega-Borgias are back – including evil Uncle Lucifer hungry for revenge. But, a long-standing pact with a demon just might interrupt Uncle Lucifer's plan.

The *Children of the Red King* series by Jenny Nimmo follows Charlie Bone as he learns that he, like Harry Potter, has a unique ability: he can hear what people are saying in photographs. This unique ability labels him as endowed and starts a chain of events that might lead to his death. He discovers that he

is actually a descendant of the Red King who had enormous power. But the descendants are all at war, and Charlie must choose sides. The evil Bloors, including Charlie's three aunts, use their gifts to force events to unfold in their favor and destroy those who stand in their way, including killing Charlie's father and keeping a young girl away from her family for over a decade. If Charlie sides with the Bloors, life could be easy, but Charlie and his friends stand up to the Bloors and face the consequences together. By the second installment, the children of the Red King are still divided between good and evil, and it becomes more difficult for Charlie and his friends to remain on the side of the good. Charlie's aunts seem to stop at nothing to have their own way – including attempted murder. This series is a quick but satisfying read for young adults with realistic characters that ground the fantasy.

Sabriel by Garth Nix begins a three-part fantastic and complicated adventure also known as *The Old Kingdom* series. Sabriel's father has a dangerous job, a job that Sabriel inherits too soon for her liking. Sabriel and her father are necromancers. They ensure that the souls of the dead arrive and stay where they belong. With the disappearance of her father, though, the balance of the living and the dead has become unstable, and creatures powerful and long since dead are walking in the world of the living. Sabriel and Touchstone try to sort out what is going on in the old country and learn that the prince, cousin to Touchstone, is behind the rise of the dead. Kerrigor has been gaining power in the land of the dead and plans to take over the living. The sequel to *Sabriel, Lirael,* takes place when Sabriel is Queen of the old country and a full-fledged Abhorsen. In a strange twist of fate, Lirael must assist Prince Sameth, Sabriel's son, in finding out why so many free-magic beings are wreaking havoc across the country. The conclusion to this saga is told in a third installment entitled *Abhorsen*.

With so many family members turning to the dark side, what does this suggest for Harry Potter? Could he and Lord Voldemort be related? Perhaps that would explain Harry's green eyes. When readers make connections

across texts, these connections may help students think more deeply about events within the reading (particularly within the Potter series), which, in turn, can lead to making predictions about what is to come in the last parts of the series.

Concluding Thoughts

Many of our students are captivated with the Potter tale and are reading the books over and over again. Rereading has much value, especially for our young readers. But, we can expand their horizons by providing them with other young adult fantasies with similar themes and characteristics to push all students, regardless of ability, to the next level of strategic reading. Due to wide publishing of these adolescent fantasies, we can support our struggling readers and push advanced readers. For instance, *The Spiderwick Chronicles* follow the adventures of the Grace children as they learn about fairies and magic. Each adventure is separated into a different book so that the books are more like short stories with limited main characters and settings to prevent struggling readers from becoming overwhelmed. On the other hand, a more sophisticated reader will be challenged reading Phillip Pullman's *His Dark Materials* series, which includes a complex storyline in each of the three books with a number of different species of characters, a new language, and connections to both science and magic. Further, as readers of a good series tend to devour the series until it is complete, our students may read more widely than ever before while they patiently wait for the next and last installment of *Harry Potter* (Tunnell & Jacobs 228). For example, *Artemis Fowl* fans have four books to entertain them and *Eragon* is one book in a trilogy as is *Lionboy* by Zizou Corder. By providing students with the opportunity to explore similar themes and characters we push them toward strategic reading in making connections within and across texts.

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Multimodal Trans(ACT)ions With Literature Through the Creation of a Zine

Mary F. Wright

In the fall of the year, at the University of Minnesota-Duluth a small group of pre-service teachers studying adolescent literature gathers in the back of a classroom planning to stage a scene based on their response to Lois Lowry's novel *The Giver*. A hush falls over the room as students stand, forming a circle facing in with their heads bowed in solemn posture. Slowly they begin to walk in a circular motion with their heads now facing rigidly up and staring blankly outward. They chant three times in unison, "Thank you for your childhood," a poignant line in the book said during the "ceremony of twelve" in which children lose their childhood to the world of work as they are given their "assignments" (Lowry 64). Each time the students utter the words, their arms and hands uniformly and alternatively lift straight out in front, then straight above their heads prior to release as they bow inwards toward the middle of the circle, symbolically surrendering their fate to the inner life of the dystopian society portrayed in the novel. A gong is played at the end of each phrase. Voices blend in rhythm, tone and pitch. Suddenly, the gong strikes three times and the group faces the front of the classroom.

The scene shifts. A new mood is felt as the students break out of the cult-like circle. Though still stone faced, one student pulls out a flute and begins playing an eerie tune created

for this scene. A drum pulses out a backbeat and xylophone chimes accompany the gong, intensifying the march forward following one student's lead as the chanter or wordsmith. The leader chants simple but powerful words chosen by the students as critically important to the essence of what is driving the protagonists, Jonas and Gabe, to a place Lowry calls "Elsewhere" (131). Words used to propel the group forward are *freedom, hope, love, Christmas, color, cold,* and *journey*. Outdoors, the students videotape a scenario, to be spliced together with another scene, to depict Jonas's cold, snowy ride up the hill with Gabe in their effort to flee the stifling community and get to Elsewhere.

At the heart of multimodal collaborative interpretation, when used in a multimedia context, is the integration of multiple perspectives through a layering of modalities resulting in a richly textured and nuanced gathering of meaning. The entire multimodal response to this piece of literature uses music, drama, scriptwriting, and videography, and the response is captured through the medium of an i-movie placed within an on-line digital literary magazine, or zine, that the students have titled *Intuitive Roots: Verbal, Visual/Aural Literary Meanderings* (Wright). As the instructor of this course, I watch as the magic of the moment happens, well aware that passers-by in the hallway linger slightly longer than normal; this is not a usual scene in a college classroom where the lecture model of instruction still dominates. Students are out of their chairs, working together, some playing instruments, using their voices and bodies in purposeful ways to simulate their interpretation of what has now become known as an adolescent classic. The intensity of their work is what draws hallway attention. Theirs is not the average question/answer classroom scenario, or even collaborative seatwork. As Csikszentmihalyi describes his theory of *Flow*, they are actively, fully engaged, at once in the moment, creating and thinking (6). They are working on capturing what is eternal in literature, that which can only be captured through internalizing the text through what Louise Rosenblatt so aptly described as transaction, an intimate meaning made between reader and text (20). However, this class and its successive cohorts have transcended the two-dimensional

transactions to literature to include multimodal responses, building meaning in a digital, media-literate environment through drama, visual arts, scriptwriting, music, and videography.

The Use of Multimodalities to Internalize the Eternal

Pulitzer prize winning author Thornton Wilder wrote of the concept of eternity in the play *Our Town*:

> We all know that *something* is eternal. And it ain't houses and it ain't names, and it ain't earth, and it ain't even the stars- everybody knows in their bones that something is eternal, and that *something* has to do with human beings. (69).

All great artists strive to capture it. We try to describe it, feel it and know it, for we know that what that eternal something is will live on long after we are gone. William Blake exemplifies it as the eternal sunrise. It is captured in the essence of the smile in Da Vinci's Mona Lisa, in the haunting images of Picasso's blue period paintings, in the living gardens of impressionist painter Claude Monet. Literature reaches for it, too; its message lives on, capturing what we find so elusive in our everyday lives. Teachers realize that the eternal something in literature lives on in our students through our teaching and that what we are teaching in the text goes beyond today or tomorrow.

In a world inundated by external mandates and a test-driven curriculum, some literature classes lack the vibrancy of the message literature offers as harbinger of the eternal. Ironically, advocates for education have long championed the use of the arts and the possibilities they provide us with for vibrant ways of knowing (Greene 122). Contemporary arts-based literacy pioneers, such as Ernst, Rief, Claggett, Chancer, and Neilson have worked during the past two decades toward establishing a more vital working environment within the English classroom in an attempt to reinvigorate the experience of learning and to excavate eternal meanings extant in the pag-

es of books through multimodal ways of knowing through the arts. Since contemporary adolescents are already living, working, and playing in a world that privileges multimodal ways of knowing, it makes sense for educators to shape their pedagogy to scaffold and mediate instruction in this area.

The New Adolescent and the New Literacies

When I taught adolescents in the late 1980s and 1990s, I witnessed much change. Students began to bring new gadgets with them to class, preoccupying their attention, and competing with school-based topics. Hand-held digital devices such as Game-Boys, palm pilots, digital watches, and cell phones mingled with conversations about discoveries of multi-voiced digital dialogues found on MSN messenger and chat rooms. With these changes, schools face new challenges in keeping students' attention (Lankshear & Knobel, "Attention" 20). With the advent of cell phones, multi-channel television access, and unparalleled and increasing growth in communication potential through Internet use, digital literacies and the adolescent meshed as part of what Alvermann and Gee refer to as the "new literacies" or "multiliteracies" (viii; "New People" 43). These changing views of literacy mirror what Mitchell forecast as the "pictorial turn" in our society, intimating an increasing need to recognize the "metalanguage" inherent in images and the link between image and text (9, 37). These changes raise the following questions:

> How do we teach literature and textual analysis in the era of "the pictorial turn" and the dominance of visuality? How do we teach what cannot be taken for granted? What do we want from a course, a curriculum, and a discipline that seeks to connect and cross the shifting boundaries of verbal and visual representation? (Mitchell 88).

Living Literature

I have long been an advocate of arts-based literacy practices, utilizing the talents and proclivities of my students to motivate, enlighten, and heighten engagement with literature. I believe, as Wilhelm does in *You Gotta Be The Book: Teaching Engaged Reading and Reflection with Adolescents*, that the use of drama in the classroom engages students in physical, cognitive and affective transactions with literature (89). This pedagogy rests on the belief that the story world is a place students enter through text-based role-play and performances, forming unique and indelible reflective transactions with literature. In addition, I feel that whenever possible, the use of music, visual arts, drama, creative writing, and videography expand our current notions of literacy to one more fit to prepare our students to interact in an ever-changing world.

When students live the literature, they become deeply involved in the transaction. Playing the part of the characters, rewriting the script, staging scenes, etc., they feel those emotions untouchable within the text. That elusive eternal message created through the art form of literature is not *"lost"* but *"found"* in translation. The students, through enactment, embody the author's intention, which is always first and foremost to provoke our thinking about life and living, ultimately affecting the way we think about our place in the world and our interactions in it. The electronic literary magazine uses multimodal lenses to calibrate classroom transactions with literature perpetuating the work we do in our classroom. A further benefit of this pedagogy is that through the digital infrastructure, transactions are frozen in time allowing us to relish them, reflect on our work, and provoke further thought and discussion about the literature.

