An Inside Look
at Marquette University High School's
English Program

...Minds...

...Hearts...

...and Faith...
Editor's Note

M.U.H.S.: M.U.H.S.

Gentle Reader:

Does it seem strange to be promoting a religion, in a religious context? A description of the course might say that “it’s not a set of guidelines, it’s a lived, shared life-long process to be engaged in.” What does this mean? One explanation, formal or informal, has begun to arise, and is based on a strong sense of how to respond to others by respecting their religious and cultural criticisms?

Vice Principal Voge told this writer that “it’s not a set of guidelines, it’s a lived, shared life-long process to be engaged in.” Another explanation, formal or informal, has begun to arise, and is based on a strong sense of how to respond to others by respecting their religious and cultural criticisms?

Call for Papers: Visual Literacy in the English Language Arts Curriculum

David Beard will be the guest editor for the Fall 2005 issue of Wisconsin English Journal. The topic is “visual literacy.” We welcome submissions that discuss your ideas and experience in how to best use visual materials (graphic novels, Yu-Gi-Oh cards, zines, advertising, and other visual media) to encourage traditional and new literacies in elementary, middle, high school and college classrooms. Send copy for this issue to David Beard (david.beard@uwrf.edu; 651-398-5405).

Call for Papers: Spring, 2006 Spotlight on a School

We are planning to make the spring 2006 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.

"Banned Books"

Two courses which I've taught are Banned Books and Creative Writing. Joe Costa was the first teacher who marketed this book. After the class list, he would state, “I don’t do it to make people think, doesn’t hesitate to make people think.” He was a strong advocate for the rights of the underprivileged, the/GLBT community, and the underrepresented American cultures.

Then Costa asks, “Who can we speak to about this?” His response was quite telling. He said, “You have to be honest with yourself. If you don’t have to be honest with yourself, then you don’t have to be honest with anyone else.”

Editor
Ruth Wood & David Beard
University of Wisconsin-River Falls

Photos & Design
Courtney Huber

Design & Production
David E. Beard
University of Wisconsin-River Falls

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Editor's Note:
M.U.H.S.: More Uplift, High Scholastics

Dear Reader:

Does it seem strange to you that Wisconsin English Journal is featuring, yea, promoting a religious school? If so, take a good look at MUHS’s idealized description of the “Grad at Grad” (page 11). Based on its Mission Statement, it’s not a set of goals that could be espoused by our public schools, but don’t you wish that your school could unabashedly advertise their desire that each student “takes some responsibility for his/her own growth... desires learning as a life-long process to develop imagination, feelings, conscience, and intellect... has begun to acquire skills toward improving the world... is developing a strong sense of the dignity and equality of all persons... [and] compassion for others by respecting diversity and by accepting and offering constructive criticisms”?

Vice Principal Victoria Bonesho, also a world culture and social studies teacher, told this writer that she believes that MUHS’s curriculum is much easier to sell because the students know that the school makes it clear that they want their students to become the best people that they can be. She stated that, the high-mindedness is not limited to moral and social ethics; it’s also aimed at mental extension. Another of “Grad at Grad’s” principles is the development of an open mind. In that service, MUHS’s approach to bringing student achievement to its highest level is better than AP programs, Bonesho believes, because AP programs can impede intellectual growth when the preciseness of their goals and questions requires careful adherence to a set curriculum; instead of giving encouragement to pursue a challenging idea until its compelling demands are dominated.

The English faculty at MUHS are encouraged to thrive on such encounters: to teach subject matter that holds genuine interest for them and to invent courses which enable them to do that. One faculty member, Ginny Schauble, expressed how much she relishes the encouragement this policy provides to “think forward” and “read, read, read.”

"Banned Books" and "Committed to Justice"

Two courses which have developed directly from individual teacher interest are Banned Books and Committed to Justice. On the day our team visited MUHS, Joe Costa was teaching Allen Ginsberg’s “Howl” in his Banned Books class. After the class listened to a 15-minute excerpt read by Ginsberg himself, Costa didn’t hesitate to answer the question from one student, “Why was this poem banned?” It is banned, he replies frankly, because “Ginsberg was homosexual, expressed anti-American sentiment in the Post-Korean War era; he named drug addicts and homosexuals among the ‘best minds of his generation’; he criticized American culture for romanticizing ‘bad lives.’”

Then Costa asks the students if they would approve of having this poem taught to their own future 16-year-old children. The question provokes just the kind of response teachers want from students: mixed opinions and a range of reasons—some personal, some social, some ethical. Costa expresses no opinion himself; he doesn’t have to, for the students cover all the significant sides. My guess is that department chair Prosser, who says he looks for “prudence, discretion, and enthusiasm” in his teachers, would approve.
The "Committed to Justice" course taught by Joe Cavanaugh and his brother Tim (he's a member of the Alumni Service Corps—see page 20 for further comment on this) aims to develop awareness in students of what their role is in bringing about justice. The course is multidisciplinary with units on theology, political science, economics, philosophy, and biology—purely an elective. Students are encouraged to develop and defend their own stances on issues that relate to the fifth "Grad at Grad" goal: "committed to justice."

Students enter the course just after they've finished a required two weeks of community service in the area immediately surrounding MUHS intended to make them feel a part of the neighborhood that their school is in.

Twelfth-grade student John Brady had spent his two weeks at a Daycare for Children of Battered Women; he felt good that he was one of the few men that these kids see doing positive, helpful things.

This day's class was devoted to talking about how students might deepen the intellectual aspects of their papers based on these field experiences. The discussion makes much of St. Augustine's notion that a sinful society brings on its own punishment through the disorder that erupts: The reward for justice is peace; the punishment of injustice is chaos. The discussion focuses on the idea that:

_In pure democracy, where we're accountable to each other, we shouldn't just punish the criminal but fix the society that produced the criminal._

Witnessing how easily these young men agreed with this community-centered, responsibility-laden belief persuaded me that young American minds can be opened to the notion that the good life is not necessarily one that is lived for the self, nor is the best way to control social disruption to build more prisons.

"Shakespeare"

Ann Downey's class in Shakespeare is clearly not a unique course invented just for MUHS's curriculum, but it embodies the same progressiveness. On the day I visited her class, Ms. Downey first gave her students a full synopsis of Henry IV (an idea presented recently in _English Journal_), then has them read key scenes and speeches. Divided into three groups and provided with excerpted scripts, the class "acts out" the three social classes of the play in choral reading. Ms. Downey leads the reading with her master synoptic script, cueing in each group when it was their turn to add a speech important to the synopsis.

All three groups responded with high thespian vigor, even donning whatever bits of appropriate costuming were available in Downey's crafty room and dramatizing with appropriate stances and gestures. I felt a bit as though I were observing a rehearsal of a cantata in Bach's day: the Maestro had the full score, and each section awaited the signal to contribute the otherwise incomprehensible part they were privy to and masters of.

What happened by the end of this class session is that all students had participated un-self-consciously in dramatically reading Shakespearean language, getting a feel for the contrasts among three social groups and the key conflicts of the play, and experiencing the reading as fun, interesting, competent. It is easy to anticipate how far such scaffolding can go to liberate young readers of Shakespeare from getting bogged down in "what do these lines mean" and into more

Interesting Question: What does Shakespeare mean by...?

A Search for Explanation

My day of observation reveals that education guided by high-mindedness and the Jesuits' purposes, and very likely it does.

Is high-mindedness possible? Of course not, and the interesting part is that it reflects the Jesuit commitment (back and teach). Can we see this department enjoy...

Is unisex education a good idea? Is it the opportunity to study and be noticed? Is the separation from the limiting role? Is there anything too noticed enjoyment?

Is unified religious education...? We need to look at this department's mission of admission, the opportunity to study and be noticed. Sophomores—2 credit weeks in all of the community, responsibility with students who...

Can we do these separations and come back to the room. Unlikely this separation of social principles. Is it possible that students thrive on being different from them and do that—a whole lot more than we could.

Call for Papers:

We are planning for a special session on...
interesting questions like "To what extent should we admire Hal?" and "Why does Shakespeare make him appear so roguish at first?"

A Search for Explanations

My day of observation did plenty to prove Ms Bonesho's theory to me that education guided by high-mindedness engendered lots of wonderful results: rich engagement with subject matter, free exchange of views, honest questioning of purposes, and very respectful human relationships, to name just a few.

Is high-mindedness the whole explanation of MUHS's high level of achievement? Of course not. But add to that a dedicated and variously talented faculty and the interesting support from the ASC (the Alumni Service Corps, which reflects the Jesuit commitment to go into the community and help: graduates come back and teach). Continue to add many other tangible and intangible plusses this department enjoys, and the end product is a fine English program.

Is unisex education one of those tangibles? Maybe not, says Bonesho: interplay of ideas is limited by all-male minds; but it does enhance their comfort level, and by the time they're seniors they don't regret not having been around women because of the shared brotherhood. It's also possible that those boys who would shrink from the limelight in high schools where their lack of "coolness" would be too noticed enjoy the freedom to be their best selves with less self-consciousness.

Is unified religious belief one? Not likely. Religious commitment is not a condition of admission. The administration values the opportunity to explore beliefs, the opportunity to practice service; uses retreats (freshman: whole class three days; sophomores in groups of 35; upperclassmen do Shared Life [required ½ credit—2 weeks in volunteer work]; and an optional, religious retreat) to develop community, respect for others, and reflectiveness, but as yet has no problem with students who reject or question religious tenets.

Can we do these same things in public schools? It's unlikely that many of ours could afford the retreats or be allowed to use uncertified teachers in the classroom. Unlikely that we can tout Ignatian and Augustinian precepts as core social principles. But can we believe, as MUHS seems universally to do, that students thrive on developing their best selves, and that it is our role to help them do that—so that we all do our part in the creation of a better world? Of course we can. Most of the time we do.

Call for Papers: Spring, 2006 Spotlight on a School

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Excerpts from the MUHS Mission Statement

The mission of Marquette University High School—a Catholic, urban, college preparatory school in the Jesuit tradition—is to educate young men to become community leaders of intellectual excellence, sincere compassion and resolute conscience who serve God by serving others.

