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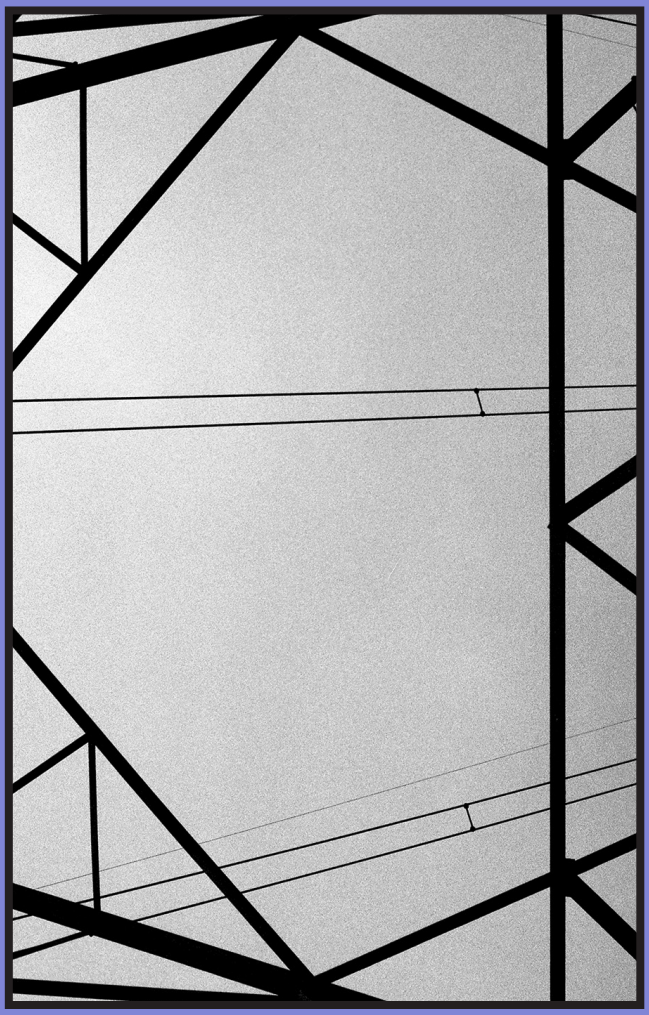

Illinois Association of Teachers of English

IATE is a professional organization for teachers of English/language arts. IATE publishes the *Illinois English Bulletin* and the *IATE Newsletter* and hosts an annual fall conference. IATE is organized by districts throughout the state, each district having a district leader and providing local activities to members throughout the year.

IATE also maintains standing committees that address a number of professional interests and works with other professional organizations to further the interests of teachers. Composed of nearly 1,000 teachers throughout the state, IATE provides a working network for the exchange of teaching tips, current research, and professional development as well as enduring friendships.

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Editor: Janice Neuleib
Publications Unit Director: Tara Reeser
Production Director and Proofreader: Steve Halle
Assistants: Caitlin Alvarez and Brian Hedgepeth
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Campus Box 4240
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JANICE NEULEIB

In this rich and full edition of the *Illinois English Bulletin*, a variety of voices address issues of teaching and learning. In addition, a literary critic and a short story writer introduce us to other worlds of thinking and being. To begin with, in "Promoting and Assessing Affective Learning in the General Education Classroom," Juliene Forrestal and Rebecca Harshman Belcher-Rankin argue for the assessment of attitudes and values as an important aspect of teaching. They give examples of this process, offering readers a beginning step toward this kind of evaluation. In "Electronic Reading and Paper Reading: Differentiated Reading Processes and Outcomes," Dorothy Mikuska, Marti Seaton, and Laura Broderick help us look at the brain as it processes both print text and electronic text. The two authors do not suggest one approach to reading over

the other but show the differences in how the two types of reading work.

In "'Students,' 'Attendees,' and Effective Teaching," Michael Reilly tells us his exciting experience of helping students see themselves as owners of their personal learning. Using an approach to critiquing the common core, Richard Hollinger, in "Common Core Standards: Consider This," questions a simplistic reading of the common core.

Taking another perspective on ways to involve students, Byung-In Seo in "This Is Who I Am: A Senior Portfolio Project" details methods for helping students learn through writing about themselves. Adding to the genre approach, J. D. and R. L. Simpson in "Form to Function: Academic Inquiry in the Multigenre Format" address the ways in which we formulate assignments for student writing. Finally, Michael Soares in "Curriculum for a Cause: Successes of Eco-conscious Curriculum Inside and Outside the English Classroom" adds to the ecological and environmental issues.

The penultimate offering in this issue gives us something a bit different: Adriana Gradea takes a critical approach to history in "Orla Crilly Speaks: Ireland's Journey through Liminality," and Mark Maxwell gives us yet another finalist short story from the Norman Mailer Awards, "Leslie & Lynette," a haunting short story based on mid-twentieth-century history.

As always, I thank Steve Halle, assistant director of the English Department's Publications Unit at ISU and his staff for their many contributions to this issue. Of course, I thank these authors for their wonderful work.

PROMOTING AND ASSESSING AFFECTIVE LEARNING IN THE GENERAL EDUCATION CLASSROOM

JULIENE FORRESTAL
REBECCA HARSHMAN BELCHER-RANKIN

In his January 2009 article in *The Chronicle of Higher Education*, Tim Clydesdale describes the millennial student as one who "appears polite and dutiful but who cares little about the course work, the larger questions it raises, or the value of living an examined life." Millennials are not willfully difficult, but they are certainly different from the generation of students that preceded them. The published research, even as it confirms that we are right in assuming that students will perform well academically, also confirms that we must continue to work for student engagement with positive affective goals.

In studies that examine what teaching methods work best with millennials, researchers like Christie Price, who

conducted a qualitative analysis of short essay responses from more than a hundred millennial learners, have found that "the most consistent theme present in the analysis of the millennial responses was they preferred a variety of teaching methods as opposed to a 'lecture only' format" and "had strongly negative perceptions of learning environments in which lecture was the only method used." One typical assertion by a millennial student in Price's study was "If you lecture all throughout the time, then we get bored. If you are constantly changing from lecture, to discussion, to group work, that helps a lot. It helps keep us awake and we learn more. Stuff gets into our head better" (5).

One goal, then, for our general education literature classes has been to supplement traditional instruction with student-centered instruction. Richard Felder and Rebecca Brent distinguish between the two by pointing out that "[i]n traditional instruction, the teacher's primary functions are lecturing, designing assignments and tests, and grading; in S[tudent] C[entered] I[nstruction], the teacher still has these functions but also provides students with opportunities to learn independently and from one another and coaches them in the skills they need to do so effectively." Felder and Brent, assert in another article that "[s]tudent-centered methods have repeatedly been shown to be superior to the traditional teacher-centered approach to instruction, a conclusion that applies" to cognitive learning as well as to the "formation of positive attitudes toward the subject being taught, or level of confidence in knowledge or skills."

Research shows that attitudes and values, the last two outcomes Felder lists, are particularly difficult to assess. But, as educator W. James Popham reminds us, "we measure what we treasure," and, if we believe that our students' attitudes affect their learning, he says,"we darn well ought to measure

them" (225). Indeed, if we "don't measure [our] students' affective status in a systematic fashion, [we are] far less likely to emphasize affect instructionally" (238).

Eileen J. Stenzel, in a 2006 study on retention of students in colleges and universities, hypothesizes that "the bias of the academy toward limiting our perception of academic readiness to the cognitive domain often blinds us to the significant impact of affective domain barriers to effective learning" (9). To address these affective barriers and provide a way to assess affective learning, Stenzel created a rubric for Bloom's five levels of the affective domain using descriptors for both learning behaviors and teaching behaviors. Although we aren't focused on retention in the university at large, we are focused on keeping those students in our classes, so her thoughts about the importance of engaging students and her descriptors of the affective domain also become important to us. We decided to adapt her rubric for our own use in measuring the engagement of our general education students and tracking their academic progress in conjunction with their level of engagement.

Our study was designed to measure how student-centered strategies affect student engagement and affective learning. These strategies included literature circles, creative projects (both group and individual), small group discussion, and reading journals. We hypothesized that these strategies would increase or maintain students' valuing of literature and their engagement in the course.

Instruments consisted of questionnaires to be administered at the beginning and at the end of the course, a checklist of classroom behaviors to be used during four observations by two research assistants at intervals throughout the semester, and checklists to evaluate students' reading journals and essay items on the final questionnaire. Both questionnaires

included demographic information and asked students to describe why they should be required to take general education literature and also to indicate how much they enjoyed and valued the subject matter of the course. Questionnaire two added a question about which activities they found most helpful in learning about literature. The observation checklist provided a measure of students' engagement as indicated by their classroom behaviors. Finally, the checklist for written responses assessed the presence of affective values.

Our subjects were 128 students enrolled in the six sections of general education literature during the Fall 2011 semester who consented to participate. The assistants conducted observations, marking behavior for each student every five minutes and noting every time a student commented in the classroom. Three reading journals were collected throughout the semester, and Questionnaire two was administered on the last instructional day. Data were gathered and analyzed at the beginning of the Spring 2012 semester.

Results and Discussion

Our analysis, while the results were often not statistically significant, still revealed some interesting aspects of our students. At the beginning of the course, students indicated that they thought general education literature would make them well rounded in the liberal arts, broaden their perspectives, give them skills they could use in the workplace, and make them aware of their place in our society. At the end of the course, students added to those ideas that they had become aware of other cultures and that they had found reading to be enjoyable.

Many of our students identified themselves as readers for entertainment, readers who get lost in a good story, or readers who like to read. Since one of our stated outcomes is

that students will learn to "appreciate literature because of its intrinsic values both to inform and to entertain," the fact that our students already enjoy literature makes our task easier. Also, such attitudes reassure us that students read for more than information. And, even though several students complained that they had little time to read for pleasure during the semester, fewer students identified themselves as disinterested or reluctant readers at the end of the course. Still, about 15% of our students identified themselves as being uninterested in imaginative literature, despite the teaching and learning strategies employed during the course of the semester. Also, our male students viewed drama more negatively at the end of the course than at the beginning.