Setting the Stage for Trans(ACT)ing With Literature: The Digital Platform as Stage

Much has recently been discussed in the professional literature about preparing our students to meet the new demands and challenges of life in the 21st century. Teacher educators often lag behind the changing times, clinging to the tried and true within

their methods courses. Lack of daily contact with contemporary adolescence, or "millennials" as Gee calls them, keeps teacher educators out of touch with the ever-changing world of adolescents and their increasingly new modes of expressing thought and communicating with one another ("Millennials" 51). Not only does this interfere with the progression of ongoing pedagogical practices, but curricular demands in a test driven educational environment often discourage teachers from taking the time to discover new ways to extend what Louise Rosenblatt encouraged as both "efferent" and "aesthetic" transactions with literature (24). Critically important in the education of pre-service teachers is allowing time and space to navigate in a non-prescriptive way the dialogue that literature engages one in. The drama of literature as lived in the moment is reinvigorated when students realize that they can negotiate meaning with literature through the digital platform as they re-write, re-stage, and perform their transactions in a three-dimensional format through the creation of a zine.

This new sustained transaction with literature is held by the digital framework as it reverberates across space and time and into the thoughts and hearts of others participating with the transaction as a digital viewer/participant. As Morris and Tchudi note, we must be aware that:

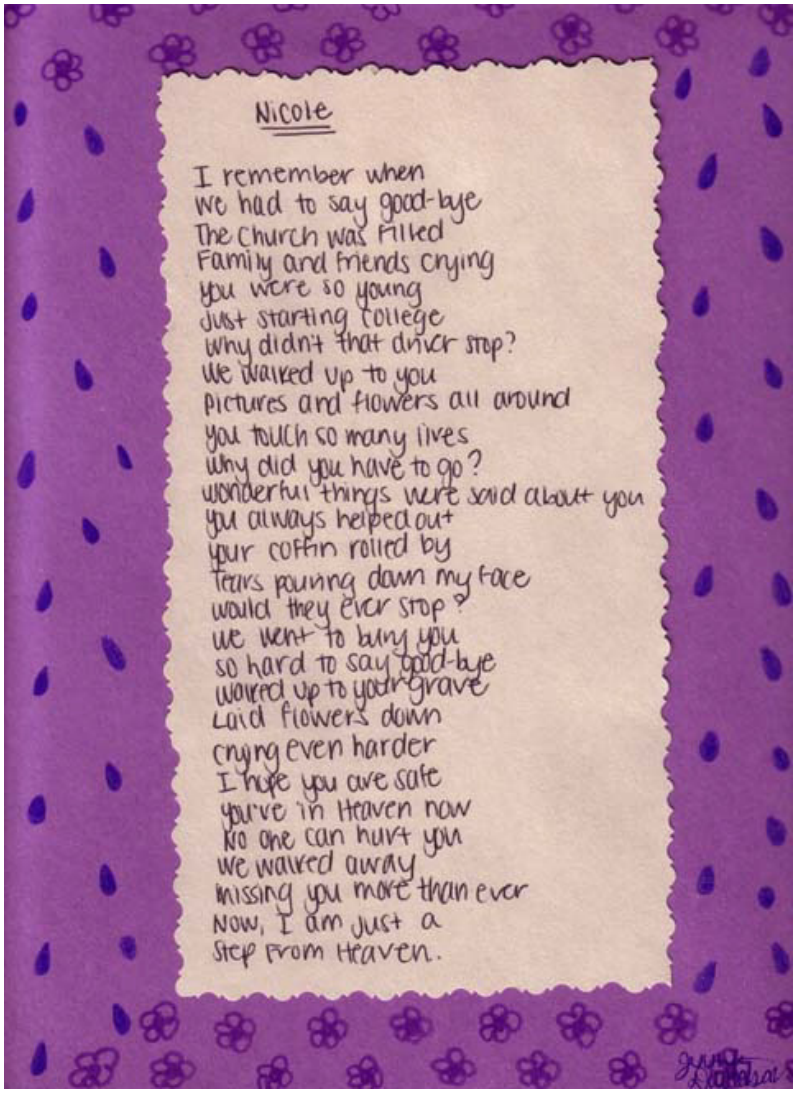
> Each new voice that joins society offers a fresh way of looking at the world, and each new form of communication, whether it is the printing press, the typewriter, the radio, the telephone, the television, or the computer, suggests a new means of transmitting human thoughts, views, and feelings to the rest of the world (22).

Typically, zines employ a two-dimensional rendering of creative thought framed in paper or digital form, supported by a social network of likeminded individuals focusing on a particular theme. Zines have been widely used

through the 1990's and into the 21st century as a way to empower young voices to speak candidly about politics, gender, and societal issues (Guzzetti & Gamboa 418). Paralleling the thematic nature of the zine in the past decade, adolescent literature has been more in touch with social issues confronting the adolescent today. One thing all z*inesters* have in common is a passion for their subject. Lankshear and Knobel state:

> A zine may specialize in a single theme across all its issues, or cover diverse themes within single issues or across issues. In all instances, the writer-producers are passionate—at times to the point of obsession—about their subject matter and desire to share ideas, experiences, values, analyses, comments, and critiques with kindred spirits ("Cut" 168).

In both my Adolescent Literature and Teaching Reading and Literature grades 5-12 courses, the zine is a vehicle for passionate transactions with literature using creative writing, image, stimulating what Sanders-Bustle calls Creative/Critical thought (13). Other modalities expand potential transaction from two to three dimensional ways of knowing and expressing. The following two-dimensional examples are from transactions with An Na's *A Step From Heaven* and Laurie Halse Anderson's *Speak*:



Nicole

I remember when
We had to say good-bye
The church was filled
Family and friends crying
You were so young
Just starting college
Why didn't that driver stop?
We walked up to you
Pictures and flowers all around
You touch so many lives
Why did you have to go?
Wonderful things were said about you
You always helped out
Your coffin rolled by
Tears pouring down my face
Would they ever stop?
We went to bury you
So hard to say good-bye
Walked up to your grave
Laid flowers down
Crying even harder
I hope you are safe
You're in Heaven now
No one can hurt you
We walked away
Missing you more than ever
Now, I am just a
Step from Heaven.

However meaningful these transactions are, they are heightened via performance on the digital stage. Now literature transactions become trans(ACT)ions, powerful mediators of expression. The pre-service teachers cast their work upon a digital loom, rendered through performance, weaving meanings across borders, continuing an on-going dialogue with literature. Within this pedagogy, the critical/creative thought processes flour-

ish within the students' imaginative transaction as co-creators of expression.

The pre-service teachers are motivated in their creative work, for they are not only reading, writing, responding, creating and performing for a real purpose and audience but that audience is global via the digital platform. They know that beyond their instructor, other English teachers, and the University community, their work has the potential to reach any interested others with an interest in their literary transaction. Therefore, they learn that inter(ACT)ing and trans(ACT)ing with literature provides a forum for adolescents and pre-service teachers to project their voice beyond the school walls and out into the community at large.

The collaborative creation of the zine is but one way that English language arts teachers and students can participate and contribute in the literary digital dialogue based on their own inquiry and experiences. Pre-service educators need to see beyond the mechanics of technology as tools and toward what those tools can offer as inquiry grounded in experience. This continues to be a critical component of the tenet of the new literacies in education as Bruce writes:

> Our task is not to prepare them to be components of the global machine, nor to shrink from it, but to help them engage that world as informed participants and critics. Beyond any specific imperatives, the new literacies highlight the central role that language and cultural values have always had in education. Thus, as we move into the fast-paced, multimedia, internationalized 21st century, the needs in literacy education direct us to earlier conceptions of learning grounded in ordinary experience and social concerns (18).

Re-Writing, Re-Thinking, Re-Staging: Holes

The use of multiliteracies in the classroom can take many

forms. Within the contextual framing of an on-line literary magazine or "zine," the inter-textual possibilities for creating what Lankshear and Knobel call "scenarios," are at once freeing and challenging ("Attention" 34). For the teacher, it means giving students the time, place, and materials to collaboratively design and implement their chosen interpretive response to the literature under study. Since my pre-service teachers are studying adolescent literature, the focus of one of our multimodal zine responses is to Louis Sacchar's fanciful and complex adolescent novel *Holes*.

In addition to discussion and writing responses to the novel, students are given the task of scriptwriting – using their knowledge of the complex plot, coupled with the underlying provocative theme of the role of destiny or fate. This stimulates the students to ask "what-if" questions, which in turn provokes the writing and triggers ideas about staging and ultimately performance. In nine hours, spread over a period of three weeks, the students conjure a scenario and decide to re-write the ending of the novel by changing the pattern of the action.

Within a multimodal response to literature, the text is not abandoned; it is extended. The students extract the lyrics sung to Stanley's great-great-grandfather in the old country and attach a melody to it to use in their performance. Re-creating the scene calls for playing the part, demanding students find and don costumes, speak in voices they have thus far only imagined. Stepping inside of the roles allows students to embody the characters, feelings, thoughts and actions, leading to a deeper transaction with literature.

The final videotaped performance takes place in the experimental theatre space, providing the students with a professional dramatic setting. Theatre lights, a fog machine, and a real stage add credibility to the moment as students lose themselves in performance for the

final time, etching their transaction on digital film to be placed within the fluid digital pages of our zine.

Becoming Stargirl: A Catwalk In Her Shoes

Jerry Spinelli's adolescent novel *Stargirl* captures the essence of the barriers cultivated by peer group pressures to conform in high school. As noted by the fluctuating popularity and rejection Stargirl Carraway faces at Mica High School, standing out, whether through fashion statements or everyday behavior, is risky business in adolescence, where fitting in means succumbing to the social norm. For their zine contribution, my students teamed up to put on a Stargirl Carraway fashion show in order to reveal the daring side of Stargirl's exploits within Mica High. They relive the moments in the text where Stargirl appears in shocking costume-like digs, reprising her cafeteria appearance in a grass skirt where she serenaded the students accompanied by her ukulele, flaunting outrageous sunflower tights, wide-hooped yellow ball gown for the school prom, and kimono outfit and blonde hair extensions. These and other Stargirl Carraway images are highlighted within the staged fashion show.

To prepare for the video, students write the script, taking excerpts directly from the text to highlight the descriptive passages about her clothing within a running commentary as hosts of the fashion show. Two students carefully select music to match the ambience of each outfit (guided by the rich descriptions in the text) to embody the bold character of Stargirl as she lived through her confrontations with the rest of her high school class in each situation. Models meticulously prepared for each presentation of Stargirl's outfits, using clothing and accessories that were hunted down in local rummage sales, thrift shops and outgrown closets and basements.

One of the students employed at a local dance studio received permission to stage the show there for the final videotaped performance. A mock runway designed with leftover Christmas lights and masking tape glitters under a disco ball as mirrors along the walls of the studio duplicate the images of the models walking up and down the catwalk. The moderators of the event describe each scene in vivid detail, taking their cues directly from the text just as Stargirl appeared in each scene in the novel.

The becoming of Stargirl Carraway for the pre-service teachers threw them back to their own adolescent remembrances of the role that clothing plays in the formative identity of young people, provoking discussion of how society and the media dictate our fashion sense and downplay our unique individual sense in choosing how we clothe and decorate our bodies.

