

and, out of a desperation to maintain the momentum of a cause, coercion becomes the style, factionalism the trend, and exploitation of the young in captive classroom audiences the morality. In the long run the gains from this behavior may really be losses.

Winter Night on Hennepin Avenue

Ten at night in Minneapolis, and ten below.
Five of us, loosely strung out, wait the bus.
Freezing, we have waited half an hour.
We have muttered commonplaces on the weather,
Now are chary of additional familiarities;
We wouldn't want to cross that line
Separating lonely babbling widows
And drunken Indian friends-of-all-mankind
From all the rest of us.
So we are simply freezing here in silence,
Wiping separate noses.
We try to keep our eyes on straight tracks,
But our eyes having minds quite their own
Slant, looking now and then with others'
Slanting back at us.
(What does this mean?)
Still, we try to concentrate on parking meters,
Stare in empathy on piles of frozen slush.
And we are very busy, certainly,
Gazing down an empty street in unison.
(We wouldn't want to miss the revelation of the bus.)
We are surely less insane upon a Northern street
Imitating ice blocks than we would be
Clustered thigh to thigh preserving heat
And warming hands in neighbors' crotches.

James Callant
1922 Fremont Ave. S.
Minneapolis, MN

These I Believe: Some Statements About Censorship

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In 1952, Edward R. Murrow, the great radio journalist, edited a collection of personal philosophies under the title, THIS I BELIEVE. I would like to sketch out five personal beliefs about English teaching and censorship, for these statements I do deeply believe. My five statements do not go as neatly together as I might like, but they all concern English teachers (the only racket I've ever known for almost twenty-five years, and I believe, still the best game in town) and potential or actual censorship (a game anyone who teaches English is almost destined to become involved in), so the statements have at least that much in common.

First, I believe that school must be the hotbed of intellectual ferment in a community. I do not mean that schools should be radical or avant garde necessarily, but rather schools should be the one place in a community (in some communities maybe the only place) where ideas of all sorts are considered, analyzed, investigated, and discussed and their consequences thought through. Ideas are seldom comfortable to deal with, but ideas, new and old, are the stuff of education. I further believe that schools should educate, not indoctrinate, and this admonition applies equally to parents and teachers, not one or the other but both. The purpose of education is to open minds. The purpose of indoctrination is to close minds to all but one mode of thought or one point of view. In too many communities, the legend seen in some churches, "The Glory of God Is Intelligence," more properly should read, "The Glory of God Is Intelligence, BUT Man's Use Thereof Is Prohibited." I believe that schools will and should reflect the mores, beliefs, values, totems-taboos of the local community, but the purpose of education is to prepare students to face the world of which the local community is only one part. I believe that schools must discuss and analyze traditional values of the community, not to scoff at the values nor to ridicule people who accept them. Ideas of many kinds, traditional to radical, deserve serious attention and study, and believers of all sorts should be respected and listened to, but respect and attention should not be mis-read as adherence or acceptance. Plato's belief that the unexamined life is not worth living is applicable to examining traditional or radical beliefs or any belief lying somewhere in the continuum between. Schools must foster one principle basic to education--ideas are not merely worth examining: they must be examined.