Other questions posed to measure the higher levels of the affective domain, such as whether literature makes students change their thinking or behavior, had few positive responses. On the other hand, the many positive results for the questions that asked whether literature affirmed or challenged beliefs or helped them change opinions about others indicate that students are aware of the power of literature to motivate them.

At the end of the semester, students were asked to identify anything that they had learned during the course that had changed how they read imaginative literature. Although very few students identified specific classroom activities that had changed their reading, they listed a few common skills, such as reading more carefully, reading a selection more than one time, listening to lectures, and incorporating ideas that emerged during whole-class discussions.

Students were also asked to identify most helpful and least helpful classroom activities in changing them as readers. According to students' explanations, they enjoyed lecture and whole-class discussions guided by the professor because they

were not sure of their own interpretations. These discussions and lectures solidified their understanding. We had expected that students would like the independence of working in small discussion groups; however, this activity received few positive responses, possibly indicating the insecurity students feel about their own and their peers' abilities to interpret literature. Being frustrated with peers who had not done the reading or who did not contribute much to the discussion seemed to be another factor in their dislike of small discussion groups.

Although our finding seems to contradict Price's research, we should point out that none of the professors lectured to the exclusion of student-centered instruction. In addition, activities such as literature circles in which students were allowed to choose a novel and then discuss it in small groups, learning from each other, were very popular. This, of course, is exactly the kind of response we would hope to obtain in a student-centered environment.

Students, on the whole, did not think they learned from group exercises and creative projects: they felt these were added to the curriculum as "gimme" points and were too much like middle school activities. Since all of the professors use rubrics that enforce reflection about the creation of the project, we were surprised that students did not value these activities, which were added to the curriculum to accommodate diverse learning styles. However, a 2008 study by Pashler et al. called "Learning Styles: Concepts and Evidence" indicates that for any given lesson, "one instructional technique turns out to be optimal for all groups of students, even though students with certain learning styles may not love that technique"; therefore, instructors should be more concerned about "matching their instruction to the content they are teaching" (qtd. in Glenn). Perhaps the negative responses of

our students say more about their learning style preferences than about the value of the activity.

In addition to the questionnaires, our observers used a checklist that included non-engaged indicators such as sleeping, texting, not having classroom materials, not participating in discussion, and not indicating by face and body that the student was engaged. The engaged behaviors were mirror images, in most instances, of the negative: staying awake, having materials, participating, volunteering, looking engaged. Because, on average, engaged behaviors accounted for 86% of the behaviors observed, we feel confident that our classrooms are places of engagement for the general education student.

The observers also noted what instructional activities were occurring in the classroom. Whole class discussion, paired or small group discussion, presentations, literature circle work, in-class writings, and student performances—all student-centered strategies—accounted for over three-fourths of the activities. Most of the professors used at least three separate kinds of activities during one observation period, indicating that professors plan for the variety and diversity so necessary for millennial students.

We examined 370 journals from the six sections to ascertain the number of affective responses. Usually about 50% of the journals contained affective responses. One topic, although chosen for its inclusion of "value"-laden language, evoked hardly any affective responses because the students responded with an objective judgment. The two topics that garnered the most affective responses had to do with faith and offensive language, two hot-button topics at our church-related school. Such results give us knowledge about how to phrase journal prompts to elicit the affective responses that sometimes remain inside the student's head.

Our findings, overall, were less than remarkable. We tried a pilot run of this study a year ago, but our sample size was too small to make significant statistical results possible. This year, however, we expected significant results because of our much larger sample size. Instead, we once again found that we cannot trace much of anything to a pure cause-effect status.

Jonna M. Kulikowich and Maeghan N. Edwards (2007) in the peer-reviewed journal *Psychology in the Schools* contend that "classrooms and schools are not organizational environments wherein students engage in activity independent of interaction and influence from others" (535), thus emphasizing the impossibility of tracing a particular cause for a student's change in the classroom, whether that change be in the affective or cognitive realm. In fact, their research seems to indicate, as does Stenzel's, that one realm is interconnected to the other, with no means of discerning a true cause/effect mode of operation. Such a complication also indicates, as Kulikowich and Edwards point out, building on earlier research, that "[c]hange…is not always easy to study statistically' (535). Our efforts to measure the effects of SCI on affective learning confirm Kulikowich and Edwards' findings that such changes are difficult to record quantitatively.

We have, however, noted trends that are quite encouraging:

- Not only does the majority of our student population enjoy imaginative literature, but also, throughout the semester, more students decide that they enjoy it, too.

- Our professors use student-centered teaching strategies more often than traditional strategies, and these strategies are the ones that the students rank as being most helpful to the learning process.

- We have found that by choosing topics for written responses that elicit affective responses, professors can informally, but effectively, measure the amount of affective learning taking place.

- When professors model such affective responses through lecture and whole group discussions, students will volunteer similar responses in reaction to a simple prompt.

Our next task is to be more intentional about planning our instructional activities so that more learning in the affective realm takes place. If Popham is correct in his assertion that we must "measure what we treasure," we should continue to emphasize learning in the affective domain and encourage other literature professors to do so as well. The result can only be a higher degree of learning and a higher appreciation of imaginative literature among our students, who then will become the models and teachers for the next generation of readers.

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Juliene Forrestal is an Associate Professor at Olivet Nazarene University and a member of the NCTE, CEA, and IATE. She teaches composition, general education literature, general education for the Honors program, Shakespeare, and C. S. Lewis. Professor Forrestal is also a faculty adviser for Tygr, an art and literary publication.

Rebecca Harshman Belcher-Rankin is a Professor at Olivet Nazarene University and a member of the Fulbright Alumni Association, NCTE, CEA, and IATE. Besides teaching courses in her special area of American literature, she teaches upper division courses in literary criticism and non-Western literature. Dr. Belcher-Rankin is also a faculty sponsor of the local chapter of Sigma Tau Delta.

ELECTRONIC READING AND PAPER READING: DIFFERENTIATED READING PROCESSES AND OUTCOMES

DOROTHY MIKUSKA
MARTI SEATON
LAURA BRODERICK

Electronic sources, rapidly replacing paper sources, soon will be the only venue for delivering curricula at educational institutions. The Department of Education wants to see universal use of digital textbooks in the next five years. This ambitious plan will mandate that all students have digital devices to read all their textbooks and curriculum material in digital format both at school and at home with universal broadband access (*Digital Textbook Playbook)*. Whether this formidable goal is achieved in the proposed five years or not, future students will be learning to read and reading to learn from electronic, not paper, sources. If this initiative is to improve learning, educators should consider where

learning occurs—in the words on a screen or in the reader's mind—so that their investment in time and resources does actually bring about the intended improvements. In other words, will merely changing the source of the same text improve learning?

Since the educational conversation about electronic reading has focused, for the most part, on the merits of digital sources to improve education, the conversation about e-reading also needs to consider whether the reading process is the same regardless of where the words appear and how any differences should affect reading instruction.

This paper will show that the brain reads differently from screens and from paper, resulting in different reading behaviors and outcomes. From fMRI scans, we know that when reading from electronic sources, readers skim words, paragraphs, and pages, without connecting new information to long-term memory in order to generate engaged reading and deep understanding. Personal behaviors also demonstrate the difference between screen and paper reading. You only need to consider whether you have ever printed an online article because it was easier to read, understand, annotate, and reread on paper than on the screen. Reading from paper sources is more focused and deliberate. Although readers can read deliberately from a screen and skim paper text, the tendency to do the reverse exists because different patterns of eye movement and stimulation of specific areas of the brain are triggered by each medium. By comprehending how screen reading is changing the way students read and think, educators can teach screen readers to read as thoughtfully as they have taught students to read from paper so that students can benefit from the technology that will be universally accessible in the near future.

Distracted Reading

Watching readers interact with an electronic device provides insights into their relationship with the text. They scroll and click, rather than read. Links within the text give them access to dictionary definitions, videos, or to other, though not necessarily relevant, web pages. They change the size and color of the text and save images and web pages to a folder without reading them. Professional websites and search engine listings are designed to make the reader view as many web pages as possible, as fast as possible, moving the reader away from the text, away from spending time carefully reading it. The Internet is designed as a consumer environment, not an educational one.

Screen reading is fast, distracted reading. The pop-up windows, flashing ads, hyperlinks, sidebar menu advertisements are designed to draw the reader's attention rapidly away from the page to the ads from which most websites and search engines make their money. As Irene Au, Google's User Experience Director, explains, "Our goal is to get users in and out really quickly. All our decisions are based on that strategy" (Walters). Electronic textbooks, even those not connected to the Internet, can divert attention away from in-depth reading of the text to a picture, a video clip, a dictionary definition, or another page. When students read digital text and use these embedded features, they avoid working through dense, complex content in a textbook (Bauerlein, "Too Dumb"). Although fast reading of hyperlinked text is appropriate in many reading situations, students also need to screen read extensive, complex text. Adults who have learned reading skills from print text in their youth have been able to adapt those skills to reading complex text from screens. Students who have learned to read from electronic sources for the most part must be taught focused, engaged reading.

Screen readers yield to many other distractions while reading or in place of reading: email, Facebook, MySpace, tweets, games, and texting. Teenagers average 3000 text messages per month: 64% have texted in class (Lenhart), where they read 2.6 text messages and send 2.4 texts (Wei, Method sect.). In addition, playing video or computer games monopolizes the lives of eight to tweleve-year olds who average thirteen hours per week while teens average fourteen hours a week (Bauerlein, *The Dumbest Generation* 83). On Everquest, Sony's massive make-believe online video game website (known by many as "Never-Rest"), players diverted themselves on average twenty-two hours a week, some up to eighty hours, in 2006 (Small and Vorgan 57). Because video games are now accessible from iPads and smartphones, they will become an even greater distraction. It should be no surprise that Internet Gaming Addiction (IGA) is an identified psychological disorder.

