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Action Research:
Reports from the Field

Also:
Regional Teaching Resources
for English Language Arts

Birthplace of Laura Ingalls Wilder
Pepin, WI
Submission Guidelines

- Send two copies of each manuscript, typed and double-spaced throughout (including quotations, endnotes, and references), with one-inch margins. Information (including addresses) on coming issues is located in the Editor's Note in this issue.

OR

Submit your manuscript electronically to the editor, Ruth Wood (RuthannP.Wood@uwrf.edu); a Word attachment is preferred.

- Provide a statement guaranteeing that the manuscript has not been published or submitted elsewhere.

- Ensure that the manuscript conforms to the Guidelines for Nonsexist Use of Language in NCTE Publications.

- Follow MLA format throughout.

The name, address, school affiliation, telephone number, and e-mail of the author should appear on the title page only, not on the manuscript. If the manuscript is accepted, the author will need to provide a disk copy of the manuscript in Word.

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Editor's Note

Dear WEJ Readers:

Welcome to an eclectic issue of Wisconsin English Journal

The first half of this issue celebrates "Action Research" by printing an article derived from an Action Research Project under the direction of WCPELA's own Tom Scott. Scott describes Action Research for our readers as follows:

Action research, to my mind, provides a systematic way to guide reflection and to explore alternatives to our current practices.

We look forward to submissions of articles derived from Action Research projects in future issues of WEJ. Please contact us with ideas and proposals.

The second half picks up on the theme of the address by Dr. Richard Beach at the 2004 WCPELA/WCA convention in Appleton, WI. There, Dr. Beach stressed the need to address local resources and local connections in the teaching of English Language Arts. Here, we spotlight a few local resources that might be of interest to WEJ readers.

--David Beard, guest co-editor

Calls for Future Issues of WEJ

Do you have a local teaching resource to share with the readers of WEJ? Have you been involved in Action Research or other classroom-based activities that help improve teaching English Language Arts? Do you have a new perspective to add to the issues that face readers of WEJ? We'd love to hear from you.

We are planning to make the spring 2005 issue a repeat of featuring an outstanding English/Language Arts program. If you are a teacher in or a former student of such a program, please send word to us that you'd like your language arts department to be considered. Give us e-mail and postal information so that we may keep in contact with you.

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Action Research

What is Action Research?

Most of us in education would agree that at the heart of effective staff development is our capacity for reflection on our practices and our willingness to examine with candor what we are doing with students and how our approaches are working.

Action research, to my mind, provides a systematic way to guide reflection and to explore alternatives to our current practices. It calls for teachers to define as precisely as possible a problem or issue that troubles them, to survey published works to discover what we already know about the problem or issue, to formulate a hypothesis suggesting a "solution" or explanation, and then to go into action to test that hypothesis and to draw conclusions on the basis of that test.

Granted, this sounds a whole lot like a description of the "scientific method," and, perhaps it is. In an education setting, however, perhaps the most we can do is quasi-science. Our classrooms are not laboratories, our subjects are not white mice, and our variables cannot be strictly controlled. We are bound by ethical and practical considerations. What's more, our claims of cause-and-effect relationships, at best, need to be tentative rather than dogmatic. Still, engaging in action research asks us to adopt methodologies that give us data that is more reliable than gut feeling, to think through the relationship between instruction and assessment, and examine how we do things, how well students are learning given our practices, and how we might do things better.

In essence, action research arises out of dissatisfaction, moves into reflection and study, proceeds into conjecture and action, and arrives at assessment and evaluation. Ultimately, the entire experience ought to eventuate in more enlightened practice and improved student learning. It's a powerful vehicle for helping us to be more successful in what we're doing.
Improving the Writing in "Literature 12" at Menomonee Falls High School

by Elizabeth Dixon, Nancy Niedziela, Elizabeth Sparks
under the supervision of Thomas Scott, Ph. D.

The Context for this Study:
The Nature of the School and the Student Body

Menomonee Falls High School (MFHS), a suburban school on the northwest boundary of the City of Milwaukee, is located in the village of Menomonee Falls. The far west side of the village is served by another school district. The community is basically white collar with a population of approximately 34,000. Menomonee Falls High School is a three-year (10-12) comprehensive school with an enrollment of 1146.

The school is accredited by North Central Association of Secondary Schools and Colleges and a member of the College Board and the National Association of College Admissions. The school participates in the Milwaukee 220 exchange program and has actively recruited students through open enrollment programs. The teaching staff numbers 83, of which 56 have masters' degrees and one has a doctoral degree. Sixty-six percent of the graduates attend a four-year college and 23% attend vocational or technical schools. The 2003-2004 ACT composite was 22.5, above the state average. A principal, two associate principals, three guidance counselors, and an athletic director serve the school.

MFHS offers a full range of extra-curricular activities for its students: a full sports program for both males and females; a full music program including band, orchestra and chorus; a range of clubs from science to FBLA, from National Honor Society to fantasy reading groups. MFHS also sponsors three publications—a newspaper, a yearbook, and a literary magazine.

Rationale and Purpose of Study

At Menomonee Falls High School, seniors take two one-semester courses in English: Composition 12 and Literature 12, and these courses are designed to meet the state standards of literary analysis and writing. Prior to our researched changes, Literature and Composition 12 overlapped to a degree.

In Composition 12, students write personal pieces to a variety of audiences ("Who Am I?", a college application/scholarship essay, and a personal narrative with reflection); creative pieces (essay of description, process analysis, short story, and poetry); and academic pieces (essay of definition and position paper). Our Composition 12 objectives are for students to immerse themselves in the writing process and to skillfully adjust to the criteria of the various composition assignments. Before our curricular changes, the writing for Literature 12 included personal response and creative pieces, as well as analytical writing. However, the course was weak in that some of these repeated Composition 12 writing tasks and in that the writings did not build on each other. Rather than focus on mastery of a few types of writings, the students wrote many different types of literature response. As a result they were generally unable to achieve the desired mastery in the analytical tasks.

Thus, the writing of Literature 12 seemed to lack focus and to unnecessarily repeat the objectives of Composition 12. Moreover, the writing for Literature 12 did not provide a consistent teaching of the writing of literary analysis, the very writing that...
Composition 12 did not include. We also knew that when our students did do literary analysis, the products were very poorly done. There was lack of focus, lack of textual evidence, and lack of length. The students made wild claims and did not see the connection between literature and their lives. They did not see the truths that are embedded in fiction.

In our action research, we had the unique opportunity to have our department chair as our instructor for the course. This allowed us more freedom to enact major curricular changes that we otherwise may not have had. We set out to study the literature about teaching analytic writing and sharpening our writing focus for Lit 12, all the while hoping to somehow reduce the paper load for teachers. We wanted to improve student writing and streamline paper grading. Why not hope for a miracle? What we found moved us to develop a rubric that created very specific writing goals for all of the papers of Literature 12 and to gear the classes’ readings, journals, and discussions towards three types of analysis.

Our research also reinforced the benefits to student learning of creating a collection of writings in a portfolio that would be graded by a Literature 12 teacher other than the student’s classroom teacher. Thus the Literature 12 teacher became the discussion leader for the literature response and the writing coach for the teaching of literary analysis. Our objectives for this class became that students would comprehend, interpret, and critically analyze literature through personal response writing, small group and whole group class discussions, and essays of analysis. The types of essays of analysis were limited to three, each being repeated twice throughout the semester: analysis of character, analysis of themes, and analysis of literature through compare/contrast. The students then selected the best of each type to put into their portfolios.

Over the past four years, we have continued to use the methodology and design as described in the action research project. The fact that we use the same rubric for all of the papers has taken a difficult task and made it possible for student to master it over the course of the semester. This rubric has also streamlined our response to papers and allowed us to provide consistent, practical feedback to our students. We have found the incentive for publication for another audience a motivator for many students. We have also found that the pre-test/post-test self-evaluation has been very beneficial to the students in measuring what they have truly accomplished with their writing over the semester. The teacher collaboration and uniformity of task assignments has convinced the students of the importance of the skills of analysis. An interesting side-effect that we had not initially considered is that students increased their attention to and an overall understanding of text.
Redesign of Literature 12

The initial redesign of Literature 12 at MFHS included the following goals and objectives:

- To value development over product
- To focus on praise rather than grades
- To focus on fewer (three) types of writing rather than the six different types we use currently
- To teach mastery of these types (focus on quality vs. quantity)
- To teach annotation via marking on short pieces using post-it notes
- To collaboratively design and implement student-centered rubrics
- To include on the rubrics a progression of style and mechanics criteria
- To use portfolio assessment; portfolios will be a collection of three of the best literary writings (one of each type), two polished reader-response journals, and one narrative self-assessment using rubric terminology to discuss strengths of writing
- To stimulate interaction with the text by means of journaling about reader-response questions and writing personal responses
- To create a climate in which the teacher is the coach/partner rather than the judge by means of the following:
  - The teacher will write the assignment with the students and model the process of writing.
  - Another literature teacher will grade the student’s portfolio.
  - The reader-response journal will be “ungraded” (i.e. it will receive a grade of credit/no credit—assessed collaboratively in an informal conference).
  - Peers will respond to journals and will use rubrics to review literary writings.

The redesigned assignments include the following Literary Essays:

- Character Analysis: “Master Harold”... and the Boys and Macbeth
- Theme: Lord of the Flies and All Quiet on the Western Front
- Compare/Contrast: Cyrano de Bergerac and A Separate Peace

Grading, then, is based on the following:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Component</th>
<th>Weight</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Portfolio</td>
<td>35%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Tests</td>
<td>20%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Quizzes</td>
<td>10%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Reader-Response Journal</td>
<td>20%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Class participation/discussion</td>
<td>15%</td>
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</tbody>
</table>
Analysis of Initial Survey Results in Literature 12

To evaluate whether our objectives to improve students' ability to do literary analysis with support from the literature and thus raise student's comfort level with literature-based writing, the first step was to survey the students.