Second, I believe that English teachers who would ask young people to think and wonder and challenge ideas must themselves be models of open-mindedness and fairness. To examine any idea, both teachers and students must be free to take the idea and its consequences wherever it forces them to go. Teachers must have freedom to pursue visions of truths (for outside of the "True Believer" there can be no one vision of one truth) with their students, but that freedom is predicated on the teacher presenting a model of objectivity, or at the very least a willingness to listen to all sides. Freedom to think, to write, to wonder, to question, to read widely, all these abstract freedoms cannot be rammed down the collective throat of a community. These abstractions and their educational applications and consequences need to be explained specifically in terms of the educational philosophy of a school or school district, the educational philosophy of the English Department, and the educational philosophy of the individual English teacher working with specific students for specific goals at specific times in the students' educational development. The community has the right to expect that English teachers can and will explain the educational values of certain books or ideas or methods of inquiry in terms of their children's educational welfare. It is our job to make the abstract concrete and worthwhile and to communicate to the community the vital role we play as English teachers. If we cannot explain that role clearly and effectively, then we deserve nothing more than the role of servile supplicant we play already in far too many communities. Much of our effectiveness in explaining the need to investigate ideas comes from our fairmindedness and objectivity. A community, no matter what its attitude towards education, cannot accept a teacher who attempts to inculcate beliefs contrary to the community's beliefs, but then no teacher has the right to indoctrinate any student into any belief, for or against the welfare of the community. Communities may not be able to distinguish between education and indoctrination. Teachers must be able to draw that distinction and to predicate their professional lives on the worth of education and the intellectual fraudulence of indoctrination.

Third, I believe that students are far more aware of the censorship climate around them than we know. Even if students were kept totally in the dark about a censorship incident in school, even a cursory knowledge of what's going on in the world would make them aware that some people try to keep other people from reading certain books or seeing certain films or television programs. Even if students had never heard of Drake, North Dakota; Ridgefield, Connecticut; or Kanawha County, West Virginia, and the censorship episodes there, those students would likely have heard about the furor surrounding the "Maude" abortion episodes, the controversy surrounding "The Hot L Baltimore" TV show, the new family hour on TV this season, the letters to the editor (or editorials or news stories) about "Mary Hartman, Mary

Hartman," the articles in TV GUIDE about sex on the networks, or news articles about local attacks on adult bookstores or "X-rated" movies. Students are, some parents' notions notwithstanding, not unaware of reality, and censorship in our society is inherently interesting or frightening or confusing, certainly worth considering, indeed something students have a right to know about. While I have no interest in establishing an elective on "Dirty Books That Blow the Mind" or "Censorship: An American Dilemma," I do believe that we ought occasionally to discuss censorship and why and how it happens in a presumably open and free society, and why the first amendment and its stated and implied freedoms are frequently ignored and abrogated by some members of our society. Why do good people want only certain beliefs promulgated or indoctrinated? Why do some people fear ideas? Why do good parents sometimes fear the new, the innovative, the different? Why do some officials fear freedom of speech and thought in some places--for example, schools? Why do some teachers preach the principles of freedom and thought and violate those principles operationally in classes? What are the responsibilities that go hand in hand with freedom of speech and thought? Why do the freedoms to think and inquire and read and write need to be defended when they are basic to the American heritage? These questions are very real questions to many students, and they deserve attention in our English classes. I am aware that the questions and discussions and reactions will often be controversial, but then I believe that controversy, in some way or other, is basic to good English teaching.

Fourth, I believe that literature can make our students aware of their own personal worlds and the world around them and make them more discriminating readers better able to distinguish good literature from bad literature (sentimental, moralistic, romantic literature) and better able to distinguish honest emotions and beliefs and thoughts from the shoddy or dishonest. I have a hunch that some past English teachers have done much to create the vociferous and virulent censors we face today. Those teachers (and unhappily some English teachers today) foisted off a narrow moralistic purview of literature and implied a moralistic set of literary absolutes (and a literary set of moralistic absolutes), some actions or beliefs or emotions being labeled right or wrong, a simplistic notion not merely misleading to young people but arrogant and unfeeling if applied in the real world to real people. Literature, at least in the sense we use the word in English classes, was not created to provide neat morals or lessons, but rather to show people caught in moral dilemmas trying to extricate themselves. Some people have argued that if reading a good book can make people good, then reading another book (one said to be obscene or profane or sacrilegious or un-American) can make people bad. That presupposes that conduct or thoughts or beliefs or emotions can easily or always be labeled by someone as good or bad, a simplistic notion in almost every case. It also presupposes that the purpose of reading

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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