Students seek these distractions often under the misconception that they are expert at multitasking, simultaneously reading a chapter in a science textbook, texting a friend, playing a video game, and friending someone on Facebook. Multitasking is a highly valued skill, even on a job resume, but the mind has the physical and cognitive ability to have only one point of attention at a time while tuning out distractions. In some places it is illegal to drive and text, or drive and talk on a cellphone—in other words, to multitask—because it cannot be done successfully. Although multitasking is useful in activities that do not require engaged cognitive attention, like talking on the phone and folding laundry, in-depth learning needs engaged, focused attention.

The reason we read distractedly from a screen is because we can. With information excess, the page on the screen can easily and rapidly change by merely clicking. Reading from

a paper source becomes deliberate and focused only on the scarce pages in hand, scarce even if the book is Haruki Murikami's 926-page *1Q84*—with no links or distractions from those pages. Deep reading by expert readers, who make meaning from the text and connect with readers' previous knowledge, occurs when the reading practices employ the skills of annotation, reflection, and rereading rather than wildly careening through web pages.

Tracking eye movements of people reading from a screen and from a book demonstrates the differences in the two media. Jakob Nielsen's (*F-Shaped Pattern*) research found that the eyes follow an E pattern when reading from a paper copy: they move across the first line of text, drop down to the next line and then to every line until reaching the bottom of the page. Reading electronic text, the eyes follow an F pattern: they read the first line, part of the next, then skim and scroll to the bottom of the web page or stop to click on a link.

These experiments show that screen readers, whether searching, browsing, or appearing to be read, do not actually read what is on the screen. Only 16% of the screen readers read sequentially, word by word and sentence by sentence, while 84% process individual words and sentences out of sequence (Nielsen, *How Users Read*). They spend little time on a page and read only about 18% of the text before clicking to another page (Nielson, *How Little Do Users Read*). These statistics are particularly alarming when they apply to students reading non-sequentially only 18% of the content of their electronic textbook—not a very good return for value even if the e-textbook costs less than a paper textbook.

Because teens know what they want and where to get it online quickly, they consciously seek distractions instead of concentrating on their academic work. An Educational Testing

Service survey of high school and college students showed that for all their deftness with technology, students don't seek, find, and manage information well. They prefer to learn about each other and perpetuate their adolescent culture without experiencing the great ideas, art, politics, and documents so easily accessible online right from their multimedia bedroom (Bauerleine, *Dumbest Generation* 113).

However, students who read from paper are less likely to multitask and be inattentive to what they are reading than those who read from electronic sources (Kaiser Foundation 31). Because reading is a continuous interaction with the text requiring extensive use of memory, feeling, and cognitive skills, these distractions can only adulterate the experience and enjoyment of reading. Students, distracted from their job of being learners for these valuable hours of their formative years, have lost opportunities to further their education during some of that time. With less exposure and interaction with adult culture and more time spent within the teen culture, they are also distracted from recognizing the requirements of academic learning in preparation for adulthood.

Fast vs. Fluent Reading

Nicholas Carr in his *Atlantic Monthly* article "Is Google Making Us Stupid?" admits: "My mind now expects to take in information the way the Net distributes it: in a swiftly moving stream of particles. Once I was a scuba diver in the sea of words. Now I zip along the surface like a guy on a Jet Ski." Because the Internet is quick and efficient, we have learned to expect information to appear in small chunks, nicely diced and prepared for us so that we can harvest rather than read and understand it. Because only about 18% of the text is read, frenetically clicking readers lose patience and tolerance for exploring ideas and for engaging in deep learning.

The prevalence of timed testing and speed reading in schools have made us believe that fast is good and slow is bad, perhaps even a learning deficiency. Actually, good readers are fluent readers, not fast readers. Fluency is the ability for readers to avail themselves of all they know about language and syntax necessary to automatically decode words and sentences so that the thinking process is given over to infer, predict, interpret, annotate, and reflect on the text (Wolf 130–1). Fluency, not speed, gives the mind time to reflect on the text in milliseconds, minutes, hours, or days. Deep readers read slowly, thoughtfully, and fluently because they have developed strategies of reflection: they willingly reread a confusing word or passage, return to earlier parts that add significance to a new selection, connect to their memories, make inferences, unpack an idea, evaluate a new concept—become inspired. Although reading is interrupted in both media, fluent paper reading is interrupted to reflect and make meaning while fast electronic reading is interrupted to jump to different texts after pausing to let the prefrontal cortex decide whether to click a link (Ulin 104–5). Good readers read as fast as the text allows them to reflect on it, but screen reading engages readers in fast, distracted reading.

Reading is an intense relationship the reader has with a writer. The important part of reading—knowledge, understanding, learning, and creating new ideas—occurs in the thinking brain, not on the page. Text does not have a single main idea that answers to a multiple-choice question, nor does it have one correct interpretation which online readers seek. Rather it stimulates the mind to enter this realm of thinking, best developed by paper readers. As Bauerlein puts it, "The content encountered and habits practiced online foster one kind of literacy, the kind that accelerates communication, homogenizes diction and style, and answers set questions with

information bits. It does not favor the acquisition of knowledge, distinctive speech and prose, or the capacity to reason in long sequential units" (*Dumbest* 148). Fast reading does not take the thinking process beyond information retrieval, nor do the skills of fast reading transfer to the analytical skills needed for academic achievement and career success.

Simple versus Complex Text

Of the three million freshmen entering college in 2008, 43% of the students at two-year public colleges and 29% at four-year public colleges were unable to do college assignments (Strong American Schools). Many experts advocate more classroom technology as the solution. However, high school students already read a great deal digitally (sometimes their traditional textbooks are electronically accessed with embedded links, hypertext, and word-search capabilities); are assigned blogs to read and write; and create multimedia presentations incorporating fragmented information extracted from their online reading. Since complex texts require focusing in one direction while electronic texts and tools draw attention in many directions, these technologically savvy students may be unprepared for the complex demands of college assignments *because* much of their reading experience is electronic (Bauerlein, "Too Dumb").

Students also are not prepared for the complex thinking derived from complex texts that is required for college assignments, reading on the job, or for making informed personal and civic decisions. The new Common Core Standards in reading address the need to challenge students with more complicated thinking about more sophisticated texts: "Through wide and deep reading of literature and literary nonfiction of steadily increasing sophistication, students gain a reservoir of literary and cultural knowledge, references,

and images; the ability to evaluate intricate arguments; and the capacity to surmount the challenges posed by complex texts" (42). To read entire complex texts that reflect deep learning, students must be willing to give careful thought to "why" questions—ones that do not have automatic answers, may not be assessed by a correct multiple choice answer, challenge us with ambiguities and dissonance, and often require hours of concentration and rereading. Digital reading, however, encourages habitually fast reading and skimming of simple text for quick, simplistic ideas and answers. Therefore, reading a complex modern novel like Toni Morrison's *Beloved* or even Stieg Larsson's *The Girl with the Dragon Tattoo*, an article from *Nature* or *Science*, a legal or historical document, or a logical argument becomes an impossible challenge because unprepared students have little experience reading complex text.

Like athletes, students need to practice intently and extensively every day, not just thirty-eight minutes reading print sources as reported by the Kaiser Foundation in *Generation M2* and more than zero to four books a year according to *To Read or Not To Read* by the National Endowment of Arts (35). Richard Allington (52), past president of the National Reading Conference and the International Reading Association, concurs with current research recommendations that students should read at least one and a half hours and write thirty to forty-five minutes every day. Only diligent practice of slow, deliberate reading of complex text can counteract the effects of skimming simple text found in text messages and 140 character tweets. Complex college work can be mastered in an unwired, unplugged, unconnected learning environment, using complex texts, ideas, language, and structure (Bauerlein, "Too Dumb").

How the Brain Reads

Humans are not born to read, as they are born to see and talk. We learned to read only a few thousand years ago with the invention of writing by reorganizing the visual, conceptual, and language areas of the brain, thus expanding the way we think. All the variations of an individual's learning experience activate different parts of the brain. Because there is no genetic basis to our minds learning to read, the "open architecture" of our brain adapts to the writing system used (English or Hebrew alphabet or Chinese characters), the formation process (the extent that cognitive resources are taught and used by the learner), the material's content, and the medium (scroll, book, web page, eBook). The plasticity of the brain allows every new reader to build a unique circuit to read and think (Wolf and Barzillai).

The brain reads and thinks differently depending on the medium. According to Small and Vorgan (16), paper reading activates deep white brain cells where long-term memory and feeling reside. Electronic reading over-activates surface grey brain cells, which seek immediacy and efficiency, and where decoding takes place. For electronic readers, the milliseconds needed to access long-term memory and feeling in white brain cells are interrupted and rerouted to grey brain cells for decoding or skimming other information superficially. This has significance for young readers, even six-year-olds who learn to read on electronic devices like an iPad. Within the very first five hours of screen reading, whether continuous or fragmented, the neural structure of the brain changes permanently to read using only grey cells merely to decode the text. Because of the brain's plasticity, young readers need to learn to read deeply and activate deep white brain cells from paper texts before they can apply those skills to electronic texts. Even the Common Core Standards do not acknowledge use

of digital text for information learning until grade five (14). By that age, students have developed paper reading skills and can apply them to screen reading.