The urban location of MUHS manifests the school’s commitment to address the needs of contemporary society. Drawing its students from a wide range of geographical, social, economic, and cultural backgrounds, the school enables a diverse group of individuals to become a community of responsible citizens.

As a college preparatory school, MUHS prepares its graduates to attain mastery in those academic disciplines required for admission and success at colleges and universities throughout the United States. This curriculum demands rigorous preparation in the liberal arts.

The community that forms MUHS is comprised of its students and alumni, their parents and families, the faculty and staff, and friends of the school who all work together in various ways to incarnate the values of the institution in the lives of all who are influenced by it. The example of their generous service forms bonds that link the minds and hearts of this community even more closely.

MUHS expects its graduates to become leaders who will make their local community a better place because they selflessly contribute their energy and talent to molding a world where justice and peace prevail.

As people of intellectual excellence, graduates of MUHS integrate spiritual, intellectual, artistic, and physical talents. They strive for excellence while recognizing their personal limits and the advantages of cooperating with others. Sincere compassion informs the graduates of MUHS, who hunger for justice, who seek ways to promote the most disadvantaged members of society, and who tenderly love the people in their lives.

The resolute conscience of each MUHS graduate results from rigorous reflection on tradition and scripture, an examination of the values that undergird religious and secular society, and their own personal experience.

Praise, reverence, and service of God which are demonstrated by respecting, cherishing, and serving God’s people is the ultimate goal of all graduates of Marquette University High School.

A Vision Shared

By Timothy J. Herlihy

“The mission of Marquette University High School in the Jesuit tradition is to prepare today’s students for tomorrow’s challenges and to nurture them into community leaders of intellectual excellence, sincere compassion and resolute conscience who serve God by serving others.”

Reader-Response

Tell all? No doubt. Quake leaders, how another’s “compassion,” and whether speculating on our impact as

However, these are the lofty principles—one very old, one relatively new—that anchor our faculty as they work with our students: cura personalis and the grad-at-grad. As an English Department, these comprise the “big picture” that we entrust each other to hold in view.

Grad at Grad: A School’s Blueprint

Our “grad-at-grad” statement that a young man might carry qualities over their 4 years; others assume them; and they make choices regarding both experiences with the desired end in mind, we want to put people and act responsibly and keep this goal in sight.

Cura Personalis: Teacher

Besides attempting to stay true, the English Department inculcates from certain Jesuit principles, or care for the person.
A Vision Shared: The Marquette High English Department

By Timothy Prosser, Chair of the Department of English

"The mission of Marquette University High School -- a Catholic, urban, college-preparatory school in the Jesuit tradition -- is to educate young men to become community leaders of intellectual excellence, sincere compassion, and resolute conscience who serve God by serving others."

Approved by the MUHS Board of Directors
8 October 1997

Reader-Response

T all order? No doubt. Questions about what exactly constitutes "community leaders," how another's personality might influence our perceptions of "compassion," and whether levels of "service" can be fairly evaluated leave us speculating on our impact as professionals.

However, these are the lofty concepts that the faculty of Marquette High continually challenges itself to employ and scrutinize for the meanings of both our mission and our own professional dedication. These are broad strokes, generalities for guiding the school, particularly those on the classroom’s frontline. Additionally, there are two principles – one very old, one relatively new – that anchor faculty as they work with students: cura personalis and the grad-at-grad. As an English Department, these comprise the “big picture” that we entrust each other to hold in view.

Grad at Grad: A School’s Blueprint

Our “grad-at-grad” statement [See page 11] denotes the intended characteristics a young man might carry with him at graduation. Students assimilate these qualities over their 4 years; new teachers are inculcated in them; veteran teachers assume them; and they influence our style and content as a department. We make choices regarding both the academic curriculum and co-curricular experiences with the desired end – really a commencement – in mind. In practical terms, we want to put people on the street who are unafraid to think, speak, write and act responsibly and compassionately. The four-year program in English keeps this goal in sight.

Cura Personalis: Teachers Build on an Ignatian Cornerstone

Besides attempting to stay relevant in educational theory and practice, how the English Department influences the institution’s formation of a student transpires from certain Jesuit principles, among them perhaps most central, cura personalis, or care for the person. Ignatius, one of the Renaissance’s great educators and
founder of the Jesuit order, insisted on respect and care for the human dignity of the learner. Educating and learning serves, in part, a person’s mental health, and thus, any community, most readily for us the classroom, ought to nourish the learner, because in turn, we expect that our students will contribute to the building of a better world.

Consequently, the MUHS English Department’s curriculum, practices and techniques, and the experiences we provide our students emerge from a tradition grounded in an awareness of a philosophy of teaching.

That means we explore techniques to find the hard-to-reach student, we walk with a student through his painful situations outside of school, and we see ourselves as more than knowledgeable authorities and keepers of the grade. This ethos somehow defines the perennial nature of Marquette High.

It also means that we do what any solid English department does.

Departmentally English
We expose students to a broad range of literary voices and we teach reading comprehension, literary explication and writing skills, regardless of the required or elective course. After a freshman year of introduction to the genres and elements of literature, and a sophomore year of American literature and composition, we offer our students 12 electives to select from during their junior and senior years.

Our philosophy (cura personalis for teachers themselves) adheres to both certain, departmentally agreed-upon texts and genres, and affords us the latitude to choose other works, subject to department discretion, during freshman and sophomore coursework. The same elective taught by two different teachers could conceivably have two different booklists. Without abandoning the canon, we want each member of the department to lead from his or her interests, enthusiasms and strengths, and feel that good teaching will occur when professionals have the ability to make those choices. For instance, freshman English teachers are required to teach *The Odyssey* of Homer, a Shakespearean play, elements of the four major genres and a novel featuring an adolescent protagonist of non-white American cultural background. These are the “agreed-upon” literary experiences, but by no means limits the literature a freshman would encounter. This policy provides teachers opportunities to try new material; creates richly heterogeneous, school-wide reading for students; and provides common allusions as students move up the ladder. This practice also sustains both initiative and pride in one’s work and collaborative respect.

Similarly, there are a certain few types of essays (autobiographical narrative, description, characterization, for instance) expected of a student during his first two years; grammar becomes part of writing instruction, particularly the first two years. Junior and senior year emphasis on helping the student to build communication skills through peer and oral textual explications throughout the year. Students learn vocabulary in the classrooms they have mastered to develop.

One of the distinguishing traits we serve as student advisor, ideal for her students. Our English Department has more than 25 years here and 6 others staff positions coaching or more special guidance groups, drama and retreat program, in addition to homerooms and clubs such as *Aoxotol*. Students perceive of teaching English, and this only...

Diverse Strengths/Multiple Charms
As most professionals in the teaching profession are not hard to deal with such issues as:

- Curriculum-inclusiveness
- Cross-curricular options
- Identification of a topic
- Turf wars over computer
- Changes in grade-progression
- Anthologies vs. single
- Writing lab staffing
- Universal use of MLA
- Technology training
- Mandatory summer reading
- Standards for correctness

...to name a few.

These issues at times underlie our. The nature of an English department is revisited and new ones be clarified.

Divergence can be a necessity, but we accept that our difference due to us. The challenge for us that can interact and share as a group. My predecessor was the impulse to convert [to allow] a better job of pooling resources. The process of collaboration together as Jesuit and lay faculty we sense our purpose, the lay colleagues more freely. More as best we can. One measure students return as colleagues.
two years. Junior and senior years feature largely analytical writing with an emphasis on helping the student find his writer’s voice. Students practice their communication skills through peer editing and review for improvement, as well as oral textual explications throughout their four years. Somehow we work Speech in during sophomore year. Students use a formal vocabulary text as freshmen and master vocabulary in the context of their reading as upperclassmen. Teachers have collaborated to develop and share master word-lists for specific works.

One of the distinguishing traits of our faculty is that everyone is expected to serve as student advisor, ideally meeting no less than once a quarter with his or her students. Our English Department combines 4 teachers each with more than 25 years here and 6 other members of younger, talented dedication. We staff positions coaching or moderating in athletics, literary magazines, forensics, special guidance groups, dramatics, travel events, pastoral works (including the retreat program), in addition to vital school committees. We also lead specialty homerooms and clubs such as Shakespeare, chess and on-line literary journal, Aoxotol. Students perceive our department as leaders in capacities other than teaching English, and this only strengthens our credibility in the classroom.

**Diverse Strengths/Multiple Visions/Cooperative Effort**

As most professionals in the field of English know, areas of clash within a department are not hard to decode. Over recent years our department has contended with such issues as:

- Curriculum-inclusiveness
- Cross-curricular options
- Identification of a top-ten grammar list
- Turf wars over computer lab location
- Changes in grade-program software
- Anthologies vs. single texts
- Writing lab staffing
- Universal use of MLA style in the whole school
- Technology training
- Mandatory summer reading selections for each year’s class
- Standards for correcting papers

...to name a few.

These issues at times underscore our distinct attitudes, and occasionally unite us. The nature of an English Department requires that old issues occasionally be revisited and new ones be clarified.

Divergence can be a necessary and occasionally painful part of any department, but we accept that our differences give us a wide range of appeal and expertise. The challenge for us through the years has been to focus on how well we can interact and share as a group with different views. In this, we have and are succeeding. My predecessor, Mike Quillin, once asked us, “Can we give up the impulse to convert [to alter our approaches about what best works] and do a better job of pooling resources to make our effort easier and more effective?” The process of collaboration, which in the past had often merely meant working together as Jesuit and lay faculty, has evolved in exciting ways. When together we sense our purpose, the load lightens, the day speeds, and we laugh with our colleagues more freely. Most importantly, we address the needs of the students as best we can. One measure of our success that we find most satisfying is that students return as collegians to tell us they were prepared for college writing.
Simply because (rather than although) we approach problems from such different angles, we are able to help each other. We find the joy of the vocation.

The Pythagorean Brotherhood is one of the student groups at MUHS.
The Graduate at Graduation

In 1981, the Jesuit high schools of the United States created The Profile of the Graduate of a Jesuit High School at Graduation. Therefore, the lay and Jesuit faculty aim to foster and encourage the development of graduates who will be intellectually competent, open to growth, religious, loving and committed to a strong sense of justice.

