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CHISHOLM AWARD PRESENTED TO TIMOTHY JOHN HIRSCH

The list of life's pleasures surely must include the announcing of awards--it's all good news and rounds of applause. Presenting the 1991 Chisholm Award for Meritorious Service goes well beyond pleasure for me, however, for it gives me the privilege of acknowledging publicly my deep respect and admiration for a remarkable human being: Timothy Hirsch.

If you've been around the Council for the last decade plus, you know that Tim has been around. His formal activities began in 1980 with a 5 year stint as District Director representing the West District. This was followed by his election in 1985 as Second Vice President, initiating a four-year tour of leadership for Council, serving as president in 1987-88. Currently, he serves on the Financial Planning Committee and he has agreed to co-edit the Wisconsin English Journal.

Indeed, he did the usual things that establish service: organize district conferences; plan, organize and coordinate the annual convention; facilitate and energize the Executive Committee. None of these are small feats. However, Tim accomplished them more than well--with finesse, with acuity, and with an originality that seems a trademark. With Tim you can expect something extra professionally whether its spicing up a district conference with a spaghetti dinner or celebrating teaching in Wisconsin by arranging--that is, writing a grant for funds--for four Wisconsin authors to speak at the annual convention.

But Tim's service goes beyond our organization to affect the profession at large and to reach out to the community. Thus, in 1981 he prepared the grant proposals that established the West Central Writing Project at Eau Claire and was one of its first instructors. In 1986, another grant proposal with a colleague established a summer institute in the humanities for secondary school teachers, the first one focusing on "Images of the Depression." In 1986 he also served as a discussion leader for
the three day Wingspread Conference, the topic being "Bringing Together Research and Practice in English Language Arts."
Recently, he spent his sabbatical researching Wisconsin authors.

His community service activities suggest both his energy and imagination and further attest to the range of his interests and scholarship: leading a 12-hour bus tour to visit important places in Wisconsin literature; providing three programs on American short stories for a public library series; leading discussions of Aldo Leopold's A Sand County Almanac and Ben Logan's The Land Remembered as part of another series titled "A Sense of Place in History and Literature," a series he helped to plan. Tim's vita is a veritable cornucopia of exciting ideas but I'll tease your intellects with only these three.

There have been, of course, formal publications--book reviews, articles, and a forthcoming textbook for English composition classes, scheduled for publication in 1991--as well as formal presentations. I will say, as an aside, that the presentations I have attended have been not so formal, being audience friendly--inviting participation, activity oriented--and steeped with Tim's warm personality, effective leadership and keen intelligence.

I've left things out, and there is more to tell. I'm sure however you must have the outlines of his professional portrait. Tim represents the highest ideal of service--energy, dedication, ability. To flesh out the portrait, you need to color in his thoughtfulness and compassion, his grace, his gift of engagement, his teacherly spirit. Given these attributes, Tim Hirsch fully deserved the 1991 Chisholm Award for Meritorious Service.

Nicholas Karolides
THE DOOR TO THE WORLD IS OPEN
Mary Louise Tamm

What are you going to do next summer? With the current emphasis on multi-cultural studies, my international teaching experiences during the past summers might interest you. Let's take a trip through my journals chronologically from the summer of 1983 when my foreign teaching odyssey began. We will be reminded of each teaching situation, my memorable experiences, and additional cultural opportunities provided. Later we will discuss the practical aspects of foreign teaching.

The 1983 Winter issue of the WCET Newsletter announced the opportunity to teach in a foreign language (English) camp for teenagers in Warsaw, Poland, sponsored by UNESCO and the Polish government. Arrangements made after years of preliminary contacts by the late Donald Thompson, K-12 Social Studies coordinator from the Racine Unified Schools, and Glendale's Nicolet High School Social Studies Chairperson Earl Bakalarz (now retired), who believed that a peaceful world was possible if its citizens knew one another, included using teachers who did not know the Polish language, so that students would have to use English to be understood. Lessons were to be provided which would stimulate conversation and enhance understanding of the American culture. This philosophy, with its practices, has been fundamental to each program in which I've participated.

And so ten American teachers arrived at the tiny, tense Warsaw airport where, after two hours of Red tape, we were greeted with flowers and warm smiles by the bright, handsome student representatives we would soon know like family. Faculty and students were housed together in the no-frills, problem-plagued dormitory of the vocational schools at which the camp was held. The 15 to 19 year-olds from all over Poland were divided into homerooms of ten to thirteen students. After a short meeting with our homeroom each morning, we taught three homerooms on a rotation basis; thus, we were able to use one lesson preparation for three days. Because there were planned activities for each afternoon and evening, we teachers took turns planning and supervising game room, reading room, outdoor physical activities, song fests, bingo, and dances.

However, the greatest enjoyment for the students was, as they stated, "to be friends with our teachers", so we spent much of our free time together, exploring Warsaw's Old Town or enjoying conversation over a dish of ice cream. The camp also provided cultural experiences for us all, such as trips to Chopin's birthplace, beautifully preserved palaces including that formerly belonging to the Radziwill family (Jackie O'Nassis's brother-in-law), ancient churches, and the tranquil campus of ivy-covered brick buildings, containing the evidence of twisted minds, named Auschwitz.

After three weeks, camp closed with tears and promises to write and meet. We left our students for a week's trip in Southern Poland, visiting Nova Huta and the Black Madonna, with her numerous jeweled costumes, the charming mountain resort Zakopane, and Krakov, the historically significant university city.

Leaving the Warsaw airport a month after arriving, we recalled the Polish hospitality in our stay with our students' families in Gdansk, the swarthy, threatening men who frightened us with our students at the memorial flower cross in Old Town, the plumbing problems in the dorm, and the heart-to-heart talks with our student friends--experiences never to be forgotten.

Next came the opportunity for twenty-five American teachers to give a four-week Short course in English at Liaoning Normal University in Dalian, the People's Republic of China, in 1985. Our students were engineers, architects, even a policewoman, music professor, and television technician--all eager to improve their English so they might be proficient enough to be allowed to study in a Western country. And willing to work!

Chinese and American teaching methods clashed, with ours eventually prevailing in China's eagerness to become more modern. Their ideas of a three-hour lecture each morning, followed by two hours of practise in the afternoon, were modified to include the
teaming of American teachers, with rotating homerooms in the morning and informal practise (even trips around this small town of 21 million population) with the teacher's homeroom in the afternoon.

The American teachers lived in the Guest House, a high rise dormitory on campus, about twenty minutes from the classroom building. All meals were in a separate dining room building where a cooking staff of thirteen was needed to feed the twenty-five of us, the meals said to be better than those in the finest Dalian restaurants. When we reciprocated with a spaghetti dinner for the staff, cooked in their kitchen woks, I'm not sure that the kitchen's rating would have been considered quite as high.

The flower and bird decorated washing machines and American toilets, brought in specifically for our use; femininely dressed Chinese women in high heels, picking their way across water-filled, mud ruts; tales of family protection of students during the Cultural Revolution and humiliation of parents during the same time; the Children's Palace, school for the gifted and talented in a former British mansion, contrasted with a dreary stadium; a long talk with an earnest young engineer, well acquainted with Milwaukee's Allen-Bradley, who longed for the day when he and his bride would be allowed to live and work in the same city; and the young woman who admitted that she wanted to be a doctor, but her test scores relegated her to teacher preparation—all Dalian memories.

Our two additional weeks of travel took us from a model commune near Guangzhou to X'ian and the terra cotta army, the Forbidden City and Tiananmen Square in Beijing to the Great Wall nearby, a chance-meeting with an American college women's basketball team, including a former UW-LaCrosse coach, in Shenyang to the help of a Boston University student managing a restaurant for the summer in Shanghai—an incredible journey.

Because of my previous experience and a Finnish husband, in 1986 I was asked to teach English at Viitakivi, a folk high school (adult education) at Hauho, Finland, about sixty miles north of Helsinki. The pristine setting of a Quaker-inspired school on twin secluded lakes is perfect for thinking and relaxing; thus, Finns who are looking for relaxation but in conscience feel they must be doing something worthwhile, enjoy Viitakivi's educational as well as recreational offerings for a week's vacation.

On the first day these adults, representing varying levels of English competency, were tested by the Canadian school head, who then placed them in homogeneous groups for reading, writing, and conversational English. The day began with the Quaker quiet period for those who so chose, a contemplative time to be with others in complete silence. Three classes followed, interspersed by the lecture of a staff member with expertise or interest in the subject. I, for instance, gave lectures on Poland and China. Later afternoon was given to swimming, boating, hiking, or sauna—a thoroughly relaxing yet invigorating Finnish tradition.

Evening programs were planned each day, often cultural activities such as folk-dancing, community singing, and recitals, or campfires where sausages were roasted instead of marshmallows, and pancakes were cooked in special skillets with long handles. With a private room in a comfortable lodge looking out on breathtaking scenery, a good library, and daylight until almost midnight, Viitakivi is the perfect place to relax—and think!

Because the English courses took just two weeks of the summer program, I spent one week in Helsinki and one week on a commercial tour of Finland, attending organ recitals in historic churches, visiting the elegant shops filled with products showcasing world renowned Finnish design, and experiencing the changing environment from the Baltic to above the Arctic Circle, fascinating country of proud, plucky people.

With a change in income tax laws, I felt it would be to my advantage in 1988 if I could teach abroad with university credit, and the program in Denmark looked appealing. UW-Milwaukee sent teachers to varying locations, avoiding the possibility that teachers speaking the same language would look to one another for companionship rather than learning to know the Danes. My assignment was the Katedralskole, a 500 year-old prep school,
equivalent to our junior and senior years in high school plus junior college, in Odense, the home of Hans Christian Andersen, which was celebrating its 1000th birthday that summer.

Though I had visited in private homes in Poland, China, and Finland, now I was to live in one, which added another dimension to my experience. My hosts were a guidance counselor/teacher at Katedralskole and her architect husband, Anne-Lise and Prebhan Frederiksen, who welcomed me as a family member during my stay. Their home was gracious and comfortable, and my meals a result of Anne-Lise's gourmet cooking classes in Paris!

Katedralskole is a no-nonsense school that had no room in its classes for wasted time. In other words, the curriculum was to be followed. As soon, however, as the faculty knew I was willing to take classes on topics of their choosing, I became much in demand. In addition to creative activities in English, I was asked to lecture on the American election procedure and problems of American teenagers. I must admit I had to spend much time in preparation, especially with no reference materials, but it's amazing what American teachers can do in a pinch! And so, in less than three weeks, I conducted twenty-two classes, enjoying them all.

Meanwhile I experienced the special evening back at school for the new class (youngest students) at which they brought their own supper, put on skits, and ended the evening with dancing. The get-together was in the student center at the top of the school, an attic-type place with exposed timbers and wooden floor. My safety consciousness had to be reined in when everyone smoked up there; in addition, although they were told not to, many students brought beer to the party, but because the principal was not present, no faculty member felt the authority to stop its use. Incidentally, this is the only activity during the school year that beer is prohibited, creating at times some rather unpleasant scenes to deal with, so I was told. A surprise--by our standards!