What eBooks Can and Cannot Provide Electronic Readers

University of California libraries surveyed 2,569 of their students to determine their satisfaction with using eBooks. Forty-nine percent preferred reading and studying from paper copy; 34% preferred eBooks; 17% had no preference. The comments given acknowledged the physical convenience of carrying and using their eBooks. Some noted the electronic format was helpful to skim parts of a book to determine its usefulness, to search quickly for a piece of information, to check facts, and to find bibliography or citation entries. However, those who preferred reading from paper believed paper sources gave them focus and eliminated the distractions they encountered with computer usage. In particular, they favored print over electronic books because they could more easily read and annotate long, complex text. They valued the ability to flip through pages to reread passages (Li and Poe 4).

When Daytona State College evaluated their students' learning from e-textbooks, students conceded that they did not read as much of the assignments from an electronic source as they did from a paper source. Faculty reported that students who had read assignments from electronic sources were unable to remember much, or chose not to do the reading (Kolowich).

As time is spent skimming web pages and collecting snippets into folders, intense reading and cohesive, complex thinking *appear* to take place, but do not. What seem to be advantages of electronic reading often become a disadvantage. Vocabulary development occurs with direct instruction and through context clues that are embedded in the text to help the

reader remember and use the new word in the future. Clicking a link to a dictionary definition may seem like an excellent tool to develop vocabulary because electronic dictionaries provide effortless accessibility to an extended external artificial memory bank of definitions. However, it merely provides a definition without the incentive to directly learn the word or connect it to its context. What electronic readers have actually learned is that they do not have to learn the word or expand their vocabulary because they can always click to a dictionary definition. Without an extensive learned vocabulary, simple or complex text cannot be comprehended by repeatedly clicking to dictionary definitions for many words on each page, as if translating the text from an unfamiliar foreign language. At best, only decoding rather than deep reading can occur.

Electronic text cannot provide the tools that make it easy and probable to learn in depth. Marking text to reread and connect to earlier information, a defining aspect of deep reading, is difficult to do on an eBook (Thayer et al. 4). Many formats, like PDF files, have annotating and highlighting functions, but accessing scattered notes within several hundred scrolled pages becomes disconcerting. Because our weak short-term memory benefits from viewing two pages at once, holding several pages open in a book, rather than scrolling back and forth through multiple windows, lends itself to rereading. With many downloaded eBooks, Kindle Fire includes Book Extras that provide character lists, plot summaries, in other words built-in Cliff Note-like features so that readers may feel no need to reread, or even read the book. However, those who successfully read complex material from eBooks often recreate conditions similar to paper reading by writing notes on paper in order to consolidate and organize information into their own words and voices, rather than highlight passages passively on the screen (Thayer et al. 5).

In addition, eBook users do not build cognitive maps of the text as do paper readers (Thayer et al. 8). Good readers generate a mental map of the physical location of information and its special relationship to a page so that returning to those locations is easy and useful. Similar to navigating by landmarks, readers might remember that an idea appeared in the upper right hand page just above an illustration. One advantage of the codex or book format over the ancient scroll format is the ease in referencing information on a preformed page rather than searching through a long scroll, a word we now use as a verb. Like ancient scrolls, web pages and eBooks produce long undefined pages of text. Because electronic pages are amorphous, page sixty-three of an electronic book may look different on a Kindle or iPad depending on font size, web browser, operating system, or software, restricting one's reading to only one device. Thus, electronic readers' valuable cognitive maps are of limited use in searching for specific information to reread because they must scroll through thousands of lines of text, sometimes on a small screen, rather than fan a book's preformed, permanently defined pages.

Finally, authoritative documents carefully assign attribution to their sources in the form of footnotes or endnotes, indicating abbreviated source information that points to a bibliography entry, which provides the specifics needed to access the entire source. Footnotes, less interruptive to the reading process than endnotes, become the "connective tissue of academic writing" because they lead the inquiring mind to additional information the author found useful or to verify details from the original reference (Thayer et al. 5–6). The fluctuating nature of the eBook page cannot support footnotes, thereby electronic readers are severed from this "connective tissue" to the long-term memory of our intellectual culture.

As both assigned or leisure reading is conducted from smaller windows found on eReaders or smartphones, only decoding of text can occur. With few words visible at a time on a three and a half-inch screen, smartphone readers can focus only on decoding individual words and short phrases and sentences while constantly scrolling as though the text were a series of 140-character tweets. This is not an environment for complex reading of *Native Son* or an article in the *Proceedings of the National Academy of Sciences* about internal friction in protein folding. How can a smartphone reader read the previous 148-character sentence? or investigate an author's trail of clues throughout a mystery novel? or track the significance and development of an image or symbol, such as the Big House on the Corner, or the power of women in Isabel Allende's *House of Spirits*? or comprehend a poem where white space and the placement of words on a page are part of its expression? or follow the comparative data in a quantum physics textbook?

Certain kinds of sources can be read successfully on eBooks, in particular those texts that require only linear, passive reading that do not invoke the need to appraise ideas, take notes, reread, or interrupt the decoding process to engage in deep reading. A study of the use of eBooks concludes, "The students in our study struggled, and sometimes succeeded, at integrating the eReader into their academic reading practices" (Thayer et al. 8).

Multi-Textual Readers

With the thrust toward employing electronic reading devices as the vehicle to deliver curriculum to every student within five years, young readers must be prepared to develop the brain circuitry necessary to become slow, expert readers as well as fast scanners of information. The more the open

architecture of the mind reinforces the wiring for fast electronic reading, the more the wiring developed for deep reading atrophies. Therefore, we must ask significant questions now if deep reading will continue to have value:

- Will children be taught which text is appropriate to speed read and skim while multitasking, and which text requires uninterrupted deep reading?

- Will reading curricula designed to improve standardized test scores provide sufficient motivation and opportunity to develop expert readers of complex text?

- Will reading tests administered online accurately assess deep reading and allow students to demonstrate their ability to reflect, annotate, and reread?

- Will all the distractions and volume of information make young readers want someone else to explain and reduce everything to the simplest ideas as quickly as possible?

- Will the prevalent use of digital sources empower and motivate readers to seek materials that will inspire reflective and independent thinking?

A substantial body of research exists about the formation of young minds reading from print, but because electronic reading is a very recent phenomenon, little research has been done in this area. Until we understand the process of reading from electronic devices, reading slowly to construct meaning and engage in the cognitive processes, which we have been teaching children to read from print, should remain the focus of what reading is (Wolf and Barzillai). Regardless of the

source of the text, students need to be taught to break down text into small pieces; put it in their own words, sentences, and voice; connect new information to what they already know; create concept maps of information known, learned, and still needed; and synthesize and organize information into transformed knowledge. Only when both paper and electronic sources are read alike in depth—employing E-Format eye patterns and fluently connecting long-term memory and emotions in white brain cells—can they be considered different media yet equally effective sources for learning.

Therefore, educators must not merely provide students the technology to access information with the belief that any text, electronic or paper, provides the learning. Because learning occurs in the reader's mind, educators must teach screen readers to read as thoughtfully as they have taught students to read from paper. Regardless of the media, though, they must teach students to become multi-textual, to distinguish which reading strategies are best for passive, linear reading and scanning for information, and which is best for expert, reflective reading.

Most of all, we must teach students to savor the gift of time that is the heart of reading—time to enable their complete absorption into another world, to meander through someone else's mind, to understand others who are as real as they are, to investigate the possibilities of the imagination, and just be quiet and alone with their thoughts and someone else's words.

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Dorothy Mikuska is a retired Glenbard South High School English teacher and a member of IATE.

Marti Seaton is an English and reading teacher and a Literacy Coach at Glenbard South High School.

Laura Broderick is a psychology and human geography teacher at Glenbard East High School.

"STUDENTS," "ATTENDEES," AND EFFECTIVE TEACHING

MICHAEL REILLEY

I recently completed a long, rewarding career as an English teacher at Joliet Central High School in Illinois, an urban, public school with an enrollment of approximately 2700 students. It is, in many ways, a microcosm of American society. The school embodies all of the opportunities and challenges that racial and economic diversity provide. Central is a very special place. I spent most of my time there teaching juniors and seniors, usually a mix of basic and Advanced Placement classes. The majority of the ideas in this paper come from my experiences with basic, often "at risk," students.

One lesson that I have learned is that teaching is mostly common sense. Through trial and error, I learned what worked for my students and me. Anyone who has been at all good at anything has had to develop his or her own style. That's the only way to be truly comfortable in the classroom and in life.

Listen to everyone, then implement what makes sense to you. Know your material. Work hard. Work smart. Succeed or fail on your own terms. Then do it better next time. A good memory is also vital to effective teaching. Too often, teachers forget what it was like to be a student; parents sometimes forget what it was like to be a kid. This selective amnesia can be a significant impediment to the rapport necessary for good teaching, and good parenting. Honest mistakes are vital to growth. Be brave enough to be yourself, and you have a shot at success. And that is all anyone can expect from life. Finally, see to it that you and your students have some fun along the way. Laughter and learning are not incompatible. I hope you find these ideas useful. They worked for me, most of the time. Nobody bats a thousand.

My goal here is to provide a few suggestions about starting the first semester in a manner which sets the stage for a successful school year. A strong start is important in all classes, but it is crucial when one is working with upperclassmen who have had academic and/or behavioral problems. Obviously, these difficulties negatively affect a student's self-confidence, self-image, and motivation. Many are unconvinced of the value of education. The damage done in the past, regardless of who is at fault, must be overcome. They need to be reclaimed.

No teacher can force a student to learn, but by opening the year with real-world, adult questions about how they choose to conduct their lives and the likely consequences of those choices, in a tone appropriate to the young adults we expect them to be, one can sometimes get them to realize the advisability of working hard on lessons that are clearly relevant to their success. It has been my experience that once these "at risk" students begin to believe that you are genuinely concerned about their future and are willing and able to help them to help themselves, wonderful things can

happen in your classroom. Win their hearts, and their heads will often follow.