Puzzleman: Discovering the Art of the Vignette in House on Mango Street

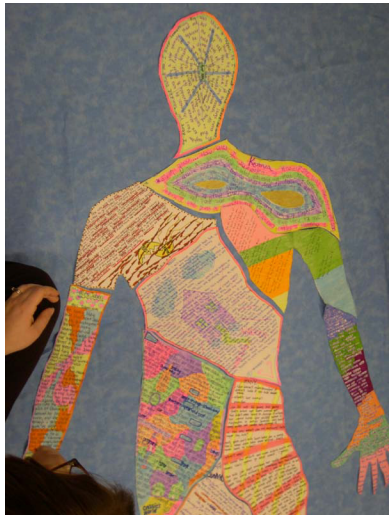
As a prelude to a zine contribution in a practicum intensive course for pre-service English teachers, we read and discussed Sandra Cisneros's coming of age novel about a young Latino girl finding her identity in *The House on Mango Street*. Since the novel intricately connects a series of vignettes concerning the people and community surrounding Esperanza's life while she grew up, we decided to parallel our class project in the following ways:

1. To appreciate the art of the vignette as a literary form, the students would each write a brief vignette recounting a personal encounter from their childhood that left an indelible impression on them.
2. To symbolize our class as a learning community, we would not only share the vignettes with each other, but also inscribe them on pieces of cloth that would be assembled in the shape of one of the students in the classroom.
3. To highlight our project as a collaborative transaction with the literature, we would perform the vignettes, illustrating the making of puzzleman and explaining briefly how this represented our learning and dialogic exchange with other pre-service English teachers.

This two-week project became intensified as the image of puzzleman began to grow with the crafting and reworking of the student narratives. A volunteer from the class had his form traced on the floor onto a canvas-like cloth with an iron-on background. Another student carefully dissected the shape of "puzzleman" into the number of students in our cohort (fifteen) and another student cut the shapes out and handed each member of the class a piece of the puzzle. Their intent was to handwrite their vignette on the cloth pieces and decorate them with an assortment of col-

orful pens and markers. The task facing the students during the next class period was to assemble puzzleman and iron him onto cloth for the making of a video in which students would perform their vignettes and frame their rationale for creating this project. One student serenaded the narratives with his guitar. This musical interlude was spliced with a background of conga drumming, during which the scene shifted to students assembling puzzleman. The flurry of activity and excitement in the classroom cannot be appreciated here as it is a multimodal performance, but it can be accessed now in the final i-movie posted on the zine. Behind a backdrop of music, student narrative and collaborative storycloth reflect the complexities of reflecting on our own experiences as we weave a multimodal representation of identity through image, music, narrative and videography.

The puzzleman project began as a way to transact with literature, and indirectly reconnected and extended our classroom community. The inquiry promoted an interplay of reading, writing and reflection, while reprocessing experience through performance. And art, music, narrative and videography fulfilled their potential as multimodal portals for each student's unique vision of and transaction with *The House on Mango Street*.



Concluding Thoughts

The multimodal projects brought to fruition in what is now an on-going project within our literary magazine, *Intuitive Roots: Visual/Verbal Literary Meanderings*, have connected my students with innovative ways of transacting with literature, and transferring those transactions onto a digital platform, one which will hopefully touch and inspire others to work and play like we do, in a dialogic rich learning environment. Maxine Greene's rejection of the belief that "all problems, all certainties, can be resolved. All we can do… is cultivate multiple ways of seeing and multiple dialogues in a world where nothing stays the same" is central to digital expression and English education (16).

Multimodal transaction with literature can be a pathway for English educators and students to cultivate multiple ways of knowing while entering the medium of the digital world. The new literacies are here to stay and with them the need for teachers to be aware of their critical place in the classroom. Furthermore, multimodal literacies, which have long been valued by arts-based literacy practitioners, are now seen as a critical piece of teaching in what Cope and Kalantzis call "a design for social futures" (234). I assert the need to embrace the critical extension of our notion of literacy and align our school-based practices to include multimodalities. As one who listens to the voices of my students, I find it necessary to support the intertextuality constantly evolving in a changing world. The possibilities are as endless as the themes and lessons we encounter through our literary travels. And while critical and imaginative interchange will guide our navigation as we chart our course, that which is eternal about the text will live on.

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Teaching Richard III: The Politics of Performance and Assessment

William D. Dyer and Scott Hall

Reasons for never introducing high school students to Shakespeare's *Richard III* abound. Let's extrude a few of them, shall we? First, if students were only going to establish contact with Shakespeare once in their high school years, they might submit to many more accessible options. Granted, *Romeo and Juliet* has become virtually a cliché within the sophomore and junior-year curriculum, and its pairing with the redoubtable *West Side Story* is nearly guaranteed now to limit and depreciate the possibilities in Shakespeare's play like touring England on the web trivializes a person's contact with real English landscapes and what being in them actually means.

But still others—*Macbeth*, *Hamlet*, even *Midsummer Night's Dream*—probably merit students' and teachers' attention more than *Richard III* and, besides being all about our students in question, afford wonderful opportunities for introducing them to Shakespeare's mastery in character realization, matchless poetic expression, and Elizabethan and Jacobean conventions.

Besides, those of us who have read and taught *Richard III* know its difficulties—its tremendous length; the many long and windy speeches that require a running scorecard to keep their speakers straight; a fabric of a play that seems built more for direct and arch addresses (and even asides) to the audience rather than consistently spirited and coherent dialogue; a series

of conventions that seem to owe their origin to a much more medieval sensibility than the tragedies I have mentioned earlier in this paragraph—the almost "wooden Indian" stereotype of a Margaret figure that clanks before us as a vengeful ghost; the extended dream sequences in 5.3 in which already dead characters alternate speaking glowingly and damningly to the sleeping Richmond and Richard, the hand-wringing and endlessly evil-scheming "Machiavel" figure in Richard who approaches us in the first scene as a morality Vice-figure straight off a guild cart participating in an important event within the liturgical calendar.

And, if that's not enough, the play seems to lurch along like a punch-drunk prize fighter; of course we know that it's a revenge play, but who *are* all of these people? Who *are* they to each other? Isn't it a *fait accompli* that Richard will crash and burn by the end, given that he declares himself as indisputably and irredeemably evil from the first words of "This is the winter of our discontent"? What's to be learned from a thoroughly evil agenda other than the creative means by which Richard clears the stage of self-avowed upstanding and protesting victims, including the killing of a brother, the gratuitous seduction of a grieving widow of a young victim of Richard in the process of accompanying the body of another of Richard's victims, Henry VI, on the way to his burial, and the slaughter of a couple of innocent kids, one of whom appears to be the next in line for the crown of England? The play seems, on the face of it, an awful mess whose only discernible center is the virtuoso Richard, treating us to a medley of his greatest hits. Is that, as Peggy Lee intoned, all there is?

But there are *lots* of reasons for considering teaching *Richard III*, and it's worth traversing the afore-mentioned difficulties in order to open up some of the real lights of this dramatic experience. The play is a wonderful opportunity to "demystify" Shakespeare. That is, many of our students (and many of us!) approach Shakespeare with great trepidation. He's a god or at least an oracle, for Christ's sake, predisposed against making a mistake or having his characters or plots (actually *those* belong to many others!) or character interactions called into question.

And, of course, that's silly. Shakespeare can be seen to

be developing and maturing into his craft, just like those of us engaged in the teaching enterprise. Just like us, he has his good and bad days. But, most particularly, as Shakespeare is becoming comfortable with his playwriting function, peering down the alley outside the Globe to see people stream into the Swan to watch Christopher Marlowe's latest production, and trying to master the theatre conventions of the times, Shakespeare is unabashedly stealing like hell, imitating what works and fills the company cash box, and is keeping his ear to the street in order to keep the Lord Chamberlain's Men afloat, put people in the Globe's seats, and operate within a repertory system that placed tremendous demands on playwrights and actors (and sometimes, dependent upon the degree of efficiency with which members of a company have fully mastered a particular play, the audience as well!).

The bottom line here is that several of Shakespeare's early plays are flawed, often extremely derivative, and sometimes imperfect rip-offs of other playwrights' successful products. These early plays always, though, show us the budding genius of Shakespeare, a kind of diamond in the rough as it were, while allowing us glimpses of the theatre of the time. And *Richard III* occurs right at the end of that apprenticeship, beyond the unfortunate but blackly-funny-as-all-get-out *Titus Andronicus* of 1594 as well as the almost unstage-able (for fear of placing modern audiences in a group coma) *Henry VI* trilogy of the very early '90's. It's clear that he's created a leading character of great dynamism and charisma in Richard, and he's gotten beyond much of the almost universal declamatory delivery of lines by many of his characters in the Henry plays, but he's still stuck, it seems, in some of the most overused early Elizabethan conventions, nor does he seem to have progressed to the double plot phase of 1598 and beyond that shows him arraying characters in almost ensemble form and intermingling blank verse and prose speeches in very intentional ways.

So *Richard III* is a transitional play, situated between the earliest and worst stuff by Shakespeare and the onset of his brilliant phase. There's much to learn from looking at such a play, not the least of which is that Shakespeare is *human*, learning on the

fly as a quick but imperfect study of what is occurring so dizzyingly around him, adjusting to what provably draws crowds, and finding his feet. And demystifying Shakespeare and being able to laugh at what doesn't work or gasp at what so startlingly *does* gets us—teachers and students—closer to Shakespeare and prepares us to claim our selves when the play reflects them back to us.

The Assessment Piece— "To be or not to be, that is the question . ."

But that's not the only reason to teach it. What I've just been doing in the far too long and windy last couple of paragraphs is assess the relative quality of Shakepeare's *Richard III*. Imagine the temerity! But, what the heck, I'm a card-carrying grown-up and a teacher to boot whom my students expect to assess *them* six ways from Sunday. In fact, the kind of assessments I run of classes I teach at Minnesota State University on my desperate way toward determining what my students have learned may be flying out of control. Assessment isn't nonsense from where I sit; heck, I've delivered conference papers on the subject of assessment, and I've helped to run assessment workshops that attempted to show other faculty members the virtues of effective assessment.

The problem, though, is that assessment may have taken on a life of its own. Just ask my pedagogical comrade in arms and frustration, Scott Hall, how many trees he consumes in documenting his assessment of his students' performance in his English classes. And ask him again how much time he spends on testing what his students have and have not learned. A lot of this, he says, is done because it's mandated—no child's behind left behind—and Scott must adjust his teaching accordingly.

Of course, students understand what they're being subjected to as well. And, they may also have learned that all of those assessments have coalesced into a fairly irrefutable series of statements about who they are, where they are going, what their capabilities are, and the kinds of educational and professional choices that lie open to them. If assessment sounds like a strait jacket or jail cell, I may have overstated the case, but

only for effect, and not by much. If abused or waged in behalf of people whose interests deviate far from educational, assessment could become an end in itself, undermine student creativity, reduce the world to a set of right and wrong answers, and deprive students of the opportunity of learning how to ask questions that have no easy answers. Even worse, if students catch on to the "assessment game" and become savvy at how to play it, high school and general education college classes might just degenerate into cynical role-playing activities.

On a number of levels, that's what's going on in *Richard III*. A very self-interested kind of assessment has been levied against Richard before the play has even begun—it's happened in Shakespeare's historical sources, one of which is Thomas More's *History of King Richard III*.[1] As the play begins, Richard appears before us in full possession of that assessment, knowing that the die is cast against him ever being able to overturn it. As Richard intones his "this is the winter of my discontent" soliloquy and determines to outdo the badness of that assessment, it's no stretch that our students ought to be able to see themselves inscribed all over this play.