Various excursions around Funen, Denmark's beautiful middle island, were planned by my hosts, including castle visits, countryside drives, concerts, and exploring historic towns and museums. In Odense the H. C. Andersen village and museum were fascinating reminders of the past, as was the Carl Nielsen museum. In this historic year, the town women had begged for a place to exhibit their presence, so were given a cloister, long ago home to single noblewomen. One show while I was there featured patchwork quilts--something dear to an American heart! And as part of our university course, we were given lectures at various Odense facilities, introducing us to Danish educational philosophy including the idea of students having the same home base teacher in grades 1 through 10, Danish history and enterprise. These activities did not preclude, however, a weekend for us American teachers to get together in Copenhagen and explore the culture and fascinations of this great city and its environs. I knew I'd be back!

But with all the overseas experience, this English teacher shamefacedly had to admit never visiting the British Isles, so that was the next stop. Summer of 1989 found me, as part of UW-Whitewater's program, in the charming seaside town of Dunbar (accent on the second syllable), Scotland. I lived with the headmaster of a country elementary school, Hamish Henderson, and his nurse-on-call wife, Lydia, in their comfortable row house, elegantly named Letham Villa. I grew to know each rose-filled front yard as I walked to Dunbar Grammar School, the high school expertly and humanely guided by Headmaster Will Collin, who orchestrated my program to be sure I would experience all facets of the school for which he was most proud. This was an excellent opportunity to see how special education and guidance services were offered, as well as being introduced to the academic, practical, and physical departments. Some of this was accomplished on Student Orientation Day, when I joined the soon-to-enter elementary students for an introduction to their new school.

Although I wasn't as needed as an English teacher here, my services were welcomed by the social studies teachers when they learned about my China experience, in the light of the April
Tiananmen Square debacle. In addition to teaching, observing, and discussing at the Grammar School, I enjoyed chaperoning and participating in an All-School Field Day, an all-day science outing to a palace and its grounds (which, although I didn’t know at the time, I would be living in for a week), a day’s visit to a Dunbar elementary school, and a day at Hamish’s country school, where daily records are still carefully being kept in an ancient, crumbling leather-covered book about weather conditions as well as attendance facts.

Another side of education in the British Isles was revealed in my visit to the secluded, exclusive private prep school on the edge of Dunbar, readying Scottish boys for entrance to schools such as Eton. The elegant reception rooms of this mansion hardly prepare one for the Spartan classrooms and dormitory, with less than adequate plumbing facilities and hazardous halls and stairways. Prince Phillip's comments about prep school toughening his sons is certainly more understandable with this visit. Life in Dunbar, surrounded by antiquity, reminds us of an earlier day with its genteel pace—mail twice a day, time for neighborly visits, and community togetherness. Underneath, however, we find efficiency, practicality, and brisk enterprise.

The Scotland Program included a week free to travel after the two weeks in our assigned town. I chose to tour England, a bit of Wales, and Scotland, savoring the sights of London, walking the paths of Wordsworth and Shakespeare, and marveling at the romantic palace and its grounds in the center of Edinburgh. And then to Dalkeith Palace, seven miles outside of Edinburgh, which I had admired several weeks earlier! The Wisconsin University System rents Dalkeith Palace for its undergraduate program during the school year and uses it for this program during the summer. The week was spent with lectures on Scottish education, our writing a newsletter, and enjoying the surroundings.

After the incredible year of freedom gained in Czechoslovakia, followed by the demolished Wall in Germany, the opportunity to teach in Prague was irresistible. A group of ten Americans was asked to help the professors of the School of Electrical Engineering at Czech Technical University improve their spoken English. Professors-turned-students were divided into homerooms somewhat homogeneously and rotated among us, with three classes in the morning and our homeroom in the afternoon. Knowing that this time our students were all people with advanced degrees in their field of expertise, we were somewhat intimidated until we realized that, in the practical use of English, most were inexperienced. Their cooperation, with great desire to learn, was a result of the immediacy of their need to speak and understand English, with the university now opening its doors and hoping to attract the best minds in the world—English being the world's common language today.

Living on the ninth floor of a dormitory serving as a youth hostel in summer, with elevators with minds of their own, proved a challenge in stamina and sleeping. However, its location across Prague from the university forced us to learn this "most beautiful in the world" city immediately, a true advantage. With help of our students, we explored the hilltop palace area, the Old Town, and Wenceslas Square in downtown Prague, enjoying the history, architecture, food, cultural activities, and openly heady evidences of freedom. They also were most generous in driving us to historic castles, restored towns, and summer homes in Bohemia and Moravia.

Memories of the impassioned "We Will Overcome" as we sang together, stories of that revolutionary November day, the hospitality extended us in Czech homes, and final comments of the Dean, thanking us "not only for presenting interesting and helpful lessons but, more importantly, in modeling the humane American educational methods which enhance the students' learning" make 1990 a very special summer.

Now to the practical aspects of summer teaching abroad. Investigation of programs available is your first step, done through contacting your local colleges and universities or the resources I append. In each situation I have experienced, the teacher pays travel and personal expenses. In the programs not
sponsored by a university, room and board are provided by the host institution. There may also be a small honorarium given. The university programs require tuition and a minimal amount to be paid to the host family. Ordinarily, the university and travel expenses have been deductible if your work is creditable in your school district; however, check the IRS implications with a knowledgeable source, as laws are constantly changing.

I have another suggestion; what has seemed advantageous to do, as long as I was paying for an overseas round trip flight, was to find another program or experience which fit timewise and extend my stay. For example, the teaching in Poland was preceded by my participation, as a member of Milwaukee's Bel Canto Chorus, in the Festival of Two Worlds in Spoleto, Italy; the summer in Finland continued at a two week international conference on our countries' common problems in Helsingor, Denmark; and the Prague experience was followed by my joining a group of UW-Milwaukee graduate students in Berlin, surveying German and Danish education.

As you surmise from our journey through my journal, teaching abroad requires a desire to learn, willingness to share, adaptability, self confidence, physical endurance, pride in being American, respect for others, and tolerance of unfamiliar living conditions. In exchange, you will return with the gratitude and friendship of your students, a broadening understanding of the world, additional self confidence through your achievements, and journals and pictures filled with experiences you will enjoy and reexperience the rest of your life.

The door to the world is open- - -welcome!

RESOURCES
UW-Milwaukee Education Outreach
579 Enderis Hall
P.O. Box 413
Milwaukee, Wisconsin 53201
(414) 229-5255

Kathy Gibbs
Continuing Education Extension and Summer Session
University of Wisconsin-Whitewater
Whitewater, Wisconsin 53190
(414) 472-3247
1-800-627-5376

WEA Travel
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P.O. Box 09027
Milwaukee, Wisconsin 53209
(414) 351-1015
1-800-535-2045


Mary Louise Tammi teaches at Glen Mills Middle School in Glendale.
DYNAMIC KNOWLEDGE ENCOUNTERS: A CALL FOR ENGLISH TEACHER REFLECTIONS
Jerald Hauser

Recently I read a very challenging novel by Thomas Palmer titled, Dream Science. In it one of the characters says, "The thing to remember is that your mind is in charge now. It dictates. Any life you can imagine is the life you can live."

I paused—really paused—and thought what an astonishing idea that was for me. That when we succeed or fail, those outcomes are those of imagination! Can I be a force among students that will help them forge appreciations, resolutions, and inner visions as responses to the literature they encounter; not the literature they read, but the literature they ENCOUNTER?

I feel secure in the conviction that a powerful knowledge encounter must recruit several sources of thinking energy. I'll refer to each source as a kind of knowledge. They are: 1) knowledge as metacognitive, 2) knowledge as consequential, 3) knowledge as engaged, and 4) knowledge as open.

METACOGNITIVE KNOWLEDGE

In one of my college courses, I encourage various kinds of vocal presentation including panels and idea reactions. I also promote construction of "creative teaching devices." Another option is to research and write a scholarly paper. Whichever option students choose, I require an analysis of their idea origination and decisions that occurred as they moved from starting to finishing their various productions. I want them to stay in touch with their thinking processes as well as the external outcomes. I'm asking the students to be metacognitive.

I believe that good thinkers are spontaneously metacognitive. They can easily answer questions about their thinking; questions such as:

What were my thoughts when a certain idea came to me?
How long had I been thinking about the problem?
Why was I pursuing that line of thought?
How did my ideas change along the way?

Gary Hart, at the Democratic National Convention in Atlanta, 1988, was asked why he had bothered to come and what he was doing there. He didn't respond to the first part of the question, but did respond, "I'm here observing and writing about these politics and sorting out my own thoughts about politics." Gary Hart was being metacognitive.

Is asking students to be metacognitive almost the same as asking a patient in therapy to be introspective? I think so. I think that teachers who set up various conditions to promote student metacognition are promoting cognitive introspection. The internal focus is not on emotions but on thoughts. I'm convinced that we should put students in touch with metacognitive potentials more that we do.

I've designed a modest self-evaluation scheme that might encourage we teachers to do some self-reflecting about how successfully we arrange opportunities for various kinds of student knowledge encounters (Hauser, 1988). A few items that represent metacognitive goals are:

1) I help students become aware of their thoughts.
2) I encourage students to describe their thinking processes.
3) I encourage students to identify when they do their best thinking.
4) I encourage students to question how they know things.
5) I encourage students to explain their best work and why it is that.
6) I encourage students to describe what kind of thinking makes them feel good.

Good poems should move thinkers into meditative and metacognitive states. Gray (1988) focuses on Elizabeth Bishop's "Visits to St. Elizabeth's" which begins, "This is the house of Bedlam," and builds to this passage:

"This is a few in a newspaper hat/that dances joyfully down the ward/into the parting seas of board/past the staring sailor that shakes/his watch/ that tells the time/of the poet, the man/that lies in the house of Bedlam."
Gray cites "visits to St. Elizabeth's" as an excellent choice to move high school and college thinkers into contact with literary and historical topics. The poet is Ezra Pound; a man both brilliant yet tragically limited, preoccupied with hatred of racial minorities as he was. Opportunities for metacognitive activities eagerly beckon. Teachers and students might analyze their own hostile thoughts. When do they occur? How long do they last? Can they be beneficial?

Student attention to the poem's content may enlist metacognition. What thoughts were you having as you read the poem? Were they bright or dark thoughts? Have you ever thought that you might be mentally unraveling? When do you think pessimistic thoughts? Violent thoughts? Do poets think differently than most of us? These aren't questions about poem content. Such questions are worthwhile, though they may be the only kind we think to ask. Metacognitive questions are those that refer us back to our own thought and feeling responses. Shouldn't literature offer opportunities for awareness of our own thinking responses? Ah, sweet metacognition!