Survey 1

The first survey was of Semester I students who were about to finish Literature 12. The students surveyed were from the Literature 12 classes of Liz Sparks and Nancy Niedziela. The students are in the average (regular) track and are basically low B to at-risk students. The students were asked about the writing assignments from the semester that they had just finished. The first two questions asked them which assignments they had struggled with and which assignments they found the easiest to write. The results were very interesting in the fact that there was no consensus at all.

- Of the students who liked writing a symbolism analysis about The Lord of the Flies, there was an equal number who found this the most difficult to write about (4/5 ratio).
- Of the students who hated writing about Macbeth, an equal number liked writing about Macbeth (2/3 ratio).

This same pattern showed in all the books/papers dealt with in the class. The students' comments about the I-search paper from All Quiet on the Western Front reflected the divergence of the students' interests: One student wrote, "I have so many issues/opinions on war I didn't know what to write down," while at the opposite end another student wrote, "the war paper was easy because it was all opinion." The only problem with the questions on the survey was that the students often answered in terms of how they felt about the reading, not necessarily about the writing.

Next the students were asked to compare literature-based writings with personal response journals or autobiographical narratives that they had written for previous classes. There was a significant number of malcontents who "learned nothing" or who said that literature-based writing "is not fun." The majority of the students offered positive comments that would make any English teacher's heart jump for joy: "writing takes hard work and determination," "using quotations made writing the paper easier," and "there were details and things I missed the first time and saw when I went back to do the paper."

Students were then asked about improvement in literature-based writing after the semester. Fifty-two to twenty-five they felt their ability to organize essays had improved. Fifty-eight to seventeen they recognized a progression in their ability to incorporate quotations into their writing. When asked which of the writings enhanced their understanding of the books we read, again students responded in very equal numbers for each of the books. Again their liking of the reading significantly affected their liking of the writing. It appeared that if the student liked the book, it did not matter what the assignment was: they were willing to write about the book.

The results were very interesting: there was no consensus at all.
When asked what suggestions they would offer to the Literature 12 teachers for future writing assignments, the students' comments were relatively neutral and complimentary. "Nothing really...all of them were reasonable," I thought all the writing assignments were good," and "keep it the same because they weren't that hard to do; they helped me understand the concept of the books we read."

The students also offered us good advice: "Give examples of each written work, so that the students have somewhat of an idea how to write their papers," "maybe show an example of the paper before we start so that we have an idea of what we are doing," and "start writing the paper while we are reading the book; it makes the paper easier to write."

Survey II

The second survey was given to the Semester II students in Literature 12 who were just about to begin the course. These students have completed a semester of Composition 12 where the emphasis is on personal experience writing and topics are freely chosen. These groups of students were in the Literature 12 classes of Liz Sparks and Liz Dixon. Each teacher gave a different questionnaire to the students covering the general area of their feelings toward literature-based writing (and writing in general) in the past. One general observation that could be made from their responses was that the memories of the students were significantly affected by time and taste. The students repeatedly said that they did little literature-based writing even though it was obvious by their answers that they had. They seemed unable to make the connection. Again it was also clear that whether the student liked the writing or not was based on whether they liked the particular reading. This student said it best: "I enjoy writing if the book is good and I have strong opinions and feelings towards it. But if it's a bad book that I don't like or understand, I hate writing about it because then it makes no sense."

Just as in the first survey, the number of students who liked writing about one particular literature selection was approximately equal to the number who disliked it. Since each student would have had a different series of English teachers, they would have experienced a variety of works of literature and writing experiences. In these responses, many of the students simply responded to how they remembered a piece of literature rather than responding to the writing about it. Students were able, however, to remark on works read in ninth, tenth and eleventh grade. Some said they simply could not remember any thing about a previous course. No consensus was achieved here.

When asked to compare their experiences with literature-based writing to their experiences with personal writing, the students overwhelmingly felt personal writing was much easier. It was clear that they resented being asked to really think about or analyze the literature.

The students were asked their opinions in writing were a "little bit" better than their past experience. "My grammar; the way I write," they answered these questions as they felt clear that the students were improving. Even though they felt they were, could label them as "challenging." Of the 12 improved their writing, 10 of them improved "a little bit, but..."

When asked about speaking, writing, and stating these students felt they could improve. The 46 felt confidence in their ability to be a significant weakness with others. They felt that the ability to get feedback in the ability to gather feedback was a "little bit, but..."

Despite most of the students, the students didn't want to do more than make a "little bit, but..." With a one above average score.

Conclusion

Now that we have planned for the new semester. We hope you to look about literature. We hope that the results will be as favorable as they are forthcoming with the results of the surveys.
The students were asked about what they perceived their strengths and weaknesses in writing were as they entered this class. Comments were in the full range: “I don’t think that I have any strengths,” to “I feel I can present things in an interesting fashion.” Weaknesses ranged from more mechanical issues, “My grammar; the way I word things always seems not to make sense to others,” to sophisticated observations, “I write in different perspectives; I need to write in one person’s view.” Probably the most important issue in how students answered these questions had to do with how they interpreted them. It was very clear that the students were able to use the vocabulary of writing with great ease. Even though they felt they still had weaknesses, they knew what the weaknesses were, could label them accurately, and could offer suggestions for their own improvement. Of the 46 who responded to the question of whether Composition 12 improved their writing, 29 offered a definite Yes and 11 more felt they had improved “a little bit, sort of, or somewhat.”

When asked about specific skills such as introductions, conclusions, and thesis statements, these students were very confident in their ability to use and understand. They felt weaker about using advanced sentence structures and making connections between quotations/examples and the thesis statement (only 19 of the 46 felt confidence here). On the second questionnaire, students were asked about their ability to use quotations in their writing, most felt this was a significant weakness with only nine of the 49 respondents able to rank themselves high in the ability to gather, smoothly incorporate, and correctly cite quotations.

Despite most of the students saying that they didn’t like literature-based writing, didn’t want to do more of it, and preferred personal writing, when asked if they would do well in this literature-based writing class, 36 of the 49 felt they would earn an above average grade of A or B!

Conclusion to Phase One of this Action Research Project

Now that we have the survey results above, we will implement the changes planned for the new semester and then survey the students again at the end of the semester. We hope to have changed some of their attitudes towards writing about literature. We hope to be able to compare their results with the students who did not have as structured a plan during last semester and also to compare their results with their own comments at the beginning of the semester. We are hoping that the resulting better papers will give students more confidence with literature-based writing.
Analysis of Follow-up Survey Results for Literature 12

Survey III

The third survey was given to the Semester II students in Literature 12 who were just about to finish the course. These students have completed a semester of Composition 12 where the emphasis is on personal experience writing with topics freely chosen, and are now finishing their first Literature 12 portfolios. These groups of students were in the Literature 12 classes of Liz Sparks and Liz Dixon. Each teacher gave a different questionnaire to the students covering the general area of their feelings toward literature-based writing (and writing in general) in the past. This third survey was an exact repetition of the first for the students of Liz Dixon. Liz Sparks, however, adapted the survey to the exact requirements of the literature portfolio, although many of the questions remained the same.

From the Sparks survey, several interesting observations can be made. In response to the question of “Did you see a progression in your ability to organize papers?” thirty-four students (out of 42) responded with a strong yes. Yet, when the second and third surveys are compared, 27 students felt that they had strong organizational skills before they entered the class, and 27 students registered the same response at the end of the course. It is unclear if the students who were initially strong at organizing are now stronger in reality and yet unable to measure that on the scale that we gave them.

The same thing happened with the question “Did you see a progression in your ability to incorporate quotes in your writing?” In the beginning of the semester survey, 30 students felt they had good or better skills at incorporating quotations into their writing. At the end of the semester, 38 students felt the same. This is a slight increase, but again the number of students seeing a progression was 33 of the 42. In short, the students felt that they had made progress, but the actual numbers don’t seem to reflect this. We don’t know if the students were confused about the questions, or if the better reflection of the students’ actual progress was better indicated by their ability to see progress in their own work.

On the early Surveys I and II, students expressed that a character analysis was difficult to write, but the good news is that of the 42, 25 found the character analyses papers the easiest to write of the semester. Of the papers required for the literature portfolio, the most difficult appears to be the compare/contrast paper, as only four of the students felt this was an easy assignment. Another interesting aspect was observed. Although none of the students felt that the theme paper was the easiest, 22 of the 42 felt that that was the essay that helped them the most with their understanding of the literature.

In short, the students felt that they had made progress, but the actual numbers don’t seem to reflect this.
The results from the Dixon classes had a more negative tone. The students' comfort level with writing papers for English class remained essentially the same from the beginning to the end of the semester, but, when surveyed, more students did not enjoy writing about literature after the literary portfolio than before. On the other hand, the survey results on individual writing skills were very positive. There was significant increase in students' perception of improvement in ability to write a thesis statement (34 to 41), paragraphing skills (36 to 40), integration of quotations (29 to 36), using quotations to support the thesis (19 to 27), and, surprisingly, ability to construct complex sentences (19 to 28). [Total number of students surveyed was 46]. Students' perception of critical analysis skills remained the same. The most interesting aspect of the survey was that the grades that the students (at the beginning of the semester) felt they would earn in Literature 12 were exactly the same at the end of the semester. Perhaps if we had more time, it would be interesting to investigate the relationship of actual grades to perceived or anticipated grades earned in Literature 12.