Historical Texts

However, before students can begin to see themselves in Richard and *Richard III*, they need to acquaint themselves with a little history. This, like brussel sprouts, is likely to go down hard initially. A high number of students have developed a distaste—even disdain—for any kind of history. After all, it's not *them*, not *now*, they complain; it's covered with the dust of irrelevance.

Their ignorance of history applies particularly to their own, and our students aren't alone in this regard—many of us, as teachers and parents, operate blithely with our headlights off when it comes to knowing our own history. It's amazing to hear the "founding fathers'" names being taken in vain to support any/every position without any real knowledge of who they were, who they were to each other, and what they believed in. But, when it comes to knowing something beyond our own country's brief and recent history, students are truly likely to balk. And, while

knowing about the events behind the actions of Shakespeare's play—it is, after all, a "history" play—isn't everything or even a prerequisite to entrance into Richard's world, it's illuminating.

Here's why. A tremendous welter of events occurring between the years of 1483 and 1485 spill one upon another into this play—that period surrounding the death of Edward IV, Richard's older brother; Richard's infinitesimally short regency of the Prince of Wales until his and his brother's murders in the Tower; the short and contentious reign of Richard, followed by Henry Richmond's entrance (the future Henry VII and the first of several Tudor kings and queens culminating in Shakespeare's time with Elizabeth) upon the English scene, and a final fight over the crown in the battle at Leicester where Richard uttered his famous cry "a horse, a horse, my kingdom for a horse" and fell to Richmond.

In fact, that's one of the major fascinations that Shakespeare develops within the play-text—not only has Shakespeare shrunk three huge years into a three and a half-hour theatre experience, but he's swept lots of issues well beyond those years into the play, too. He means for the audience to feel the breakneck speed with which Richard makes things happen for the first four acts and then himself to feel the speed of events broken beyond his control and boring down upon him. Any reader or viewer of the play unaware of that critical time period will probably remain untouched by Shakespeare's intention.

But an appreciation of this potboiler of a play and the speed with which it unfolds depends on at least a minor grasp of earlier events that precede *Richard III* by anywhere from thirty to eighty-five years. Included among the bloody events of those times are some, not nearly all, of the following: the Wars of the Roses, fought between the years of 1455 and 1485; the end of the 100 Years War between the French and English that resulted in England losing all of the lands in France that it had won largely under Henry V up to 1421; the birth of the future Henry VI, only six months old when his illustrious father died, throwing his administration into the hands of those more loyal to their own interests while Henry VI grew into his mentally feeble and incompetent majority; Henry VI's marriage to

Margaret of Anjou, the Margaret of Shakespeare's play who not only wore Henry's pants but often led her own forces into battle in them, tried to rally French support for Henry VI's government in the 1450's during the civil wars ultimately won by the Yorkists in 1460, and agonized over her husband's murder in the tower and her only son's death on the battlefield; the wayward loyalties of Richard's other brother, the Duke of Clarence, who, perhaps largely due to his marriage to a daughter of Lord Neville, Margaret's closest advisor, briefly allied himself with Margaret against his brothers before seeing the light—Edward actually did have him arrested after ascending the throne and gave the order for his execution; a fairly undistinguished administration of Edward IV marked mostly by marital engagements with several women, a very public and dirty affair with a woman named Shore, and a decision to marry decidedly lower in class with Elizabeth and fill his cabinet with Elizabeth's relatives and favorites who, by her device, had been rewarded with titles and wealth. And, when the smoke clears in 1485, a very politically-minded Henry Richmond leads an army he's assembled in France against Richard, and, after defeating and killing him, embarks on a reign that sees the establishment of the very frightening Star Chamber (and a kind of secret police to go along with it), more repressive taxation, and a more centralized government. It wouldn't be a popular reign, but it would, at least, be an efficient tightening of royal prerogatives by a studied Machiavellian.[2]

Behind all of these events lies the most telling action of all—Richard II's forced deposition of the English crown in 1399 to Henry Bolingbroke, the future Henry IV (father of Henry V and grandfather of Henry VI), and his murder most probably carried out by Bolingbroke. It's hard to contemplate a more cataclysmic event than the murder of a legitimate sitting king—Shakespeare would probably have believed so, his Queen Elizabeth having spent all of her then forty-six year reign under an order of excommunication and as the object of many plots,

foreign and domestic, to divest her of her crown. The ambiguity of who would ultimately succeed her created a real national anxiety. In fact, all of Shakespeare's histories spin from this single event, and realizing its importance enables the knower to begin to grasp the providential view of history (that is, the notion of God as shaper of history and future events through his earthly agents, and avenger against the violent removal of one of them) that Shakespeare is enacting in *Richard III*.

But there's still more. It's Richard. It's about who he is represented to be in the play and who he actually *was*. And, although finding the *real* Richard is likely to introduce the seeker to a minefield of very partisan pleading and questionable information—it's hard to imagine a more biased web site than the one assembled by the Richard the Third Society![3]—some patience and powers of discrimination will reveal some important truths about the real Richard that are at odds with Shakespeare's Richard. Was Richard actually physically misshapen and born with a full set of choppers?—not likely, beyond carrying one shoulder lower than the other as a result of brandishing a heavy broadsword very efficiently from the back of a horse over an illustrious military career. Was he a calculating and delighted doer of evil?—probably not, certainly when it came to his very even-handed and humane administration of the North over so many years, during which time he's praised for extending legal redress to so many who had previously had no access to it. Did he plan and carry out the killing of his brother, the Duke of Clarence?—no, since he was probably out of town at the time and, when he found out it was going to happen, rushed to London to attempt, unsuccessfully, to talk Edward out of it. Did he kill Henry VI in the Tower?—it's impossible to say, except that this probably would have been Edward's call, not the very young (nineteen in 1460) Richard's. Did he kill his own wife Anne?—the facts of the relationship argue against it, since they'd been married happily for many years in what appears at all counts as a love match and suffered in mourning at the unexpected death of their only son, that death being supposed to be

the reason for Anne's passing not long after. And—here's the real kicker—does history hold Richard responsible for the murders of the two young princes in the Tower?—lots of ink, both in the interests of fact-finding and fiction-creating, have been spilled to answer the question; the kids were no doubt killed, but, even though extravagant detection mechanisms like carbon dating have been employed, no definite answer has emerged.

So what? Why should we—or our students—care? Well, because a quite intentionally *fictional* construction of Richard has been front-loaded into this play. More than that, and we'll get to this a bit later, this fictional construction pre-exists any action in the play—it exists and has been almost universally accepted as who Richard *is* before he utters word one of his opening soliloquy. And it's important to note that a character delivering an extended soliloquy to the audience before we've seen him say or do *anything* is an odd and rare circumstance; in fact, I've found no other instance in any other play by Shakespeare. Has Richard *earned* this construction, real or fictional, by anything he might have done? We don't know. All we *do* know is that Richard confronts us with a portrait of malevolence that is insuperable—like a Karl Rove political attack ad, a series of general catch phrases repeated so persistently that they have become Richard's reality. And Richard, seeing no way to dissociate whatever his real self may be from this demonizing verbal one, determines to *be* it, with a vengeance.

Did Shakespeare *know* that he was working with a false conception of Richard, and, if he did, did he care? Again, no ultimate answer exists. But we know a few things. First, we know—and our students should gain at least fragmentary exposure to—the primary "historical" source of Shakespeare's Richard: Thomas More's early sixteenth-century *History of King Richard III*. If objectivity is a bad thing, then this is a great historical source. More paints within it the vilest picture of Richard and blames him for every possible offense short of the temptation of Adam and Eve. Any close comparison of Shakespeare's play and More's *History* will unmistakably reveal the extent to which Shakespeare is indebted to More for the portrayal of Richard as

irremediably evil, egoistical, physically ugly, and almost limitless in his talent for inventing ways to entrap and dispatch his victims.

More's *History* is, indeed, so broad in demonizing Richard that it's funny, and, perhaps, intentionally so. More was a brilliant man, a "man for all seasons" as a Christian humanist capable of writing wonderfully insightful and piercing and self-protectively veiled satires against misused authority such as *The Utopia*.[4] But, besides being a dedicated religious man wearing a hair shirt under his clothes, he was also, sometimes reluctantly, a practical politician attempting to soften and humanize the actions and policies of his sovereign, Henry VIII. And, of course, his dedication to principle over the issue of Henry's divorce to marry Elizabeth I's mother cost More his life. Not the kind of educated, enlightened guy one would expect to wholeheartedly, delightedly, and uncomplicatedly enter into the writing of a piece of vitriolic propaganda like his *History* unless he had other less obvious intentions. Neither did he appear to have had high regard for "historical scholars" like Polydore Vergil whom Henry VII had hired as dedicated demonizers of Richard III after the fact and apologists for his own administration since entering England from France and leading an insurrection that ended with the killing of a king.[5] Sound vaguely familiar?

Whatever More may have been doing with his history, he had spent most of his life doing *real* scholarship and publishing it. He knew the difference between history, drama, and self-promotion, and a man of such proven balance in his religious and political views would not have intentionally been a party to the dissemination of lies—clearly, his dearest friend and fellow Christian humanist Erasmus wasn't when he laid bare the Catholic Church's attempts to intimidate him into ceasing his constructive attacks against it.[6] Importantly, More never sought to publish his *History*; it was published well after his death in 1557.

Whatever his *History* was to More, whatever enjoyment it may have afforded him in parodying the style of that clutch of promoters of Henry VII that were contemporary with More in the court, so compelling and theatrical was that fictional portrait of Richard that More drew that it became the version of "histo-

ry" that later historians like Hall and Holinshed based their own histories upon. Thus, the perpetuation of a fictional construction of Richard that passes for history at a time—the 1580's and 1590's—when the English citizenry, flushed with the victories over the Armada and the Catholic Anti-Christ, can't get enough of representations of a country newly growing into a sense of itself.

So, where was Shakespeare on the question of the reliability of his source? Who knows? And it doesn't matter anyway, for two reasons—the theatricality of the character of Richard ("there's no business like show business") as represented in More's *History* would have likely drawn Shakespeare to it like a magnet, as did Richard's potentially rich relationship with "audiences." By "audiences" I mean not just cast members and ticket-holders who watch Richard perform his nefarious deeds, but those who, considerably earlier than the commission of those deeds, have colluded in the creation of a character and stage identity for Richard, for reasons that may be apparent later in this discussion.

Shakespeare clearly saw the theatrical possibilities in building a play around More's character—such a hand-wringing delighter in evil would be guaranteed to fill the Globe. And Shakespeare didn't have to believe in the historical truth of the character to imagine the magnetic relationship it could establish with its audience.[7] And Shakespeare might have been attracted to staging the moral ambiguities inherent in a Richard character capable of being drawn broadly like Marlowe's Barabas—physically reprehensible and so exceptionally different from all others around him; psychologically complex, illimitably devious and creative in his plots to strike against his detractors.

The tradition of the stage Machiavel would have recommended such a character to Shakespeare, but Shakespeare would have realized that Marlowe's Barabas character (and the Richard character he was in the act of conceiving) exceeded the hand-wringing and aside-delivering stage type that audiences had loved to hate. Marlowe and Shakespeare both imagined characters who looked ugly and loved to do evil, who were clearly isolates and outsiders, but who were inspired to be so by a group of insiders capable of doing what the ugly evil characters did (but with not

nearly as much style and panache). These insiders' interests seem best served by constructing and imposing upon their respective enemies an evil role that, whether these characters wished to accept it or not, *became* who they were. Pretty powerful stuff.