CONSEQUENTIAL KNOWLEDGE

The most consequential poem in my high school years was Robinson's Richard Cory. "... went home and put a bullet through his head." I laughed when the teacher first read it. Hey this is like Jonathon Winters! How disappointed the teacher must have been because I had been doing some good work for her. But with my laughter still audible, she must have quickly yanked me out of her pantheon of sensitive high school boys. Then she quietly explained how the poem might be a very powerful comment on the isolation that people can feel. The class had an extended and consequential (at least for me) discussion about suicide which I didn't participate in. But I listened, and the poem has whispered to me through the years. I will never become too sophisticated for it.

Dynamic knowledge is consequential because it produces action and resolution on the part of the learner and knower.

Knowledge becomes consequential when the thinker is urged to produce or create a product or an idea and this action is rewarding. Slaving (1988) indict teachers for constructing objectives and tests that demand "inert information" instead of meaningful and consequential knowledge.

There is an important place in school for demanding memorized knowledge, but it is my conviction that the best teachers create contexts to energize that memorized knowledge. Russians memorize poetry because they love it and that internal pleasure is a powerful and persistent motivator. But even in the presence of such internal drives, it helps student thinkers if they can address the question of why they have to learn something. Why is this content important? What are the consequences of learning it or not learning it? Such questions are invitations for teachers to create assignments in our classrooms that carry meaningful outcomes. We do not have to judge our goals against any standard of "real-world" relevance, but we should look for ways to generate stimulating and consequential "real-world" activities for assignments within classrooms.

Consider the following example of knowledge in a classroom that may not be very consequential for students. Here is the scenario. Students are assigned to read Hamlet. The teacher explains certain dialogues, footnotes, and Elizabethan vocabulary. A class later the teacher tries for some medium level discourse. Perhaps there is discussion, but maybe part of it is a poorly disguised student effort to find out the content of a future quiz or test. A day, then another day passes. The teacher decides to give a quiz, then shortly after, a more comprehensive test on Hamlet. The quiz and test are given. Oh, oh! A lot of students blew the multiple-choice section. Some couldn't finish the essay questions. Too bad because the essays challenged higher level thinking. But now we have to get back to the six sonnets. Should students be required to memorize one of them? Maybe two or three?
The second example represents Hamlet assigned to students in a more consequential context. The teacher introduces the play with special thought given to contemporary celebrities who might or could resemble Hamlet and other play characters. Part of the discussion could be steered to stimulating student thinking about actual or potential modern day celebrity counterparts of Hamlet and others in the play. The teacher assigns reading homework and even gives homework questions to be written out and handed in at future classes; nothing wrong with that. But how does Hamlet become a consequential endeavor for students? Here's how. The teacher asks for five volunteers (or selects five students) to role-play American reporters who will ask Hamlet questions pertaining to themes that Hamlet might have some opinions about. Who of the students would be Hamlet? Perhaps a sixth, or maybe each of the five originals would, on teacher signal, take the Hamlet persona.

Meanwhile the rest of the students write down at least three questions (while the reporters are asking their own) that Hamlet might find interesting. Perhaps Hamlet is played by three or four other students whose names are drawn out of a hat during the role-play episode. The closure is an essay assigned to the students and demanding summary and synthesis of topics covered during the role-play experience. The students playing reporters (and Hamlet) could write essays about their thoughts before and during the role-playing episode which would be a consequential and metacognitive exercise.

Why is the second scenario more consequential than the first? In the role-play exercise, the students on stage have much more to gain or lose with success or failure because the consequences concern teacher and peer evaluation. Responsibility for committing facts and concepts of Hamlet to memory and internalization is more intense than students are usually asked to be accountable for. Potentials for spontaneity, creativity, and improvisation are greatly increased for participants, while the other class members have greater opportunities for vicarious identification with role-players and Hamlet characters. Also important is the high probability that such a classroom episode will be remembered more holistically and in more detail than other less consequential approaches to the play about the brooding Dane.

For self-evaluation as creators of consequential classroom knowledge encounters, teachers might reflect upon the following items (Hauser, 1988):

1. Students perceive work that I assign as meaningful.
2. Students can be creative as they do the work that I assign.
3. I carefully evaluate student work.
4. When students do assignments well, they are helped by those efforts to do other things well.
5. When students memorize facts or concepts, they know that they will need those facts and concepts for other activities.
6. I look for ways to help students use knowledge that they acquire in my classes.

ENGAGED KNOWLEDGE

Is it possible for teachers to deliver information, assignments, tests, and grades to students without ever engaging them? Goodlad (1984) in A Place Called School: Prospects for the Future, is convinced of more than the possibility. He indicts America's schools of not training America's future citizens to judge for themselves. In about a thousand classrooms systematically studied by his research team, "only rarely" was there "evidence to suggest instruction likely to go much beyond mere possession of information to a level of understanding its implications." The extensive study emphasizes how narrowly and inactively students are forced to encounter facts, concepts, and values.

I remember a high school teacher who occupied an entire year of my English hour life, but seldom (if at all) engaged me. Students would walk into the classroom and when the bell rang, would begin to write answers to questions written on the
chalkboard. The reading assignments were also written on the board and after reading them, we would begin to write answers to questions. Some of the questions required only short written responses; others demanded longer and higher level essay responses. Shortly before the bell rang to end the class, the teacher would ask if we had any questions, but there was usually so little time that discussion never resulted. Then the bell rang and all of us would hurry out to more important engagements in the corridors.

Had that teacher built projects, reports, panels, skits, and other dimensions of knowledge pursuit into the English hour classes... Had that teacher encouraged us to visually portray ideas... Had that teacher selected materials and planned techniques to emotionally involve us in the assigned knowledge... Had that teacher encouraged students to seek and communicate knowledge beyond the assigned textbook... to represent ideas... Had that teacher accomplished only some of these implied recommendation, I would be citing that class as a positive example, rather than negative example of knowledge engagement.

The question that pleads for address from dynamic teachers is if and how they can engage learners in knowledge encounters that go beyond podium explanations and taxonomic knowledge arrangements. Can we engage thinking, feeling, and physically active students? The question applies to thinkers of any chronological age because persons regardless of age are more than disembodied intellects. Have we forgotten the Greek ideal of excellent education: that educating mind, body, and heart are noble pursuits and each should be enthusiastically pursued and diligently planned for by teachers?

I am appalled at how much of what students are supposed to learn from year to year is either never mastered or only shallowly absorbed and quickly forgotten. This deterioration from temporary knowledge mastery back to no mastery (or retrieval capacity) should not be dismissed as if it merely represented callow you and its limitations. Too much time, effort, motivation, and money are expended with the hope of producing better student knowledge for lack of success in this endeavor to be facilely dismissed. Lack of student engagement in too much of school curriculum content is not intended to explain student knowledge deterioration. But consider the value of the hypothesis that when knowledge is engaged through several avenues of motivated participation, the resulting strands of memory, emotional arousal, and perceived pleasure and usefulness should have a more durable longevity.

Can teachers of Language Arts and English lift themselves and their student thinkers beyond the traditional taxonomically constructed cognitive carriages? Can teachers engage students in knowledge encounters that are visual, emotional, kinesthetic, and aesthetic? To what extent are Language Arts and English teachers paralyzing student encounters with engaged knowledge by presenting it to students without arrangements for more complete and wholistic human learning and thinking responses?

Cook and Haight (1986) have recommended an engagement model that explores a variety of thinking style potentials. Their general objectives pertain to story comprehension and appreciation, but their social dimension objectives focus on elementary school students working together and sharing ideas. Their techniques move students through four engagement stages:
1) oral reading, 2) imaging exercises, 3) art activities, and 4) ideas sharing.

In the oral reading phase, teachers are recommended to concentrate on open-ended questions about characters and main themes. The purpose is to urge students to express perceptions and reactions to paragraphs and stories without concern for answer correctness and fear of saying something wrong. Imaging exercises help students see themselves within the context of the story and to become participant observers of characters in the stories. Students might be asked to pretend they are with a character or characters and describe what she/he might say to or advise the characters to do. In phase three, students represent feelings and images in a visual art form such as drawing, collage, painting, sculpture, or other. These activities are
meant to move thinkers beyond language symbols and into more sensual and vicarious story engagement. In the final sharing phase, students gather in groups to describe and discuss their thoughts and to display their productions. Throughout this social engagement, teachers are encouraged to keep the discussions focused and friendly.

For further reflection and self-evaluation about how well we may be engaging student thinkers, the following statements might offer some helpful motivation (Hauser, 1988).

5. Students in my class seek knowledge from sources beyond the classroom.

6. I try to bring interesting persons with specific knowledge and talent into my classes to dialogue with students.

7. I communicate to students that I value their efforts to acquire knowledge in various ways and places.

8. Students in my classes are encouraged to build models that represent their ideas.

9. I encourage students to think and work cooperatively.

OPEN KNOWLEDGE

all of our formal education procedures condition teachers and students to value finished problems and completed assignments. "So what is your conclusion?" we frequently ask, at times, with adversarial energy. "Cite your source..." "Find the expert..." "Get your facts straight..." Such concern and recommendations for solid evidence and tough sources should be valued, but they may represent some unfortunate results. Such wisdom convinces adults and children alike that the best knowledge is certain, complete, and located in expertness. Perhaps the concept of finished knowledge is most appropriate as a label to represent our conditioned momentum toward thinking authority and completeness.

But is knowledge, as completed and authoritative, capable of producing thinker response beyond memorization and practice? When students so frequently absorb the crystallized knowledge of textbooks, experts, and institutions, will they be inclined to produce divergent and controversial conclusions of their own? Will they think for themselves? Will they have any desire to think provisionally? As I periodically go back to Dewey's work, it occurs to me that much of what he recommended with perhaps inspired conviction was that our thinking energies and knowledge encounters should be open and flexible.

If we once start thinking, no one can guarantee where we shall come out, except that many objects, ends, and institutions are doomed. Every thinker puts some portion of an apparently stable world in peril, and no one can wholly predict what will emerge in its place.

It is the view of this essay that knowledge becomes efficacious when it is associated with atmospheres that accommodate synthesis through idea sharing. The teacher who delves into literature with students and creates an atmosphere fragrant with idea and opinion possibilities would seem to be more in harmony with open knowledge prerequisites than the teacher who presents conclusions and expert opinions, no matter how dynamic or engaging such authoritative lectern presentations can be.

McNeil (1988) has recently reported her findings pertaining to Social Studies teachers in a certain sunbelt school system. The teachers are described as frequently reducing issues to "...lists of facts, names, places, events, laws, and the like." McNeil proposed that these teachers wished to "...maintain authority over content," and that the lists copied, then memorized by students, helped teachers to maintain their confident and comfortable view of the content as stable and worthy of mastery. The epistemological question of why the knowledge was important or worthy didn't seem to exist.