INTELLECTUALLY COMPETENT – The graduate is encouraged to exhibit a mastery of academic skills for advanced education and development of character. He is trained in basic study and research skills so that he is prepared for life-long creative learning. He is developing an aesthetic capacity. The graduate is developing intellectual integrity and honesty. His repertoire of knowledge enables him to view his community in a compassionate and hopeful way. Similarly, he is developing a critical consciousness, which enables him to analyze and question the issues facing our society. He is learning that different branches of knowledge provide alternate approaches to truth.

OPEN TO GROWTH – The MUHS graduate takes some intentional responsibility for his own growth. He strives to grow in the realization and use of his talents. He is beginning to understand that leadership is a vehicle of growth for both himself and others. The graduate is learning how to learn. Consequently, he desires learning as a life-long process to develop imagination, feelings, conscience, and intellect. He is developing compassion for others by respecting diversity and by accepting and offering constructive criticism. The graduate is willing to risk new experiences and recognizes them as opportunities to grow. A close relationship with God enables him to nurture such openness.

RELIGIOUS – The graduate knows that God loves him and he returns that love through prayer and service. He has begun to experience a personal relationship with God and has reflected on that relationship in prayer. He seeks to recognize the work of God in others. He is aware that the Catholic Church is an instrument to aid personal development. The graduate seeks to develop a personal faith that recognizes injustices and promotes just actions.

LOVING – The MUHS graduate is seeking to understand and to love himself and others. His relationships are deepening as he tries to move beyond self-interest and to disclose himself, accepting the mystery of other persons and cherishing these persons. The graduate is not a fully confident, loving adult, yet he is beginning to integrate his interests, concerns, feelings, and sexuality into his whole personality. The graduate, to the best of his abilities, gives himself to others in service and is becoming sensitive to the beauty and fragility of the created universe.

COMMITTED TO JUSTICE – The MUHS graduate is developing a strong sense of the dignity and equality of all persons. He is beginning to acknowledge and respect all people, regardless of race, sex, religion or ethnic background. He has begun to acquire skills toward improving his world, whether that be through his family, his school, his career, his city, or his nation. He is beginning to understand individual and structural injustices. The graduate knows that God can be found in all things. In working toward a just world, the graduate is preparing to contribute his gifts and talents developed at MUHS to his community. He is becoming aware of his participation in bringing God’s kingdom to reality.
“What’s It Like with All Boys?”
by Elizabeth Jorgensen
(student teacher, Marquette University High School)

“What’s it like with all boys?” “I just can’t imagine.” “Isn’t it incredibly
difficult?”

The comments are all the same when my student teaching peers hear about my
experience at MUHS. They picture a classroom overflowing with testosterone,
but I’ve found the excitement and opportunities the boys bring to be rare and
remarkable—and far different than any of my peers’ co-ed experiences.

On my first day, when I walked into a school filled with men, the comments
were varied. An administrator jokingly asked when we went co-ed. In the
hallway, upperclassmen waited until I passed to debate whether I was a student
teach or someone’s sister. But when I reached room 208, introduced myself and
began to teach Expository Writing, I felt at home. To the faculty and students, I
was not seen as a college student, their sister’s age or a student teacher; rather, I
was simply a faculty member at MUHS, privileged to be in front of a classroom
of excited learners.

I have had success at MUHS because I haven’t been afraid to delve into a
teenaged boy’s world, filled with ice hockey sticks, spark plugs and the NCAA
tournament. In order to understand the stack of papers on my desk each Friday,
I’ve had to research car transmissions and end each night with Sports Center.
But from every bit of car and sports knowledge they’ve given me, I’ve traded
with them the tools to create detailed prose and articulate feedback.

Relying on the competitive nature of the boys, I created a Jeopardy game on
grammar, split them into teams and saw them study more than they did for their
exam. I’ve challenged them to turn their papers in early, to email me for sugges-
tions and to try varied writing styles. They’ve met the challenge head on.

To help them study for an exam, and feeding off their love for attention and dra-
namics, I assigned a short presentation on their grammar book. The class ended
in tears of laughter as Dave replaced punctuation with barnyard animal noises
and Santo discovered that if the entire class was used in the presentation, he’d
have no one to present to.

I’ve challenged them to send letters into the community and create change.
When John showed up in the free long-sleeved Honda Hybrid polo Honda sent
him, his classmates erupted in applause, proclaiming their own responses and
free merchandise from their own advocacy letters.

With what we’ve accomplished already this semester, I’m saddened at the
thought of leaving the 25 men seated in the circled desks, in what my supervis-
ing teacher affectionately calls a club atmosphere. There are only a few short
weeks left in the 2004-2005 school year and I find myself saying, “What’s it like
without all boys? I just can’t imagine. It has to be incredibly difficult.”

"The America Hero"

A few weeks ago, Philip a student asked him his view on the American
culture and whether he studied historical heroes. That response led
me to examine the histories and disciplines comprise the
Irish Adventure
If the Learning Is Exciting,  
the Teaching Is Exciting

by James Kearney

A few weeks ago, Professor Peter Gibbon visited Marquette High to talk to students about his area of expertise, heroes. During the day one of the students asked him his views on Joseph Campbell. His reply was that he preferred studying historical heroes rather than mythological heroes, who are Campbell’s focus. That response caused me to wonder whether any substantial difference between those distinctions really exists. Campbell would argue that whereas a culture designates its heroes, in return those heroes define the culture. If we want to know who our people (or ourselves, for that matter) are, all we need do is examine our heroes, be they historical, mythological or literary.

"The America Hero" and "Irish/British Literature"

That premise is a major focus of two of our junior/senior English electives, one called "The American Hero" and the other, "Irish/British Literature". In both courses we do study literature as an aesthetic, but we also attempt to arrive at an understanding of the civilizations that gave rise to the literature. Granted, both courses, at base, are designed to improve critical reading and writing, but this approach is the vehicle that drives the courses.

"The American Hero" is a course in American mythology, a somewhat elusive genre to characterize, given that this country was founded by an already literate gentry and therefore had no mythical oral history, unlike the countries from which those founders or their ancestors emigrated. We begin with Joseph Campbell’s The Hero With a Thousand Faces, a challenging but brilliant study of comparative mythologies, which can easily be applied to literature. From there we move on through biography/autobiography, novels and films, studied somewhat chronologically, to determine the evolution of our heroes through time. In literature, for example, we look at Natty Bumppo of Fenimore Cooper’s Leatherstocking Tales, Crazy Horse, Wooden Leg, George A. Custer, all through various biographies, Hank Morgan of Mark Twain’s A Connecticut Yankee in King Arthur’s Court, Joe Christmas of William Faulkner’s Light in August, and Jack “Legs” Diamond of William Kennedy’s Legs. Typical of the films we view are The Natural, Casablanca, The Outlaw Josey Wales, and Miller’s Crossing. Campbell’s work provides the base from which all of the others are approached.

In “Irish/British Literature” the bias is more Irish than it is British (due entirely to an unabashed chauvinism on my part, for which I do not apologize). We do read Beowulf (the Seamus Heaney translation) and a portion of The Canterbury Tales, but from there we jump to the works of James Joyce, Patrick Kavanagh, William Butler Yeats, and other noted Irish authors. While Joyce and Kavanagh personified themselves as their heroes (Stephan Dedalus and Tarry Flynn, respectively), Yeats attempted to get at the soul of “Irishness” in his poetic plays about the great Cuchulainn, superhero of many Irish myths. We also study a substantial number of poems that, almost unavoidably, choose Irish politics and/or spirituality as their foci.

To accomplish an intelligent study of the literature of these courses, we must examine the histories and sensitivities of the countries as well. As a result, several disciplines comprise the infrastructure of both electives. Irish Adventure
Some of the students in "Irish/British Literature" avail themselves of the opportunity to travel in Ireland for two weeks in the summer with classmates and faculty on a tour we call "Irish Adventure". En route they visit many of the sites commemorated in the literature or providing the inspiration for the poetry and prose which they have read. They get a strong dose of Irish history in the process as well as ample opportunities to explore the landscape and get to know the Irish people. Needless to say, their experience in the course is enhanced by the trip and vice versa.

We Are All the Heroes of Our Own Myths

A unique but invaluable sidelight to this approach to literature manifests itself in the personal benefits the students can reap from it. In learning to define heroes and heroic behavior, the students learn to define themselves. As Campbell often said, "We are all the heroes of our own myths." As such, the students learn that heroes often triumph not because of society but in spite of it—that in serving the common good, one must sometimes break from the traditional and follow his/her own conscience. They can also learn to deal in intelligent and healthy ways with change—something we require and cannot avoid throughout our lives but which oftentimes intimidates us. Seniors, of course, given the imminence of a major passage in their lives, are particularly receptive to this lesson.

A bottom line in all of this (not necessarily the bottom line) is that, yes, studying literature as an aesthetic is valuable—but the lessons literature teaches us about the process of living, about who we are, where we've been and where we're going, are invaluable. Once the students catch on, they oftentimes get excited about what they're learning, especially the self-discovery and, as any teacher knows, if the learning is exciting, the teaching is exciting.
The Librarian, the Media Specialist
by Courtney Huber

Kathleen Hart sits in her office, keen-eyed and with a hint of merriment in her youthful expression. She does not look like the picture of an overworked school librarian. Every now and then she looks out through a large window with a mixture of alertness and something that resembles tenderness to see students reading quietly in the library's study area. It is clear she loves her job.

Hart will be retiring after fifteen years as head librarian at Marquette University High School. Over the years Hart has shaped some basic beliefs about the functions of a school library and its staff. She believes, for instance, that a good school librarian not only assists students with research, but also encourages them to think on their own and utilize all of the library's resources proactively. In so doing, she's affirming the aim of the majority of this school's assignments: motivate students to formulate their own viewpoints and find their own voice—rather than rely on someone else's perspective.

Hart believes that a big part of her rewarding experience has been honing her skills as librarian and crafting the ideal program that a school library should offer its students.