**Conclusion, Phase Two of this Action Research Project**

The general observation about the students' feelings toward doing a literature portfolio and observing what they believe they learned is positive. The comments, of course, range the entire spectrum from good to bad, but in general the students appreciated the learning experience. Here are some of the comments from the survey sheets:

- "I learned how to annotate, pick out the theme, track a character, get more out of a book."
- "I learned it's much easier to annotate as we read because the writing that follows a book is much easier then."
- "I think I better learned how to write essay theses, and how to carry it through the whole paper."
- "I learned to broaden my view about the books we read."
- "I learned that when you are concentrating on one subject throughout the book, it makes the book easier to understand."
**Analysis of Pre- and Post-Writing Samples**

To quantify the range of student improvement through the course, we gave the student a pre-test and a post-test. On the first day of class, students received a five-page excerpt from *Lord of the Flies*, a book they had not yet read. They were to read the selection overnight and come prepared to write a analysis of the character Piggy. We gave them no tips about the character or about writing a character analysis. Students came the second day and wrote this pre-test. Towards the end of the semester, we gave them a similar task, with a six-page excerpt from *The Grapes of Wrath*, another book they had not read. Without assistance, students wrote the post-test character analysis on the following day. We evaluated both tests as to the following: focus/unity; use of generalizations supported with examples and quotations, and elaboration.

In the post-test, we found that more students included a clear thesis statement and then stayed on topic, creating a clear focus and a unified analysis. In the pre-test, 43 of 81 students had a clear thesis statement; in the post-test, 72 of 81 used such a statement to summarize their writing. Sixty-two of the students stayed on topic in the pre-test, as opposed to 76 in the post-test. (See graph.) Overall, it was clear that students grew in their ability to organize their literature essays. In the diagnostic pre-/post-test samples in the appendix, Katie's two pieces are exemplars of a shift from loosely organized observations to a well-constructed mini-essay.

Secondly, we looked at student ability to support generalizations with examples and with quotations. Our results were a bit mixed. Twenty-one students used fewer examples in the post-test than they had in the pre-test; twenty students used an equal number; and forty students used a greater number. We were pleased with the student growth indicated by those who increased their support of generalizations with examples. A look at Amanda's pre-/post-tests in the appendix illuminates two of the reasons why students may have stayed the same or decreased in their use of examples. First, Amanda developed her examples in greater detail in her post-test. She generalizes that "Ma turned violent," and then she supports that with details from the text and a quotation, providing greater development of support for generalization in the post-test than in her pre-test.

A second reason for the mixed results may be that the two literature excerpts we chose were different. *The Lord of the Flies* selection had many more revealed and accessible characteristics of Piggy, whereas in *The Grapes of Wrath* piece, Ma Joad's character is more implied.

Generally we found that students grew in sophisticated use of examples to support their statements. Students dramatically increased, however, in their use of quotations in support of generalizations. Seven of the 81 students evaluated remained the same in the number of quotations used in their pre-/post-tests. The remaining students used from one to seven more quotations from the text to support general statements. Blaise's diagnostic tests are clear examples of an increased ability to select significant quotations and to smoothly imbed quotations within his argument.

The third measure of student improvement that we looked for was the ability to elaborate. Students had word-processed both diagnostic tests, and to identify growth in this area, we counted the number of times students wrote less in the pre-test than they wrote more. Students significantly increased their elaboration. She lacked elaboration in her essay, but wrote uniformly longer paragraphs in her post-test.

The results from the significant, text-based analysis underscored our sense, that more students were reading and understood the literature, and that students both formally and informally in written work were more confident about their writing... also observed an improvement in the students' self-confidence and writing confidence.

**Final Comments**

Overall, we feel good about our students' literary analyses. Not perfect, but their portfolio of work shows improvement. We were convinced us of the following:

- Providing students with a rubric (the writing and understanding of a given topic)
- Using a mix of writing and thinking options and activities
- Class discussion that focused on the students' work
- Virtually all students were able to work on the same schedule at the same time
- Virtually the students improved their skills in writing and understanding the texts...
counted the number of word-processed lines. We found that eight of the students wrote less on their post-tests than their pre-tests while all of the other students wrote more. Most wrote between one and ten lines more, but some students significantly expanded their writing. Romeek, a limited and struggling student, is our most significant example of improvement in elaboration. She lacked a clear thesis for her essay, but wrote unified and well-developed paragraphs in her post-test.

The results from the diagnostic tests demonstrated our sense, throughout the semester, of tremendous student growth in the writing of literary essays. We knew, from talking with students both formally in classroom discussion and informally in writing conferences, that our students felt increasingly confident about their writings for this course. In reading students' papers, we had also observed an impressive improvement in their writing. These quantitative results from the diagnostic tests only prove what we knew in our guts was happening.

Final Commentary, Conclusions, and Recommendations

Overall, we feel good about the improved performance of our students in writing literary analyses. Not only is there evidence that they are writing better analyses, but their portfolio self-evaluations revealed that they feel more confident about their ability to do so. Reading the self-evaluations in the portfolios convinced us of the following:

**Final Conclusions**

- Providing students with the writing assignment (the purpose) and the rubrics (the way) before beginning a book improved student concentration and understanding of the stories.
- Using post-its made using quotations to support generalizations a realistic option and was helpful in improving reading comprehension.
- Class discussions were meaningful and helpful because they (again) focused on the analysis due at the end of the reading of a book.
- Virtually all students believed they were better writers (and many better readers) because of the strategies employed in this class.
- There was a certain “energy” as we team-planned and followed the same schedule. It felt like more students were “buying into” the work of the semester since all second semester Literature 12 students had virtually the same assignments and deadlines.
Of course, no program is perfectly designed and we were ambitious beyond our ability to get the work done. Some things that fell by the wayside included teacher modeling of good thinking and writing practices and the exchange of and comments upon reader responses to the literature. The heavy volume of essays and the requirement for students to revise and edit them as needed for their portfolios made our writing of the essays a burden too great to manage. Both Dixon and Sparks made the effort to write the essays for the first unit but didn’t stick with the plan since the hours required by the course work were already too labor intensive. Both teachers abandoned reader response exchanges as well. These plans were abandoned as a high number of absences and a lack of confidence on the part of some of the students became serious issues. The students continued to write the reader responses and use them to assist their writing. Also, the curriculum (three novels and three plays) allowed for little time to include such group work time.

Assessing student progress also became an issue. The diagnostics were from two different sources (one from The Lord of the Flies and the other from The Grapes of Wrath). The problem with this is that the Piggy character had more concrete description (e.g., he was fat, had glasses and asthma) and the Ma Joad character required more inferential (and therefore more sophisticated) analytical skills. Our proposal is that next year’s literature class use the identical piece at the beginning and end of the semester so that a more accurate evaluation can be achieved. In addition, assessing the diagnostics based on number of examples and quotations can sometimes look as if students have learned less rather than more. What we sometimes observed, but had no measuring device for, was the student who used fewer examples to support a more sophisticated generalization on the Ma Joad piece. This student often used two or even three quotations to flesh out a supporting example. We felt this was a significant and sophisticated development in the student’s critical analysis skills, but on a chart it might look like the student had made little or no progress.

Some plans under consideration for next year include the following:

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**Plans Under Consideration**

- No unit tests—the final essay is the test of the unit.
- Directing students to plan essays outside of class, but providing two workshop days in the computer lab (students bringing notes and their books with post-its to the lab) for the actual processing of the essays (Make-ups would be taken care of as tests are in the library.)
- Conferencing with students during the lab days (including conferences with the Writing Center coach)
- Less hands-on editing from the teacher—more dependence for improvement on the student to translate the rubric evaluations into good writing.

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Perhaps the best part of this program has been working together. The exchange of plans and ideas and the “misery loves company” concept kept us a team. We were committed to doing a good job. It nearly killed us, but, in the end, we think we managed to improve the thinking and writing skills of our students.

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For Further Reading


Ms. Bauman’s communicative teaching stimulated the students to write more closely as people who respond to the writing inquiry. This will answer the question of (168). Ms. Bauman adds to the written texts as prompts that are based on the students’ ideas to write self-assessment projects, motivation for collaboration.


Discusses the role of the student in the school system and come to “late” matem as well. It is important to a clear-cut evaluation.


Addresses the integration of the arts and the student in the school system. It works in the student’s interests to reinforce the new grade. It is important to a clear-cut evaluation before the student's graduation.

16
For Further Reading:


Ms. Bauman argues that writing for grades "obscures writing's communicative function" (162) and hinders students' abilities to assess and evaluate themselves as writers. Rather, she creates "writing situations that stimulate natural, out of school language learning situations as closely as possible" (164). She has students write for real audiences who respond to their writing. She says, "I am determined that all the writing my students do will be dialogic—they will write to people who will answer their writing, either by writing back, or by using it as the basis for further research, or by trying to do what it asks, or whatever" (168). Ms. Bauman also "shifts the tasks of assessment and evaluation to the writers themselves in as many ways and as many different contexts as possible" (164). She uses contracts in which the class grade is based on the amount of pages read and written. The students, throughout the class, evaluate themselves and each other through their responses to writing, through "acknowledgements" (peer praise), and various self-assessment writings. Ms. Bauman cites research that argues that motivation to learn is best achieved by choice, challenge, control, and collaboration, rather than by grades (167).


Discusses why grading/ranking/judging student writing is wrong for both students and teachers. Bencich also shares her experience with reader response journals focusing on how students and teachers can come to "like" (and express their "liking") for the writing of their classmates as well as their own writing. The overall focus is on how to "get to a clear-eyed evaluation."


Addresses the following issues: (1) how can students become more integrally involved in the evaluation process? (2) How do we (teachers) increase student dialogue and community? (3) How do we increase student ownership of writing? Some of the suggestions: (1) Students worked in writing response teams to generate communication and to reinforce security in decisions; (2) Students created a generic six-point rubric constructed for each specific assignment; (3) Teachers devised new grading criteria to shift from scores on rubric to grades for the course; (4) Teachers modeled peer response process with entire class before process began. In short, student evaluation works only with hours of preparation, but then the results are earnest student evaluations.

Provides four sample student reports which could be used as an alternative assessment mechanism.


Discusses the primary issue of high school writing: Students have negative responses and therefore violate the primary rule that to get better at writing, a person needs to write. Offers suggestions for abolishing the twin ogres of judgment and comparison from the classroom, ogres that are symbolized by our grading process.” Article discusses the pitfalls of traditional grading systems and especially their negative effect on writing. Suggests generalized alternatives to grading.