They would instruct students to copy into their notebooks such terms as the Federal Reserve System, the International Monetary Fund, or even Capitalism, but they would not discuss the terms in any depth.

It occurred to McNeil that teachers who emphasize dictation and note taking often want to avoid the inefficiencies related to
Risking expression of opinions in speech and writing would certainly seem to be a desirable Language Arts and English class activity. Varying opinions, convictions, and outlooks in response to poems, essays, plots, and characters should occasionally swarm out of these classes, yet may not because teacher attitudes and content persuasions may appear closed and students fear disfavor if they express a nonconventional or unexpected viewpoint. Ah, but isn't that what fuels and magnifies literature - that more than predictable interpretations are possible and desired? Isn't meaning and appreciation forged for each of us when we listen, compare, and share ideas as participants in a dialogic process?

Creating encounters with open knowledge may require temporary suspensions of teacher evaluation and expertise. Composition teacher should suppress the urge to "take over a student's rough draft or any piece of writing." (Murnane, 1988). When a teacher too quickly imposes outside structure and correction responses on student writing, "...the message that there is a controlling force outside of the learner" is emphasized. "Whenever you find yourself taking over the student's writing and beginning to make it your own, remember this quote from H. G. Wells: "No passion in the world, no love or hate, is equal to the passion to alter someone else's draft." (Murnane, 1988). To impose standards of official correctness on early drafts of student work or rigorous standards of writing correctness on journal writing may be another version of closed rather than open knowledge encounters. The "correctness" can come eventually, but delay of quantitative teacher judgement may encourage more extended student excursions into open (and metacognitive) knowledge encounters.

Teacher attention to the following inventory statements may provide insights into the teacher's appreciation and facilitation of open knowledge encounters (Hauser, 1988).

1. I encourage various student interpretations of knowledge.

2. I encourage various student interpretations of knowledge.
3. I appreciate sincere student responses, even if they are controversial.
4. Students in my classes know that even expert opinions can be questioned.
6. I compliment students for expressing new or interesting ideas.
8. In my classes, students know that sincere discussion is valued.
12. In my classes, students are encouraged to practice skepticism toward ideas that may seem very attractive and comfortable.

THE MAJOR IDEAS ...
...in these pages have addressed our need for becoming self-reflective about our capacities to guide students into powerful knowledge encounters. Applications to Language Arts and English teachers have been a recurrent focus and the concepts described have been knowledge as metacognitive, consequential, engaged, and open.

Enhanced self-knowledge about one's art and skill in helping to empower student thinking about Language Arts and English content should be deduced as a precious teacher quality. Can we, as self-reflective individual teachers, begin to choose content and arrange thinking atmospheres where interactions are dialogic? Can we guide thinking students toward creating meanings, reflecting on them, and listening to the reflections of others?

In an interview with William Glasser (Brandt, 1988), three human needs and their curricular implications were addressed:
1) We need to feel as if someone we respect listens to us.
2) We need someone to say, "your're right," because that helps us to start believing that what we say counts.
3) We need to hear someone say, "Your way is better than mine. I think we should do it your way.

Consider how good it feels for children and adolescents who are striving for security, status, and recognition to have even one of those privileges described by Glasser. When they do,
Hauser, Jerald from "Educator Self-Appraisal: Dimensions of Student Thinking." (available on request).


Nurkane, Yvonne, "Metacognition and Writing," from paper presented with J. Hauser at ATE Summer Conference, Mississippi State University, Starkville, MS., Aug. 9, 1988, p. 6.

Hauser, Jerald, from "Educator Self-Appraisal: Dimensions of Student Thinking." (available on request).


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**Eighth-Grade Writers Honored by Teachers of English**

As the current school year ends, a total of 382 eighth-grade students are being honored for their writing ability by the National Council of Teachers of English. They received certificates of achievement for demonstrating exceptional writing ability in NCTE's 1991 Promising Young Writers Program. Eighth-graders in the United States, Canada, and American Schools abroad wrote impromptu essays and submitted samples of their best work. All others who took part in the program received certificates of participation.

In announcing the names of students being honored, NCTE Executive Director Miles Myers, formerly associate director of the National Writing Project, said he is gratified that more than 1,700 eighth-graders entered this year's competition. "Writing has become an essential skill in contemporary society, both to function as a citizen and to work," Myers said. "Several NCTE research projects have shown that writing has two critical uses—to communicate to others and to clarify one's thinking. The work of these NCTE award winners emphasizes the importance of early and continuing work in the development of writing, which must be part of many courses and units throughout the curriculum."

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**INTERNATIONAL ASSOCIATION OF LITERARY SEMANTICS**

**FIRST INTERNATIONAL CONFERENCE**

**UNIVERSITY OF KENT AT CANTERBURY: JULY 31ST-AUGUST 2ND 1992**

The Conference to found an International Association of Literary Semantics will take place from Friday July 31st to Sunday August 2nd, 1992, at Eliot College, University of Kent at Canterbury: Conference President Professor Gunther Kress. For further details, please write to the Conference Convenor: Trevor Eaton, Editor, *Journal of Literary Semantics*, Honeywood Cottage, 35 Seaton Avenue, Hythe, Kent CT21 5HR, England.
Teaching a Unit On Women's Roles in Literature
Helen Dale

There has been a great deal of controversy lately about the
canon of literature we English teachers present to our students.
Voices from different perspectives are demanding to be heard,
forcing hard decisions between traditionally revered literature
and that which represents the voices that have been excluded.
Including something new means excluding something treasured. In
spite of that, it is important to engage our students with
literature from a new point of view. This paper deals with
including in our courses units of images of women in literature.

Rationale for Teaching Women in Literature

In the last twenty years there has been a revolution in the
changing roles and aspirations of women, but that is not
sufficient time to counterbalance hundreds of years of male
literature and criticism already in place. It would make sense
that change would come slowly, and indeed it has. Compilers of
anthologies have tried to update their new editions, yet a 1985
survey published in the English Journal found the latest Norton
Anthology of British Literature contains 160 male entries to 14
female entries, and the Norton Anthology of American Literature
contains 117 works by men and 33 by women (Ray, 55). Women's
literature is still under-represented.

Even thinking about teaching a women's literature unit makes
us examine our tacit assumptions about why we teach literature.
Certainly a basic reason people read fiction is to know...
themselves. When we realize that most literature has been written by and about men, and further, realize it has been criticized by men who therefore established the canon, we realize that we are leaving out half of our young readers from seeing and knowing themselves in literature. Vivian Gornick, a scholar of women's literature, sees literature as the cultural record of our experience, but a record of male experience, "a detailed description of human hungers and human fears as men have experienced them" (112). Another feminist scholar recognizes "the novel as functioning in our culture as...an instrument for education and socialization" (Cornillon, 115). There is a wealth of literature about young boys growing up which lets them see and affirm themselves, but this model is not functional for all of our students.

What young women have instead of literary models are stereotyped images in the media as well as in literature. They are faced with sophisticated dilemmas as Mary Anne Ferguson points out. Girls are taught to be passive, but that very passivity is then given as a reason they can not succeed in fields where more assertiveness is demanded. And assertiveness is linked with success (1). There are other examples. Whereas possessiveness shows protectiveness and responsibility in a man, in a woman it is seen as narrowness and selfishness. In a man self-sacrifice is noble; in a woman it is taken for granted (2).

These dilemmas show themselves in the traditional canon of literature. Even in works with female characters, the females are often secondary or have characteristics hard to identify with. It is rare that young women can see themselves mirrored admirably; this can lead to a loss of self-esteem. Teaching women's literature can teach positive characteristics of women, so their values and opinions count. Alan Purves sees reading as appearing "to follow a pattern of prediction followed by confirmation" (59). In teaching women's roles, we can easily see these predictive role patterns but then can go beyond that toward interpretation and evaluation of the stereotypes.

Teaching a Unit on Women's Roles

The rationale for teaching fiction by and about women is clear, but many questions remain about when and how. It makes sense to me to teach a unit on women's literature to high school juniors or seniors because by then they have accumulated enough life experience to judge whether female characters are realistically or fairly represented. On the other hand, they are young enough that their values have not solidified. They also do not yet have a set of interpretation of works in the canon. At this age, we do not have to re-interpret; they need not unlearn first.

Teaching a separate unit on women's literature is one way to include more women's works than the standard anthology provides. The traditional organization of courses stresses genres or time periods, both of which work against inclusion of women. Teaching a whole women's literature course would be unrealistic in most cases because of economic and political realities. Incorporating a unit on women into a standard course exposes a larger population to a feminist perspective.
Developing a unit organized around roles women play in literature allows one to tap into student interests. Students this age are concerned with image; they are trying on various roles themselves. So examining stereotyped roles for women can help all students think about what is right for them and about how destructive stereotyped roles can be in co-opting choices. In the next few years these young people will be facing many new roles and should have some examined guidelines in place. A further justification for examining stereotyped roles is that it encourages students to think critically about the perceived values of society.

I would not expect that this unit be gladly received at first. Most of the young women probably have not been aware of sexual stereotyping in their lives yet. Most would think of "feminist" negatively, and many would assume that there were no discrimination problems for women any longer. Young men, it would be expected, would be distrustful and uncomfortable. But they too will be experiencing a world in which both men and women play new roles: working wives, shared household responsibilities, shared child care.

Because of such expected resistance in teaching a unit on women's roles or images in literature, one would have to be careful not to preach about right thinking. There is a great deal they should know about women's place in history, about why women did not write or were not published, about the distorted views of women that literature can project. But that knowledge is secondary and may arise in discussion. The larger goal is for them to observe the stereotyped roles that literature may present, to see the wastefulness of this type of thinking and its cost to women and society. The unit would be based on many short stories and poems, rather than a novel, so that the students would have multiple experiences in reading, interpreting, and criticizing. Furthermore, these stories and poems could be duplicated, probably necessary because the texts most high school teachers have available simply do not include enough literature by and about women.

The unit would begin with an opinionnaire to see where the class stands and to get controversies about women's roles openly aired in an atmosphere accepting of multiple viewpoints. Another possible introductory activity would be for students to bring in ads from magazines that depict women in various roles. Through these ads the class could determine the roles in which women are typically cast. Many of the roles women play in literature would be exposed here. Students would write reactions to the assigned works in reading journals so that each would formulate an opinion. Since there are six primary roles, subsections of the unit, the class would divide up into six groups to write discussion questions, plan discussion, and possibly design activities relevant to analyzing the role they are assigned. Although I would discuss each role first to make sure the students had a full enough understanding, I would use student-led discussion of the literary pieces to give the class ownership of the unit and to prevent teacher "sermons." The culminating activity would be a paper analyzing the roles of women in stories or a short novel not addressed in class.
The Roles of Women in Literature

The traditional roles of women in literature view women in terms of their relation to men rather than as themselves. Sandra Eagleton notes that "we find out immediately if she is married or single, a mother or childless, attractive or unappealing" (1) Men are sometimes stereotyped, too, but their characters are usually more complex as they more often are shown interacting with the outside world. Women, in contrast, are usually defined by their biological roles: wife, mother, sex object. The teacher’s goal is to stress the perspective from which the story is told, to go beyond the narrator’s view to see the situation through a different lens.