Ugly and evil characters earlier than Barabas and Richard hadn't been designed to occupy the lead in a theatrical production—they'd heretofore been merely stage devices to be dispatched at the appropriate time. And, even more importantly, both Marlowe and Shakespeare invested their evil characterizations with something no two-dimensional Machiavel was capable of demonstrating—a complex interior, individuality, the capacity to change and grow through the production, if only a little. A character, no matter what evil deeds he has committed, becomes human when he begins, only for a moment, to reflect on the consequences of his actions and his responsibilities for them. And, when an admittedly evil character like Barabas or Richard become even slightly human, we then see them as well as those insiders who had gained such an advantage by isolating and demonizing these evil characters in a considerably more complex way.

Performance and Assessment—Bringing Our Students' Text Into the Play

And that appears to be what Shakespeare may have used More's version of Richard to portray. There are two related issues, and exciting and absolutely contemporary ones for our students, that Shakespeare's *Richard III* stages, and they are inextricably related—performance and assessment. For us and for Shakespeare, the issue of performance is two-fold. First, there's the idea of play, acting a part in a production, or improvisational role-playing. It's what Shakespeare's characters do while they're on stage. But reading and re-constructing Hamlet has taught us that "performance" is the social role that some people cloak themselves in to hide their true intentions. Such social performances can confuse and alienate a character like Hamlet who, in his extended adolescence, is trying to discover himself and resist the imposition on his complex character of a social role and expectations that powerful others want him to play. And they'll

win more power over Hamlet if they can make him play it. On the other hand, Hamlet derives his only true peace and happiness in the world of the play from theatre and the visiting company of players—there's safety and clarity in recalling and reciting a set speech, of occupying the role of a theatrical character whose lines, gestures, and relationship to other characters in a production can be mastered and will not change. Play offers stability, control, engagement in a group of similarly-interested players, and the chance to escape, if only briefly, from a very ambiguous world.

On the other hand, assessment constitutes the other side of performance. It's the press notices from critics that members of an acting company wait so anxiously to read after opening night. How were we? How did we do? What did the critics think? How did they rate our production in comparison to other shows of its type? Will the show produce good box office? What criteria did they use to evaluate us, and did those criteria seem fair?

But assessment, for us and our students, has become a much stickier wicket. Students probably understand—Scott and I did in the distant days when we were students—that they are being assessed nearly 100 percent of the time: by teachers in so many ways in each of their classes, in terms of their academic performance but also in terms of their attitude, maturity, sense of responsibility, social interactive abilities, leadership qualities, level and success of engagement in school-related activities, ability to follow directions, overall behavior, and on and on. And they have probably begun to catch on to the more subtle aspects of assessment in the schools—their subjection to batteries of tests that assess their intellectual development and aptitude for particular jobs and tasks. Even if they haven't paid attention to public policy, they know about "No Child Left Behind" and manic application of standardized testing to measure what they have learned and whether that "what" is sufficient to push them and their school over the rung of assessment acceptability (and funding!). They may or may not know that a "book" has been kept on each of them from the first day they've stepped inside a school building. Or that it gradually sketches in the details of an assessment "profile" that eventually will have a great deal to do

with what college they attend (if that profile determines that they are, indeed, "college material") and the person they will become.

Sound Orwellian? And we know, beyond the obviously pernicious features of this assessment system that seems designed to drive the majority of us toward the safe, soft, cream-filled center of mediocrity (where we and our schools are judged to be "okay"), that assessment means something far more complex for our students. The culture of a student body is driven by sub-cultures or "cliques." Some of these we choose ourselves while some are obviously chosen for us by the way we look, and the length or style of our hair and our choice of clothes. There's invariably a kind of official or unofficial "board of review" consisting of extremely popular and attractive young people who oversee the way the student culture sifts out. There are intentionally established pecking orders among the constellation of cliques in any given school operating with the same brutal efficiency as a prison.

And assessment rules. Decisions of assessment result in the identification of clique labels like "the collegiates," "the geeks," "the jocks," and "the greasers," and I'll restrict myself here to the labels I can safely use in polite conversation. Most of us still possessed of short-term memory remember how painful much of this sub-culture assessment was and how it operated on foregone conclusions about things we couldn't change about ourselves. Most of us wouldn't repeat high school even knowing what we do now because of memories of how the niche determined for us to occupy caused us to be treated by others—the options ranged anywhere from acceptance to exclusion, an impossibly busy social calendar to harassment, mockery, or, worse still, victimization by bullies. It took, in my imperfect memory, a very rare person to be permitted to cross the acknowledged boundaries that separated one student sub-culture from another and to gain acceptance and membership in both, or more than two. As the well-known grunge song title goes, "it smells like team spirit." Or, much more to the point, the picture I've sketched of the student culture of a typical school that operates by an implicit reliance upon as-

sessment might summon up ominous images of Columbine.[8]

So what's the relationship between performance and assessment here? It's really complex and intertwined. The movers and the shakers of the larger group agree at least tacitly on the roles that must be acceptably played to gain admission into the most desirable sub-groups. And, make no mistake about it, those rules may be as strict as any required to occupy any conventional stage type to be played in a Shakespearean production—the "look," the dress, the "talk," the music signature, the activities are all requisite evaluative criteria for "belonging." And, conversely, the movers and shakers survey the scene and attach less than complimentary labels—stereotypes—to the behavior, dress, hygienic habits, drinking or drug preferences, speech, attachment to loud and fast vehicles of peers they find disreputable or distasteful. The labels, once attached, become virtually impossible to shake. They become, for some, tickets to social ostracism or alienation. For others, the assessments become self-fulfilling prophecies. That is to say, if I can't shake the label—if I'm going to be stuck with a limiting evaluation of myself even though I recognize that evaluation as a frightful oversimplification of who I really am with no hopes of changing it except by moving out of town to a new school (and we all know how *that's* likely to play out!), then maybe I'll just dedicate myself with a fine and applied and anti-social intention to *becoming* the most frightening expression of that label that anyone could possibly imagine. Oops, the spectre of Columbine looms again.

It's our view that, in order to make Richard and *Richard III* meaningful and relevant to our students, we need to enable them to see that *they* are in this play and, although it's perhaps a huge stretch to possibly conceive of themselves in the hedge-hogged and abortive and hunch-backed and evil-breeding personage of Richard (trust me, the majority already sees themselves as more than a little hedge-hogged!), in the character of Richard, too. Preparing them to make those contemporary connections from something four hundred and ten years ago about a set of political circumstances about five hundred and twenty

years old requires that we engage them in a couple of writing prompts and have them share what they've written on these prompts with other class members. We have currently dedicated about five minutes each to the first four of these prompts:

> 1.Are there social groups or cliques at your high school, and, if so, could you identify as many of them as you can with the names that are used to refer to them?
> 2. What group or groups do you see *you* fit in best? Why?
> 3. What group do *others* see you fitting in with? Why?
> 4. What assessment criteria do you understand your having to fill in order to gain admission to your group?

The Play text is the Thing

But, once we're beyond students' responses, where do we start? Actually, just about anywhere, but, without hesitation, the opening soliloquy first. And those prompts might actually make this window into Richard's soul more luminous, more accessible. To sustain the metaphor of assessment within the soliloquy, Richard's attitude may be sour or alienated here because his older brother has all the toys, the prettiest girls in the senior class, and has named himself the president of partying. All serious business has been placed on hold, says Richard as he refers to either his own special ironically royal "winter of *our* discontent made glorious summer by this son of York." The "our" word is tellingly sustained as Richard darkly mocks a court dedicated to silliness and solipsism:

> Now are our brows bound with victorious
> wreaths,
> Our bruised arms hung up for monuments,
> Our stern alarums chang'd to merry meetings,
> Our dreadful marches to delightful measures.
> (*RIII* 1.1.5-8)[9]

Instead of responsible leadership to heal the wounds of state after a long and bitterly contested civil war, members of Edward's privileged clique of insiders have isolated themselves to watch the king dance "nimbly in a lady's chamber/To the lascivious pleasing of a lute" (*RIII* 1.1.12-13).

In the next twenty-five lines of the soliloquy, though, Richard indicates just how far outside his brother's privileged clique (the sardonic "our") he has been cast, how he has been defined as an outsider, and how that alienated outside position has provoked him to strike back by seeking revenge:

> But I, that am not shap'd for sportive tricks,
> Nor made to court an amorous looking-glass;
> I, that am rudely stamp'd, and want love's
> majesty
> To strut before a wanton ambling nymph;
> I, that am curtail'd of this fair proportion,
> Cheated of feature by dissembling nature,
> Deform'd, unfinish'd, sent before my time
> Into this breathing world, scarce half made up,
> And that so lamely and unfashionable"
> That dogs bark at me as I halt by them—
> Why, I, in this weak piping time of peace,
> Have no delight to pass away the time,
> Unless to see my shadow in the sun
> And descant on mine own deformity.
> And therefore, since I cannot prove a lover
> To entertain these fair well-spoken days,
> I am determined to prove a villain
> And hate the idle pleasures of these days. (*RIII*
> 1.1.14-31)

The rest of his speech is very subject-specific—he's thought rather concretely who he'll be directing his long-cultivated rage at (the crops are definitely in!): it's the schematic of a stereotypical revenge play (foment a hatred between Edward and Clarence, imprison and arrange the

murder of his brother Clarence who has played both sides against the middle during the wars, arrogate the stereotypical role of Machiavel and be "subtle, false and treacherous").

But the heart of the soliloquy portrays—and we must believe it if soliloquies provide our only real opportunity to see into the soul of Shakespeare's characters—an identity that has been encased in a most theatrical stereotype delivered by a voice that sounds only too aware of having been cast in such a broadly stereotypic and limiting self. He's aware of the irony. The "mirror" image that recurs in relation to Richard at several junctures is not used idly here. Most of us don't see ourselves in the mirror; rather, we see our own deficiencies, as we perceive them, when measured against the unrealistic standard of those who don't have them. That is, we may not see what we want to see—a reflection of what we see in others we wish to emulate.

Similarly, the verbal perception of self may also be a mirror—as Jaques Lacan explained it in his ground-breaking "mirror-phase" essay, we become alienated from ourselves once we've accessed the symbology of language.[10] That language system, managed by the controllers of language, projects the construction of reality (not my or your reality) prevalent in society and agreed upon by those that wield it. And that isn't Richard.

Could what he's telling us be literally true? Could he actually be a hunch-backed, stoop-shouldered, prematurely-born deformity equipped with a full set of teeth? Could he be so lame and unfashionable as to set the dogs to barking? Could *this* have been the youngest child that his mother had given birth to? Not likely. It certainly would be a prodigious feat for him to lead an army of horse soldiers into full battle with any hope of success in such a lop-sided state and still be able to manage his broad sword. Besides, the language seems too arch, too wildly theatrical to be taken as anything more than someone's most hyperbolic metaphor to express someone else's internal moral state. Is Richard a Vice figure, the kind of paste board construction that would play the devil's part in a medieval miracle play? The only way that this could be true is if these phrases had been repeated so frequently *ad nauseam* like

memorable sound bites over the length and breadth of a political stump that, eventually, fiction would finally become reality. Richard seems to be delivering the lines with no small amount of knowing irony. And faced with the prospect of living that stereotypical role, Richard promises to get even by radically enacting the part. His best defense, then, is a good offense.