It all begins with honesty. Kids can smell a phony in the first five minutes. Hypocrisy and condescension are death in the high school classroom. Our students deserve lessons that teach them that hard work is important, but it doesn't guarantee success. It does, however, give them a shot. They need to learn resilience and perseverance, that screwing up in high school doesn't doom one to a life of continued failure. But they need to realize that the sooner they wise up and show some self-respect by working hard, the better their chances of success become. It's all about choices. In short, I treated my students as young adults, unless they chose to behave like children. I was rarely disappointed.

The beginning of the school year is an excellent time to make these points. I often shared a quote from the epilogue of Ralph Ellison's *Invisible Man* with my students: "But my world has become one of infinite possibilities. What a phrase—still it's a good phrase and a good view of life, and a man shouldn't accept any other." Implicit in this epiphany is the realistic optimism of the American dream. A kid who buys into this concept and is willing to work and persevere to make his dream a reality has taken a major step in his ongoing education.

Possibilities are often the result of the choices we make. Early on, I would ask the young adults in my classes to choose how they would conduct themselves for the remainder of their time at Joliet Central, as "students" or "attendees"? "Students" realize that high school is a temporary opportunity best completed in four years. They understand that every class provides an opportunity to learn, regardless of whether they like the teacher or the subject. They see how developing and maintaining disciplined work habits increases the likelihood

of their getting wherever they want to go in life. "Students" see the "infinite possibilities" that life offers. They get it.

"Attendees," on the other hand, aren't necessarily stupid; they just don't get it—at least not yet. They don't know why they're in their classes. Their vision of school hasn't changed much since third grade: see your friends, have fun, and so on. They're blind to the damage they're doing to themselves. They tend to hang out with others who share their myopia. "Attendees" need to be given the opportunity to confront the likely consequences of their actions. Medicine doesn't always taste good. The truth isn't always pretty. Life after high school doesn't care about excuses; it's all about results.

It is a teacher's great opportunity to present these important choices at this point in his "attendees" lives. Many of these kids are ready for this message. They're sick of sleepwalking through school and life with a vague awareness that the way they're living isn't working. They need help to develop Plan B. Many want to be challenged to take concrete steps to begin to make something of themselves. The past is gone. The future is in their hands. And working hard in school is the first step in taking control of their lives.

And taking these steps requires discipline, for both the teacher and the students. When students are convinced that their teacher is competent, caring, disciplined, and demanding, they are more likely to develop and maintain a positive approach to learning. The best classroom discipline is effective teaching. It's common sense. The teacher is prepared to teach, and the students are ready to learn. It's a matter of mutual respect. A good teacher doesn't need a long list of rules. Attend class regularly. Be on time. Take notes. Ask questions. Respect your classmates' right to learn. Respect yourself. In short, care. And if you don't care, you probably don't belong in this class.

I also did everything in my power to eliminate feeble excuses for poor academic performance. I gave my students my home phone number, and I insisted that they call me if they had questions about a test or if they were having trouble with an essay. If we couldn't resolve the problem over the phone, they were given an extra day or two to complete the essay. No call—no extension. I might have been pranked once in over twenty-five years. I would delay a test if the kids had a full period of good questions on test day. I only gave short-answer and essay exams, except for the mandated district and state standardized tests. Notes and study guides were sometimes allowed. Retakes and rewrites were always available to earn a passing grade. It was important that my students knew that I was on their side.

I assured my classes that each of the works that we would study had the potential to teach them significant life lessons. The key word here is potential. They needed to be active participants in their education. They had to think. Even though they had been in English classes for many years, few had really given much thought to the question of why we study literature. This remains disturbing. I encouraged them to begin asking why more often, especially in school. It's common sense that we do things better when these actions make sense to us. Studying great literature is practical; it can help us to better understand life by offering us various insights into universal issues and questions that have forever troubled mankind. It's up to the reader to decide the degree to which the writer's message resonates with his or her beliefs and experiences.

My classroom was a place for this discussion. I wanted it to be what any true classroom should be, a place where divergent ideas can be freely discussed and argued in an atmosphere of mutual respect. No one had to agree with me,

the writer we were studying, or another student. But everyone needed a solid, logical basis for his position. The shrill and the irrational were often exposed. Once again, they had to think. It usually worked out.

So let's get to the specifics of the first unit of the year. As I said earlier, my ideas worked for my students and me at my school. I am forever grateful to the department chairs and other administrators who trusted me with the academic freedom to adjust the standard curriculum to meet the needs of my students. My opening lesson was a logical continuation of the goals I established during the first few days. It focused on works that illustrate the connection between individualism, self-reliance, and personal enlightenment. I used this unit with both my regular and AP classes. The works we studied were different, but not as different as one might expect. All students deserve to study great literature. High expectations, with appropriate assistance, can produce enlightening results.

Plato's "Allegory of the Cave," Sophocles' *Oedipus the King*, Shelley's *Frankenstein*, Orwell's *1984*, many quotes and excerpts from the writings of Emerson and Thoreau, films like *The Matrix, Gandhi*, *Apocalypto*, and *A Bronx Tale*, and a variety of personal, enlightenment-related quotes, articles, essays, poems, and short stories combined to inspire insightful discussions and intelligent essays on the relevance of the epiphanies that we studied to the decisions my students would make about how they would live their lives. These activities also provided a model of the type of work we would be doing for much of the year. Most of my students rose to these challenges most of the time.

The freedom I enjoyed kept me relatively sane and generally happy. And a relatively sane, happy teacher is much more likely to be effective than one who is distracted by factors that frequently have little to do with the quality

of his or her students' learning. I believed in my curriculum, and I taught it well.

Adapt my ideas as you see fit. Teaching, like life, is not a one-size-fits-all proposition. A runner could go through track season in shoes that don't fit, but he wouldn't be as successful as he might have been with the right shoes. The same is true for teaching, and life. Good luck.

Michael Reilly recently retired after teaching English at Joliet Central for over 25 years. He also taught at Joliet Catholic High School, Savannah (Georgia) High School, Joliet West High School, Joliet Junior College, and Auburn University. Reilly has a BA from Southern Illinois University and an MA from Governors State University. He has also done work at University College in Dublin, Ireland, Auburn University, the University of Illinois–Chicago, the University of Indiana–Bloomington, and the University of Chicago. His son, Tristan, is a second generation teacher in Joliet Township High School District 204. "My students made me laugh, and they made me think. They taught me as I taught them."

COMMON CORE STANDARDS: CONSIDER THIS

RICHARD HOLINGER

From my house in Geneva, Illinois, I can hear the freight trains whistle through town. In fact, one is about to roar through nearly every state's classrooms and unload its toxic freight.

Yes, the charlatans who brought us No Child Left Behind—now left behind, looking like roadkill—are back with the same old Rubik's Cube, newly twisted, to harass our public elementary, middle, and high schools (private and parochial schools may or may not adopt the program). This time around it's called the Common Core (State) Standards (CCS).

In theory, and when first hearing the idea, CCS makes sense: every teacher responsible for a major subject (English, math, the sciences, etc.) presents similar proposed classroom material. This way, mandated curriculums prevent the errant knucklehead from foisting his "scientifically proven" theory

of glandular telekinesis on an unsuspecting physics class (a scenario easily corrected by a department head if doing his or her job).

But here's the rub: CCS presumes to prescribe the percentage of "fiction" versus "informative" nonfiction texts taught in each grade. For example, in early elementary grades, fiction dominates. By sixth grade, the amount changes to a 50-50 split. By grade twelve, classrooms are expected to offer a 70% informative, and only 30% fiction, reading load.

That's right, eleventh and twelfth-grade teachers will face a directive they create a curriculum to allow informational texts to preponderate. Incredibly, instead of the major English professional organizations such as the NCTE challenging such draconian enforcement, they've rolled over and played dead.

This thrust toward nonfiction over imagined literature feeds the need to quantify classroom curriculums so student ingestion of material can be assessed by objective tests. Two major companies today are constructing tests that will be ready in 2014. So powerful, reportedly, are these organizations (like PARCC, our Illinois test-maker), that their assessments will compete with, and possibly replace, the long-revered SAT and ACT.

Consider what happens if CCS assessments vanquish the time-honored and trusted iconic exams: teachers will begin teaching only quantifiable, testable material, figuring questions on the CCS-sponsored exam will be rooted in CCS-recommended texts. Teachers will conform to CCS's factual and historical agendas; they will shun creative projects and creative writing; and they will not waste time helping students pursue their personal interests because that cannot be assessed on a multiple-choice test.

This current over-reliance on testing has turned into a mania. Government education gurus, for worse, not better,

have force-fed schools the illusory ideology that measuring student "progress" will banish bad teachers and award the good ones, all in the service of making our children competitive with the Chinese. To accomplish this, testing has infiltrated even our youngest students' classrooms, including kindergarten. According to *Chicago Reader* writer Ben Joravsky, this year Chicago Public Schools added a new test, the REACH, "on top of the TRC, the MAP, the EXPLORE, the ISAT, and DIBELS…. There are four standardized tests [given] two or three times a year" (10). Joravsky describes a reading comprehension test in which a story is read aloud to students (because they can't yet read), after which they're questioned on its contents. This sounds to me more like a memory check, not the comprehension and interpretation of a piece of prose gathered from black symbols on a white page.

The point is, testing has turned from its original purpose of discovering a child's understanding of a lesson taught so he or she can be filled in on what he's missing, to a method of determining which teacher needs replacing and which school deserves funding.

Not all educators have caved to CCS; some have spoken out vociferously, questioning CCS's pedagogical dystopia.

Public school teacher and *Atlantic Monthly* contributor Susan Ohanian cites radio commentator Glen Ford's warning that "the goal of corporate education reform is to turn teaching into a service industry." She also targets "Common Core architect David Coleman" as believing "nonfiction is where students get information about the world and that's why schools must stop teaching so much fiction…. Coleman is echoing the corporate world he is hired to serve." She then reveals "Bill Gates funded the Common Core development and is paying for much of the PR campaign."