The roles examined in this unit and many of the chosen short works are taken from Ferguson's Images of Women in Literature where a more detailed description of both the roles and the literature can be found. For each of the roles examined, it is important to emphasize what the students need to know to understand the role. It would make sense to start with literature about young girls, but there are few growing up stories emphasizing girls' rites of passage. Even in fairy tales a female is not fully alive until the prince kisses her. So the roles would start with wives, both dominant and submissive.

To read successfully about submissive wives, the students would need to know why it was important for women to stay submissive. One way to get at this is to examine how their grandmothers' roles as wives were different from their mothers' roles and from their own projected ideal. Another goal would be to differentiate between women who were submissive willingly (thus the conflict must come from elsewhere in the story) and those for whom the submission was the central conflict.

A story one could start with is "Little Women" by Sally Benson in which the woman accepts and enjoys the submission her husband encourages. Another work in this section could be May Swenson's poem "Women" which shows a deep resentment toward submission. In the most complex work in this section, John Steinbeck's "The Chrysanthemums," the students must work through the complexities of Eliza's decision to be submissive or not. Ferguson points out that none of these women see an alternative because they have internalized the image that "cheats them of selfhood and happiness" (21).

There is a polarity in women's roles; they tend to be good or bad. The wife who is not submissive becomes the literary role of the dominating wife, universally ridiculed and hated. In this section of the unit, I would want the students to get beyond the narrator's point of view and see the character more objectively. One small assignment to accomplish this would be to have students write a letter from a dominating wife character to her own mother explaining the problems in her marriage; this could lead to a discussion of point of view. Thurban's "The Secret Life of Walter Mitty" works well for this assignment; it is easy to see the wife as shrew, but that point of view is worth examining.

The role of mother is a major one in literature and there is polarity here too. Just as there are submissive (good) and
dominant (bad) wives, so there are idealized mothers and bad mothers, archetype roles, whose power "lies in the basic truth it represents: all human beings yearn for the free-floating comfort of complete dependence and, at the same time, for independence and assertion as individuals..." (Ferguson, 66). In The Glass Menagerie student could examine the relationship between Tom and Amanda to determine if Amanda is a "bad" mother standing in her son's way.

This central role of motherhood defines women by biology. In a time when motherhood is an option, women need ways to define themselves in other ways as well. What students would need to know to understand this role can come from an examination of their own lives as well as literature. Students would examine when they wanted to become parents and then focus on their own parents whom adolescents sometimes see more as roles than people.

In reading the three stories in this sub-group, the primary goal would be to examine how the female characters define themselves, to question if they are defined beyond their motherhood. Again, point of view is important. A second question to ask is whether their efforts or sacrifices are taken for granted just because they are mothers. In Harold Brodkey's "Verona: A Young Woman Speaks", the father showers the girl with things and attention, but it is with the mother she feels the closer bond although the mother in this story is left an undeveloped archetype. Myra Goldberg's story "Gifts" explores a mother/daughter relationship in which gifts are a symbol of dependence. The character of the mother is flat; it is the daughter who deals with the conflict the gifts present. If the mother had a life function beyond the role, she might not be so dependent on filling role beyond its usefulness. The last story, "The Sky is Gray" by Ernest Gaines, shows the price women must pay to be strong enough, or at least seem strong enough, to carry the role of mother.

The next role is woman as sex object, and the readings are controversial yet important because this is an age at which students face sexual decisions; there is much authentic discussion that can occur. Often in traditional literature when a woman fulfills a man's sexual needs, she is a "fallen" woman to be discarded. The students would need to ask themselves if the woman is treated as a full human being valued by the narrator and author. In Irwin Shaw's "The Girls in Their Summer Dresses," the wife realizes that her marriage is doomed because of her husband's attitude toward women. The narrator invites us to see past the main character's limited view. There are two very good, but very strong pieces that Ferguson includes in this section, Margaret Atwood's poem "Circle--Mud Poems" again about men wanting not a real woman but the warmth and pliancy of mud and Ntozake Shange's poem "With No Immediate Cause" about rape. If these two selections seem inappropriate, others can replace them, but almost any work dealing with woman as sex object might offend some.

The last of the traditional roles is that of Woman Alone. This role is not ambivalent; a woman without man is assumed to be so involuntarily and therefore pitied or ridiculed, drawn as prim
and withdrawn from life because no man has validated her. Pre-
reading discussions would center on the validity of the role's
underlying assumptions. Must a woman wait for a man to take the
initiative? Can she find an identity without a man? What
happens to a woman's self-esteem when others pity her? These and
other questions form a sound basis for the readings in this
sections.

Edna O'Brien's "The Call" shows us the stereotype of the
woman waiting for the phone to ring. Students could decide if
this passive role still exists. "Miss Brill" by Katherine
Mansfield portrays a stereotyped old maid, and students can
examine the narrator's view toward the character. A nice
contrast is Kate Chopin's "The Story of an Hour" in which the
character does not fit at all the role of the pitiful, inadequate
widow. In fact, Mrs. Mallard is happy only in the one hour in
which she assumes her husband dead. For this and all the
stories, the questions students raise should be about the
individual woman no matter what her marital status.

A nice way to conclude the unit is with a few works that
Ferguson groups under Women Becoming, about women who are full
human beings, not objects of others' perceptions. Susan
Glaspellier's one act play "Trifles" works well for this section, as
does "Roses, Rhododendren" by Alice Adams, a story filled with
many women important in the protagonist's life. Through these
diverse role models, the girl sees choices in her future. A few
poems also celebrate women becoming. "Stepping Westward" by
Denise Levertov, and Adrienne Rich's "Diving Into the Wreck" show
growth and quest as necessary—and androgynous. Alice Walker's
"Beyond What" presents human beings who "reach for destinies
beyond/ what we have come to know." It is a positive note on
which to end the unit.

Although specific concerns and questions have been discussed
for each of the roles, students in their future reading will not
have female characters so neatly classified. Therefore, I would
want the students to take away from the unit a short set of
questions they could ask themselves in determining whether a
character is being portrayed as a role and not as a person.
These questions would give students something concrete on which
to base future interpretations and would give them independence
in judgments about women in literature and in their lives.

1. Do any of women's traditional roles limit the author's
   representation of the character?

2. Is the female character allowed full human potential,
   e.g. strength as well as weakness? Is she responsible
   for herself and her choices?

3. Are the female character's feelings and motivations
   explored by the author in the depth that a male
   character's would be?

A unit on women's roles and the exploration of the ideas
presented her would be a good way of showing students that
reality can always be looked at from alternative perspectives.
Seeing women as individuals, not as biological roles, allows us
to see men with the same freedom. Human experience can be
expanded by re-examining the neglected experience and perceptions
of women.
Works Cited


Helen Dale is working on a Ph.D. degree from UW-Madison.

Results of the Readership Survey

5. What would you like to see happen to the Journal's format? (check one or more)
   - 29 Remain the same
   - 16 Change size (for example, from 6" by 9" to 8½" by 11")
   - 11 Add more photographs and/or other graphic material
   - 33 Get more visually exciting.

Inserted in the spring issue of the Wisconsin English Journal, you received a "Readership Survey" with questions on it like the one above. Seventy-seven Journal readers took time to complete and return the survey. In addition to checking boxes, many wrote thoughtful comments. Thank you, all of you who responded.

Rhoda and I have carefully studied the survey results, especially the extended comments. Although we would have preferred a larger sampling, we believe that the survey provides an accurate picture of the preferences of the people who read the Journal most closely. We will not be able to respond immediately to every suggestion, but we will take every one seriously into account as we plan future issues. On some questions, the responses were spread out about equally, and so the responsibility of deciding what to do comes firmly back to the editors.

Judging from our survey, only a small percentage of people read the Journal from "cover to cover." Almost two-thirds said that they "skim to read only articles of interest." That suggests to us we need to search out materials for the Journal which are "of interest" to our readers. We interpret, "of interest," however, to mean more than "directly related to our jobs." We hope it also means, "interesting," even if it introduces something new to most readers, or something slightly outside their primary area of professional interest. For "interesting," then, we are looking for anything lively, well written, stimulating to our professional thinking and helpful to our professional practice.

The results of the survey seem to confirm our impression that most of the readers are secondary school teachers--middle school through senior high. Of the "other professional journals" they mention reading, NCTE's English Journal was identified 40 times, ten times more than any other. Other NCTE publications mentioned more than once were College Composition and Communication (3), Language Arts (4), and College English (2). The responses to this question demonstrate the wide range of interests among the Journal's readers; they mentioned more than thirty different periodicals ranging from Macuser Magazine to the John Donne Journal.

We were pleased to see how many people were able to list specific titles or authors they had read in the Journal--clear evidence that many of you read at least parts of the Journal carefully. More than thirty different works were mentioned, some more than once. Several readers also wrote that they were enjoying the
poetry, often mentioning specific poems. Al Menninga's poem on teaching English, "A Diminished Thing," with five notes of appreciation was the champion here.

As you can imagine from the responses to question number five above, we do not always know how to read your advice. Twenty-nine people want the format to remain the same, but some of the same people marked one of the other boxes. Thirty-three want the Journal to become "more visually exciting." We need your advice about how to do that without irritating the people who want it to remain the same. Five people also commented on format in their final comment. One emphatically urged us to do something about the typeface and the design "so that it doesn't look like a typewritten term paper." One said, "Don't waste your energy on format: content counts." And another said, "I love the new format."

The responses to question number six seem more conclusive. Most people prefer a mix of long and short articles, but if they had to choose one over the other many prefer "shorter articles" while no one asked for more "longer articles." And clearly most readers prefer practical information over theoretical discussions. One reader warned us not to see theory and practice as opposites: "We need teaching ideas based on proven practice, a solid theoretical base, and careful research."

The interest in practical materials is echoed by the number (42) who suggested more "lesson plans" in question number seven. Many of the same people who marked "lesson plans," however, also indicated that they want us to continue including poetry. In response to reader suggestions, we will begin more actively soliciting fiction, case studies, and position papers.

Some readers also asked for more information about individuals--character sketches and tributes like the recent one for Neil Vail.

6. Recent issues of the Journal have included some articles on both theory and practice, some as short as four pages and some as long as twelve. What do you prefer? (check one or more)

- A mix of long and short
- More shorter articles
- More longer articles
- More discussion of current theoretical issues
- More articles which provide practical information.