The authors, recent collaborators in the Kennesaw Mountain Writing Project, created an experiment with ungraded writing in which each teacher’s students corresponded with each other. In this case, the students were elementary and middle school pupils and college teachers-in-training. They found ungraded writing promoted greater self-confidence, fluency, experimentation, and a more relaxed personal voice. Key to successful ungraded writing was supportive response. They critiqued the ungraded writing informally and collaboratively, “assessing it in terms of ongoing learning goals” (159).

**Additional Bibliography**


Call for Papers:
Action Research

The first half of this issue celebrated "Action Research" by printing an article derived from an Action Research Project under the direction of WCETLA's own Tom Scott. Scott describes Action Research as follows:

Action research, to my mind, provides a systematic way to guide reflection and to explore alternatives to our current practices.

We look forward to submissions of articles derived from Action Research projects in future issues of WEJ. Please contact us with ideas and proposals.

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715-425-3537
715-425-0657 (fax)

Submission Guidelines

☐ Send two copies of each manuscript, typed and double-spaced throughout (including quotations, endnotes, and references), with one-inch margins. Information (including addresses) on coming issues is located in the Editor's Note in this issue.

OR
Submit your manuscript electronically to the editor, Ruth Wood (Ruthann.P.Wood@uwrf.edu); a Word attachment is preferred.

☐ Provide a statement guaranteeing that the manuscript has not been published or submitted elsewhere.

☐ Ensure that the manuscript conforms to the Guidelines for Nonsexist Use of Language in NCTE Publications.

☐ Follow MLA format throughout.

The name, address, school affiliation, telephone number, and e-mail of the author should appear on the title page only, not on the manuscript. If the manuscript is accepted, the author will need to provide a disk copy of the manuscript in Word.
Celebrate Communication in Wisconsin

at the Joint Convention
of the
Wisconsin Communication Association
&
Wisconsin Council of Teachers
of English Language Arts
Wisconsin Speaks

Celebrate Communication in Wisconsin

April 22, 2005

Madison Marriott West
Middleton, WI

For additional convention information, contact
Bill Schang
729 Woodside Ave.
Ripon WI 54971
schangw@ripon.edu

Visit http://facstaff.uww.edu/wctela/convention.htm for program and for registration information.
Poem

As if I were testing the water
before entering the pool,
I trepidatiously reach out
feeling for rocks or tide pools
that will hurt or swallow me whole.

I must let you go;
I do not know how.
Dr. Brazelton showed me how to love,
nurture, feed, clothe, and burp you--
He neglected to tell me how to let go.

This is new territory, this is.
It's a foreign and alien
landscape that seems to hold
no shelter or places of rest.
It stretches before me into eternity
with no road home.

Releasing you into the wind—
Am I just to stay on the ground and watch
helplessly
to see if you will soar or plunge?
This can not be the way things are meant to be,
yet everyone tells me it is.

Labor pains, earaches, driving lessons, staying out past curfew—
None of these hurts
hurt like this
motionless surveillance
of my firstborn winging his way into the world.

Someone should have warned me.

No matter.

I still would have created.
The world needs more souls like his.

The above poem was written by one of our cooperating teachers from our spotlight school last Spring. If you are interested in recommending your school for spotlight, see the note from the editor earlier in this issue.
The Power of a Book Club:
Growing in New Directions
by Dawn Bohm and Corinne E. Solsrud

Remember sitting in that one literature class, afraid to share any insight on the reading assignment? Maybe you wiped your sweaty palms on your Levi's. You tried to calm the thumping in your chest. And, you certainly kept your eyes downcast because making eye contact with the teacher guaranteed your name would be called.

English and reading classes are nerve-wracking when teachers seem to be solely interested in hearing the “right” answer. Try as they might to prevent that opinion, literature teachers are often perceived as experts by students. After all, consider how many times the typical freshman language arts teacher has read standard selections, such as Romeo and Juliet, Great Expectations, or The Odyssey. The number of times the course is taught each day multiplied by the number of years in the classroom equals formidable comprehension. Teachers also benefit from nifty textbook sidebars and supplementary materials. For them, talking about certain stories is like visiting dear, old friends. So, how can teachers reacquaint themselves with the process of investigating literature with new eyes and that nervous flutter?

In the spirit of teachers “walking the walk, not just talking the talk,” consider starting or joining a book club. It will invigorate your teaching, improve your reading skills and (background) knowledge, give you valuable insights into how readers process text, and lastly, offer you a free-wheeling, friend-making, stress-releasing and fun time to spend with other adults.

Our particular book club came together in summer of 2000; we started it among a couple of friends. Each member was given charge to find another “warm body” for the group. Our first book was a near-disaster. It took two monthly meetings to plod through John Irving’s A Prayer for Owen Meany. While Owen Meany garnered less than enthusiastic reviews, it has been a focal point of laughs and groans ever since. Obviously, a sense of humor is one of the keys to starting and maintaining any successful book club.

Over the past four years, members have come and gone.
We are two of the four founding members who have been advocates for the club from the beginning. Another tip about book clubs: a book club is like every other relationship. It requires commitment and work, or it will dissolve. At first we set a few ground rules such as “everyone has to think of a question for the next book discussion,” but over time the rules have evolved organically. One example is a time-honored tradition — food and drink must be present at each meeting.

Another unspoken rule? We commit to one title each month, and if someone doesn’t read it — no big deal, she just listens to the discussion and often finalizes her decision on whether to read it later. Also, we find it effective to select our titles up to three months in advance. This helps busy people get their reading done.

And finally, how do we select the books? We consult lists (Literary Calvaca has great ones!), and we use recommendations from members who know a book’s reputation from a friend or a review. Most of the time, but not always, we agree with the recommendations. Since teachers continually assess, one of the most provocative and fun discussions lately has been assigning an A–F rating of each novel. It was during these discussions that we felt peer pressure to like or hate a book. We engaged in lively debate over ratings for many titles. We still may pry rationale from dissenting book club members as to exactly what caused The Bell Jar, for example, to receive their failing grade. Maybe we need to discuss what constitutes great literature? Ultimately, we decided to average the ratings for a cumulative grade.

If we strong-minded women felt the need to conform to others' opinions, certainly our students feel similar pressure during class discussions.

Our ratings reflect the strong opinions that were averaged into a single grade. Some of the ratings may surprise you. If we strong-minded women felt the need to conform to others' opinions, certainly our students feel similar pressure during class discussions.

The influence of being in a book club has been many-fold. We have become more critical and skilled readers, gaining a better understanding of what students in literature class experience. The first is obvious — the more you read, the better you get. Being in a book club "forces" us to read the "assignment" for the next month — it’s a good motivator because we want to contribute to the discussion, know this book, and become more well-read. Strangely, it also pushes boundaries; we have read books, from classics to contemporary novels, that we would have selected on our own.

We often consult the "cheat sheets" so our point during discussions. We support grabbing our copies, passages or even a main character’s name. In a classroom, why shouldn’t we promote those strategies during discussions, pop quizzes, and tests? Having the book open and notes available make it possible to get to the meat of the text. We teachers are supportive of our book-club approach, deeper, more relevant discussions and more students talking about the text.

After the success of the book club, we’ve remained confident to reach that level. For example, one student is a junior high. She wrote and received permission for student book club twenty-five eight students joined “Mrs. B’S Book Club”. The girls select Scholastic, Trump, and Book Club com
know this book, and become more well-read. Surprisingly, it also pushes our reading boundaries; we have to read the books, from classics to contemporary novels, that we never would have selected on our own.

We often consult the text or our "cheat sheets" so we can make our point during our discussions. We support each other by grabbing our copies to find key passages or even a main character's name. In a classroom, why shouldn't we promote those strategies during discussions, pop quizzes and tests? Having the book open and notes available make it possible to get to the meatier material in the text. We teachers can be more supportive of our students. A book-club approach can foster deeper, more relevant discussions and more student writing about the text.

After the success of our adult book club, we've gained confidence to reach out to others. For example, one member, who is a junior high English teacher, wrote and received two grants for student book clubs. In 2001, twenty-five eighth-grade girls joined "Mrs. B.'s" Book Club. The girls selected books from Scholastic, Trumpet, and Troll Book Club companies which helped stretch the budget. Each girl discussed seven different titles. Several were about the Holocaust due, in part, to interest generated by The Diary of Anne Frank which is studied in English class. After book club meetings, the girls were allowed to keep the books; several passed them along to others. In addition to the book club meetings, the girls decided to share the gift of reading with toddlers. So the ladies in our adult book club chaperoned five carloads of girls to the local Kinder Care. The preschoolers were a great audience! The girls felt good about their community service. Even the chaperones had fun!

The second grant funded the "Rad Readers" Book Club and was open to all interested freshmen. In small groups led by four English teachers, over forty freshmen discussed The Kitchen Boy, Second Star to the Right, The Lovely Bones, and Confessions of a Teenage Drama Queen. Happily, freshmen boys joined the groups this time. They discussed The Giver and The Picture of Dorian Gray. As with the first grant, students were allowed to keep the books.

The excitement for book clubs in our school district grew as the once-eighth grade girls
convinced a senior high teacher to create a book club in their building. We are hoping the momentum carries into their adulthood. Currently at the junior high, a grant is being written to establish another freshmen book club. In that same building, an interdisciplinary team of teachers formed a book group; their goal is to read four educational texts to enhance their professional development.

Our colleagues and students are in growing relationships centered on literature meaningful to them. We are proud of the far-reaching effects our book club has had on others and on ourselves. Our colleagues and students are in growing relationships centered on literature meaningful to them. Our book club continues to revisit that marvelous, nervous flutter each month as we reveal more of ourselves and encounter new literary heroes. Moreover, our personal lives have been surprisingly enriched by the relationships formed within the group. Our mission has been more than accomplished. Book clubs are blossoming in our school district, planted by a small seed—six women who like to talk about books.

I can't stop this story. I can't stop the myriad characters in her college career. A particularly American story, perhaps. African American. The hazards, they taught us, are similar to the experiences of Emerson and Thoreau, and the rewards.

