

literature is to make people good. While I cannot conceive of literature being used or taught or recommended in our schools with the deliberate intent of making students bad, I doubt that many books are used by English teachers with the deliberate intent of making students good. The purpose of literature is to excite students about the possibilities and frustrations and joys and terrors of being human in our time now and their time to come, to make students aware that actions and beliefs and emotions have consequences, to alert students to the multiplicities of other peoples occupying space on our troubled planet, to make students aware that good and bad are easy terms to apply to conduct and beliefs and people foreign to them and difficult or impossible to apply to specific literary characters or real people about whom students care deeply. Students who care about the works they're reading soon learn that BRAVE NEW WORLD is not about gloriously free sex but about the ease with which a benevolent dictatorship could make certain kinds of slavery most attractive. THE CATCHER IN THE RYE is not simply about a thoroughly mixed-up boy who talks dirty but about a boy who unrealistically wants to keep all children pure and free from reality and growing up.

Finally, I believe that we must involve the community in the selection of our teaching materials. I am not suggesting that we give in to societal demands that our rights to choose materials be taken from us and given to a group of lay people. I am suggesting that the final determination of materials must remain with the teachers; but we should invite lay people in to help with the selection process, and in turn, to begin to understand that the selection process is just that, a process which takes time and effort and means making some difficult choices. I sincerely doubt that many parents have the remotest idea how much work is involved in selecting materials, and the educational process they might undergo in seeing what teachers do and why and how they go about doing it might, just might, have a salutary effect. I know that all this is a calculated risk, but I believe the dangers are small compared to the possible gain for teachers, kids, and community. It's no secret that parents and English teachers are foes in the censorship wars. We've seen far too many examples of that in the last couple of years, notably in Kanawha County. I believe that it's high time both parents and teachers accepted the fact that neither side can truly win the war, but students, presumably the innocent non-combatants, can lose any chance of anything bordering on an education if the war continues. I would prefer to find common ground between parents and English teachers for a peaceful settlement without either side knuckling under to the other, but I am not fool enough to believe permanent peace with total honor is likely. What I would propose are some tentative grounds for an honorable truce which would allow education to exist and allow both parents and English teachers to share ideas, beliefs, and emotions concerning the education of the young. The three steps in my suggested

truce assume, obviously, good faith on the part of teachers and parents and certain responsibilities on both parts. (1) Parents would agree to read the books in question or to view non-print media materials before criticizing or believing the criticism of others. In effect, no criticism till all the evidence is in. (2) English teachers would agree to inform the public about the what and the why of anything in the English program. Parents could help here by inviting English teachers to civic, professional, service, or religious meetings, not to attack teachers but to allow them to explain the program. (3) Parents and English teachers alike would urge moderation and the possibility of necessary compromise. Groups with differing opinions but reasonably open minds know that almost never is one side totally right. English teachers must recognize that the community has a stake in the education of young people, just as the community must recognize that English teachers are dedicated to bringing life and reality into the classroom. I suspect that a compromise which will offend neither group and will further educational possibilities of young people is more easily reached than either group presently realized. (An article by Margherite LaPota Language Arts/English Supervisor in the Tulsa, Oklahoma Public Schools, "Censorship and Adolescent Literature: One Solution" will appear in the April ARIZONA ENGLISH BULLETIN. LaPota's article is proof that parents and teachers and students can get together to select books which are at least mildly controversial and learn something about education, young people, and each other in the process.)

These then are my five beliefs, and I do deeply believe in them.

Haiku

Spring rain turned quiet.
No signature of sleet signs
this whitened page.

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