The MUHS Library Mission

The MUHS library staff prepares students for their future careers as college students, graduate students, and later as working professionals, by cultivating a talent for research. Hart says, "Most important [is to] serve the information needs of the students, faculty, and staff of the high school."

To that end, the library consists of a general study area, computer stations, and a section reserved for the book and journal collections. Students have access to two online databases to assist with research: Badgerlink and SIRS. Kathy Hart's task is to tie it all together: to introduce the students to all library resources—from journals off the shelves to online databases—thus making them practiced, thorough researchers.

Hart believes that a big part of conducting research properly means asking questions. Although there are a few students at MUHS who seem hesitant to ask for help, Hart says that most feel comfortable in seeking her assistance with projects. One story she's happy to relate is about a student with a project that compared the cultural aspects of three different wars. After talking with the somewhat beleaguered student and looking at his assignment sheet, Hart suggested three wars he might compare and pointed him to relevant sources. Drawing on finely tuned research instincts, Hart purposely steered the student away from studying recent wars so as to keep him from getting stuck in a critique of muddy present-day politics.

One gets the impression that Hart could happily discuss all the topics she has helped students explore over the years if allowed. But there is work to do, and the students she sees studying just outside her office window remind her that there is a limit to how much time she can spend reminiscing.

The Librarian's Advice
To a student seeking her help, Hart’s best advice is: “Don’t reinvent the wheel.” In other words, Hart recommends that students first consult secondary sources relevant to the research topic in question. If a critic has already published an article on the differences between various models of theology, for instance, Hart encourages the student to read that source before coming up with an angle for the assignment.

**Every Challenge Has Its Reward**

A head librarian at a high school faces some unique challenges. Teaching the students how to avoid unintentional plagiarism and possible copyright infringement—a problem all teachers and educational institution workers wrestle with—is one aspect of Hart’s job that can be hairy at times. It’s not that the students are likely to plagiarize; it’s simply necessary to always make sure they know how to cite their sources properly. Hart recognizes that the utilization of secondary sources is a research skill that the students will need to master for college and beyond.

Keeping the lines of communication open between teachers, students, and the librarian is an ever-present challenge she aspires to conquer. To illustrate her point, Hart relates that in some cases a student will come to her with no preparatory work done for a project. It is very important for a student to meet her halfway: if he comes to her office with nothing but an assignment sheet, he can expect only the advice to first brainstorm, then free-write, and finally come back to her when he knows what he wants to research. Even more rarely, a student seeks Hart’s help because his teacher’s expectations for a project haven’t been clearly outlined. In this case, Hart recommends that the student speak to the teacher.

These occupational challenges have been tempered over the years with the rewards Hart has enjoyed in directing the library: her connection to the school community and her devotion to the students dispel the occasional job-induced headache.

Hart says that the biggest reward for her has been “the people I have met, [including] the faculty, staff, students, parents,” in short, “everyone who has come through the doors of the library.”

“All have, in some way,” Hart explains, “changed or enhanced my world. I feel that I am the richer for having spent these years with such a diverse and rewarding group of individuals.”

**The MUHS Library in Transition**

After Hart retires, the library will make the transition from a librarian to a person who holds the title of media information specialist. Is there a difference, or is it merely semantic?

“Semantic? I think not,” Hart says. She explains that the librarian title should “encompass all aspects of work in the information field,” whereas a media information specialist may have extensive training in the more modern library resources and researching techniques.

But will Hart’s successor focus too much on these modern resources? Will the library begin turning out graduates knowing only how to find full-text articles on online databases like...

“My fear,” Hart says, “is one of promoting the selection of the print, electronic, or, if possible, a combination.”

Only time will tell if that will mean more than the enthusiasm of Kathleen...

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D1 West Allis
D2 Milton
D3 Fennimore
D4 West Salem
D5 Portage
D6 Oshkosh
D7 Green Bay
D8 Gillett
D9 Tomahawk
D10 Chippewa Falls
D11 Turtle Lake
D12 Ashland
online databases like *Academic Search Elite*?

"My fear," Hart says, "is that in relinquishing that title, the position will become one of promoting the primary use of electronic resources in lieu of encouraging the selection of the proper, most effective and efficient resource whether it is print, electronic, or, in some cases, a personal interview."

Only time will tell if the library's transition to a media information specialist will mean more than just a change in position title. One thing seems certain, however: if the new media information specialist has half the dedication and enthusiasm of Kathleen Hart, then the future students of MUHS are in good hands.

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**Discover Your WCTELA District.**

District boundaries correspond to Cooperative Educational Service Agency areas (CESAs). CESAs boundaries are determined by school district boundaries. If you require a more precise indication of your location, please visit the Department of Public Instruction Website for an alphabetical listing of school districts by CESAs.

Cooperative Educational Service Agencies (CESA)

01 West Allis
02 Milton
03 Fennimore
04 West Salem
05 Portage
06 Oshkosh
07 Green Bay
08 Gillett
09 Tomahawk
10 Chippewa Falls
11 Turtle Lake
12 Ashland
Academic Support Programs

The mission of Marquette University High School acknowledges the college-preparatory environment. Marquette High School works to prepare its graduates for "mastery in those academic disciplines required for admission and success at colleges and universities throughout the United States." In acknowledging this mission statement, the school also works to service the learning needs of its students by providing programs designed to assist and support those needs.

The STAR program was established in 1998 to help freshmen acclimate themselves to the college preparatory environment. Students are identified following the successful completion of the MUHS summer school program as a condition for admission. These students are then scheduled in the STAR program. The intent is academic support not remedial learning. The goal is to offer more individualized attention to students identified through entrance scores and summer school performance.

It's About Numbers
--But Not Just Numbers
by Terry Kelly

Gaining admission to a highly selective college or to an extremely competitive college preparatory high school is frequently all about numbers. Whether those numbers are test scores or grades, admission offices around the country grapple with choosing which students should be admitted and which students will be turned away. Marquette University High School is an institution that continually faces this dilemma of deciding which students should be offered admission to its freshman class.

Annually, over 500 students test to gain admission to a freshman class that numbers approximately 280 students. Acceptances are usually offered to about 350 students. Director of Admissions Dan Quesnell uses a variety of data to come up with each year's new class, including a nationally standardized entrance exam, grade school records, recommendations from an applicant's grade school teachers, and additional test scores such as the Iowa Basics. However, since these applicants typically come from almost 120 different grade schools, Quesnell has to look beyond the numbers.

Summer Support for New Students

In some cases, students are brought in for personal interviews, some are placed on a "waiting list" so that their records may be reviewed more intently, while others, usually about 75 students, are required to attend a six-week summer session at which students take classes in mathematics, reading, composition, science and theology.

The Next Step: The STAR Program

Although this is an involved process, Marquette High wants to make sure that each student can be successful in a very challenging and fast-paced environment. Normally, a freshman class will retain well over 90% of its members, but...
the school not only wanted to increase its level of retention, but it also hoped
to improve the level of student achievement. Therefore, almost ten years ago
it began an effort known as the STAR Program, an acronym which stands for
"Students at Risk." The program was designed to serve students whose scores
and records, although solid enough to earn admission, indicated that they might
struggle at the outset of high school. Rather than have these students start off "in
the hole," the school developed a program which both monitored and assisted
these identified students from the outset of their freshman year (instead of wait-
ing to see if they were experiencing academic difficulties).

The STAR Curriculum

Each year 30 students are selected for this program based on their admissions
data and summer school performances. Their schedules are arranged so that they
are divided into two sections of 15 students each which are dove-tailed with one
another for their English and social studies classes. In addition, all 30 students
are placed in a study hall together, which is proctored by their English and
social studies teachers as well as two mathematics teachers who meet with each
student as needed. The students are mainstreamed with their fellow classmates
for their mathematics, world language, theology, and science classes to avoid the
negative impacts that could result from a totally tracked schedule.

While students are taught by the same English and social studies teachers, their
progress in these reading intensive courses can be constantly monitored, special
attention can be given to the development of composition skills, and strate-
gies for dealing with an individual student’s weaknesses can be implemented.
The curriculum in the STAR English and social studies courses parallels that
which is followed in other freshman classes, but it is covered at a slightly slower
pace. Since these two teachers also work with the students during an assigned
study hall, the teachers are also able to assist students with assignments in other
classes. The math tutors work with students in groups, thus providing consistent
reinforcement of the skills taught in each particular class.

Results?

The results of this program for its first nine years have
been very encouraging. Traditionally, the students who
matched the profile of the students who are chosen for
the STAR group would account for almost 75% of the
students who at the end of their freshman or sophomore
year are dismissed for academic reasons, usually 15
students. Now, it is rare for more than 2 of the STAR
students to be dismissed, and it is not uncommon for
three or four of the members of the STAR group to earn
a place on the honor roll (at least a 3.2 GPA). Beginning
with their sophomore year, all members of the STAR
group are mainstreamed for all of their classes, and up
to this point there has not been a significant difference
in their academic performances compared to the rest of
their class.

Obviously, numbers strongly influence the STAR pro-
gram at Marquette High, but it is the focus and atten-
tion given to each individual student that has made the
program so successful. The STAR program is not just
numbers – it is people.
Alumni Service Corps

The Alumni Service Corps (ASC) is a volunteer program that allows MUHS alumni to experience high school teaching in the framework of the Jesuit commitment to service.

Individuals accepted into the program are asked to make a commitment of total involvement in the Marquette Community for a period of one school year. Each participant will be required to teach a minimum of one section (20-25 students) in a subject area in which he is determined to be qualified. Furthermore, he will be asked to offer assistance in other areas of school life (coaching, academic support, recruitment, pastoral programs, proctoring). Participants are mentored throughout the school year in the areas of academic involvement, extra curricular participation and community development.

The author of the next piece, Ben Krahn, is a member of the Alumni Service Corps at Marquette High School.

“What Do Students Truly Need to Know?”
by Benjamin Krahn

There’s a cliché which says that one must first experience the bad in order to appreciate the good. It took pop cultural icon and Tonight Show host Jay Leno for me to realize that writing is no exception to this archetypal tenet: It often takes hearing bad writing to value the good writing that does indeed exist.