7. In addition to traditional articles, would you like to see more: (check one or more)

- Poetry
- Fiction
- Case studies
- Other

8. Recent issues have focused on a theme or subject area. What would you like? (check one or more)

- Continue with selected themes or topics
- Organize the Journal into Departments for different teaching levels
- Organize the Journal into Departments for different features of Language Arts
- Make each issue a heterogeneous mix
- Other

A clear majority (41) prefer that each issue of the Journal continue to focus on a selected theme or subject area, but thirty-four also want each issue to be a "heterogeneous mix." One reader cautioned, "Be careful that the issue is not primarily for one educational level." And another sounded the same warning: "Themes or topics must not eliminate groups and readers." From these suggestions and others like it, we have become more alert to the variety of needs served by the Journal, and we will search for ways to do it better. We want to enlarge the circle of our readers and have everyone in it feel comfortable.

Several readers suggested possible themes or topics for future issues, and you will see those suggestions regularly reflected in our call for manuscripts. Thirty people also admitted that, with encouragement, they might be willing to write something for the Journal. For us, that was the most exciting part of the survey returns. If you were among them, thank you. We will be writing to you individually soon, but please accept our encouragement right now. Send us your completed manuscripts, your working drafts, or even your manuscript ideas, and we will respond as soon as we can. Why not do it today?

Thirty-two readers responded to the survey's invitation for "additional observations, comments, questions, and suggestions." Although a few were essentially critical ("The spelling in some articles is not accurate," "What century are you people living in?" "Frankly, I won't re-subscribe."). Overall, we were very pleased by the solid advice and thoughtful insights we found there. Most expressed appreciation and support. Rhodes and I are grateful. Four readers said they were happy to have a chance to state their opinions about the Journal, and that they would like to see us do it again. If you have expertise in designing surveys of this type, please volunteer to help us design the next one.

Thank you again, for responding to this survey. Your suggestions will guide us as we plan and prepare future issues.
Notes on a Mathematics of Criticism
Edward L. Risden

Commonly when studying a text we apply an heuristic, a paradigm, a philosophical orientation, or a critical method either theoretical or goal-driven. That is, we superimpose (or just impose) a model on a text to help us read and understand it. For instance, we may attempt Derridean deconstruction of a text, a Frye-like structural analysis, a New Critical reading a la Brooks, a psychoanalytic reading based on Freud or Jung; we follow the method of an accepted theoretical master. Recently, books aimed at a more general audience cross fields to make theoretical comparisons and provide alternative readings of the progress of disciplines, books such as Fritjof Capra's The Tao of Physics, Carl Sagan's books on astronomy, the history of science, and culture, and David Hofstadter's study of the "strange loop," Godel, Escher, Bach. We challenge limited (and limiting) perspectives honed by the professional necessity of immersing ourselves in single disciplines to establish new viewpoints, new sympathies, and new grounds for understanding our own field as well as others. As new composition programs at colleges and universities develop writing across the curriculum programs to give students a broader, more realistic context for writing, so teachers of writing may refigure our own writing by a shift in perspective or by taking up the metaphor of another field to enliven our own writing and thus our teaching with some healthy intellectual interbreeding--and perhaps to save ourselves from our own technical jargon by dunking ourselves for a day in someone else's. And though, as Robert Persig shows in Zen and the Art of Motorcycle Maintenance, any metaphor amounts to only one "cut" into the subject in question, it does at least supply a vision of the subject that was previously hidden from view.

Example: one afternoon I stood at the podium before class reviewing my notes on Leo Steinberg's essay on aesthetics, "The Eye is a Part of the Mind." Steinberg argues that in addition to traditional art's pleasing by imitation, "even nonobjective art continues to pursue art's social role of fixating though in aesthetic form . . . rendering [conceptions] . . . accessible to the apparatus of sense" (212). Having just read that passage, I happened to glance beside the podium where lay someone's crib notes of many formulas for a physics test; I focused on a particular formula.

Having not reviewed calculus in several years, I found the formula mysterious, other than my being able to recognize that it involves integration, with which one may develop an equation to measure the area under a curve specified by the formula.

Now, such a formula, both traditional and nontraditional in artistic terms, represents an attempt to provide a measurement for a physical quantity, but seldom in applied mathematics are quantities exactly determinable. One often gets a very near approximation for a given instance (as a word is metaphorical approximation for a concept) that remains more or less repeatable in subsequent instances of similar context. More important to me, I began to read the equation as a process, a trope to turn an abstraction, a shape, a measure, a quantity into something
compatible with the senses (science knows by measuring sensory data, mathematics abstracts sensory data into numbers and numerical relationships). The equation became for me a movement, an object taking shape, and a process of the mind conforming its attention to that shape to make physical, mental, categorizable sense of it: to use it. The equation itself has a liveliness, but the thought process of creating and using the equation appeared (and appears) as truly elegant. Mathematicians will speak of the elegance of geometrical proof or beauty of a derivation, which Scott Buchanan describes as a "comprehensiveness and precision" plus economy of style: the best examples "short and crisp like epigrams (e=mc^2 ?) and [even] the longest have swings and rhythms ... like music." Math, too, has its Ciceroian and its Senecan, its Baconian and its Brownian.

Might one, then, conversely, turn a mathematical aesthetic to literary analysis? A calculus of aesthetics might suggest possibilities for appreciating and understanding a text based on the progress or change of a work, focusing, say, on narrative in terms of symphonic movement or of geometrical or exponential rather than arithmetic progression, or perhaps on poetic technique based on a sum of imagery or an analysis of tangential allusions or symbols by observing the creation of and subsequent fulfillment of potentials of tropes or conceits. But mathematics is a structural science, originating with observation of phenomena then attempting to measure and quantify the progress of those phenomena, then finding the simplest (and most accurate) method for representing those phenomena in abstract terms that can be reconstituted precisely to analyze future incarnations of the same or similar phenomena. The artist or critic may blanch at accepting what one could consider a purely formulaic or structuralist aesthetic, especially in these days when the desire to quantify everything has become a disease that seems to want to invade every discipline, but one may perhaps temporarily adopt a reading viewpoint based on a mathematical model as a point d'appart from which to observe a text without committing oneself to that, and only that, method. As the quest to an equation is arduous, resulting in a new beginning (the useful equation), so, for instance, a structuralist analysis of a text creates not a simple plug-in, nor a box to file away the text, but a key to open the text to one of many possible readings.

A text becomes in light of such a system a problem to be solved creatively by applying various and variable metaphors. The reader may discuss the logic and precision of its sentence-or paragraph-level constructs, apply generative-grammatical analysis to sentences and phrases, do word-frequency counts, follow metrical patterns (which poets for so long called "numbers"), develop a picture or schematic of the scope of a work: mathematical-model style methods that we already apply to literary analysis.

Perhaps such a reading method would favor complex texts that allow for analogy to as many esoteric mathematical techniques as possible, but any structurally beautiful text should respond to the comparison. Even a brief lyric may respond to mathematical
prodding, proving itself plenipotentiary when aptly prodded.
Take, for instance, the Middle English lyric "Western Wind,"
slightly modernized here:

   Western wind, when wilt thou blow?
The small rain down can rain.
   Christ, that my love were in my arms.
   And I in my bed again.

The 4-3-4-3 meter, or standard ballad meter (called so because it
is typical of ballads because it is easily set to music), follows
an aesthetic based on regular "numbers," or a consistent meter.
Geometrically, this meter suggests a rectangle with two sides of
four units and two of three. The poem has an elegance in its
brevity, as Buchanan suggests of math formulas. But despite that
brevity, it has considerable potential for use in the meaning.
The poem may be about a person far from home eager to return to a
spouse or beloved upon finishing a journey or work, perhaps in
the fields. The epithet Christ may be a prayer, or it may be a
curse because the speaker remains far from home. The rain may
function as a sign of current ill or as a sign that, at its
coming, the narrator may go to the beloved. The poem may serve
as a deserved or undeserved complaint, or even as an attention to
desire and long-awaited pleasure to enhance current lack so as to
make a coming fulfillment sweeter. Thus the study of the meaning
creates a matrix or a curve of potential meanings that one draws
from determining the limits of what the poem offers, as one may
use a Riemann sum or integration in math.

Repetition may also serve as a kind of arithmetical
enhancement in the poem: the three y's in line one to mimic the
sound of wind; the repetition of rain to suggest that though the
rain be "small," it must come insufficient quantity; the "oo"
sound of suffering thou, blow, and down would probably have had
in Middle English. This kind of analysis lies within the common
practice of literary criticism, but it nonetheless has
mathematical analogues, and this fact in no way detracts from its
use; rather, it suggests that a general interdisciplinarity
naturally takes place constantly. Noting it may make us bolder
to draw even more distant metaphors to textual analysis.

Several other brisk comparisons between mathematical and
literary thinking may help. As the integral determines the area
under a curve, so the study of the meaning or purpose of a text
produces a range of potential meanings. The author's choice of
techniques, tropes, and forms helps us determine the range of
meanings. As Aristotle shows in the Poetics, tragedy denotes a
different set of potentials than epic, though they share many
qualities. Comedy implies a different "surface area" than lyric,
though they may deal with similar thematic elements. Integration
may compare on one level, then, to genre criticism, in that it
seeks the limits of what the subject contains.

In mathematics a derivative measures time rate of change,
yields a tangential measurement, such as an instantaneous
velocity, of a changing system. This process compares to a
narrative analysis in which one distinguishes discrete plot
elements to examine them separately. Narrative pacing or
deviations in meter or rhythmic flow within or between passages
provide the reader clues similar to those a mathematician gains
from derivatives. And as a partial differential in math also
measures instantaneous rate of change, but with respect to some quantity other than time, such as the change in diameter of a cylinder as its volume constantly increases, so a literary critic might note the instantaneous effects of certain images upon one's reading of a scene while also pointing out that those images become part of an image complex that helps guide the plot or visual movement of a work as a whole.

Poetic image sequences compare to arithmetic series or geometrical series, perhaps even exponential, affecting the reader's sensory perceptions that may be additive or greater, depending on the power and breadth of the images. Often images build toward an effect greater than the sum of the parts, which may point to a specific end or create a series that diverges toward infinity, if the author intends or the reader finds no specific meaning. Such a series, as does a Riemann sum, provides an approximation, an objective correlative (a kind of correlation without a suggestion of equality) for a sense of feeling that the author seeks to encapsulate (our mathematics of criticism seems to have a penchant for boundary phenomena).

Finding a way to read a text compares to finding a formula or deriving an equation to quantify a phenomenon. One hunts authorial clues—tension, paradoxes, motifs, complex words—for how to read a text in a fashion analogous to that which one uses to solve a problem, determining known quantities to lead to unknown quantities, much as structuralism may apply a familiar construct to an unfamiliar work. One perhaps finds meaning in both text and equation, a representation of human life and a representation of a physical process, through a few literary or symbolic constants remaining untouched by contemporary theory.