For CCS to push arbitrary percentages of different

genres taught in classrooms insults teachers' professionalism and undermines administrators' job to regulate content. Moreover, a dictum presuming to know which genre to accentuate at each stage in a student's education, regardless of their cultural, ethnic, mental, or socioeconomic circumstances, reeks of hubris.

"The fact is that given the challenges we face, education doesn't need to be reformed—it needs to be transformed," Sir Ken Robinson writes in his groundbreaking book, *The Element: How Finding Your Passion Changes Everything*. "The key…is not to standardize education, but to personalize it, to build achievement on discovering the individual talents of each child, to put students in an environment where they want to learn and where they can naturally discover their true passions" (4).

Instead of mainstreaming curriculums with quantifiable data, Robinson contends, schools need to promote individual creativity, now "more important in education as literacy, and we should treat it with the same status" ("Ken Robinson says"). Additionally, in *A Whole New Mind*, Daniel Pink cajoles, "The future belongs to a very different kind of person with a very different kind of mind—creators and empathizers, pattern recognizers, and meaning makers. These people—artists, inventors, designers, storytellers, caregivers, consolers, big picture thinkers—will now reap society's richest rewards and share its greatest joys….We are moving from an economy and a society built on the logical, linear computer-like capabilities of the Information Age to an economy and a society built on the inventive, empathic, big-picture capabilities of what's rising in its place, the Conceptual Age" (1-2).

Pink cites Daniel Goleman's study of fifteen large company executives whose star performers "'relied less on deductive, if-then reasoning' and more in the intuitive,

contextual reasoning" (qtd. in Pink 142). Multimillionaire CEO Sidney Harmon "doesn't find it all that valuable to hire MBAs. Instead, 'I say "Get me some poets as managers"…. They contemplate the world in which we live and feel obliged to interpret and give expression to it in a way that makes the reader understand how that world turns…. It is from their midst that I believe we will draw tomorrow's new business leaders'" (qtd. in Pink 142–43).

If CCS does cater to presumed and supposed corporate needs, Pink argues that business "has begun to take spirituality more seriously," as today's "Conceptual Age is flowering with postmaterialist values and deepening our 'meaning want'…" (223). With that in mind, wouldn't characters like Ahab, Hester, and Gatsby, wrestling with monumental moral issues and whose actions reveal raw feelings roiling below the surface of our souls, be more a catalyst to spiritual and existential questions and insights than informational texts on whaling, Puritanism, and Prohibition?

If faced with a *Sophie's Choice* of which two novelists to jettison, Melville, Hawthorne, or Fitzgerald, not to mention a myriad of short fiction, I wonder if English departments will lead their high school juniors and seniors gently into that good night and give in to teaching 70 percent "informative" texts. Because, if they love fictional literature with the passion needed to teach it well, the loss will feel like giving up one's own children, characters endowed with more complexity and passion than, I suspect, present in a gaggle of bureaucrats conspiring to shift education from the art of challenging curious and creative minds resulting in wisdom, to the drudgery of acquiring baseline knowledge.

In fact, a website elucidating CCS's goals and strategies states CCS curriculums will place "little faith in private opinions, experiences or connections with a text. In its place,

questions should target exactly what the wording actually says or doesn't say" (Hartle). Such an approach (hardly the New Critic method that celebrates rich ambiguity) presumes that students, much less teachers, will understand Eliot's exact meaning of "The Love Song of J. Alfred Prufrock," or William Faulkner's precise message in *Absolom, Absolom*. Apparently imaginative literature should be taught and consumed with the same cold, dispassionate stance as a chemistry experiment. The metonymic suggestions of Gatsby's mansion can hardly be scrutinized with the precision of an iPhone map or Google Earth. I doubt if the CCS designers ever once experienced the aftermath of a poem the way Emily Dickinson did, "as if my head were taken off." Can one reach that horrific ecstasy through a clinical search for one exact "meaning"?

One last objection, having to do with two facets of modern literary theory. First, Reader-response criticism posits that each reader brings preconceptions, cultural baggage, interests, and expectations with him when reading a text. The understanding and appreciation of one story or novel may be extremely varied even within a single classroom. To admonish teachers and students to ignore "private opinions, experiences or connections with a text," is to do the impossible. Just think of the emotions roused when reading your spouse's grocery list. "What? No cumquats? And who eats nonfat cottage cheese?"

Second, for CCS to distinguish so cleanly and clearly between fiction and nonfiction is to ignore—or be ignorant of—postmodern and poststructural theory over the past four decades. In his essay, "Fictional vs. Factual Narration," Jean-Marie Schaeffer notes, "The poststructuralist criticism of the fact/fiction dichotomy has pointed out that every (narrative) representation is a human construction, and more precisely that it is a model projected onto reality." In other words,

autobiographers, historians, and even pamphleteers choose a literary voice, a point of view, a selection of details, formal or informal diction, a narrative structure, and syntactical patterns to create a unique impression on the reader regarding a certain set of circumstances. How accurately these decisions mirror the reality the author has tried to capture will vary from the extreme verisimilitude of those ultra-truthful bathroom mirrors to a carnival's fun reflections stretching or squeezing the truth into grotesque distortions.

A writer like Jon Krakauer might use personal and published facts when writing about daredevil mountain climbers or a rebellious adolescent going *Into the Wild*, but his style mesmerizes with its figurative language, rhythmical prose, and reconstructed scenes he did not witness. A CCS recommended text, Fredrick Douglass's *Narrative of the Life of Frederick Douglass, an American Slave*, reads like fiction because the author chooses scenes and encounters meant to create suspense and sympathy for the central character, himself. Not that he changes facts; no, the horror of his enslavement is compelling enough to create suspense and convince his audience of the wrongs done him and others without resorting to contrivance. However, Douglass culls the scenes in his life that most potently bring that life to life. In a real sense, he imposes his concept of reality on the reader by interpreting real life events by using fictional techniques: dialogue, scene construction, character/narrative arc, and metaphorical language. That's what fiction writers do.

Blogger Christina Hank comments on the cutting back of imaginative literature assigned upper level secondary school students: "The rationale is that reading and writing… need to be relevant and connect to a student's 21st century skills. Fiction, unfortunately, does not meet that need." If that's true, to parody the bandit in *The Treasure of Sierra Madre*,

we won't need no stinkin' English teachers. Students will be handed informational packets that pack into their brains the information necessary to make them politely and effectively functional in a world that discourages change, innovation, and creativity. A world like Orwell's *1984* or Huxley's *Brave New World*, where everyone is programmed to think the same way and never to question established truth.

What can English teachers and the general public do? Become informed. Start making noise that will drown out that freight train about to roar through the nation's classrooms. Enough children have been left behind; we need curriculums that focus on children's creative spirit and enhance their passion, empathy, and creativity, not squelch or subvert it. We need to promote a child's intuitive curiosity, not bury it. We need to show students the possibilities inherent in the spoken and written word, and the magic that can transform lives.

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My work has received three Pushcart Prize nominations. My manuscript, "Not Everybody's Nice" won the 2012 Split Oak Flash Prose Chapbook contest. A chapbook of innovative fiction was recently published last year by Kattywompus Press. My fiction has appeared in Witness, The Iowa Review, Flashquake, Other Voices, ACM, Cream City Review, WHR, Flyways, The Madison Review, Downstate Story; creative nonfiction and book reviews in The Southern Review, Midwest Quarterly, Cimarron Review, Crazyhorse, Northwest Review; poetry in Boulevard, Chelsea, Southern Poetry Review, Blue Unicorn, the new renaissance, Hampden-Sydney Poetry Review, ACM, Manhattan Poetry Review, Webster Review, North Dakota Quarterly. Essays in anthologies include The Writing Group Book (The Chicago Review Press) and In the Middle of the Middle West (Indiana University Press). I teach at Marmion Academy, a college prep school, in Aurora, Illinois, and have lived in the Illinois Fox River valley west of Chicago for more than thirty years. Degrees include a PhD in Creative Writing from the University of Illinois at Chicago, and I received a Poetry Grant and a Short Term Artists Residency from the Illinois Arts Council.

THIS IS WHO I AM: A SENIOR PORTFOLIO PROJECT

BYUNG-IN SEO

The time between the end of spring break and graduation can be excruciating for teachers who have to teach high school seniors. While some seniors have checked out since January, by March/April, senioritis has really set in, and they have no desire to do anything. The first year I taught seniors, I taught Shakespeare's *Macbeth*, or rather tried to teach *Macbeth*. While some students paid attention and learned the literary elements of the play, most could have cared less about the lessons. Narcissistic by nature (Sylwester 56), instead, they were thinking about themselves: What will they do in the summer? Why are they still here (in school)? What's the point of it all? Thus, the next time I taught seniors, instead of teaching literature, I had them write every day, about themselves, and put it in a book. Thus, the Senior Portfolio Project was formed.

This project originally came from a colleague. He had his AP English students collect mementos and other memorabilia in a container, and throughout the spring, he would have them write reflections on the items in the container. I decided to make it into a book. When high school seniors graduate, a part of their life has ended. Some may go into higher education; some may go into the workforce. Whatever they chose to do, it would begin a new phase in their lives. As a result, students had to have something that documented who they were right at that time in their lives. They submitted two portfolios: one academic and one personal. The academic one had their graded essays. Like a community college English 101 course, I had the students write different genres of essays throughout the year. Since many of them were going to go into higher education, I wanted them to have these essays, to use as possible models when they got to college. On the other hand, the personal portfolio was a collection of writing, photos, and other mementos to document this part of their lives. This portfolio was to help the students not only understand who they were, as individuals at that time in their lives, but also document this stage/phase of their lives. It contained the following:

1. Journal Entries
2. Family History
3. Letters or Copies of Them
4. Personal Inventory
5. Photographs and Other Mementos
6. Oral Presentation

Journal Entries

Using writing prompts is one way to get students started on their writing process (Fisher and Frey 184). It helps students link learned information into their current knowledge.