For example, in this_tale of a college graduate who grudgingly returns to her hometown where she enrolled in a teacher certification program a single summer before her graduation from a high school English class. She meets Robert, whose confusion about his career as a teacher comes from a unique combination of trying to be progressive and at the same time belong to teaching corps. Robert's passion is teaching children who believe in the power of the story and the power of children.

In September I met Robert. He struggled to teach the American classic, *Watchin* God, to a group of students who were all interested in sports. He read the book, six feet tall and in a gym, and called his students “beauty builder!” and “Sheba’s size.” Difficulties of communication, climate, and the elements of the story. They called their idiosyncrasies “their fake destiny.” They were told to flee the
A Review of ZZ Packer's 
Drinking Coffee Elsewhere.
ISBN 1-57322-234-8 
by JoAnne Katzmarek, UW-Stevens Point

I can’t stop thinking about the Romanticism of ZZ Packer’s stories in her collection Drinking Coffee Elsewhere. Hers is a particularly American Romanticism. Most of the stories involve young African Americans encountering the Great Society and, among its hazards, they try to hang onto that scrap of uniqueness that brought them to the experience in the first place. In the rich tradition of Emerson and Thoreau, Packer explores the cost of individuality and the rewards of self-reliance.

For example, in “Our Lady of Peace,” she tells the story of Lynnea, a college graduate who failed at free-lance writing and then grudgingly returns to Baltimore where she enrolls in an accelerated teacher certification program. In a single summer she trains to become a high school English teacher. There she meets Robert, a former cop whose confusion along with his aggressive and authoritarian responses to teaching conflicts underscores the uniqueness of the tensions of teaching. Robert just doesn’t get it that his power really doesn’t matter to these kids.

In the rich tradition of Emerson and Thoreau, Packer explores the cost of individuality and the rewards of self-reliance.

In September Lynnea finds herself in her own classroom where she struggles to teach inner-city African American 9th graders great American classics such as The Great Gatsby and Their Eyes Were Watching God. Soon she learns she will get a new student, Sheba, who lives in a home for girls and who had knifed her previous teacher. Lynnea sees Sheba first in the school office. “She was over six feet tall and the legs under the mini skirt looked like those of a body builder” (62). Lynnea and Sheba enter an uneasy partnership, and Sheba’s size and stalwart seriousness help Lynnea navigate the difficulties of classroom management. Some of the funniest moments of the story are Packer’s adroit observations of students and their idiosyncracies such as when she describes the girls dragging their “fake designer handbags behind them like migrant workers told to flee the land” (63).
The story is fast paced, the descriptions apt and sassy. The ending, an unexpected gathering of several strands in the story, is in many ways a sad yet honest portrayal of the vagaries of teaching. Teachers will enjoy this story.

In another story, “The Ant of the Self,” the narrator is a high school boy whose drunk of a father manipulates him into driving him to Washington, DC so that he can sell stolen exotic birds at the Million Man March. The hilarious irony of the story, a loser black man exploiting the humanitarian and ennobling motives of the Million Man March, is matched in perfection by the tragic conflict facing the young narrator. Should he give up a debate tournament where he knows he can win to facilitate instead this exploitation? Packer deftly reveals the frustrations and anxiety of a young black man tugged by the many forces that try to shape his manhood in America. And the drama that connects all this is the intimate tension between father and son: a father who will not take responsibility for himself but for whom the son feels a reluctant responsibility. Their battle draws us in. “The Ant of the Self” is a tremendously satisfying story.

In the title story, “Drinking Coffee Elsewhere,” Dina arrives at Yale for her freshman year. Her battle with the isolation that race and class differences creates begins at orientation where the new students play community-building games or, as the narrator comments, “Frustrating games for smart people” (105). In one game, a game she says is like “charades reinvented by existentialists” (105), one freshman says she wants to be earth with a capital E, another says he would like to be a gadfly like Socrates, and Dina flatly announces she would like to be a revoler. The comment signifies her isolation and anger. And thus her freshman year begins.

She eventually becomes friends with Heidi, a co-worker in a dining hall, and together they forge an unexpected and in many ways unrequited affair, an affair of the heart, psyche, and flesh. The im-

It is this dream, this yearning that contributes to a very American theme in this collection of stories.

We are reminded of the great journey stories in American literature, stories where the protagonist believed that moving on to some new place would settle the anxiety of the present.

All of the stories do celebrate in some way the ambivalence as well as the significance of the discovery of self, a very American expression of Romanticism.

Not all of the stories are about teachers and the hypocrisy of some. “Geese,” young men in the fast paced stories do celebrate the significance of the American Romanticism. They won’t soon for-
agery of the title is perhaps the most telling image not only of this story but of several in this collection. Dina tells her psychiatrist: “I remember the morning of my mother’s funeral. I’d been given milk to settle my stomach; I’d pretended it was coffee. I imagined I was drinking coffee elsewhere. Some Arabic speaking country where the thick coffee served in little cups was so strong it could keep you awake for days” (128). Dina is most comfortable in her thoughts of being elsewhere.

It is this dream, this yearning that contributes to a very American theme in this collection of stories. We are reminded of the great journey stories in American literature, stories where the protagonist believed that moving on to some new place would settle the anxiety of the present. We can’t help but think about Jim Burden in *My Antonia* whose travels, it turns out, do not calm his feelings for Antonia, the immigrant neighbor. We might even think of Jay Gatsby, for whom New York was a fresh green world to support his dream of regaining Daisy. Several of Packer’s characters could rightfully join this group of dreamers and yearners.

*All of the stories do celebrate, in some way, the ambivalence as well as the significance of the discovery of self, a very American expression of Romanticism.*

Not all of the stories in *Drinking Coffee Elsewhere*, though, are about teachers and students. “Brownies” captures some of the hypocrisy of summer camp for girls of different races. And in “Geese,” young African Americans struggle to find and keep work in the fast paced entrepreneur setting of urban Japan. All of the stories do celebrate, in some way, the ambivalence as well as the significance of the discovery of self, a very American expression of Romanticism. They are stories we enjoy reading. They are stories we won’t soon forget.
About the Cooperative Children’s Book Center (CCBC)

The Cooperative Children’s Book Center (CCBC) is a unique examination, study and research library of the School of Education at the University of Wisconsin-Madison. The CCBC’s noncirculating collections include current, retrospective and historical books published for children and young adults.

The CCBC supports teaching, learning and research related to children’s and young adult literature and provides informational and educational services based on its collections to students and faculty on the UW-Madison campus and librarians, teachers, child care providers, researchers and other adults through the state of Wisconsin.

A vital gathering place for books, ideas and expertise, the CCBC is committed to identifying excellent literature for children and adolescents and bringing this literature to the attention of those adults who have an academic, professional or career interest in connecting young readers with books.

The CCBC was established in 1963 and is funded by the University of Wisconsin-Madison School of Education and by the Wisconsin Department of Public Instruction/Division for Libraries, Technology, and Community Learning

Please visit the CCBC website at http://www.education.wisc.edu/ccbc.

A sample of the many bibliographies available from CCBC follows on the next few pages of WEJ.
A Bibliography of Books about Wisconsin People

This listing features books published from 1996 to the present that have been received by the Cooperative Children's Book Center (CCBC) and are about Wisconsin-related topics.

Titles that have been recommended by the CCBC are designated by "CCBC Choice" at the end of the citation.

Adare, Sierra. Ojibwe. (Native American Peoples) Gareth Stevens, 2003. 32 pages (0-8368-3667-7)
Part of a formulaic series of informational books about Native American peoples, this volume offers a brief historical and contemporary overview of Ojibwe life, illustrated with photographs and line drawings.

This biographical narrative is arranged in chapters covering ten-year increments beginning with the decade when Laura Ingalls Wilder's parents first met and married in Wisconsin in the 1850s and ending with Laura's death in 1957. The album is laid out on pages that are decorated with photographs of Laura and her family, greeting cards, letters, postcards and other memorabilia related to her life and the times in which she lived. (Age 9 and older)

This picture book recounts the life of Laura Ingalls Wilder, from her birth in Pepin, Wisconsin, to her many travels across the Great Plains as a child, to her life as a wife and mother, to her years as a writer in Mansfield, Missouri. (Ages 6-8)

A biography of author Laura Ingalls Wilder highlights experiences from her autobiographical books and also some of the life events not included in her well-known accounts of her childhood and adolescence in Wisconsin, Kansas, Iowa, Minnesota and South Dakota during the mid-1800s. The author tells of Laura's adulthood in Missouri and her career as a writer. (Ages 7-11)

A formula biography of the vice president who attended the University of Wisconsin for a year and worked briefly for Wisconsin Governor Warren P. Knowles. (Ages 7-10)

Profiles of six women who were eager and enthusiastic observers of nature from the time they were children, and who all grew up to be naturalists who made significant contributions to science. From the time she was young, each woman had a passion she ultimately could not ignore, despite the obstacles that gender, class, and family expectations cast in her way. The profiles in this paperback collection, illustrated in black and white, are arranged chronologically. They include Maria Sibylla Merian (17th century); Ann Botsford Comstock (19th century); and four women of the 20th century: Frances Hammerstrom (who
spent most of her adult life studying birds in Wisconsin and documenting the
causes of extinction), Rachel Carson, Miriam Rothschild, and Jane Goodall.
(Ages 8-11)

Bausum, Ann. *Dragon Bones and Dinosaur Eggs: A Photobiography of Roy Chapman
Andrews*. Photographs from the American Museum of Natural History. National
Geographic Society, 2000. 64 pages (0-7922-7123-8) CCBC Choice
An objective account of the compelling life of naturalist and adventurer Roy
Chapman Andrews who was born in Beloit in 1884, where he lived until he
graduated from Beloit College in 1906. The man who made history himself
because of his intrepid spirit, unparalleled explorations, and subsequent fossil
discoveries in Mongolia between 1922 and 1930 is widely believed to have
been the model for the movie hero, Indiana Jones (Age 8 and older)