Inspired by Late Night

And so it was quite fortuitous that I was watching NBC’s Tonight Show the summer preceding my first year of teaching English at Marquette University High School in Milwaukee. Lesson plans and curricula and syllabi haunted me as I wavered back and forth among the many novels, poems, grammar and writing lessons, films, essays, short stories and other materials from which I would select my final syllabus. Planning a course, while fun, is not an easy undertaking. Watching and laughing at Leno’s monologue on that particular night, but always unconsciously struggling throughout this night and many others to design the perfect course for my students, I suddenly stopped all thought and action as Leno, before going to commercial break, introduced the next segment of his show as “Real SAT Essays by high school students that you don’t want to miss.”

I immediately thought that this would be interesting. At that particular moment in time, little did I or Jay Leno know that his show would assist a high school English teacher in constructing part of his syllabus. When the show resumed, Jay announced that the essays he would soon read aloud were actual and genuine responses by American high school students to actual and genuine SAT Essay questions.

It was hard to laugh at students produced: would signify that the mind is. We often use the power of laughter for, among others, the form of a sales pitch. Students were in the room as Jay Leno read their work. I wondered: “Would this be something that my students would do with it. And why not?”

Turning off the televisions, I asked my students to bring the categories of reading material that they would be allowed to use as references in their quick-witted and maybe even literary SAT essays for the final exam. Many of us are thinking of the exam. This is what Jay Leno jokingly referred to as “writing by merit” – the student is allowed to write about a topic that he knows well, an area that he has studied. I allow my students to choose their own topics, which often leads to a battle.

Core Values in Writing

But I had another reason for thinking about educational age where strife over what constitutes the product of this line. I often reflect on my own, “What do I want students to write?”

The Writing of Students

While Jay Leno’s writing exercise prompts students to consider rhetorical questions, which are the ones that often lead to meaningful, thought-provoking responses.

“Which molders our culture?”

“Are we motivated by taste or mere convenience?”

Additionally, the American high school that takes away from students what they are exposed to different points of view is often a big part of the curriculum. This type of writing becomes especially important if we were to have a Western Front.

It was a serendipitous moment for the resourceful teacher to find that they have
It was hard to laugh at the horrendous writing that some of these high school students produced. To me, as a future educator and teacher of writing, to laugh would signify that this was indeed some sort of comical punch line, much like, say, Seinfeld or The Simpsons. But education is no joke, and it pains me that we often use the poorly educated as the butt of our jokes. I could not join in the multitude of laughter that ensued from the audience; my own inner laughter took on the form of a scowl as I shook my head in disgust over the shoddy writing of students in our American school system.

I wondered: “Would my students write like that?” Frankly, not if I had anything to do with it. And this is how Jay Leno helped me create what would account for 10% of my course’s grade assessment.

Turning off the television, I gathered my notebook – pages of notes, ideas and materials for teaching – and wrote: “In-class SAT essays once a week.” Added to the categories of writing, exams, quizzes, homework, and class participation would be an in-class writing exercise where students would have 30 minutes – in a computer lab – to respond to a particular question of my choosing.

Many of us are thrown into situations without experience or adequate preparation. And this is precisely my own explanation for why the SAT responses that Jay Leno jokingly read aloud were so deprived of literary grace, explanation, or merit – the students had never been held to task or asked or prepared to write a quick-witted and immediate response to such quirky questions. I would not allow Jay Leno to make a mockery out of my students’ writing, nor would I allow my students to enter the SAT without the proper ammunition to succeed in battle.

Core Values in Writing Education

But I had another motive in mind in assigning this weekly task. We live in an educational age where curriculum standards are constantly being challenged, where strife over what constitutes “Core” content arises. I am an unambiguous product of this line of thinking, for, when devising a lesson plan, I always ask myself, “What do students truly need to know?” That said, the SAT in-class writing exercise performs a multiple function. It asks students to respond to rhetorical questions that are central to everyday existence, that are archetypal, and thus fun to write:

"Which molds the human being better, formal or experiential education?"
"Are we motivated to achieve by money and fame or by self-satisfaction?"

Additionally, the assignment calls for a type of writing that transcends the typical academic, literary essay: basic interpretation and analysis. I’m part of the school that thinks that too much academic, scholarly and university-type writing takes away from practical, everyday writing, and I wanted my students to be exposed to a different form of writing – in effect, “real” writing. At the same time, this type of writing was a treat to read and grade for the same reason: I did not receive the same trite, banal responses that I ordinarily would have received if I were to have assigned a paper on the topic of nationalism in All Quiet on the Western Front.

It was a serendipitous moment on that summer night, and I must thank Jay Leno for the resourceful demonstration. And as for my students: They may dislike the fact that they have to write an in-class essay once a week, but they’ll thank me
later. Their writing has no doubt improved. And, most importantly, they have acquired writers' ammunition. Much like a soldier prepared for battle, my students are equipped with a diverse spectrum of writing, be it writing for the business world (the business letter), literary analysis (interpretation), the prescriptive essay (persuasive), the descriptive piece (creative), among others.

“GENTLEMEN!” said Midori Snyder. “Can we have it quiet as we’re going to see a movie. Hero is a fantastic movie with trees and do battle just like a reporter. Nevertheless, there’s a fairly explicit sex scene.”

In twenty minutes the movie lights up, probably. She began asking questions with her insistent hands that had to do with the music, about the movie, about the last episode, about twenty years of what’s going on here? Midori Snyder asked, “Do you think the movie made sense?”

“What was going on?”

“Told me and then,” she said.

“My big job is to get the kids to talk. Don’t let them just accept the first what happens. After that, if a student asks questions for weeks of term, “I get fed up!” She tells them that. That scares them! They think they have to do a single spaced essay and only fifty percent. They think it’s all discussion. (No writing! Nah, I’m not going the sex scene!)”

(I also wondered if I should call my students as “gentlemen.”)

Midori the Author
Not many high school teachers lived in the big houses in N...
Visiting with Midori Snyder
by Dave Wood

Midori the Teacher

Midori Snyder’s class in Literature and the Visual Arts looked pretty much like any high school classroom. More than twenty faintly scruffy students filled the classroom in a ragged semicircle, bookbags slung here and there. But I knew something was different when a kid bumped past me and said “Excuse me.”

“GENTLEMEN!” said the slight woman who stood by the movie screen. “Let’s have it quiet as we watch the second part of Hero.”

*Hero* is a fantastical movie set in ancient China, in which warriors fly over trees and do battle in wondrous ways. Wondrous, but indecipherable to this old reporter. Nevertheless, the students hung in there, busily taking notes. During a fairly explicit sex scene, I heard no snickers, saw no ribs poked by neighbors. In twenty minutes the episode was over. Midori Snyder didn’t bother to turn the lights up, probably because it would take up too much time to flip the switch. She began asking questions immediately. Hands shot up all over the place, insistent hands that said “Call on me!”

Midori Snyder asked them tough questions about the colors used in the movie, about the music, about how mood was created and how the plot had progressed since the last episode. Answers were fired back with elan.

In twenty years of college teaching I had never seen anything like it. What was going on here? More incredible were the sensible answers they gave. Suddenly the movie made sense to me.

“What was going on in there?” I asked Snyder after class. “How do you get them to talk so much and so enthusiastically?”

She told me and the scales fell from my eyes.

“My big job is to get these students to recognize their own investigative skills. I don’t let them just sit there.” She tells me that she makes it clear from the first what is happening in the plot. After that, the discussion turns to technique. After that, if a student doesn’t talk and contribute to class for the first three weeks of term, “I go and talk to them, personally.”

She tells them that 50 percent of their grade will come from class discussion. That scares them! How can they manage? By writing and turning a one-page single spaced essay on every work they see or read, which accounts for the other fifty percent. They are also required to annotate these little essays based on class discussion. (No wonder they were taking notes through the whole film, including the sex scene!) “I give no exams and just hope they ingest what they see.”

(I also wondered if I had been better off when I was a teacher if I had addressed my students as “gentlemen” and “ladies” rather than, “Hey, you! Listen up!”

Midori the Author

Not many high school English teachers double as novelists published by one of the big houses in New York City. But Midori Snyder does. She began publish-
ing novels while bringing up her children. When they were ready to fly the coop
four years ago, Snyder began teaching at MUHS, where her husband Stephen
Haessler had taught for many years.

She’s published eight books so far, many of which will soon be re-issued in
paperback editions by Viking (“I’m very big in France,” she jokes). One such
book is The Innamorati (Tor Books, 1998), an historical fantasy set in Renais-
sance Venice. Here’s how it begins:

“The morning sun rose above the edge of a quiet green sea. Bright rays
of light speared the waters of the laguna and transformed the canals of
Venice into ribbons of flame. Burnished water splashed over the mossy
walls of the canals, scattering droplets the size of sequins. A golden
tide sluiced across the Piazzetta de San Marco and lapped at the white
and pink marble columns of the ducal palace. . . .”

(For a review of this novel, see UW-River Falls student Katrina Styx’s piece fol-
lowing this article.)

“Wow!” I said to Snyder, during her break from the classroom. “Your creative
writing course must be a knockout, as you share your writing experiences . . . .”

“I don’t teach a course in creative writing.”

“Really!? ”

“No, I try to keep my teaching and my writing separate. And grading creative
writing assignments is very difficult, hard for the teacher and for the student.
You know, if you give a student a ‘C’ or a ‘B’ on a term paper, that’s one thing;
putting a grade like that on a short story or a poem the student has invested lots
of emotion in is a totally different thing. It hurts too much.”

It seems a shame she can’t make some use of her double life.

“Oh, but I do. I teach a course in short fiction and each semester I have the
students write a short story. And in any literature course I teach, I tend to be very
old fashioned, sort of like the New Critics. I do not stress theme over technique.
As a writer I try to impart to students what it takes to put a story together, so my
writing plays a part in all my courses.”

Lots of English teachers around the state would undoubtedly like to publish their
own creative efforts. As a full-time teacher Snyder has a very full plate with-
out a second career. What would she tell aspiring writers to help them live the
double life she does?

1) “I get up between 4 and 5:30 every day and write. Write every day,
even if it’s for only 20 minutes. That helps you keep a thread going.”