For this project, all of the writing prompts merged into journal entries, and Appendix A has my writing prompts/journal entries. All of them required the students to not only recall events from their academic life, but they also had to reflect on their interests, ideas, beliefs, and ways of life. While there was a 250–300 word minimum, most students wrote 500–1,000 words on each entry. The number of entries was determined by the number of days between the end of spring break and prom. At my school, seniors first had prom, had one week of classes, and then final exams. Since I worked at a Catholic school, we had a spring break in the middle of the semester, sometime in March, and then an Easter break. When the two coincided, there was only one break. In general, there were 25 days between the end of spring break and prom. The number of journal entries can be adjusted, depending on the school's calendar. The whole idea was to have the students write every day. Many brought their laptops to class and preferred to compose that way. Others would print the entries on fancy paper using elaborate fonts, and there were those who handwrote their entries on loose leaf paper. Whatever means they used, they were writing, daily. There was very little conversation, because they were deep into their own thoughts. Also, many of the entries required them to truly reflect on their lives, so the entries became very personal. The only person who read the entries was me, and they understood that I would keep everything that they said confidential. If I read an entry that revealed abuse or neglect, I had a private conversation with the student, and together, we determined what needed to be done with that information.

Each entry required students not only to give feedback, but they also had to provide a rationale for that feedback. For many students, they had not had the opportunity or the need to explain their opinions or views on a particular subject.

Writing the rationale was particularly difficult because students needed to give a clear reason for their perspectives, and many of them never had to give reasons in the past. Sometimes, students discovered attitudes and beliefs that they did not know existed. In a sense, they were reaching within themselves and uncovering their true essence.

Family History

In this section, students needed to give Appendix B to four members of their "family." "Family" is in quotation marks because it has different meanings for different people. In an ideal world, all adolescents would have an immediate family member, someone at their school who was not a student, an extended family member, and a mentor/coach who was not a part of their school, who would be willing to complete this form for them. However, that situation was not always the case. For students in foster care, I asked them to find an adult who was like a family member to them. Some students either didn't/couldn't/wouldn't develop relationships with their teachers, so I offered to complete the form for them. Some students didn't have a mentor outside the school, so those students got the option to choose another person in the school. One year, a student told me that her mother wanted to complete the questions but couldn't read them. In those cases, this activity became an interview, where the students asked the questions to the adults, and they wrote the adults' responses on the sheet. Learning interviewing skills had students not only listen to their family member, but they also needed to record what was being said (Blasingame and Bushman 88).

It became a learning experience for both the students and the adults. In some cases, it was the first time the students received constructive advice and feedback from their

family members and mentors. For other students, reading the feedback, seeing it in printed form, made the feedback more meaningful for them. Their attitudes were, "If they're willing to write it down, then it must be really important." Then, there were those students who were "forced" to speak with their elders, and they realized that these elders were not as clueless as the students believed. With all of these cases, more often than not, lines of communication opened, and these young adults reaped the benefits of the lived experiences of those who came before them.

Letters or Copies of Them

Letter writing has become a lost art. With email and other electronic means of communication, handwritten or typed letters have been ignored. Letters have power and influence that electronic communication does not. Whether they are handwritten or typed, it is a deliberate act of communicating one's ideas and feelings to another person. Emails can be written and sent in haste. However, letters take time to construct. For letters, the sender is not only aware of his/her audience but also the medium in which it is written. As a result, there are three relationships: the relationship between the writer and the text, the relationship between the text and the reader, and the relationship between the writer and the reader (Bakhtin 46). As one student stated, "Email is nice, but letters are oh so much better." When asked to elaborate further, this student said, "Letters take more effort, so there is more thought and planning that goes into it."

In this section, students needed to write five letters, and of the five letters, two of them needed to be sent. For the letters that needed to be sent, they needed to provide a copy of the letters in their portfolio and a stamped envelope and photo with the original letter. In an age of text messaging

and tweets, writing letters was a novelty for many students. Instead of writing something short, they needed to write something that was thoughtful and meaningful to the person. For a couple of classes, I needed to review the letter-writing process and format, because they never wrote one in the past.

One of the letters that needed to be sent was to a mentor/teacher. If the teacher or mentor was from my high school, I had the addresses, so I addressed the envelopes. At no time did I give the teachers'/mentors' addresses to the students. In most cases (99.95% of the time), the letters were complimentary, thanking the mentor/teacher of his/her influence in the students' lives. Every once in awhile, a student would write a scathing letter to the adult and expect it to be sent. If the letter was vulgar or crass, the student needed to rewrite the letter. Admittedly, in some cases, I did not send the letter because I thought it would cause more harm than good. No, I never told the student that I did not send the letter, but I did keep the photo for my personal scrapbook.

Personal Inventory

In general, students complete this section first. The Personal Inventory is to record their interests, preferences, wants, and dreams as of that moment in their lives. If there was conversation, it happened during this section. Students discussed which bands were the best, and they tried to determine what were their favorite foods. If they had multiple favorites, I encouraged them to write everything. The whole idea was to provide a snapshot of interests, so that they could refer to it ten or twenty-five years from now and be able to see who they were at that time. Students completed this section first, because it was fast and easy for them. While the other sections take true thought and reflection, I preferred this

section to be spontaneous, because the spontaneity provided the students the opportunity to truly be themselves.

Photographs, Other Mementos, and the Book

Collecting photographs and mementos can be tricky. Many students have photographs of themselves over the years, and they usually had other memorabilia from their school years. However, there were students who had little to no items. Minimally, all students had their school pictures, so these students included these pictures with the book. Other students, particularly foster children, did not have many mementos. Since they moved from home to home, there were few items that they might keep. With those students, they had the option of illustrating items that they previously had or items that they wished they had. As the in-house yearbook photographer, I regularly took pictures of my students, and they knew that my camera was near at hand. If students wanted me to take their photos, I did, and I gave those prints to them, at no charge. My spending a few dollars provided tangible memories for the students. Those memories were worth far more than the price of having photographs made.

Once all of the writing had been completed, students gathered their photographs, mementos, and other artifacts and crafted it into a book. This book could be a binder of loose-leaf papers, or it could be an elaborate scrapbook, with the fancy fonts and colors. It was the students' decision on how this book was to be constructed. In some cases, students put a journal entry, photograph, and memento on the same page, like a collage. In other cases, they kept each section separate with dividers between each section. The books' appearances were not a concern. As long as it was complete, with the requisite writing assignments and other artifacts, it was fine.

Time was set aside for the book construction process. Prom, at my school, was on a Thursday evening, so construction took place the Monday, Tuesday, and Wednesday, with it being due on the Thursday of Prom. Keeping them from talking about their Prom festivities was a lost cause, so as long as they were completing a constructive project, the conversations continued.

Students preferred to construct their books in class. At home, many students had younger siblings, and these students were afraid that their items would be lost. Each class had a box, and the students were welcome to store their precious works in the box until the next class period. During book construction, it was the students' responsibilities to bring all needed supplies: scissors, glue, tape, paper, markers, lettering, etc., in addition to their writing. It was not unusual for the girls to spend hundreds of dollars at the scrapbooking store, picking the right paper and lettering for their books. Surprisingly, boys also brought the elaborate scrapbooks, with the fancy papers and lettering. Fearing that some boys looked effeminate, they "blamed" their mothers for getting the supplies for them. However, the majority of the time, the boys in the class had enough self-esteem to take tremendous pride in their books.

Every once in awhile, a student may forget an item, and at that point, he or she can borrow from my craft box. However, this borrowing is highly discouraged. Groups of friends have worked together to divvy the responsibilities of the supplies. One year, there was a class of 15 students who decided that each person was responsible for an item, and they shared the communal materials. In another year, it was every man or woman for him or herself. Whatever the case, during the book creation process, students were very serious, making sure to place the correct item with the appropriate piece of writing.

Students have asked if they could construct electronic books and submit a DVD or CD of their works, and I have said that they could submit an electronic version of their work in addition to the tangible book itself. Books are a powerful source of information. Holding it and actively turning the pages require thought and energy. Lingering on a page, soaking in the color and text, are rewarding experiences in themselves. The idea of reading from a computer screen is not appealing, and an e-book could not be read without machinery. At a recent ten-year reunion, I learned that a group of students brought their books to the reunion. It must have been a wonderful sight to see those adults recall their youth. They could have had a similar experience with a DVD, provided that a DVD player was available. However, looking at an e-book on a telephone screen does not have the same appeal as leafing through tangible pages.

Oral Presentations

As stated earlier, there was one week between prom and final exams. With regards to final exams, I didn't take them very seriously. They had already cut their ties from the academic world long before spring break, so I gave a simple final exam question: identify, explain, and give a rationale of five lessons you learned since January. Their answers gave me a clear picture of what they felt was important to remember from the semester. Since the final exam did not require strenuous studying, the week between prom and exams was time for oral presentations.

Oral presentations provide students opportunities to communicate about themselves in an atmosphere that is built around mutual respect (Blasingame and Bushman, 19). For the final phase of the portfolio project, students gave oral presentations about their favorite food/meal. Each student

needed to give a five minute oral presentation on this topic: reasons for their preference, the occasion of its consumption, the ingredients, the recipe, and one unique characteristic about it. After the student gave the oral presentation, he or she needed to distribute samples to everyone in the room. The number of students in the class determined the number of presentations per day (number of students divided by five days). In order for the students to stay attentive, no one was allowed to eat any of the samples until everyone gave their presentations for that day. Then, it became a food fest. The first year I gave this assignment, the students only brought enough samples for their classmates. As a result, everyone ate but me. The next year, I reminded them that they needed to bring enough for the students AND the teacher.

For the last week of school, it was a nice way to end their time together. We got to break bread and have wonderful conversations about their time in high school. Some students got nostalgic; some became braggarts, while others were surprisingly quiet. Whatever the case, I got to sit and take in my scene of students, watching them as they were about to leave the security and confines of high school.