Blum, Hallie Lou Whitefield. *Hallie Lou’s Scrapbook: Memories of Madison*. Historic
Madison (P.O. Box 2721, Madison, WI 53701), 1996. 92 pages
Hallie Lou’s memoir for a young audience begins when she was born in 1916
in Madison. Abundantly illustrated with archival photographs, this handsomely
produced booklet can serve as one model for the many personal stories that
might be told and published as outcomes of the state’s sesquicentennial. (Age 8-11)

pages (0-385-72932-4)
Originally written for an adult audience, *Flags of Our Fathers* has been adapted
for young adult readers. The author tells of the six men immortalized in the
famous photo of the flag raising on Iwo Jima during World War II, including
the author’s father who grew up in Antigo and Appleton, telling briefly of their
lives before the war and then focusing on the military events in the Pacific in
February, 1945, and their aftermath. (Age 14 and older)

2002. 40 pages (0-689-83267-2)
What is Harry Houdini’s secret? A small boy wonders as he waits with nervous
anticipation for the great escape artist to perform his latest feat. Young Sam
wonders how Houdini can possibly escape from the trunk in which he’s locked
at the bottom of a river. But he does escape, emerging triumphant. In search of
answers, Sam turns to his Uncle Ezra, who says, “maybe you shouldn’t worry
so much about his secret...What’s really important is finding your secret—something
that becomes like a seed inside you—that will grow as you grow up.”
Author Robert Burleigh also offers Houdini’s feats as a metaphor for more than
just physical freedom in in text meant to represent Houdini’s own thoughts: “I
am Houdini. I am the one who nothing can contain. I free myself.” (Ages 7-10)

Byrnes, Patricia. *Environmental Pioneers. (Profiles)* Oliver Press, 1998. 160 pages (1-
881508-45-5)
Provides a brief overview of the American environmental movement, and
profiles eight figures who played major roles in that movement, including John
Muir and Aldo Leopold. (Age 11-14)

Cha, Dia. *Dia’s Story Cloth: The Hmong People’s Journey to Freedom*. Story cloth
stitched by Chue and Nhia Thao Cha. Denver Museum of Natural History/Lee & Low (95
Madison Ave, New York, NY 10016), 1996. 24 pages (1-880000-34-2) CCBC Choice
From a refugee camp in Thailand, Dia Cha’s aunt and uncle, Chue and Nhia
Thao Cha, sent her the story cloth that is the inspiration and the centerpiece for
this important book about the Hmong. The cloth they stitched depicts the history of the Hmong, whose culture reaches back thousands of years to China, and stretches from Asia to North America, where over 100,000 Hmong have settled in the years since the Vietnam War (including many in Wisconsin). Hmong means “free people,” Dia writes in her introduction. Dia’s Story Cloth includes a discussion of Hmong history, culture and artistic traditions by the Curator of Ethnology at the Denver Museum of Natural History. (Ages 8-11)


What was life on the prairie really like? This book offers insight into the Little House series, providing historical context, recipes, crafts, and songs. Readers will learn about food, dress, and lifestyle of the quintessential pioneer girl. Includes a biography of Laura with photographs, plus a bibliography and index. (Ages 8 and up)


This helpful compendium contains background information about life in each of the houses occupied by Laura Ingalls Wilder and her family as well as recipes and other activities related to each book. Family trees are included as is information about the real Laura for contrast with the stories she wrote about herself. A fine bibliography is included along with a time line showing events during the decades in which the books are set. (Ages 9-adult)


A narrative based on the writings of John Muir captures his enthusiasm and appreciation for the natural world. Author Cornell, himself a naturalist, has written his biographical narrative in Muir’s first-person voice. “I have told his story as if he were alive, using his own words and colorful expressions as often as possible,” Cornell writes. Lyrical descriptions reflect Muir’s celebration of and respect for nature. A series of suggested activities written directly to children at the end of the book invite them to read, write, think and observe. (Ages 8-11)


This biography of the famous magician Harry Houdini chronicles his life from his Wisconsin childhood to his death in 1926, highlighting his famous escape acts and his crusade to debunk fraudulent spiritualists of the era. (Ages 9-12)

Davis, Frances A. Frank Lloyd Wright: Maverick Architect. Lerner, 1996. 128 pages (0-8225-4953-0) CCBC Choice

This straightforward account of Wright’s life focuses on his innovative work as an architect but it doesn’t shy away from describing the ups and downs of his personal and professional life. Numerous black-and-white photographs of the man and his work accompany the well-researched text. Wright was born in Richland Center, Wisconsin, grew up in Madison, and established a working residence in Spring Green. (Ages 11-16)


Children acquainted with artist Lois Ehler’s books realize she loves color, flowers, color, birds, color, being out of doors, color, the changing seasons,
color...This slim little book allows a peek at some of Ehlert’s childhood family pictures. Color photos show Ehlert at work in her studio and outside in Milwaukee, where she lives near Lake Michigan, and much more. The steps involved in creating a book are shown and summarized. They learn about Ehlert’s interest in Latin American folk art, her advice to young artists and writers, and her love of children and books for children. Organized like other books in the same series, Under My Nose contains an inviting format, easy reading and an inside view of a popular artist and author. (Ages 7-12)


Artist Lisa Fifield, an enrolled member of the Wisconsin Oneida Nation, shares paintings that reflect her “vision of people and animals helping each other.” Her work features Native peoples interacting with creatures of the natural world in scenes that reflect the sense of balance that occurs when the two are in harmony. Writer Lise Erdrich, a member of the Turtle Mountain Band of Plains Ojibway, has written brief, single-page stories to accompany each of Fifield’s paintings. (Ages 7-10)


Part of a formulaic series, this book briefly examines Potawatomi history; people; home, food and clothing; government; family; religion; “The Three Fires”; and gatherings. Each two-page spread features a full-page photograph and one page of text devoted to one of the topics. (Ages 5-8)


A biography of author Laura Ingalls Wilder for older elementary school readers relates her life story, from her childhood years in Kansas, Wisconsin, Minnesota, Iowa, and the Dakota Territory through her adulthood. The book highlights her life’s similarities and differences to its portrayal in the Little House books. (Ages 9-12)

Hintz, Martin. Wisconsin Portraits: 55 People Who Made a Difference. Trail Books (P.O. Box 317, Black Earth, WI 53515), 2000. 113 pages (0-915024-80-2)

From explorer to artist (Jean Nicolet, Georgia O’Keeffe), writer to warrior (Edna Ferber, Black Hawk), actor to astronaut (Spencer Tracy, Jim Lovell), this eclectic gathering features brief profiles of 55 individuals born and raised in Wisconsin or who lived and worked in the state over the past 400 years. The focus is primarily on people who lived in the 19th and 20th centuries and many, such as Harry Houdini, Frank Lloyd Wright, and Laura Ingalls Wilder, are widely known within the state and beyond as standouts in their fields. Others, such as former Circuit Court Justice and Secretary of State Vel Phillips and activist Ada Deer, are less well known in broader circles but no less outstanding in their accomplishments. From the noteworthy (Zona Gale, Aldo Leopold, Al Jarreau) to the occasionally notorious (Joseph McCarthy), this trip through state history provides plenty of interesting points—or rather people—along the way. (Ages 10-14)

Hitrooth, Deborah. The Importance of Golda Meir. Lucent, 1998. 111 pages (1-56006-090-5)

The struggle to establish Israel as the Jewish homeland and the nation’s early years are woven into this portrait of the Israeli prime minister who spent much of her childhood and early adulthood in Milwaukee after her family emigrated from Russia. Includes black-and-white photographs, notes, and index. (Ages 9-13)

Hunter, Sally M. Four Children. Allen. (We Are Still Here) CCBC Choice

Planting in the fall, the Indian corn for member of the Nipmuc tribe, Hochunk, in the spring, reaffirm the ties of the corn to the natural world.

Ito, Tom. John Muir. 9)

Although the importance of the 19th century National Parks system has become more recognized, John Muir, the father of the National Parks system, is often overlooked.


A child might not read this alone, but adult to adult in a casual hike, this book is a great companion.

Lakin, Patricia. Harry Houdini. (pbk. 0-689-84815-5) 2003. 24 pages

“Magician of the Century” is a fitting title for America’s greatest entertainer. (Ages 9-12)


Appleton-Houdini established the school for magicians and mastered developing the public’s interest in the world of magic. A great biography for any young magician.


Born in Scotland and raised in Lake Park, Minnesota, Muir is known for his dedication to the outdoors.