2) “If you want to write a novel, write one. Don’t write a short story
because it’s shorter. It’s a different genre and it probably won’t work
out.”

3) “Use your summers. I can hardly wait until summer when I really
get a lot done. Because I’ve written every day during school, my writ-
ing ‘chops’ are in shape.”

4) “Learn about publishing. Read Writer’s Market and other publica-

These guidelines must come from class, she told me her next
months.

Dave Wood taught for the
the Minneapolis Star Tribune

Get to Know
Committee

Standing Committee Chair
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DPI Liaison: Gerber
Affiliate Liaison to
Intellectual Freedom
Video Productions
Archivist: Helen D. 

Publication Editors
Update Editor: Ron
Wisconsin English
Falls

WCTELA Conferences
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revens Point
Wisconsin Confer-
of Menomonee Falls

NCTE Award State Co-
Program to recognize
Hoppe, Bonduel H.
Promising Young
Achievement Award
School
tions. Be sure to check on submission guidelines and what audience
the publishers are aiming at. And attend writers' conferences. I got my
start by attending a World Fantasy convention. I went there cold. An
editor asked me if I had a manuscript. I didn't but I said I did. The edi-
tor told me to send it to her. I quickly wrote a 45,000-word piece, sent
it in. She wrote back and told me to flesh it out to 85,000 words. I did
and and it was published!"

These guidelines must work for Midori Snyder. Before she ran off to her next
class, she told me her next book from Tor, Three Sisters, will be out in 18
months.

*Dave Wood taught for twenty years before becoming book review editor of
the Minneapolis Star Tribune and vice-president of The National Book Critics
Circle.*

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Review of M. Snyder's *The Innamorati*  
by Katrina Styx

*The Innamorati*, an historical fantasy by Midori Snyder, follows the footsteps of eleven pilgrims across Renaissance Italy and through the great maze of the city Labirinto. Five come to lose their curses in the ever-changing twists and turns: Anna Forsetti, the greatest mask-maker in Venice, haunted by her past, is prevented by her curse from making her masks. Fabrizio, an aspiring actor in a traveling troupe of comedians, is cursed with his father’s stutter. Erminia, an exiled and silenced siren, seeks to redeem herself to the head of Orpheus, who dealt the punishment. Simonetta, a prostitute mourning the murder of her husband and children, searches for her lost youth and happiness. Don Gianlucca, an immoral priest, longs to rid himself of the guilt given to him by a dead lover. These five, joined with a daughter, a swordsman, a beggar, a thief, a lover, a poet, and a curse made flesh, travel the paths of the mysterious and enchanting maze to find peace, love, and a place where they belong.

Within her fascinating creation, Snyder primarily addresses the theme of deception, with much of the story built around acting and the masks that the actors of that period used. Every mask is symbolic both of the deception each character hides behind as well as the roles each pilgrim plays. There is Il Capitano, the warrior braggart; Arlecchino, the fool; Il Dottore, the lawyer; Pantalone, the miser; the satyr; the nymph; the ingénue; and Innamorata, the unmasked lover. As the pilgrims begin to understand their roles, they also begin to see the method by which they can let go of their masks.

Sadly, while the rest of the book is beautifully crafted, the ending is somewhat clichéd. Its fairy-tale feel disconnects it from the vivid real-life detail of the beginning and middle that colors the story and inspires the reader to search out his own mask. It drops the link between fantasy and reality that had been so expertly established.

But even with a less-than life-like conclusion, *The Innamorati* is a masterpiece. Midori Snyder takes the pilgrimage and variance of afflicted characters from Chaucer’s *Canterbury Tales*, wraps it in the comedy and drama of Shakespeare, and displays it with the readability and enjoyment of J.K. Rowling’s *Harry Potter*. She combines just enough elements of literature to impress meaning on her readers, but still is able to write an enchanting tale that can be read simply for pleasure’s sake.

Although Snyder’s writing is easy and comfortable to read, it is not designed for younger readers. Immorality in all forms plays a major role in the story, and Snyder’s portrayal of the time paints an extremely crude picture of humanity that the immature would be hard-pressed to understand. But to the reality-conscious adult, these elements can teach lessons such as: too much of a good thing can be deadly, honor cannot be found solely in the defeat of one’s enemies, and many others.

I can confidently say that in *The Innamorati*, Midori Snyder has found that balance between literature and entertainment that so many authors search for. Her writing is captivating and not overbearing, and her story constantly carries her readers through a thrilling current of love, hate, reality, and dreams. Her characters make you laugh and cry, and her lessons are timeless. This book is simultaneously enjoyable and thought-provoking. I couldn’t put it down!
Banned Books: Civics and Literature
by Michael Feely

The first time I walked into my "Banned Books" course two years ago, I knew there were going to be challenges. The challenges came in selecting works that would stimulate quality discussions and seeing that my students walked out on the last day feeling as though they had challenged their own beliefs.

I selected Fahrenheit 451, Slaughterhouse Five, Clockwork Orange, Lolita, The Color Purple and several contemporary short stories that walked a fine line of being useful in a classroom. For each of the novels, there are a variety of sources available concerning the censorship history. For the short stories, there is nothing available since many are written by minor authors or have not come under scrutiny in the Supreme Court. This is a nice mix.

It was late one night when the backbone of this course was solidified. I watched a few school board meetings on a local cable access channel and decided that through my course, I would offer the opportunity for the students to speak their minds to a mock school board.

The school board was voted into office by the class, given instructions for running "meetings" and allowed autonomy on decisions about whether a book and its message were deemed "good" or "bad". Each student in the class was given a profile including how much money he made, what kind of house he lived in, what his job was and family status. (I stole the profiles from Parker Brothers game of Life). In addition, I serve as the town mayor, making all final decisions on what the next step would be after the decision. Our fictitious high school and town is known as Pigskinuckle. Giving the class such an identity pleasantly spurred a sense of civic pride I had not planned on.

My students amazed me. Since starting the school board, there have been legal challenges to board decisions, respectful arguments between the "citizens," school board sponsored activities such as essay contests and dry cereal breakfasts and a community newsletter which includes minutes from each meeting.

We hold one school board meeting per book; however, we have had a few emergency meetings as issues arise during both small and large group discussions.

At the end of the course, students are asked to write a paper about the activities of each school board (there are two per semester — election day is fun to see which incumbents are unseated). In the paper, students are asked to define their standard of what is "good" literature and what is "bad" literature. What I find interesting and a mark of progress is that through these activities, the students will touch on areas of their own personal philosophy of literature that was previously untapped. They also consistently identify the challenge of working with other people who do not agree with them.

The challenges are new every semester, but the benefits make the challenge the reward.

If I can offer any further insight to the faithful readers of the Wisconsin English Journal, please contact me at feely@muhs.edu.
Building Bridges: Interdisciplinary Education
by Joe Cavanaugh

At Marquette University HS, the formation of a student’s character is guided by a description of what we would consider to be the ideal graduate at graduation. These “grad at grad” qualities are: Open to Growth, Intellectually Competent, Religious, Loving, and Committed to Justice. Throughout their four years at MUHS, the development of these five qualities are discussed both formally, through assemblies and morning announcements, and less formally, through the academic material and class discussions.

Similar to the idea of teaching writing across the disciplines, MUHS believes that every discipline in the school has a role to play in the development of the “grad at grad”. However, with lessons about these qualities being taught by 70 teachers in 8 different departments, it is difficult for an individual teacher to understand the overall nature of what the students are being taught. As a result, it is inevitable that potential connections between what a student is learning about these qualities in two separate classes are not explored.

This year, in an effort to facilitate these connections, MUHS offered a class called Committed to Justice. The course is interdisciplinary in nature. The goal of the course is to revisit the places where the topic of justice has come up in their history, political science, theology, psychology, biology and English classes in an effort to make connections across these areas. For example, a student may write on whether King Lear exhibits an Old or New Testament concept of justice. Or the class may discuss how the psychological models of conditioning match the American prison system. The result is an understanding of justice that is greater than the sum of all of the parts. Even though the class is not within the English department (in fact, it is not within any department), I asked to teach the class. The experience of teaching this class has taught me much about education in general. I have applied many of these lessons to the literature classes I teach.

Overall, I have been convinced of the value of interdisciplinary education. So much of the way a school is structured discourages interdisciplinary thinking. When the bell rings and a student transfers from an American History class to my American Literature class, the student switches to a new teacher, text, notebook, folder, and classroom. They potentially change their attitude about the class and their confidence in their ability as a student in that class. Unfortunately, they also seem to separate the knowledge they have gained in one class from the discussion in another. At MUHS, our sophomores read Huck Finn; by the time they read Twain’s novel, most have already learned about American Slavery in their American History class. However, in my five years of teaching the novel, I have yet to have a student bring up the Fugitive Slave Act as a reason why Huck and Jim are in danger.

Undoubtedly, with a teacher’s help, the students are quite capable of making these connections, but there are also many barriers to this happening. With full workloads and little planning time, it is difficult to stay aware of what material other departments are covering. Coordination is also a problem. How can I time the reading of The Great Gatsby so that the history classes have already discussed the roaring ‘20s? I read Tim O’Brien’s The Things They Carried, but most of the US History classes never make it to the Vietnam War.

In an ideal teaching environment, these barriers would not exist. But, the Committed to Justice class has brought home the fact that starting thing out by teaching students lessons on their own is to use lessons on their own. With almost all the material is easily available online, students see that the materials are accessible. When a student sees the material as in Romanticism, for example, the result of a specific work in English literature, students find the literature is applicable to the artwork and they become more engaged in the literature. This is not always the case. It has given students an appreciation for the literature they bring with them to their classes, but it doesn’t always help them make the connections they bring with them to their classes.