Now, it would be *one* thing if Richard were the only offender, the only perpetrator of disorder, the only self-serving personality in the world of the play. If that were indeed the case, then the verbal construction of Richard as evil incarnate would be confirmed, regardless of whether the "evil" label arrived before Richard did. But a brief look at portions of the first four scenes in the play may convince students that the moral environment of the play is muddy at best. In 1.2, Richard views an apparently grieving Anne, her husband recently killed in the wars, escorting the body of her recently murdered father-in-law, Henry VI, to his burial. Under the circumstances, nothing could be more loathsome to Anne than the supposed murderer of both her husband and Henry, unless it be that murderer attempting to woo her to be his wife! And, one must say, Anne appears to have fully bought the stereotype that Richard has indicated is current in his soliloquy:

> Richard. Sweet Saint, for charity, be not so
> curst.
> Anne. Foul devil, for God's sake, hence, and
> trouble us not,
> For thou hast made the happy earth thy hell,
> Fill'd it with cursing cries and deep exclaims.
> If thou delight to view thy heinous deeds,
> Behold this pattern of thy butcheries.
> O gentlemen, see, see! dead Henry's wounds
> Open their congeal'd mouths and bleed afresh!
> Blush, blush, thou lump of foul deformity …
> (*RIII* 1.2.49-57)[11]

Bad stuff. An insuperable obstacle to overcome, her grief and rage. And she confronts Richard so defiantly. Yet it takes astonishingly few lines for Anne to move from damning epithets

like "homicide," "fouler toad," and "hedgehog" to a revolting turnabout as Richard offers her his sword with which to kill him:

> Anne. I would I knew thy heart.
> Richard. 'Tis figured in my tongue.
> Anne. I fear me both are false.
> Richard. Then never [was man] true.
> Anne. Well, well, put up your sword.
> Richard. Say then my peace is made.
> Anne. That shalt thou know hereafter.
> Richard. But shall I live in hope?
> Anne. All men, I hope, live so.
> Richard. Vouchsafe to wear this ring.
> Anne. To take is not to give. (*RIII* 1.2.192-202)

What's just happened here? And our students wish to know as well. In the space of a little over one hundred lines, Anne has caved. Because of personal weakness? Because her grief has left her vulnerable to Richard's amatory assault? It's difficult to know, and, after all, the play is about *speed*, the absolute break-neck swiftness with which Richard determines what to do and then enacts it. But, as Richard congratulates himself at the end of the scene, promises to rid himself of Anne at the first opportunity, and rushes to find a mirror that may confirm that he is not as ugly as advertised—"Upon my life, she finds (although I cannot)/Myself to be a marv'llous proper man" (*RIII* 1.2.253-54)—we're left with gnawing questions about Anne's moral compass.

But she's not the only one. The next scene, 1.3, terribly confuses the difficulty of knowing the good guys from the bad guys. King Edward is deathly ill, and his wife Elizabeth is discussing the subject with her brother Rivers, just one of the many family favorites and hangers-on that she's filled the court's roll with. Her self-concerned query?: "If he were dead, what would betide on me?" (*RIII* 1.3.6). In the ensuing conversation, it appears to be all about power, all about maintaining one's advantaged position, and not at all about the health and well-being of the state and its citizens.

Richard's stagy entrance stirs the contentious pot even more vigorously. His performance, most appropriately, will feature a wronged and offended and slighted Richard, misrepresented by his competitors for power. But, ironically, much of what Richard delivers so theatrically is spot on:

> They do me wrong, and I will not endure it!
> Who is it that complains unto the King
> That I, forsooth, am stern, and love them not?
> By holy Paul, they love his Grace but lightly
> That fill his ears with such dissentious rumors,
> Because I cannot flatter and look fair,
> Smile in men's faces, smooth, deceive, and cog,
> Duck with French nodes and apish courtesy,
> I must be held a rancorous enemy.
> Cannot a plain man live and think no harm,
> But thus his simple truth must be abus'd
> With silken, sly, insinuating Jacks? (*RIII* 1.3.42-53)

Certainly Richard is performing the role of a plain and harmless man, and it won't be the last time, but he's right that Elizabeth and her crew are nasty and self-serving backbiters. He doesn't hesitate to tell Grey, one of Elizabeth's sons, that he's speaking, among others, to "thee, that hast nor honesty nor grace" (*RIII* 1.3.55). We may doubt whether to take Richard's word about Elizabeth and her court that has left him "disgrac'd, and the nobility/Held in contempt, while great promotions/Are daily given to ennoble those/That scarce some two days since were worth a noble" or whether his words to Rivers about Elizabeth are to be fully believed: "She may help you to many fair preferments,/And then deny her aiding hand therein/And lay those honors on your high desert" (*RIII* 1.3.78-81, 1.3.94-96). But, if Richard is wrong, Elizabeth's and her family's arguments are weak or non-existent. Whatever Richard is doing here, or whatever role he had determined to perform, this court is a moral mess of self interest, wasted resources, and indolence.

And all of this, and more, becomes clear when Margaret arrives on the scene. Like a ghost hovering invisibly over the stage, Margaret observes and delivers a critique on this group's bickerings. She knows all of them, has lost her crown because of their actions and decisions, and, as she enters their midst like a wooden Indian pushed into place on a hand truck, she embarks upon the most theatricalized of the many theatrical roles performed by any character in the play. Interestingly, it's taken all of them no time to turn their vitriol on Margaret. None of them is exempted from Margaret's scathing review of *their* performances:

> What? Were you snarling all before I came,
> Ready to catch each other by the throat,
> And turn you all your hatred now on me?
> Did York's dread curse prevail so much with
> heaven
> That Henry's death, my lovely Edward's death,
> Their kingdom's loss, my woeful
> banishment,
> Should all but answer for that peevish brat?
> (*RIII* 1.3.187-92)

"Wrangling pirates" is a wonderful epithet to use on this turf-protecting bunch of individualists, and Margaret uses it as prelude to curses on Elizabeth, Rivers, Dorset, Lord Hastings, Buckingham, and, of course, Richard—in her view, the worst of this group only by degree. Her words to Richard recall Anne's stereotypical assessment, except here it's even more hyperbolic:

> Thou elvish-mark'd, abortive, rooting hog!
> Thou that wast seal'd in thy nativity
> The slave of nature and the son of hell!
> Thou slander of thy heavy mother's womb!
> Thou loathed issue of thy father's loins!
> Thou rag of honor! Thou detested—(*RIII*
> 1.3.227-32)

If ever there were an embodiment of Revenge in perfect line with the list of conventions affiliated with the traditional revenge tragedy, Margaret fits the bill. She's virtually that supernatural presence, returned from banishment (and the grave, actually, if we were reading *real* history), providing a clear list of wrongs and wrong-doers, a preview of coming attractions for the revenges that will need to be enacted to satisfy this shrill declamatory presence, and a sense of what it will take to establish justice in the play from a voice of moral clarity, Margaret seems to be it.

But Shakespeare has complicated our sense of Margaret, and students need to be invited to see this complication. Margaret can't escape blame for her actions during the wars no matter how loudly she rants—historically, this was a strong, intelligent woman, providing her supporters and her mentally weakened husband the leadership that they sorely needed. This was a woman who led men into battle. And, to use the fictionalized version of Margaret that Shakespeare created for the *Henry VI* plays, she is vicious, merciless, and capable of foul acts. Richard remembers the public humiliation that Margaret subjected his captured father to during the battle at Wakefield, how she had prepared a mockery of a crown out of a dirty piece of paper and set it on his head, presented him with a bloody napkin soaked with the blood of his second son (ordered murdered by Margaret), and took an active part in the group stabbing that followed:

> The curse of my noble father laid on thee
> When thou didst crown his warlike brows with
> paper,
> And with scorns drew'st rivers from his eyes,
> And then, to dry them, gav'st the Duke a clout
> Steep'd in the faultless blood of pretty
> Rutland—
> His curses then, from bitterness of soul
> Denounc'd against thee, are all fall'n upon thee;
> And god, not we, hath plagu'd thy bloody deed!
> (*RIII* 1.3.173-80)

It's important that the "Machiavel" Richard delivers these horrific truths about Margaret. They complicate the role of revenge and moral clarity she's representing. And that role is undercut, and the moral ambiguity of the play's environment even more muddied, by this brief exchange between Richard and Margaret following Margaret's interrupted phrase "Thou Detested--"

> Richard. Margaret!
> Margaret. Richard!
> Richard. Ha!
> Margaret. I call thee not.
> Richard. I cry thy mercy then; for I did think that
> thou hast call'd me all these bitter names.
> Margaret. Why, so I did, but look'd for no reply.
> O, let me make the period to my curse!
> Richard: 'Tis done by me, and ends in "Margaret." (*RIII* 1.3.233-38)

And the very self-interested Elizabeth momentarily finds herself on the same side as Richard when she gloats, "Thus have you breath'd your curse against yourself." Talk about contending assessments!

But the behaviors of still more people in this royal private club are rendered questionable, even while Richard has set the stage for his victimization of them. In 1.4, we meet brother Clarence, languishing in jail because of Richard and also, it seems, because of his older brother Edward. Informal assessment of Clarence and his self-referential use of language starts early, as he indicates that he has just awakened from a terrifying dream and his keeper makes the mistake of asking him to tell him about it. In typically hyperbolic language, Clarence embarks on an imaginative pot-boiler in which he is on a boat in the process of crossing the channel from France with Richard, looking back toward England and "cit[ing] up a thousand heavy times,/During the wars of York and Lancaster,/that had befall'n us" (*RIII* 1.4.14-

16). As they pace the deck, Clarence imagines that Richard, while stumbling, has managed to knock him out of the boat into "the tumbling billows of the main." It only gets better from there:

> O Lord, methought what pain it was to drown!
> What dreadful noise of [waters] in [my] ears!
> What sights of ugly death within [my] eyes!
> Methought I saw a thousand fearful wracks;
> A thousand men that fishes gnaw'd upon;
> Wedges of gold, great anchors, heaps of pearl,
> Inestimable stones, unvalued jewels,
> All scatt'red in the bottom of the sea:
> Some lay in dead men's skulls, and in the holes
> Where eyes did once inhabit, there were crept
> (As 'twere in scorn of eyes) reflecting gems,
> That woo'd the slimy bottom of the deep,
> And mock'd the dead bones that lay scatt'red by. (*RIII* 1.4.21-33)

When his keeper asks skeptically how Clarence could have had the time and presence to have observed the "secrets of the deep" so carefully, Clarence turns the verbal spigot back on and explains that his dream was extended beyond his death.