That a text possesses consistency, integrity and completeness and has meaning guided by authorial intent that is constant, though the reader may vary, comprise assumptions that postmodernist critics have sought to dismantle much of Euclidean geometry falls apart when one passes from a flat surface to a curved one. A great number of critics take textual relativity as a truism, though stout defenders remain to argue that more likely readings of a text exist that provide a common ground on which text and critic may meet. Even physical relativity seems to have limits; the speed of light and the fact that the effects of relativity are negligible over small distances or at low speeds. Mathematicians have not expelled Euclid, and engineers use him every day.

Statistics offers another healthy body of material for comparison, especially since one may use statistics, as rhetoric, to persuade and convince. The standard bell curve suggests a range of potential readings for a text: many readers will read similarly, others (but fewer) will find readings different to radically different from the norm. A skewed or bi-modal curve of readings could imply a non-homogeneous audience. On can explore, even impose, non-standard or variant readings on a text to compare it to another text, privilege a certain political stance, deconstruct the text, or simply to find out what it yields under pressure. Correlation coefficients apply quite well also: they test how the change in one variable is related to the change in
another. Small changes in images or image patterns greatly affect the tone of a poem, as may the smallest hint or irony, and even small changes in tone affect how one reads symbols or themes. One might compare successive versions of a work to show how changes in technique affect the final product. Studying several pieces by one author will uncover consistent (or inconsistent) techniques or theoretical stances used by that author; such a study mirrors correlation. Multiple regression provides an analogue for how several poetic variables changed at once can produce entirely new poems or how a different set of reading assumptions or preconceptions or critical stances may yield an entirely different analysis of a work, thus, according to some schools of thinking, altering the work itself by altering one's reading perception of it. Similarly, analysis of variance suggests a method of comparing related texts' component traits or modes; for instance, how many technical coups must two works share to be labelled as occupying the same genre?

In this paper I intend only to attempt a metaphor for the sake of exploration to suggest the value of overlaying diverse fields and seeking alternative aesthetic contexts. Other potentials for application arise: testing a more developed mathematical aesthetic by applying it to a long, complex text, an author's complete works, a genre or a period. And of course questions arise: would anyone take this sort of amateur/refashioned tool seriously?

Could anyone bring together expertise from diverse fields with separate "ways of knowing" sufficiently to compare them profitably? I see this essay only as a whisper of the possibilities.

Edward L. Risden, English department, St. Norbert College.

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REFLEXIVE VOICE

Everybody and her brother write poetry today maybe they always did and I just didn't notice so when I think about putting pen to paper I wonder am I just adding to the drek but the important part I reply is having something you need to say even if nobody at the moment wants to listen and knowing that soft hard voice at that back of your head isn't going to go away until you've let it say what it has to say

Is anybody listening?

---Nadine S. St. Louis
English Department
University of Wisconsin at Eau Claire
Picnic
Norways framing
black fire grate
and splinter-rich table

kindling box ("Are you big enough to carry this?")
secure in six year old arms

striding importantly
the needle-packed
trail, stopping to watch

another family--
white-striped blacknesses
("What are they, Dad?")

"Be still, Son. Just watch.")--
striding importantly
the needle-packed

trail, stopping to watch
another family,
mother suspicious,

confronting, family to family,
the space between
a pine silence.

Sniffing busily,
mother blackness turns
and leads into the Norways,

surrendering the grate
and table and trail
to father and son

and kindling box
held secure by
a six year old

standing importantly.
Mark Christensen

NOW PLAYING IN THE LADIES' ROOM

(Female participants in a high school spring music festival occasionally warmed up before performance in the girls' restroom.)

Crystalline harmonies, pure, pristine,
Melodies marrow-felt, not seen,
Angelic played out behind a wooden screen.

Porcelain echoes brushed with tile;
Silvery sopranos mirrored while
Altos waved with basses, guile.

Like primal springs bubbling life,
The sound rebounds from the two-edged knife
Wielded by an opaque midwife.

At song's end the girls all fled
Leaving woodwinds in their stead--
to toot and trill till they've too sped:

Lullabies that are too soon sung,
Typewriters played and registers rung--
Their song is over and it's just begun.

Such sad sweetness impeding doom,
The bit of beauty spent so soon,
That now is playing in the ladies' room.
Gary Jones
Sister Bay, WI 54234
CHRISTMAS STORYTELLING: IN THE SPIRIT OF EXCELLENCE
Mary Jo Wojtusik

As a teacher trained in the New Criticism approach to studying literature, I became confused when I began my graduate program during the past few years. I was deluged by jargon describing the latest methods for teaching reading and lit: Whole Language, Response-Based Instruction, Student-Centered/ Meaning-Centered, and so on. But class discussions proved enlightening, and I became intrigued by ideas that seemed to provide greater relevancy. Therefore, I designed a curriculum for Dramatic Literature in the high school, using this freshly-gained insight.

Assuredly, there is a sound rationale behind my plan. James Moffet and Betty Jane Wagner treat the value of informal classroom drama extensively. They assert that none of the activities presented are just "games for kiddies" or enchantment for its own sake. Instead they are serious, yet delightful; they are part of the business of learning. In fact, drama will further the goals of teaching language, literature, composition, and basic skills. Moreover, dramatic activities will further these goals and often by increasing motivation, will enhance learning in other subjects (118).

Now I can't vouch for the across the board enhancement, but I have created a unit that has spawned a high degree of relevance and motivation: Christmas Storytelling. Among my objectives are to develop oral communication skills, to collaborate in a meaningful educational activity, and to do something for others in the holiday tradition. Our communications instructor, Ms. Sue Brockmann, suggested an excellent way to begin. By watching the videotape Bill Cosby Himself, students identified and discussed elements of effective storytelling, such as timing, vocal variety, pitch, tone, volume, rate, and interpretation. Having made preliminary visits to check out samples, I gleaned advice from the professionals. Since I have two sections of Dramatic Lit, I arranged for presentations at different sites: Parkside Preschool and first grade at Washington School. The librarians suggested stories based on age level, content, length, and art work. (The little ones enjoyed looking at the pictures while a student turned the pages slowly.)

Assigned to groups of three and four members, students began the week and a half of preparation. Initially, they did a read through and timing (I had set an eight-minute limit; the average was six minutes long). Next a recorder from each group indicated the various tasks each member would assume; for example, narrator, reindeer, elf, or tree. Incidentally, one class having two Santas was worried about upsetting the preschoolers, so the students asked me to alert the teachers at Parkside, who, in turn, explained to their tiny charges that our plays would be make believe.

Continuing their preparations on day three, the students examined their stories to plan for props, costumes, scenery, and art work (I always appreciate these colorful touches, reflecting abilities beyond the realm of English). The first rehearsal took place on day four with group members working through verbal interpretations and blocking. During the remainder of the time, they alternated between the classroom and art studio in their efforts to orchestrate. I felt like an elementary teacher in the midst of this unit, wondering why I had introduced such merrymakem. But I kept reminding myself that Christmas was coming, along with vacation, and that the outcome would be satisfying.

In the final class periods before the event, we planned a dress rehearsal as a requirement for grades. The rest of us critiqued the stories to offer suggestions about arranging scenery, speaking audibly, and polishing "acting skills." When the big day arrived, I was pleased by the care and creativity on the part of everyone; a special concern about whether or not the children were able to hear and understand the stories, for example. My students assembled elf and Santa costumes, used stage makeup to display a case of "chicken pox," as well as the face of a woodchuck (decked out in a grumpy sack and a pair of brown tights). They also busied themselves baking cookies, making adorable "Thingumajig" puppets, and painting backdrops of
cozy fireplaces, overstuffed chairs, and Tannenbaums. Apart from Santa getting stuck on the school bus and the antics of a canine named Alice, there were no mishaps. The project was a sparkling success, so naturally, the grades were mostly A's and B's in the spirit of the season.

Later, while chatting with others in my department, I mentioned my satisfaction with the storytelling unit. Inevitably, when I think of presentations in the community, I am aware of a higher degree of excellence than is reached on everyday assignments. Why don't students bring the same energy to tasks completed in the classroom? I asked my colleagues for their opinions. We all agreed that, on the one hand, a language-experience approach motivates, but we likewise saw the connection with the community producing positive results. I wondered how the classes would view the question.

The following day I asked the kids for comments on the storytelling experience. With enthusiasm they shared these responses. "Everything we had learned in the class came together."

"One of the preschoolers wanted to know if Jon's dog was Lassie."

"We really had to be sure they understood the stories."

"You could be creative and do your own thing."

"Anytime you can apply something to the real world..."

After the discussion I decided to give them a short survey. A summary of their ideas on the five questions is listed below.

1. Is your attitude different toward assignments designed for an audience in the community?

In response to this item, 43 of 43 students circled "Yes."

2. If "Yes," give two reasons why you think this is true.

Among the reasons cited were remarks that signaled an awareness of audience. ("You want to do better so you aren't embarrassed in front of the public." ) Others indicated the need for motivation. ("You want to keep their attention." ) Still others alluded to the peer pressure that exists when one performs for classmates. ("Smaller children don't criticize you." ) One student, named Kari, said something unusually perceptive. "Most people our age are more worried about being 'cool.' When you perform for the community, being 'cool' is not so important."

3. Do you see an educational value in role play and storytelling?

For question three the survey showed 38 answering "Yes," 4 "No," and 1 "No Response."

4. If "Yes," give one reason for your choice.

The reasons given included the possibility of learning from the ideas in the stories (this would seem to support the importance of literature in the development of the person, not feasibly measured by standardized tests). Another reaction to the question of educational value involved the making of meaning. ("Some kids can understand the story better with actions and expressions, instead of just reading the text."") Lastly, several respondents mentioned enhanced communication skills.

5. State the name of the story you told the students and describe one special feature connected with your performance.

This could refer either to you or someone else in your group.

First a member of the "Merry Christmas, Space Case" troupe talked about the alien costume and the chase scene that made 20 first grades squeal with delight. Next, someone from "Nicky's Christmas Surprise" commented on the vivid animal sound effects done by one versatile young man. Also, the Santas in both classes discussed their pleasure in assuming that role. In addition, two vivacious young ladies, dressed in night shirt and pajamas, taught the kids a song and dance routine, called "I Got the Chicken Pox for Christmas." "One of the girls expressed these thoughts: "I think it's important to have younger audiences participate in what you are doing. It keeps their attention, and they seem to enjoy it more. They usually don't sit still too long!"

A few students elaborated on the thinking skills and social skills needed for getting it all together.

Now let's give a little cheer for Burt in "The Giving Tree," who had this to say. "There is nothing like the warmth in the eyes of a young child enchanted by a world you create with your
stories. It makes you appreciate the teaching profession and the problems it has keeping the child's attention in a subject that may not be his favorite."