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In an ideal teaching environment, the resources and time needed to overcome these barriers would be available. However, my experiences in the Committed to Justice class have motivated me to stop waiting for a structural change and start doing little things in the classroom. One practice that I have found helpful is to use lessons on American Visual Art to supplement my American Literature classes. With almost every major work of American Art available on-line, the material is easily available. One advantage of using visual art is that it helps the students see that the literary periods we are discussing do not occur in a vacuum. When a student sees the same values in Fredrick Church's landscape paintings as in Romantic literature, the student is more ready to see how both were the result of a specific context the artists shared. Another advantage is that the students find the language and tools they have been using to investigate literature are applicable to the investigation of a painting. When I first exposed the students to artwork, they instinctively treated it as a separate unit. With practice, they became more comfortable jumping back and forth between the painting and the literature. This is the greatest advantage of using artwork in the classroom. It has given students practice in including two disciplines in the same thought. Once they become more comfortable with this, they do on their own what I am less able to help them with. When the bell rings and they transition to my class, they bring with them ideas from their other classes that enrich our discussion of literature.

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The Human Condition Enters; We Create It as We Speak of It
by Ginny (Virginia) Schauble

Scene: Computer lab, the last day of classes before Spring Break. Freshmen working against time in order to finish a formal essay project on a poem (or two or three) which reference(s) The Odyssey of Homer as their final statement on the epic.

Specs:
15 vocab words,
paragraphs 12-15 sentences,
formal syntax,
MLA Work Cited, properly formatted.

Sound: 27 students; a total of 54 hands on keyboards gives off a vibe like cicadas on a hot day.

Enter Left: Older brother – of one student madly getting his MLA ducks in a row – who is now on the brink of law school studies and, by the grace of God, home – as it seems – for the purpose of delivering his younger brother’s essay file, unbotched, forgotten at home. Older brother, quickly dubbed “Hermes” by lucky younger brother’s classmates, gives me bear hug and, free of nostalgia, goes on about what he, even now, relies on from our American Lit classes “of old.”

Camera lens pulls back to show one moment in two separate lives: the perspective of tadpole and matured outcome, neither better than the other. Despite the ominous reality of the bell ringing and their final versions of the epic’s impact being submitted in hard copy, this is simply a moment among many wherein skills and intents, aspirations and the eloquence of the young comes to a point of fulfillment with a mix of beautiful clumsiness, angst and grace.

I, too, am learning that however “slick” the lesson plans or the students, all turns to an empty clanging of competition or egotism if I lose focus, perspective. I work with young people who are on their way toward – hopefully – fulfilled and constructive lives. Whether with freshmen or with uppersmen in elective classes like "ExposWriting” or "Poetry as Power,” or working with the staff of Signatures, the student literary & arts magazine, my convictions and attitudes can either encourage or scotch the works. Working with students is never about control. Rather, it’s about the organic mix of modeling and cooperation, of nurturing empowerment and challenging toward a high standard; it’s about the cooperation and conversation that evolves into critical thinking. It’s about the tight-wire balance of daily consistency and firmness in that evolution, so that mere repetition and stagnancy do not bring the curse of boredom into the circle.

Talk, then, becomes hugely important. Talk begins with my dropping questions and continues with one student’s courage to begin an idea or insight that perhaps he cannot “finish” yet which explodes a seed in a classmate’s mind until no wallflowers remain because defensiveness loses its value. Insight to insight, they pass the torch, they model for each other until they – not I – stand in the spotlight. Mine is to keep the young mind wrestling with the text: with how it has been made as much as with the subject matter it renders; with its essential ambiguities and the human articulation of these realities we refer to so neatly as the human condition. Talk in the form of humor and curiosity (sarcasm can

wait outside the classroom and bring with them to the angell’s of wit and one idea at a time, which is our. That solo flight of terms of understandi...tion enters the circle,

My domestic analogy of the ingredients could be the oil, a little salt, a lot of spice, a soup that has cooked and cured in a home: the dynamics of academics: the dynamics of effects on students, the dynamics of teacher...resumes, even a little... mine is to keep insiste...ing about prioritizing the final product remains the magazine, it’s the...ty, conversation mixture in... they pass the torch to...should be no other way.

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wait outside the classroom door) becomes the finest prewriting impetus students bring with them to the empty page or screen. Then the necessary wrestling with the angel(s) of wit and logic and clarity occurs as the student works to express, one idea at a time, what has been exploding simultaneously on the text(s) before us. That solo flight of writing becomes ultimate in terms of self-knowledge, in terms of understanding the visibles and the invisibles of life. The human condition enters the circle; we create it as we speak of it.

My domestic analogy: I am an avid “bean maker” who uses no recipes. The ingredients could be no simpler: beans – turtle or pinto – garlic, onions, olive oil, a little salt, a lot of pepper, cumin, sometimes a sweet curry. Once the pot has cooked and cured, a peculiarly beautiful aroma remains for days. Shift to academics: the dynamics are analogous; only the details differ. Hopefully, the effects on students, the consequences and contingencies, remain at least as long!

I go to my email before I sit to write this. I find a list of messages to and from the Signatures staff – stating the work accomplished, yet to do, queries for future work sessions, even an encouraging message from one student in California with word of when he’ll be back and available to help the weekend before classes resume. They need me and they don’t. The excellence and the labor is theirs. Mine is to keep insisting on their finest qualities, to encourage and keep reminding about prioritizing tasks and the short-term goals of each work session. The final product remains theirs, the pride and success of it, all theirs. The essay or the magazine, it’s the same: individuals enter into and are engaged by community, conversation mixes and enhances contemplation. Inheritance and birthright, they pass the torch to one another and down through the years. In my book, it should be no other way.

Join the many Wisconsin English teachers who know the benefits of WCTELA Membership

Publications
* Wisconsin English Journal and WCTELA newsletters
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Dismantling Notions of "the Other" Early
by Stephanie M. Stella

During my graduate studies, I came to understand the "other" as any voice, either authorial or narrative, that emerges from some place different than that of the traditional Western voice; and the Western voice as that of the European, or the European settler. What concerned my colleagues and me, as scholars being educationally nurtured within institutions advocating diversity and justice for all, is the often demeaning, objectified, or silenced characterization of non-Western individuals in Western literature and the space on curricula allotted to non-Western writers (or lack thereof). Furthermore, the concept of the "other" never seemed to fit neatly within the restrictive confines of theory or academia and seeped into numerous and diverse discussions, disciplines, and experiences.

While graduate school provided my first formal introduction to the concept of the "other," my investment in the topic stems from my experience as a Peace Corps volunteer on the island of St. Lucia in the West Indies. For two years I submerged myself within a community of voices to which I had never before been exposed. I became intimately connected to this "other" life. The children in my Creole/English classroom, a classroom rooted in European colonial education, told me their Anansi folktales and I read Derek Walcott’s Omeros for the first time. I questioned why I had never heard these voices in my literature classes, especially since they knew so much about my cultural voice. I questioned the tension associated with my presence and voice; why some natives, without knowing me, silently revered me, while others treated me with disdain. I questioned privilege and why one voice or type of experience seemed more highly valued than an "other." I committed myself to carrying these questions, experiences, and voices home with me.

This personal commitment became my greatest challenge when I accepted my position at Marquette University High School. "How do I implement my experiences and beliefs into a traditional culture and classroom?" I asked myself. As I reflected, shaped, and created syllabi, I strived to do away with any central cultural voice and instead placed individuals from opposite ends of the globe side by side: Norwegian writer Roy Jacobsen is followed by South African author Zoe Wicomb; African American Toni Cade Bambara is placed beside Colombian Gabriel Garcia Marquez. In this way universal topics, such as encountering difference, coming of age, or experiencing disillusionment in the adult world, are studied from multiple cultural perspectives; and while distinctions between voices are appreciated and explored, at the heart of our class discussions are similarities of emotion, celebration, and the human experience.

Some students do resist this non-traditional approach and the non-traditional literature. Reading Jamaica Kincaid’s "Girl," for instance, ignites complaints about the language, the perceived lack of structure, and the perceived lack of plot. Students question, "What’s the point?" And therein lies the point. Using this question as the backbone of their research, I have students explore the history of Jamaica Kincaid, the history of Antigua, the history of black and female cultures in the West Indies, the significance of benna and the Creole language. Only after this research do we enter an in-depth discussion on Kincaid’s language, the perceived lack of structure, and the perceived lack of plot. Finally, because I also want the students to connect to the seemingly different narrator,
they write their own, personalized versions. The result is a closer understanding of the “other,” and a sense that I am teaching with integrity.

Literary critic Shaobo Xie writes,

“Every time consciousness breaks with its past, it renews itself through identifying with an ‘other’s’ thought. To speak from other’s thought is to redefine and renarrativize the world.”

Perhaps by creating a curriculum in which there are no central or peripheral voices, students might break from a past that values one experience over those of others. Perhaps students’ consciousness will be raised as they move closer to identifying their own thoughts and emotions with those of unlikely others. And perhaps together we will work to redefine and renarrativize so that the future might hold justice for all, rather than for the few and for the privileged.

Works Cited

The Rules of Pointing and Retrieving
by Joe Costa

At Marquette High, I am granted the flexibility to use methods of teaching that suit my philosophy of reading and writing, a philosophy inextricably linked to my personality.

Here's my method.

Kindergarten ended in the spring, and my father brought home this pup, a wobbly brown-spotted springer that, with training, would flush game birds hiding in brush and tall grass. Throughout the summer, my father prepared the pup for the fall hunting season — voice commands, hand signals, technique, the rules of pointing and retrieving. My father’s shrill two-fingered whistling demanded discipline, control; there would be no premature bird risings too far from shotgun range.

Literature is allied with real human experience. Textual criticism, an exercise of the intellect, needs the creative accompaniment of living emotional connection and response.

By October, I had mastered first grade, the single-file lines and hand-raising, Pooh’s love for Tigger in spite of the crazed bouncing. But I was still too young to hunt, and the springer had graduated to the real thing, birds in the wild, on the wing, thundering shotguns, soft-feathered gatherings. At home, I imagined my pup nosing out the silent wily pheasants and leaping to snag descending bodies from the air. Stuck hand-holding across streets and obeying boundaries, I craved what the pup possessed: an opportunity to shine, to dart across open fields and hold the spoils still twitching in my jaws.