So, for the playgoer, there is no rest for the weary as Clarence painstakingly itemizes every detail of what followed:

> O then began the tempest to my soul!
> I pass'd (methought) the melancholy flood,
> With that sour ferryman which poets write of,
> Unto the kingdom of perpetual night.
> The first thing that there did greet my stranger soul
> Was my great father-in-law, renowned Warwick,
> Who spake aloud, "What scourge for perjury
> Can this dark monarch afford false Clarence?" (*RIII* 1.4.44-51)

After conveying the vivid visitation of the bloody shade of Henry VI's son Edward whom Clarence had killed at Tewksbury, Clarence describes "a legion of foul fiends" that bedeviled so loudly that he finally awoke believing that he was still residing in hell (*RIII* 1.4.58).

An incredibly long-winded utterance. Most theatrically delivered as if his audience were considerably larger than just his keeper. Clarence has infused much guilt in his rendition of his dream vision. He clearly has reason to feel guilty in fighting for the Yorkists, abandoning them for the Lancastrian side, and then rejoining once again the forces of his brother King Edward just in time to kill a very young and untested Lancastrian prince. And, his conscience not withstanding, this man *needs* to die, not just because his loyalty to either side is impossible to ascertain but because it's the only sure way to make him shut up.

We know that's going to happen presently as Brackenbury encounters the murderers commissioned by Richard to finish him off and reads the letter of surety they carry. All that's left is some wonderful comic business involving an overly voluble Clarence attempting earnestly to religiously convert the murderers. He almost succeeds in talking them out of the deed—"And are you yet to your own souls so blind/That you will war with God by murd'ring me?/O, sirs, consider, they that set you on/To do this deed will hate you for the deed" (*RIII* 1.4.252-55). But one of them finally acts to end Clarence's sermonizing with a stab in the back and a quick flip into a butt of malmsey. Certainly it's a murder. And it's wrong, no matter what Clarence may have done to deserve it. But, on the other hand, Richard may have done the larger audience a great favor by removing Clarence from the cast. This is murder by poetic justice, and there's great black comedy in the doing of it. If ever a character has been done away with as an act of assessment, Clarence is it.

As the play turns the corner into the second act, there's one more instance of assessment against those who've cast Richard as the play's Vice figure. In a way, it signals a brief return to the private royal cortege that Margaret had delivered her rant

to just a couple of scenes earlier. But, this time, a nearly dead Edward orders his bickering group of insiders to do the impossible: swear oaths of love and peace with their competitors, and to "dissemble not" in the process. The oaths nearly provoke laughter until Richard enters to burst their hypocritical bubble:

> Hastings. So thrive I, as I truly swear the like!
> [. . . . .]
> Rivers. And I, as I love Hastings with my heart!
> [. . . . .]
> Elizabeth. There, Hastings, I will never more
> remember
> Our former hatred, so thrive I and mine.
> [. . . . .]
> Dorset. This interchange of love, I here protest,
> Upon my part shall be inviolable.
> [. . . . .]
> Buckingham. When ever Buckingham doth
> turn his hate
> Upon your Grace (to the Queen), but with all
> duteous love
> Doth cherish you and yours, God punish me
> With hate in those where I expect most
> love!
> And most assured that he is a friend,
> Deep, hollow, treacherous, and full of guile
> Be he unto me! This do I beg of God
> When I am cold in love to you or yours.
> (*RIII* 2.1.11-40)

And, after swearing similarly that "'Tis death to me to be at enmity" and "thank[ing] my God for my humility," Richard shatters the peace and ensures that his brother Edward will die a guilt-ridden death soon by exposing Elizabeth's hypocrisy that Clarence be included in the love-fest: "Who knows not that the gentle Duke is dead?" (*RIII* 2.1.61, 73, 80).

There's no denying that Richard has authored Clar-

ence's murder, or that he has nothing but contempt for those he's shocked by his revelation. However, Edward agonizes over having actually given the execution order. And, in a long speech, he recalls only good about Clarence, even in his disloyalty, and he maligns the rest of the court for protecting their own interests by never speaking in Clarence's behalf to Edward:

> But for my brother not a man would speak,
> Nor I (ungracious) speak unto myself
> For him, poor soul. The proudest of you all
> Have been beholding to him in his life;
> Yet none of you would once beg for his life.
> O God! I fear thy justice will take hold
> On me and you, and mine and yours, for this.
> (*RIII* 2.1.127-33)

And he's right. There's no justice in this court—merely rampant individualism. And, as the violence is about to escalate, Edward's assessment of his court has nearly provided Richard the justification to act as God's scourge against a fairly nasty lot. Not that he needs an excuse.

Edward's death clears the way for Richard's virtuoso prosecution of revenge and his parallel rise to power nearly as quickly as one can aim and fire an automatic weapon. In rapid succession, Richard does away with Dorset and Gray and Hastings, behaving in self-assessed "formal Vice, Iniquity" fashion (*RIII* 3.1.82). And his undoing of Hastings is particularly adroit. Hastings—cocksure of himself and his supposed friendship with Richard in his steadfast support of Edward's little son as successor to the crown, recklessly ignoring warnings from Lord Stanley, and untroubled about having shared a mistress of longstanding (Shore) with the king—entraps himself in a charge of treason against Richard by confidently swearing loyalty to all three in the council in the Tower called to choose the coronation date; he's rewarded with a speedy beheading. With Edward's kids secreted safely in the Tower, Richard need only perform two actions in order to fully hold the reins of state: canvas the people for their sup-

port for his kingship and then, if he has the heart for it, kill the kids.

In 3.7, Richard's schemes to gain the hearts and minds of the people demonstrate as much "spin" as the most staged and controlled party convention or any campaign stop along the hustings that involves careful management of the "message," the image, and the audience. The beginning of 3.7 finds Buckingham operating behind the scenes as Richard's campaign manager and "dirty tricks" agent, and his discussion with Richard about devices for swaying public opinion comes loaded with all of the linguistic baggage of the play. This could be a sequence we could access from a recent episode of *The West Wing* or an insider's reportage of a piece of the last presidential campaign:

> Richard. How now, how now, what say the citizens?
> Buckingham. Now, by the holy Mother of our Lord,
> The citizens are mum, say not a word.
> Richard. Touch'd you the bastardy of Edward's children?
> Buckingham: I did, with his contract with Lady Lucy,
> And his contract by deputy in France,
> Th' unsatiate greediness of his desire,
> And his enforcement of the city wives,
> His tyranny for trifles, his own bastardy,
> As being got, your father then in France,
> And his resemblance, being not like the Duke.
> Withal I did infer your lineaments,
> Being the right idea of your father,
> Both in your form and nobleness of mind;
> Laid open all your victories in Scotland,
> Your discipline in war, wisdom in peace,
> Your bounty, virtue, fair humility;
> Indeed, left nothing fitting for your purpose
> Untouch'd or slightly handled in discourse.
> And when [mine] oratory drew [to an] end,

> I bid them that did love their country's good
> Cry, "God save Richard, England's royal king!"
> (*RIII* 3.7.1-22)

Karl Rove could hardly do a better job of promoting the candidate, keeping the message simple, scripting attack ads, and rallying the base. But, as Buckingham reports, almost like a stage manager reporting backstage to the lead actor a crowd's reception of a performance, they have responded "But like dumb statues, or breathing stones,/Star'd at each on other, and look'd deadly pale" (*RIII* 3.7.25-26). Buckingham has gone so far as to plant supporters in the audience, with no effect.

However, he arranges for a second performance before the Lord Mayor, his aldermen, and more citizens, this time coaching Richard to "Play the maid's part" (*RIII* 3.7.51). In a brilliant performance facilitated by Buckingham, Richard enters equipped with an open Bible and surrounded by prelates, at least as "earnest in the service of my God" as any born-again believer (*RIII* 3.7.105). Playing the fearful and unworthy and now unworldly disdainer of politics that "my desert/Unmeritable shuns your high request," Richard parlays Buckingham's plea for his public service in light of Edward's dissolute rule into a reluctant acceptance, to the adulation of all who've been favored by his canny improvisation:

> Will you enforce me to a world of cares?
> Call them again, I am not made of stones,
> But penetrable to your kind entreaties,
> Albeit against my conscience and my soul. (*RIII* .3.7.223-26)

With only the kids' fate to contend with, Richard engages Buckingham in a calculated piece of "prompting." Up to this point, the play has been a record of a tyrannical playwright's insistence upon his players responding instantaneously and unquestioningly to his prompts in order to avoid having their parts excised from the script. And Buckingham misses his cue on the line he's meant to recite about killing the kids: "Thus high, by thy

advice/And thy assistance, is King Richard seated;/But shall we wear these glories for a day?/Or shall they last, and we rejoice in them?" (*RIII* .4.2.3-6). Delaying only a second to contemplate the horrific enormity of the deed he's being asked to commit because he's either forgotten his line or is unable to deliver it, he doesn't realize that he's already Shakespeare's version of a "dead man walking." By the time Buckingham has summoned the courage to respond, this time asking Richard to confirm his promise of an estate and its lands for services rendered, he's flunked the audition. Richard can neither see nor hear Buckingham any longer, and, when he momentarily attracts Richard's attention, his response represents an assessment of the most extreme prejudice: "I am not in the giving vein to-day" (*RIII* 4.3.16).

The depth of Richard's evil has heretofore been softened and diffused both by the quality of his acting, invention, and the delight to be taken in removing from the play and pronouncing negative reviews on a group of moral equivocators. However, in 4.3, Richard loses the audience's approval and support by exulting in Tyrrel's story of how his henchmen have suffocated the two princes and what a horrible act he has presided over. What's responsible for that shift in our (and our students') affections?—Tyrrel is an experienced, professional, cynical hit man, unlike the earlier murderers that Richard has retained. And this dispassionate man delivers his story movingly:

> The tyrannous and bloody act is done,
> The most arch deed of piteous massacre
> That ever yet this land was guilty of.
> Dighton and Forrest, who I did suborn
> To do this piece of [ruthless] butchery,
> Albeit they were flesh'd villains, bloody dogs,
> Melted with tenderness and [kind] compassion,
> Wept like two children in their deaths' sad story.
> (*RIII* .4.3.1-8)

Shakespeare has deemed it important to shape an assess-

ment of not only the act but of the mind that calculated it. This is evil, pure and simple, against innocent victims. There's more than collateral damage at stake here. And this is a way of complicating the analysis of evil that involves so many in the world of the play.

So, then, is it all over for Richard, and should we then throw all of our support to the newly-arrived and soon-to-be Henry VII? Not on your life! Shakespeare's representation of young Richmond in a Guthrie production of the play a number of years ago was intentionally boring, wooden, clearly taking second place to Richard, even to the point of having to be pushed on stage on the back of a white wooden horse mounted on a platform. In terms of the lines that Shakespeare has equipped him with, he seems an entirely rhetorical presence, artfully political, without a compelling personality. The first time students encounter him in 5.2, they have two reactions: after a full dose of Richard for the entire play, Richmond pales in significance. It's hard to install such a late-comer to the festivities as the conquering hero of the play, particularly since his first speech seems so bland and conventional:

> Fellows in arms, and my most loving friends,
> Bruis'd underneath the yoke of tyranny,
> Thus far into the bowels of the land
> Have we march'd on without impediment;
> And here receive we from our father Stanley
> Lines of fair comfort and encouragement.
> The wretched, bloody, and usurping boar,
> That spoil'd your summer fields and fruitful
> vines,
> Swills your warm blood like wash and makes
> his trough
> In your embowell'd bosoms . . . (*RIII* .5.2.1-10)

A speech filled with rhetorical figures—formal and artful and, linguistically, dead on arrival. Whoever Richmond is, he doesn't appear to be in this speech. It's a political voice.