Since observing student's behavior seems to me a perfectly legitimate way to evaluate, I concluded that they were having a great time learning; my goals had been met. It was rewarding to do something in the spirit of the season. In the hope that others may be encouraged to try this or a similar project next year, I have included a bibliography of the selections we chose as well as a few more recommended by the children's librarian.

An atmosphere of excellence prevailed in our reaching beyond the walls of the school, but I was not surprised. If you do not expect, you will not get. But the challenge remains: "Why can't we have Christmas all through the year?"

Mary Jo Wojtusik teaches English at Merrill High School

Works Cited


Laurence Yepez has enriched children's literature with a variety of realistic stories about Chinese Americans, set in the past and present. They reveal telling attitudes of immigrants confronting an alien culture and compelling of second and third generation individuals interacting with tensions between two cultures. The *Star Fisher* is no exception.

The Lee family has just arrived in a West Virginia town to start anew, expecting to make their livelihood operating a laundry. They are the first Chinese to come to this community. The Lee children are American-born but their parents are immigrants. Their reception is predominately chilly though there is both overt hostility and warm helpfulness, the latter from their landlady.

The plot and central theme, assimilation, grow out of these tensions. Fifteen-year-old Joan, who tells the story, learns about people -- their defenses and fears, their willingness to help and ability to adjust -- and also about herself and her family. Adjustment and acceptance work both ways. The conclusion of both plot and theme is heartwarming.

The *Star Fisher* is based on stories from Yepez's own family. This factor, in addition to his stylistic dexterity, gives it the ring of truth. Joan Lee emerges a believable character with whom readers will easily identify.

Nicholas J. Karolides
University of Wisconsin-River Falls


Children have varied reactions to personal experience with divorce and, in this excellent book, sixth grader Veronica Vailor's becomes barbary of a Judy Blume character. Veronica's internal struggle with her parents' divorce as well as her resulting behaviors become central themes to Cooper's book. Veronica must face the threatening loss of her father and the inescapable reality that the little time they will have together will be shared by his new girlfriend. Veronica wonders where, or if, she will fit into the new life her father is forcing on her.

Tearful confusion, resulting in vindictive, cruel pranks at school, become barbary of Veronica's painful struggle in dealing with the realities of divorce. Her coping mechanisms are examined and Cooper creates a telling link between Veronica's outward behaviors and internal problems. Veronica must remain invulnerable in the eyes of her classmates, so she creates a facade that few friends are willing to penetrate or question. She is a controller and uses her pain to create pain. Veronica is willing to try anything to humiliate some friends she believes are gossiping about her family troubles. When her plans fail, the target of her mischief refuses to retaliate, shattering Veronica's barriers, causing her to wonder if she really is condemned by her "mean streak."

Cooper moves the story toward her intended conclusion with effective description and a coherent, well-planned plot. Her themes are more than relevant, revealing current family changes and personal reactions to them. Veronica's internal struggle with her parents' divorce and her father's remarriage accurately depict the final blow to a child's hope of reunion. Cooper also explores the impact that divorce carries into the classroom.

Realism is carefully woven into the pages of Cooper's book. Her character grows when Veronica begins to see truth in what her classmates tell her. While readers will not find hidden messages or easy solutions to life's problems in *Mean Streak*, they will find how one sixth grader dealt with a difficult but common problem. Veronica makes no promises to change but she opens her mind to possibility.

Berta Zumdars
University of Wisconsin-River Falls (student)


This story's strength rests on a boy's unique solution to a common problem. Boredom plagues 12 year old Kieran's life, moving him mundanely through the ordinary until his grandmother reveals her newest invention. Against her warning, he steals her altered television remote control, which sends him forward and backward in time, away from responsibility and reality. Becoming absorbed and then controlled by the tempting invention, Kieran fails to notice its negative influence on him until nearly too late; then, moving rapidly in and out of the present, he becomes in danger of losing everything.

Pausacker has contrived a recognizable metaphor and used it to explore a modern malady. Rushing through time and escapism are telling experiences for Kieran, and he comes to understand that actions have consequences.

Nine and ten year olds will enjoy this book's simplicity. Older readers may search for a richer style and vocabulary, finding instead a creative correlation between today's fast-paced society and boredom.

Berta Zumdars
University of Wisconsin-River Falls (student)

Welcome to the club, the human race, everybody's old pain. The Foreseeable Future, a book of three novellas, tenderly guides readers into club membership. Explored are themes of female power and male isolation and in prose so poetic that readers may pause with awe to savor a sentence or even an entire paragraph.

Each narrative portrays the complications of men trying to find themselves and women trying to cope with it. Lost males touched by war seeking better virtues seek women who mentor them forward. Price's men seem pitifully immature and desperately needing the very women as the talented and sensitive healers of the men they love, or at least loyal to? I believe he does.

Several poignant scenes of men elevated by female wisdom occur. Consider a haunting episode near the end of the second narrative, for which the book is titled. Whit Wade, wounded in France then honorably discharged in 1945, returns to North Carolina and his old job of insurance adjusting. During a five day car trip he visits Martha, a woman of color and his love-interest of long ago. But now she is without teeth, half blind, and dying. She knows that Whit is still charmed by her and rejects his naive memories.

"...so your mind's looking back at the past and thinking it's real, Whit - the best of friends and lovely as God - but we been dead and dust millions of years. Don't reach back now and try to touch 'em, child. They ain't there to touch. Go home and don't try."

The theme of men as fragile personalities reprises in the third tale, Back Before Day, when small town high school coach Dean Walker, learns from his young son that an old beau has phoned his wife, Flynn. He assumes the worst - that she is unfaithful. The suspicion is premature but Dean accuses her, then takes five year old Brade out of a warm bed into the night on a surreal kind of dark road car excursion.

Where is he going? To his mother's place? What will that accomplish? A tragic experience with a former student returns Dean from the land of ego-centricism. He and Brade journey back to Flynn. Yes, Flynn's beau of long ago did call, but not to woo her. Chastened with better wisdom, yet still the dreamer, Dean finishes the night back in his own bed, drifting into sleep and dreams of perfect homes, "Where no voice ever rises except at Christmas or to say Supper's ready.

In the first tale, The Fare to the Moon, Kayes Paschal appears more self-directed than male characters who follow and his wife, Daphne, less influential. But Leah Birch is very powerful as Paschal's intense and dusky lover. Drafted into the army and ready to roll for boot camp, Kayes worries about Leah's safety. Will town ruffians harass her? He tries to give her the family car, but that's where Daphne asserts herself. She claims the car and Leah tosses a coin (heads it is) and goes north.

A night later, on a cramped bus, Kayes tries to assure himself that the intense six-month affair with Leah is more important than the wedding ring he holds in his hand. But only the ring remains and in dreamy introspection he laments, "Who else on earth will ever risk Kayes Paschal again?"

There is so much more to praise about The foreseeable Future than space allows. The narrative technique is complex and creative with first person introspections weaving amid past tense narrations as if such writing harmonies could only be easy. Episodes of special dignity are italicized and succeed in elevating attention and empathy to characters.

Throughout the book, lack of male-to-male bonding is apparent. In the first novella, Kayes' brother is distant and his son bitter toward him. In the second and best of the three, Clyde Towns, a discharged and traumatized war veteran, asks Whit, "What helped?" (in recovering from war trauma), but Whit can only think, "I can't give him a pitiful thing." In the third story, Dean's only reaction to the sorrow afflicting Flynn's old beau comes wrapped in a show of superficial concern.
Are we males so wounded by isolation — so severed from sources of self-understanding, sacrifice, and empathy? The Foreseeable Future won't make it easy for any of us to say no.

Jerald Hauser is a faculty member in Teacher Education at St. Norbert College in De Pere, Wisconsin.

LANGUAGE ARTS JOURNAL OF MICHIGAN
CALL FOR MANUSCRIPTS

For an upcoming special focus issue of The Language Arts Journal of Michigan, its editors invite submission of articles and essays focusing on the history of English language arts instruction. Such articles might examine past practices and texts, discuss significant changes that have occurred in the writer's own teaching practices, explain the origin or evolution of current practices, and/or speculate on the directions English language arts instruction may/must go as we near the end of the century. Such articles and essays will be reviewed until February 1, 1992. Appearing twice during the academic year, LAJM publishes articles on issues, theory, theory-based practice, and research in the teaching and learning of the language arts at all levels, kindergarten through college. Manuscripts should be 6-12 pages in length, double-spaced, and use the MLA style for parenthetical documentation and the NCTE Guidelines for Non-Sexist Use of Language. Send three copies and a self-addressed stamped envelope to LAJM Editors, Department of English, Central Michigan University, Mt. Pleasant, MI 48859.

Achievement Awards in Writing, 1992

To encourage high school students in their writing and to recognize publicly some of the best student writers in the nation, The National Council of Teachers of English will give achievement awards in writing to students nominated and cited as excellent writers by judges. Nominees must be students who will graduate from high school in 1993.

A maximum of 876 awards is possible; the awards are announced in October when student nominees have entered their senior year in high school. Recipients of awards and the English departments from which they were nominated receive certificates of commendation from the Nation Council of Teachers of English.

Because NCTE is a not-for-profit educational association, it has no funds to award scholarships to winners. Their names and addresses, however, are printed in a booklet that is mailed in October to directors of admissions and freshman studies in 3,000 colleges, universities, and junior colleges in the United States. Accompanying each booklet is a letter in which NCTE recommends the winners for college admission and for financial assistance, if needed. Every state in the nation is represented among the award recipients. Each state is allowed at least two winners; the specific number is proportionate to the state's population.

ELIGIBILITY

Only students who are JUNIORS in the academic year of 1991-92 may be nominated for 1992 awards; they must be candidates for high school graduation in 1993. This stipulation is made so that the booklet naming the winners may reach colleges in time for students to be considered for admission and scholarships in 1993. High school juniors from public, private, and parochial schools in the United States and Canada, as well as from American schools abroad, are eligible.

NOMINATION PROCEDURES

Each high school selects its own nominee or nominees: one or more juniors agreed upon by the English department, not chosen by an individual teacher. In selecting the young writers, teachers may want to consider the following standards: Does the student show depth of thought in the quality and presentation of ideas? Even if the thought is relatively commonplace, has the student made the idea his or her own? Is the student clear about subject and audience? Does the student demonstrate a command of vocabulary and sentence structure? Perhaps the comprehensive question is whether or not the writer exhibits power to inform and move an audience through control of a large range of the English language.
A current official nomination blank for each nominee must be submitted to NCTE, postmarked no later that January 23, 1992. Only one student may be nominated on each blank. No substitutions will be accepted after the January 23 deadline. All nomination blanks from a school should be mailed to NCTE in the same envelope, and only one teacher should be designated to receive the follow-up instructions in March. All information requested on the nomination blank must be provided.

The State Coordinator for Wisconsin is Mrs. Sandra Ludeman, Milton Schools, 430 East High Street, Milton, WI 53563.