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Planting in the spring; tending in the summer; harvesting, storing and giving thanks in the fall; food throughout the winter. These are the four seasons of corn for the Winnebago, or Hochunk, people. Twelve-year-old Russell, a member of Hochunk Nation, is learning about the importance of corn from his grandfather, who takes Russell, his brothers, sisters and cousins to the country each year to plant and care for a field. But the corn is more than food for the Hochunk, it is also considered a gift from the spirits. As Russell and his family give attention to the corn every season in the midst of their busy city lives, they reaffirm ties to their heritage and knowledge of the ways of their people. Text and color photographs comprise another welcome portrayal of contemporary American Indian lives. (Ages 7-11)


Although the author must conform to the formula for each book in the “Importance of...” series, Ito is able conveys a vast amount of information about the 19th century immigrant boy from Scotland known now as the “Father of National Parks.” The internationally prominent conservationist showed great promise as an inventor during his early years and is a University of Wisconsin - Madison alumnus. (Ages 11-14)


A childhood resident of Wisconsin, conservationist John Muir traveled as an adult to Alaska in 1880. This picture book details one of his legendary glacier hikes, accompanied only by a Stickeen, a friend’s dog whose adventurous spirit matched that of Muir. (Ages 5-9)


“Magician! Escape artist! Super-human stunt man! Who was that and more? Harry Houdini!” This easy beginning reader focuses on the hard work and commitment the famous magician put into his work. (Ages 6-8)


Appleton-native Ehrich Weiss reinvented himself in 1892 at age 18 as Harry Houdini and began traveling the vaudeville circuit as a magician. He soon established himself as an escape artist who attempted increasingly daring feats, many of which remain a mystery to contemporary magicians. Houdini also mastered the art of publicity and promotion in a time when mass media was developing on an international level, and his fame spread rapidly throughout the world. A lively, well-researched biography, generously illustrated with archival photographs, brings the man and his times to life. (Ages 8-14)


Born in Scotland, John Muir spent much of his childhood living at Fountain Lake Farm in Wisconsin’s Marquette County. Full-page oil paintings depicting Muir in the landscapes he loved are accompanied by a text which focuses on his adulthood travels in Yosemite, his founding of the Sierra Club, and his
activism for the preservation of natural areas. (Age 8 and older)


CCBC Choice

This unprecedented published history of Wisconsin’s Indian nations for the general public is a wonderful resource for older teens and for teachers of any grade. Patty Loew, an enrolled member of the Bad River Band of Lake Superior Ojibwe, writes in her introduction, “This is by no means an exhaustive study of the tribes in the state. It is my earnest attempt, however, to explore Wisconsin’s rich native heritage in a collection of compact tribal histories. . . . I confined my discussion to the twelve Indian nations. . . . whose presence predated Wisconsin statehood and who have maintained a continuous residence here.” Those nations are the Ho-Chunk, the Menominee, the Potawatomi, the Oneida, the Mohican, the Brothertown, and the six bands of Ojibwe. An opening chapter examines the early history of native peoples in the state, including the Effigy Mound Builders and the Mississippian, noting the connections of these cultures to contemporary Wisconsin native peoples. The book documents the impact of European arrival in a general way in the second chapter. Subsequent chapters discuss individual tribes and their histories, including the oft-tragic impact of white settlement, but also the richness of tribal cultures and traditions. Loew emphasizes the uniqueness of each nation. She also addresses the challenge of documenting a chronological “history” of peoples who organize their pasts thematically and for whom “stories unfold in a circular fashion.” This important work fills a void in the histories of many of Wisconsin’s native peoples. (Age 14-adult)


Loew’s adaptation of her adult work *Indian Nations of Wisconsin* follows the same format of that publication (see previous entry), but the text has been modified to make it accessible to children. Additional information in this welcome and essential paperback volume includes brief profiles of several contemporary Native children and adults in Wisconsin. (Ages 9-12)


John Muir spent his childhood and adolescence in Wisconsin, before he left the state to study and write about the natural environment of the western states and Alaska. This picture book offers a fictionalized account of Muir’s actual 1868 meeting with Floy Hutching in Yosemite, when Muir worked for Floy’s father while studying his theories of glacial formation. Six-year-old Floy was intrigued by Muir’s unusual lifestyle, and he in turn shared with her his unique appreciation of nature. (Ages 5-8)


Nine-year-old Abby Cobb introduces readers to her grandmother, Vicki Cobb, a former Wisconsin resident and author of over 80 science books for children. Using the first-person voice of Abby, who lives in Racine, the book tells how Vicki Cobb researches her books’ subjects, writes the books, receives editorial direction, and makes school presentations. (Ages 5-8)


Born in Italy as a missionary, Samuele Manzini, at Green Bay, Wisconsin, in 1840, he was a member of the Menominee tribe and, because of his Davy Crockett-like adventures in the Wisconsin wilderness, became a local hero. At the tender age of 15, he had to flee from the commands of the U.S. army to protect his life and the lives of his fellow tribesmen from their harsh treatment. After an early death at 28, the Menominee erected a monument to honor him, which is still located in the town of Keshena, Wisconsin. (Ages 8-12)


Known as “the Almanac of Richland County,” the Almanac of Wright County, his almanacs have been awarded an annual Spring Greenery prize by the National Audubon Society. The Almanac Library is a collection of essays about life in Wisconsin. (Ages 9-12)


This picture book celebrates the relationship between the Native peoples and the land, especially in the Badger State. (Ages 5-8)


This black and white text and the aboriginal stories of escape, revolt, and survival tell the story of one of the most significant women in Wisconsin history. The book also provides a bibliography. (Ages 9-12)


This black-and-white text and the aboriginal stories of escape, revolt, and survival tell the story of one of the most significant women in Wisconsin history. The book also provides a bibliography. (Ages 9-12)


Stories of individuals presented, with photographs and a timeline, coming home, meeting, herding, planting, and many other activities common to the archives.
Born in Italy in 1806, Samuele Mazzuchelli became a priest and worked as a missionary among Native Americans in the upper Midwest, including Wisconsin, at Green Bay, Mineral Point and other points in between. (Ages 9-13)


Beloit native Roy Chapman Andrews's work unearthing dinosaur bones in the Gobi desert of Mongolia led to new understanding about the Age of Dinosaurs on earth. Andrew's five Gobi expeditions are chronicled in this handsome, highly visual volume that includes a number of sepia-toned photographs of the explorer/scientist at work. (Ages 9-14)


Known as "the Father of American Architecture," Frank Lloyd Wright was born in Richland Center in 1867 and in later childhood lived in Madison. As a young man, he briefly attended the University of Wisconsin-Madison, and in 1955 was awarded an honorary doctorate of fine arts from the UW. Taliesin, built near Spring Green, served as both Wright's home and the site of the Taliesin Fellowship, his architectural school. This seven chapter volume contains photographs of Wright, his family and friends, and many of his architectural projects. (Ages 9-12)


In this picture book biography, each two-page spread examines a different "role" that Carl Sandburg had in his life, from "new American" to vagabond, minstrel to journalist, historian to poet, and more. Penelope Niven's short essays about Sandburg are accompanied by a poem or prose excerpt from Sandburg's own writing, and a color illustration by Marc Nadel. (Ages 7-11)


This picture book biography tells the life story of Betty Brinn, from her childhood in the Milwaukee County Children's Home through her years in foster care, to her adulthood as a successful businesswoman with a family of her own. Betty Brinn's adult philanthropy helped to fund the Milwaukee children's museum and the children's room at the Milwaukee Public Library. (Ages 6-9)


This black-and-white illustrated volume introduces the Underground railroad and the abolitionist movement of America's Civil War period, while telling the stories of escaping slaves and the Wisconsin people who played a role in their escape. Told in narrative form, these stories include real and imagined stories, and weave in actual quotes of real historical figures. Includes an annotated bibliography. Winner of the 1999 Elizabeth Burr Award. (Ages 9-12)


Stories of immigrants to Wisconsin during the 19th and 20th centuries is presented, with each of the experiences broken down into three components: leaving home, making the journey and settling. The author drew on materials from the archives of the Wisconsin Historical society and personal interviews as the

Marcie Rendon's text and Cheryl Walsh Bellville's many color photographs look at some of the ways in which one Anishinabe family celebrates the circle of life: by opening their arms and their hearts to welcome foster children into their family, by keeping close ties among the generations, by grieving together in the aftermath of a death. The Downwind family—parents, children, foster children—is profiled over the course of a summer, during which time they go on the powwow trail, attending two gatherings where they become part of a larger community. (Ages 7-11)


Fans of Laura Ingalls Wilder's *Little House* books know that there are two years unaccounted for between *On the Banks of Plum Creek* and *By the Shores of Silver Lake*. Here, author Cynthia Rylant worked from Wilder’s unpublished notes and her own imagination to create a story that chronicles the Ingalls’ family life during that time in Burr Oak, Iowa. (Ages 8-11).


The daughter of Transcendentalist parents, Lavinia Goodell defied traditional gender roles to become the first female lawyer in Wisconsin. Active in the temperance movement and supportive of women’s suffrage, Lavinia studied law independently and insisted on taking the bar exam in 1874, despite strong opposition from local lawyers and judges. She opened her own practice in Janesville, and specialized in representing women and practicing criminal law until her death in 1880 at age forty. (Ages 9-12)


Part of the Notorious Americans and Their Times series, this biography of the infamous Wisconsin senator Joseph McCarthy recounts his childhood, his early years as a young lawyer and judge, the deceptions he undertook to become a senator, and the anti-Communist hysteria he stirred up during his time as a United States Senator. Includes a timeline, glossary, bibliography, and index. (Ages 10-13)

*Stories of Our Elders by the Youth of the Mohican Nation*. Muh-He-Con-Neew Press (N9136 Big Lake Road, Gresham, WI 54128-8955), 1999. 21 pages (0-93579-06-3) $10.00

Brief biographical portraits of fourteen elders living in the Stockbridge-Munsee (Mohican) community were gathered as part of an oral history project with Mohican teenagers. Each entry is accompanied by a photograph of the elder, as well as a photo documenting the interview itself. The original voices of the teen narrators have been retained throughout. (Age 9 and up)


This album provides brief biographies of eighteen great NFL quarterbacks, including Packers Brett Favre and Bart Starr. Photos and vital statistics accompany each entry. (Ages 9-13)
Aviator Charles Lindbergh’s two-year career at the University of Wisconsin-Madison, and subsequent visits he made to the city, are highlighted in text and photographs. (Age 10 and older)

A collection of stories, poems, essays, and articles from throughout her life showcases the writing talent of Laura Ingalls Wilder. (Ages 8-12)

Told in the first person, this picture book chronicles how her surroundings inspired twentieth-century painter Georgia O'Keeffe. The world-famous artist was born in Sun Prairie, Wisconsin, and spent her childhood there. (Ages 5-8)

This biography of the famed naturalist who spent most of his adult life in Wisconsin is illustrated with black-and-white and color photographs. The book includes a chronology, bibliography and index. (Ages 7-10)

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The Milwaukee Public Library's Wisconsin Writers Wall of Fame pays tribute to a spectrum of literary talents—novelists, poets, journalists, playwrights, historians—whose work has been influenced by their life and experiences in Wisconsin.

The Milwaukee Public Library, like most public libraries, is a great resource for local materials for use in the English Language Arts Classroom. Please visit the Wall online at http://www.mpl.org/Files/wall_index.htm.