And the stage is set for a series of parallel comparisons

between Richmond and Richard in the "Ghost" scene that follows. In a play filled with spectacle and carefully staged performances, 5.3 is the most conventional one. Essentially, it's a medieval dream sequence, except that both Richmond and Richard are dreaming the same dreams and being spoken to by the many victims of Richard. They are now turned moral cheerleaders, enabling Richmond with their supernatural support to wake up refreshed and Richard, harangued and damned by the same chorus, to awaken in a fearful sweat. But, if we've been paying attention during a very long play, we've justifiably lost interest in these ghosts whose credibility as arbiters of good and bad has been severely bruised.

And, when Richard *does* wake up, he's much more complex than a mere Machiavel. His soliloquy draws us not only to the parallels *within* 5.3 but to Richard's initial soliloquy back in 1.1. Rather than dedicating himself to be what others have determined him to be, Richard has awakened to just a whiff of self-awareness, a commodity in very short supply in this play:

> What do I fear? Myself. There's none else by.
> Richard loves Richard; that is, I am I.
> Is there a murtherer here? No. Yes, I am.
> Then fly. What, from myself? Great reason why—
> Lest I revenge. What, myself upon myself?
> Alack, I love myself. Wherefore? For any good
> That I myself have done unto myself?
> Oh no! Alas, I rather hate myself
> For hateful deeds committed by myself.
> I am a villain; yet I lie, I am not.
> Fool, of thyself speak well; fool, do not flatter:
> My conscience hath a thousand several tongues,
> And every tongue brings in a several tale,
> And every tale condemns me for a villain. (*RIII* .5.3.182-95)

It's a scathing self-indictment, but it has to oc-

cur. And, since there's hardly a person in the play capable of delivering it for him without indicting himself, a realization of self must come from Richard. This is as open and as honest as he gets. If he has not changed (and I'm not convinced that he hasn't), he's grown in self-awareness.

Still, this soliloquy contains some very desperate stuff, perhaps suggesting that Richard is simply enacting the irremediable role of Devil that the ghosts have pronounced. And there's something to that, as seen in 5.4, when two more parallel comparisons are presented to the reader, this time rallying speeches delivered to the followers of each general just prior to the battle. Again, Richmond's speech strikes the politically obligatory tone that God is on their side; with divine sanction, "Then if you fight against God's enemy,/God will in justice ward you as his soldiers" (*RIII* .5.3.253-54). It's all about law and order. On Richard's side, the argument is singularly passionate and a-religious, filled with images of violence and chaos:

> If we be conquered, let men conquer us,
> And not these bastard Britains, whom our
> fathers
> Have in their own land beaten, bobb'd, and
> thump'd,
> And in record left them the heirs of shame.
> Shall these enjoy our lands? Lie with our
> wives?
> Ravish our daughters? Hark, I hear their drum.
> Fight, gentlemen of England! Fight, bold
> yeomen!
> Draw, archers, draw your arrows to the head!
> Spur your proud horses hard, and ride in blood;
> Amaze the welkin with your broken staves!
> (*RIII* .5.3.332-41)

If this were fifty years hence and Milton were handling this theme, I could well imagine a desperate Satan rallying his troops

on the field of heaven with similar language. But, whoever is speaking, the voice and the words are human and moving. And, in the final scene, when we hear Richard, committed to fighting to the very last breath, crying "A horse, a horse! My kingdom for a horse," it seems to matter little that he has no chance against the six versions of Richmond on the field that are stalking him (*RIII* 5.4.7). From what we've heard from Richmond, it seems a fairly easy impersonation. What we *are* moved by is that, to the very end, this is Richard's play, and, regardless of the assessments that Richmond has delivered against him in the final act and moments of the play, Richard's courage and (just as importantly) his charismatic theatrical presence sustains itself to the end.

You bet that this is a study of evil, but it's not enough to simply label and consign Richard to that role. That's already happened at the hands of some moral question marks and self-aggrandizers in the world of the play. If we can get our students to open up their own personal texts, contribute to the discovery of some historical texts contemporary with the action of the play, learn the conventions of revenge that Shakespeare is using and going beyond, and access some of the cultural texts that they operate in on a daily basis, we can make Shakespeare and Shakespeare's Richard live for and in them a little bit.

Notes

1. Thomas More, *The History of King Richard the Third* [unfinished],http://darkwin.uoregon.edu/%7ErBear/r3htlm. This text "was transcribed from W. E. Campbell's facsimile of the Rastell edition of 1557 by R. S. Bear at the University of Oregon, January-March 1997."

2. Students can find information on the Wars of the Roses and its related players and activities very easily. One useful web source is the "British History Online" site <http://www.british-history.ac.uk>, which has many useful links to information and maps (copywritten in 2003-05 by the University of London and History of Parliament Trust). Students need only to visit this site, enter "wars of the roses" in the "search" box, and track to the "later middle ages," where the information is located.

3. See the Richard III Society Home Page at http://www.richardiii.net/begin.htm.

4. Edward Surtz's "Introduction" to his edition of More's *Utopia* (New Haven: Yale UP), .xix "A remarkable feature of the frequent comic tone is not only that it helps to furnish relief. In almost every case it also emphasizes the thought and reinforces the emotional context."

5. See Denis Hay, "The Manuscript of Polydore Vergil's *Anglia Historia*, *ELH*" 54 (1939), 240-51. Polydore Vergil's text was ordered by Henry VII to be written and took the Italian cleric some twenty-six years to complete.

6. See Erasmus' *Praise of Folly* (New Haven: Yale UP, 1979), 1-2. Erasmus says to More in his introduction: "'How did you ever get that idea [for the book's title]' you will say. First of all, it was suggested to me by your family name 'More' which comes as close to the Greek word for folly (Moria) as you yourself are far removed from the fact of folly, and everyone agrees you are far from it indeed."

7. See Christopher Marlowe's *The Jew of Malta*, in *Christopher Marlowe: The Complete Plays of Christopher Marlowe*, ed. by J. B. Steane (Harmondsworth, Middlesex, England: Penguin, 1972). Only a couple of years earlier, he'd seen a similar character in Marlowe's *The Jew of Malta*, Barabas, steal the show. That character was at least as nasty as Richard—made just as much of a pariah by a hypocritical Christian Knights Templar society that justified its expropriation of Barabas' money earned from usurious money-lending on anti-semitic grounds. Those Christian acts of hypocrisy launched Barabas on a career of vengeful mayhem against his tormentors that thrills the audience with its evil creativity and secures its emotional support (mostly). Marlowe's play was a tremendous box office success—something that wouldn't have been lost on the financially astute Shakespeare.

8. Written and directed by Michael Moore, *Bowling for Columbine* (2002).

9. William Shakespeare, *The Tragedy of Richard III*, in *The Riverside Shakespeare*, ed. Evans et al. (Boston: Houghton Mifflin, 1974), 708-64. All subsequent references to this play

will come from this text, indicated by *RIII*.

10. Jacques Lacan. "The Mirror Stage as Formative of the Function of the 'I' as Revealed in Psychoanalytic Experience" in *Ecrits: A Selection*, trans. Alan Sheridan (New York: W.W. Norton and Company, 1977), 1-7.

11. Richard III's character is identified as Gloucester in *The Riverside Shakespeare* edition of the play. For coherence, the character is referred to here as Richard.

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Call For Papers for *MEJ*'s Next Issue

As we did at the end of the last issue, John Banschbach and I want to encourage all of you who are reading the Fall 2005 number of *MEJ* to consider yourselves part of our continuing dialogue with language, literature, reading, and composition—a dialogue that engages and shares and enriches *your* pedagogy and research. And, to aid you in expressing and shaping *your* interests in and concerns about the materials you bring to the classroom, the students you bring them to, and your invention of strategies for engaging those students in those materials, we would like you to consider one of the topics listed below as your focus. Please understand that these topics are merely suggestions. Should your teaching context or circumstances cause you to identify a topic not on our brief list, we invite you to pursue it and send us the results. We want to read and interact with your work, whether that work has sprung from a teaching context in the elementary, middle, or high school, either public or private; community college; technical college; public university; or private college.

As you peruse the list, do not hesitate to contact us for clarification on any of the topics or for advice about responding to an item we haven't listed that you would like to respond to. We welcome the opportunity to work with you. Please think

about **June 1, 2006** as a deadline, and think about the **Spring MCTE Spring Conference in April 2006 in Rochester** as a venue for presenting it.

Topics:

1. ***Young adult literature*** (multicultural, American, and/or British—traditionally structured or non-linear)

2. ***Teaching and representing Shakespeare*** for high school and college students

3. ***World literatures*** (Anglophone/commonwealth; African; Caribbean; Latin American; Chicano; Native American; Asian/American; East Indian)

4. ***Assessment*** at any level (we're not just thinking about rubrics that work, but the kinds of anonymous interventions that can be used to determine whether our students are learning what we intend for them to learn)

5. ***Literature of the Americas*** (any kind of literature to any number of audiences, related to Canada, the U.S., the Caribbean, and Mexico through Tierra del Fuego)

6. ***Un-banning the banned books*** (experiences and methodologies related to teaching them)

7. ***Assignment packages that work*** (i.e., prompts and materials situated around the development of an important assignment tied to a particular course and an audience for that course; a "tool box" of materials and rubrics and writing assists and prompts and strategies that will assist members of that audience with their struggle to complete successfully that assignment; and an assessment strategy that will enable some effective testing of whether the goals and objectives connected to the assignment have

been reached—this is for teachers at any level)

8. Writing across the curriculum, issues and strategies

9. Writing-intensive courses (definitions, challenges, approaches)

10. Electronic distance learning (dealing with audience problems, delivery issues)

11. The "capstone" experience, from portfolio to research paper (problems of mentoring and assessing are connected here)

12. Teaching the world: Humanities at any teaching level

13. Collaborative learning: assignments and teaching strategies that work

14. Technology in the English/language arts classroom

15. The relevance of the Western Cannon (expanding/re-envisioning the canon)

16. Standardized testing and its impact on English/language arts curriculum

17. The world wide web and research paper writing

18. Poetry and its relevance

19. English language learners: how can we best serve their needs in the reading and composition classroom

20. Grammar and its place in today's English classes

21. Feedback on student writing and issues pertaining to responding

22. Practices in the teaching of English language arts

23. Research in and out of the classroom

24. "Audience" related issues

25. Teaching tips

26. Issues of diversity (representing race and gender)

We are hoping very much, depending upon the nature of your responses to these and other issues important to you, to incorporate two new areas into the journal: a "letters to the editor" section that either responds to essays represented in the pages of *this* issue or at the spring MCTE conference in Rochester or to other issues of importance to you related to teaching literature, language arts, reading, and composition; and a section devoted to short and practical strategies of teaching in these areas (assignments; assessment pieces; collaborative techniques for engaging students in literature or the evaluation of their own writing; means for assisting students with their struggles to respond to your assignments or realize themselves as contributing members of your classroom environment; etc.).

We look forward to hearing from you.

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