Confused by language, cryptic imagery or eccentric structure, students ask questions: “What do the clouds represent? What does the red shoe symbolize? What does this mean?” Students discover meaning through knowledge of literary construction and proficiency with language. But this is not enough. A wholly technical, formulaic approach to teaching literature creates fragmentation, a disconnection with the living, breathing, running, leaping, tail-wagging matter of art.

In mid-November, the springer and my father were hunting far from home; I remained behind in first grade, despondent and abandoned. At story time, Sister Esther didn’t take Pooh off the shelf. Instead she said we were to have a discussion about our blossoming futures. “What do you want to be when you grow up?” she asked. Yes! I was ready, an opportunity to show my stuff, to set in motion the life I wanted to live.

“Firefighter like my dad,” some kid said.
“A doctor.”
“A hair-cutter.”
“A cook.”
“You mean a chef?”
“Yeah. A chef.”

“Your turn Joey,” Sister said.

Get to Know

President: Jan
First Vice Pres: Pat
Second Vice Pres: Liz
Director at Large: Tom
Secretary: Jan
Treasurer: Pat
Trustee: Jan
Convention Manager: Pat
Keshena
A long, contemplative breath, and then, “I want to be a puppy, a springer with brown spots, and I want to hunt birds.”

“Impossible,” Sister explained. Stuck in this human form, bound by genetics, I couldn’t hunt on four legs or howl on lonely nights. I had to pick a job, a profession; I would have to make a “living.”

When do we realize that possibility is limited, that the world is not completely open to our whims and interpretations? That mysteries are solved? Tragically, this happens too often in schools. Given formulas and definitions, students focus on the right answers, the single file lines, the rules of pointing and retrieving. Pups can’t be pups.

As a teacher, I provide students with opportunities to explore the multiplicity of literature. I ask them to speak and write not only about point of view and metaphor and setting and all the rest of it, but also about themselves, their memories and experiences and rituals in order to nose out their own identities from the tangled academic brush.

In winter, the pup, having grown almost to full-dog status, craved the outdoors. A jingle of the dog-tagged collar sent him into wild prancing. A tennis ball, a Frisbee, sticks – the springer sprinted and leapt for each, no preferences, no limitations. Pure bliss in the simple act of living by instinct.

I struggle to call myself a teacher. Doesn’t seem to fit what I do each day at Marquette High. Can anyone really teach literature? Provide formulas to interpret Faulkner or Woolf? Instead, I focus on instincts. I throw tennis balls and urge the students to give chase, to love and fear and grieve and live within the pages of a novel and to wallow in the bittersweet turning of the final page. For me, teaching literature is not pointing and retrieving, but a mad leap to catch what is elemental in this two-legged humanity.

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Outstanding Student Teacher Awards
Each year WCTELA selects two senior English education students to receive the Outstanding Student Teacher Award. Each institution can nominate one candidate. Nominees should have a strong commitment to teaching, show leadership in and out of the classroom, possess strong communication skills, maintain rapport with students, and develop effective professional relationships with colleagues.

Nancy Hoefs Memorial Award for the Outstanding First-Year Teacher
This award recognizes an outstanding first-year teacher of the English language arts. Full-time teachers in their first permanent position are eligible to be nominated. Criteria for selection include the following:
1. Contribution to the teaching of English language arts. This contribution may include, but is not limited to, innovative teaching techniques, curriculum development in literature, reading, writing, speaking, listening, or media study; or participating in faculty activities related to English.
2. Professional commitment. Nominees should have a strong interest in professional development. Indicators of this interest might include membership in professional organizations such as WCTELA, NCTE, WSRA, WAMLE, IRA, WCA, etc.
3. Staff and community relations. Nominees should have a good relationship with parents and others in the community and should have demonstrated potential for leadership among colleagues.

Lee Burress Intellectual Freedom Award
WCTELA wishes to once again honor an educator with the Lee Burress Intellectual Freedom Award at the Spring Conference. This award recognizes an educator who has been an advocate for expression free from censorship and for humane communication. It is designed to acknowledge the work done by educators who teach and exalt the tenets of free speech and who urge responsible, humane and caring communication. Such work may be demonstrated in particular lessons, special projects and the ongoing style and goals set by an educator. It was begun in honor of Lee Burress, a long time educator at UW-Stevens Point, who exemplified these attributes in his life as well as his teaching.

NCTE’s Student Awards
WCTELA recognizes the Wisconsin winners of NCTE’s student awards each year at its annual convention. The awards include
- NCTE Promising Young Writers Award for eighth-grade students.
  State Coordinator: JoAnne Katzmarek, UW-Stevens Point
  N4136 County FF
  Hancock, WI 54943

- Achievement Award in Writing for students in eleventh grade.
  State Coordinator: Erin Olkowski, New Berlin West High School
  3438 N. Bremen St.
  Milwaukee, WI 53212

- NCTE Program to Recognize Excellence in Student Literary Magazines
  State Coordinator: Mary Hoppe, Bonduel High School

Instructions available at the NCTE web site identify the materials to be sent to the state coordinator for each award as well as deadlines.

Experiments
I sat in the seventh row. The first words of The Comedy of Errors that were spoken were “I didn’t stop them, because I didn’t understand the play” and I didn’t stop them, because I didn’t figure out this play, which seems to be set in a graveyard. The each of the charter members of “The Shakespeare Club. As I expected, after intermission, they talked about the performance, they even offered their opinion of the show.

Teaching Shakespeare: I was fortunate to teach an entire unit of William Shakespeare last year, having read each play, surveying the productions. I like the way which helps the students to understand an interpretation of the script. Students who sign up for the class come into class with an expectation for their literary signature, will need to act in this manner, I reassured the students. When they can interpret the words and putting them in context of both the meaning of the messages. What does this performance techniques to enhance?

A. Reading and Listening speeches with a “Macbeth” that I encourage them for the reasons behind this requirement to me. Prior to reading about that Hotspur hand over a spleen, someone with a rage. I may take a step back to get several volunteers will be replaced, if necessary.

B. Choral/Interphonestrategies, very large groups represent the scene and have the role.
Experimenting with Shakespeare
by Ann Downey

I sat in the seventh row at the Milwaukee Shakespeare Company's production of *The Comedy of Errors*. During the first couple of scenes, the students in front of me whispered and leaned into each other, and generally looked perplexed. I didn't stop them, because they weren't being rude and they were trying to figure out this play, which they hadn't read. I knew that the quality of the writing and the immediacy of the performance would take over and they would "get it." How could I be so confident that an entire group of high school students would understand and pay attention? This was no ordinary group; these were charter members of "The Shakespearment," Marquette High School's Shakespeare Club. As I expected, by the time the first act was over, they were rapt. At intermission, they talked excitedly about the show and by the end of the performance, they even offered critiques.

Teaching Shakespeare at the high school level can be challenging, unless you are fortunate enough to teach students who choose to take the class. In "The Plays of William Shakespeare," we tackle five plays, learning the history surrounding each play, surveying their critical histories, and evaluating different professional productions. I like the students to learn the plays through short performances, which helps create the feel of the Bard's words. By "walking through" the plays, they can understand and appreciate them on many levels. Additionally, these performances give me the opportunity to assess their learning through their interpretation of the scenes.

Students who sign up for the junior-senior level "Plays of William Shakespeare" come into class with an interest in Shakespeare's works, or at least an appreciation for their literary significance. What they don't expect, however, is that they will need to act in this class. (I also teach the school's acting classes.) To allay their fears, I reassure them that I'm not interested in their abilities as performers. When they can interpret Shakespeare, translating his scenes into their own words and putting them in unique situations, they demonstrate understanding, both of the meaning of the play itself, and of the universality of the Bard's messages. What does this mean on a practical level? I employ a variety of performance techniques to enhance student understanding and appreciation.

A. Reading and Listening—Throughout the reading of each play, we break down speeches with the help of readers. For example, I'll assign a student to be "Macbeth for the day" and another to be Banquo. These students, with some direction from me, will read their lines while the rest of the class listens. I discourage them from following along in their books. I find that they pick up more of the nuances of the plays when they listen carefully to a reader. But this requires me to select readers carefully and direct them regarding meaning. Prior to reading Hotspur's vitriol-laden speech after Henry has demanded that Hotspur hang over his prisoners, I ask for a student who wants to vent a spleen, someone who can project bitterness and frustration to the point of rage. I may take a student aside and give him advice on the reading. I usually get several volunteers, but students know that they must read as directed or risk being replaced. I find that they enjoy being freed by me to really get into the piece.

B. Choral/Antiphonal Reading—At times, we will break sections up and have large groups represent particular characters. I'll cull the important lines from the scene and have the class read parts antiphonally or chorally. I'll stop read-
ers periodically during these first two techniques to ask and answer questions. These questions help the readers/performer to better interpret the lines.

C. Competitive Scenes – We will also have scene competitions, where small groups will present the same scene. Students use whatever props (hats, capes, glasses, etc.) I have on hand to help create their character. I find that this spirit of competition works very well with boys. Each group seeks to out-do the others.

D. Scenes for Performance – The most revealing activity, however, involves the preparation of scenes for performance. I select five scenes, one from each act, which are performed by small groups. They have several days to prepare their scenes and bring in whatever props they feel they need. My expectations for these scenes are fairly simple: they must apply all the rules of good public speaking; they must put Shakespeare’s words into their own words; they must invest their scenes with energy and enthusiasm. I have no expectation that these will be well acted – it is merely a bonus for me if they are. In the past, students have set *Macbeth* on a pirate ship, visited Prince Hamlet in the Old West, translated Falstaff and Hal into hip-hop.

Recently, I started the Shakespearean, with the intention of getting together a small group of Shakespeare enthusiasts to read additional works, see plays and hopefully, travel to England to visit Shakespeare sites. I never expected 75 young men to sign up. These students join me on their own time at local performances. They are filled with great ideas about future club activities. I believe this enthusiasm comes not only from their desire to be in a slightly unusual club, but also from their sense that to know Shakespeare is to be an educated man. The bottom line is that they think it’s cool to be able to understand Shakespeare and to make his works a part of their intellectual library. That’s why I was confident that my students would settle in to the performance of *The Comedy of Errors*, would promote the Shakespeare club, and would participate enthusiastically in class.

*Marquette University High School*