*Inducted to the Wall in 2004*

**John Koethe (1945-)**
Professor of Philosophy at UW-Milwaukee

Born in San Diego, California, Koethe was educated at Princeton and Harvard Universities. He is the author of several collections of poetry, including *Blue Vents*, *The Late Wisconsin Spring*, *The Constructor*, and *North Point North: New and Selected Poems*. His 1973 book of poems, *Domes*, won the 1973 Frank O'Hara Award for Poetry, and his 1997 collection, *Falling Water*, received the 1998 Kingsley Tufts Poetry Award. In 2000, John Koethe was named Milwaukee's first poet laureate.

*Inducted to the Wall in 2003*

**Stephen Ambrose (1936-2002)**
Raised in Whitewater

Graduating with a major in history from the University of Wisconsin-Madison, Ambrose earned his master's degree from Louisiana State University, and returned to the University of Wisconsin to begin work on his Ph.D. in history. Some of his best sellers include: *Undaunted Courage: Meriwether Lewis, Thomas Jefferson, and the Opening of the American West*, *Citizen Soldiers*, *Band of Brothers*, *D-Day June 6, 1944: The Climactic Battle of World War II*, and most recently, *Wild Blue*.

**Frederic Cassidy (1907-2000)**
Taught in Madison

Cassidy was born in Kingston, Jamaica. He earned his bachelor's and master's degrees at Oberlin College and his Ph.D. at the University of Michigan. From 1939-1979, Cassidy taught at the University of Wisconsin-Madison where his courses included Beowulf, Old English, Old English Poetry, Middle English, and the history of the English language. He authored numerous published works, but will be best remembered as the chief editor of *The Dictionary of American Regional English*, a massive compilation of slang, regionalisms, and folk language.

**Francis Paul Pruch (1920-1992)**
Born in River Falls

A Jesuit priest, Pruch has taught chemistry and science at Marquette University and elsewhere. He has chronicled the history of petrochemical industry near Milwaukee. As Milwaukee's local history columnist for the Milwaukee Journal, Pruch chronicled this transformation.

**John Gurda (1947-)**
Born in Milwaukee

As Milwaukee's local history columnist for the Milwaukee Journal, Gurda has chronicled the city's history. He is a graduate of the University of Wisconsin and is the author of several books and articles about local history.

**Lois Ehlerd (1934-)**
Born in Beaver Dam

The talented author and teacher is a graduate of the University of Wisconsin-Madison where he taught in the Department of English. She is a social historian of the book and her work has been featured in *Cuckoo: A Mexico Book*.

**Marguerite Henry (1905-1988)**
Born and raised in Wisconsin

The beloved children's author was a native of Wisconsin. She is best known for her many books about animals, especially horses, which have delighted children for decades. The popular *King of the Wind* was made into a film.
Inducted to the Wall in 2001

Francis Paul Prucha, S.J. (1921- )
Born in River Falls

A Jesuit priest, Prucha is a professor of history at Marquette University, where he has taught since 1960. In his many writings he explores the complex and sometimes tempestuous relations of the American Indians with the dominant white society.

Frederick Jackson Turner (1861-1932)
Born in Portage

A graduate from the State University (Wisconsin) in 1884, Turner became a professor at the University of Wisconsin, where he drew the inspiration for his essay “The Significance of the Frontier in American History” which addresses American territorial expansion and its impact on the growth of democracy. An author of numerous books, his name is synonymous with the western frontier.

Inducted to the Wall in 2000

John Gurda (1947- )
Born in Milwaukee

As Milwaukee’s local historian and author of The Making of Milwaukee, Gurda has chronicled the histories of Milwaukee area neighborhoods, churches and industries. A graduate of Boston College and holding a master’s degree from the University of Wisconsin-Milwaukee, he is also a photographer, lecturer and local history columnist for the Milwaukee Journal Sentinel.

Inducted to the Wall in 1999

Lois Ehlert (1934- )
Born in Beaver Dam, resides in Milwaukee

The talented author and illustrator of over 30 books for young children, Ehlert is a graduate of the University of Wisconsin, Milwaukee and the Layton School of Art. Her simple and fun concept books abound with brightly colored collages of tone and texture. She received a Caldecott Honor for Color Zoo and has delighted children with her colorful creatures in Circus, Feathers for Lunch, and Cuckoo: A Mexican Folktale among others.

Inducted to the Wall in 1998

Marguerite Henry (1902-1997)
Born and raised in Milwaukee

The beloved children’s author wrote 60 books in her lifetime. Educated at Riverside High School and Milwaukee State Teachers College (UW-Milwaukee), she found an enthusiastic audience of young readers for her books about animals, especially horses. Awarded many honors in her lifetime, she won the 1949 Newbery medal for King of the Wind. Her best-known book, Misty of Chincoteague, and the popular Justin Morgan Had a Horse and Brighty of the Grand Canyon were made into films.
Inducted to the Wall in 1997

August Derleth (1909-1971)
Life-long resident of Sauk City

Wisconsin’s most prolific writer, Derleth published more than 150 books ranging from historical novels and poetry to themes of the macabre. The Hills Stand Watch describes political Wisconsin as it emerged from a territory to a state.

Aldo Leopold (1886-1948)
Lived and worked in Madison

Leopold was a pioneer ecologist whose concept of wilderness preservation is outlined in A Sand County Almanac. This collection of essays uses spare, eloquent prose to champion the need for an environmental code of behavior for humankind.

John Muir (1838-1914)
Boyhood home in rural Montello

Born in Scotland, Muir came to Wisconsin in 1849. The Story of My Boyhood and Youth describes his early years in rural Montello. Naturalist, inventor, writer and conservationist, Muir is recognized as the father of the national park system and founder of the Sierra Club.

Lorine Niedecker (1903-1970)
Born in Fort Atkinson, lived on Blackhawk Island

Niedecker is a poet of a single location, the area around Blackhawk Island. “I spent my childhood outdoors - red-winged blackbirds, willows, maples, boats, fishing...” wrote Niedecker. She worked for a time as a library assistant in the Dwight Foster Public Library. Her works include New Goose, My Friend Tree and My Life by Water.

Zona Gale (1874-1938)
Born in Portage

Edna Ferber recalls being in awe of this “real” writer who visited the Milwaukee Journal while she was a reporter. Gale also wrote for the Milwaukee Journal but is best known for her novels, plays and short stories which reflect her passion for politics, pacifism, education, social reform and feminism. She received a Pulitzer Prize for her play Miss LuLu Bett.

Hamlin Garland (1860-1940)
Born in West Salem

A novelist and essayist, his work A Son of the Middle Border and Pulitzer Prize-winning A Daughter of the Middle Border portray the harsh life on the prairies of rural Wisconsin.

Sterling North (1906-1974)
Born in Edgerton

Life on a farm near Edgerton became the setting for North’s The Wolfing and Morning in the Land. A reporter, literary editor and publisher of North Star Books, Sterling North is best known for his exploits with his pet raccoon which he chronicled in the novel Rascal, later made into a Disney film.

Edna Ferber (1885-1968)
Childhood home in Appleton

Once a reporter for the Milwaukee Journal, Ferber’s book A Peculiar Treasure describes her early impressions of Appleton. She wrote several best-selling novels including Giant and Show Boat, and won a Pulitzer Prize for So Big.

Carl Sandburg (1878-1967)
Lived in Milwaukee

Poet, historian, novelist and essayist, Sandburg wrote The People, Yes in 1918. His poem Chicago is perhaps his best known work. The Big Wind is a collection of poetry with Captains Courageous.

Laura Ingalls Wilder (1867-1957)
Born in Pepin, Wisconsin

The famous author of the Little House books was born in Pepin, Wisconsin. As a young girl, Wilder was inspired to write by the hardships of life in the wilderness. Her first novel, Little House in the Big Woods, describes Wilder’s early life in Wisconsin living in a log cabin with her family. The books inspired the television series called Little House on the Prairie.

Thornton Wilder (1897-1975)
Born in Madison

Playwright and author, Wilder won the Pulitzer Prize in 1940 for The Matchmaker and in 1954 for Our Town. His novel The Bridge of San Luis Rey won the first Banta Award.
Ellen Raskin (1928-1984)  
Born in Milwaukee

Ellen Raskin received an art degree from UW-Madison and established a New York career in freelance commercial art, as well as writing and illustrating children's books. In 1966 Raskin wrote Nothing Ever Happens on My Block, which was named one of the 10 best illustrated children's books of the year by the New York Times. She received the Newbery Medal and Banta Award for The Westing Game which is set in Sheboygan.

Carl Sandburg (1878-1967)  
Lived in Milwaukee as a journalist

Poet, historian, novelist and biographer, Carl Sandburg lived in Wisconsin from 1907 to 1912. He worked as a reporter for the Milwaukee Journal and Milwaukee Sentinel. He later became best known for his biographies of Lincoln, winning a Pulitzer Prize for history for "Abraham Lincoln: The War Years" and for poetry with Collected Poems.

Laura Ingalls Wilder (1867-1957)  
Born in Pepin

The famous author of the "Little House" books was born in Pepin, Wisconsin in 1867. The series of family stories describing both the joys and hardships of life on the frontier began with Little House in the Big Woods. This first book describes Wilder's years in Wisconsin living in a log cabin with her family. The Little House books inspired the long-running television series Little House on the Prairie.

Right:  
Laura Ingalls Wilder's birthplace, Pepin, WI

Thornton Wilder (1897-1975)  
Born in Madison

Playwright and novelist, Wilder grew up in Madison and spent his first nine years investigating the city's library, lakes, and the newspaper office. In 1928 he won the Pulitzer Prize for fiction for The Bridge of San Luis Rey. His popular play The Matchmaker was made into the musical Hello Dolly! and he won Pulitzer Prizes for both Our Town and The Skin of Our Teeth. In 1974 he received the first Banta Award for his novel Theophilus North.