

For The Season

January passes, my resolutions fail--
the holidays go swimming by
like fish that will not take my bait.
This year I'll mail my Christmas cards
before July--and tell you once again
the very best intentions pave
my special road to hell--
and wish you godspeed on your own,
and grace and love and peace.

Dear friends, the weather here
is always 28 below--
I celebrate the season,
a haystack looking for a needle
in the snow.

MARK VINZ

Literature: A Cushion for Future Shock

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Many English teachers have to deal with the present shock of dwindling enrollment in elective courses. Students are seeking "more relevant, more practical courses" we're told. They want courses geared to get them through tomorrow's problems.

One of these problems, according to Alvin Toffler, in Future Shock, is that

there are discoverable limits to the amount of change that the human organism can absorb, and that by endlessly accelerating change without first determining these limits, we may submit masses of men to demands they simply cannot tolerate.

As an English teacher wanting to serve the student, other English teachers, and society as well, I thought I'd suggest a mini-course to minister to the "human organisms" that Toffler is talking about.

To show the world what even Toffler should know--that the problem is age-old--I'd begin with Medea, the Greek play by Euripides. We hear the chorus chant:

Gone is the grace that oaths once had.
Through all the breadth of Hellas, honour
is found no more; to heaven hath it sped
away. For thee no father's house is open,
woe is thee! to be a haven from the
troublous storm, while o'er thy home is
set another queen, and the bride that is
preferred to thee.

Here the chorus laments the loss of stability that oaths once gave. Later in the play we see Medea's reaction to the sudden change forced upon her. She murders her two children. She does so to get revenge on Jason, true, but the murders might just as accurately be explained as the