Conclusion

As a teacher, I enjoyed grading them. I am basically a nosy person, so reading these portfolios gave me a voyeuristic window into my students' lives: past and present. Since it was the end of the year, most of their writing skills had improved, so reading their texts was not as difficult. Grades were given for completion, not correction. If all of the parts were there, then the student received full credit. Points were deducted when students forgot to include a family inventory or a journal entry.

This senior portfolio project was fun to teach and enjoyable to administer. Since students wrote a variety of texts and

genres, every Common Core State Standard for high school writing was covered. Students use academic language when describing their best and worst subjects; they reflect on the journal entries before responding to them, and they need to engage a variety of resources to get this project completed.

Adolescents are narcissistic, and at the end of senior year, their narcissism truly shines. Their main focus is on themselves, plain and simple. What better way to channel that focus into a project that is all about themselves. As a result, they are documenting who they are, telling their readers and themselves, "This is who I am."

APPENDIX A

Journal Entries

Answer the following questions. Each answer should be at least 250–300 words. This is about 1/2 page typed, double spaced or one page handwritten, on loose leaf paper. Spelling and punctuation will not be graded. I will only grade for completeness. Feel free to be as honest and frank as you want with these answers. The only person who will read them is me.

1. As of today, how do you want to be remembered? What do you want people to think of when your name comes up?
2. Who are your best friends today? Why are they your best friends?
3. Who used to be your friend? Why are you not friends with that person anymore? Would you be friends with this person if given the chance?
4. Which of your current friends will you make an effort to keep in touch with? Why these people?

5. Which teachers would you keep in touch with at Driscoll? Why would you keep in touch with these people?
6. Who is the best teacher you've ever had, either at Driscoll or elsewhere? Why is this teacher so great?
7. Describe your family. Make sure to include your parents, stepparents, siblings, and anyone else who lives with you, like the pet.
8. Who is the most influential person in your life today? How is this person influential? Why is the person influential?
9. Who is your favorite relative? Why is this person so special to you?
10. If you could have any meal in the world, what would it be? Why?
11. Who do you admire? Why do you admire this person? What kind of an impact has this person made on your life?
12. What regrets do you have? Why do you have these regrets?
13. If you could live your life over again, what would you change? Why?
14. What is your favorite activity? Why is it your favorite thing to do? What's so great about this activity?
15. If you had one day to live, what would you do? Why would you do those activities?
16. What will you do the day after graduation?
17. Will you feel sad or elated when you receive your diploma? Why would you have these emotions?
18. As graduates, what lessons or advice would you give to the incoming freshmen? Why are these

advice/lessons so valuable to you?

19. Describe Driscoll Catholic High School, from your perspective. Make sure that you include the teachers, students, staff, and everything else that makes this place unique.
20. Do you have any regrets for attending Driscoll? What are they? Why? If you have no regrets, why don't you have any regrets?
21. What kind of life do you think you'll have five years from now?
22. What kind of things would you *like* to tell at your tenth year reunion? What do you think you'll *really* tell at this reunion?
23. What fears do you have? Why these fears?
24. What career goals do you have? Do you think you'll reach them? Why?
25. What personal goals do you have? Do you think you'll reach them? Why?

APPENDIX B

Family Inventory

Give these questions to four people: an immediate family member, someone at Driscoll who isn't a student, an extended family member, and a mentor/coach who is not a part of Driscoll.

My Name:

Name:

Relationship to Me:

What kind of a person do you see me as today?

Where do you see me in 5–10 years?

What experiences do you want me to have as I become an adult?

What advice do you wish you got when you were my age?

What advice do you want me to have?

APPENDIX C

Letters

You will write at least one copy of the following letters (You can write more if you'd like). Of these five letters, you must send two of them: the one to an influential teacher and one other. You must have Xeroxed copies of all of the letters that you send in your journal. For the letters you send, you must include an open, stamped, and addressed envelope and a current photo with your letter. Every letter must be at least one page long.

Letter to a Mentor/Teacher: Write a letter to an influential teacher, mentor, or another adult, who is NOT a part of your family. Tell this person why he/she is so influential and tell him/her the impact he/she has made on your life. *You must send this letter*.

Letter to Parents: Write a letter to your parents. Tell them how you really feel about them. Feel free to be as honest and frank as you want to. Do not be vulgar. Use the opportunity to tell your Mom and/or Dad everything that's been on your mind about them.

Letter of Apology: Write a letter of genuine apology to someone whom you've hurt, whether it was intentional or not. Admit to your wrongdoing and tell this person what you would do, if you could, to remedy the situation.

Letter to a Friend: Write a letter to a current friend. In this letter, tell him/her how much he/she means to you. Talk about a favorite activity or a wonderful shared memory. Also, write about your future with him/her and your friendship.

Letter to an Admirer: Write a letter to someone you admire. It could be anyone from a movie star, sports figure, or someone you actually know. Tell this person why you admire them. Be specific about the important qualities this person has and why you admire them.

APPENDIX D

Personal Inventory

As of today, what is my:

Favorite color?

Favorite restaurant?

Favorite snack?

Favorite food?

Favorite meal?

Favorite thing to eat for breakfast?

Favorite fast food joint?

Favorite band?

Favorite type of music?

Favorite album/CD?

Favorite actor?

Favorite actress?

Favorite movie?

Favorite television show?

Favorite website?

Favorite radio station?

Favorite superhero?

Favorite store?

Favorite place to shop?

Favorite place to go for a special occasion?

Favorite place to go to kill time?

Favorite place to go to meet people?

Favorite clothes to wear on a dress down day?

Favorite clothes to wear on a Saturday morning?

Favorite clothes to wear when I go out with my friends?

Favorite clothes to wear when I go out with my parents?

Favorite thing to do with my friends?

Favorite thing to do when I'm alone?

Favorite thing to do if I had all of the time in the world?

Favorite thing about school?

Favorite thing about being a teenager?

Favorite thing about graduating?

Complete the following sentences.

If I had a million dollars, I would

If I could go anywhere in the world, I would

If I could have genius talent, it would be

If I could do one thing over, I would

If I could be anyone in the world, I would be

If I met the president, I would

If money was no object, I would

If time was no object, I would

If I could do one GREAT act of kindness, it would be

If I could alter history, I would change

If I was principal for the day, I would

If I met God today, I would

If I met Satan today, I would

If I was God, I would

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Byung-In Seo is an associate professor in the Doctoral Studies Department at Chicago State University. As a former English teacher who also taught math, she is interested in writing across all curricula, linking ELA and mathematics at the secondary level. This project was a means of her keeping her sanity during the last weeks of the school year.

FORM TO FUNCTION: ACADEMIC INQUIRY IN THE MULTIGENRE FORMAT

J. D. SIMPSON
R. L. SIMPSON

Research Writing

A poem for ten thousand voices

Thus Spake the Teacher…	The Student Responds…
This is what you shall do:	
You will	
	I am eager to
Learn	Learn
You will	
	I am curious; I will
Research	Research
You will	

Give to me
An
Essay

Double-spaced

Times New Roman

Twelve-point
Five paragraphs
With
Your

With your Thesis Statement Underlined.
You will

Cite
Your
Sources

You will

Be Consistent

I will
Give to you
An-
Other
Essay
Just like the five other
Essays

Double-spaced

Times New Roman
Twelve-point
Five paragraphs
With
My
Thesis Statement Underlined

I will
As ever
Cite
My
Sources
Sources
Sources
I will
As ever
Be Consistent

("With consistency
A great soul has
Simply nothing
To do."–
Remember when

You told me that?)

You will conform
To the standards
Of MLA
And I prefer footnotes.

You would.

You

I

Will

Will

Not

Not

Use

Use

"I."

"I."

Please do not use
Color ink

Or
Color paper.

Standard
Standard
Standard
Standard margins only
(I'll use a ruler)

(He actually does. I've seen it.)

I will not

Have fun!

Have fun!

Rationale and the Research Question

Learning always should be the object of academic endeavor. Among the most important skills a teacher should impart to a student is the ability to know how to know—the ability to pose a question, then seek and find the answer, and report on the process all independent of the teacher. This is the real value of student inquiry: The student learns how to learn. For as long as we have been learners ourselves we have been involved in the process of inquiry, first as students asking questions, accumulating sources, reporting findings, documenting our work in carefully prescribed ways. Later, as classroom teachers, we have instructed young people in precisely the same process—using bibliography cards and note cards, drafting thesis statements, preparing detailed outlines, constructing works cited pages, all in 12-point, font Times New Roman, double-spaced, with a carefully prescribed manuscript-form title page, and all according to the faceless gods of style at the Modern Language Association. And the product has been much the same from year to year and generation to generation, with few major or important variations on an original predictable and limited theme.

Not that there's anything wrong with that.

Traditional academic writing certainly has its place, and this project has in no way been an effort to replace the time-honored formal essay. Some information is best presented in a straightforward and scholarly format. All young scholars need the experience and the skills that only the traditional process offers. And they certainly get that experience. In the contemporary standards- and tests-driven classroom, students spend more time with traditional, formal research. According to the Ohio Academic Content Standards: K–12 English Language Arts, students in kindergarten begin with research objectives (132–140) and from grade one, students are writing responses

to literature (113–124). In the middle school and junior high schools, students craft formal research papers. Upon reaching the high school English classroom, which has in the past been the accepted and exclusive forum for imparting these research skills, the process is no longer mysterious nor particularly novel. Young people have conducted traditional research to the point of boredom, and even then the kinds of research they formerly would have conducted in the English-Language Arts classroom are being duplicated in almost every other discipline in the building.

The framework for virtually all traditional research is the same as it is for most analytical studies of literature—the thesis-driven, multi-paragraph/five-paragraph essay. This structured form is an important and useful rhetorical tool. Students absolutely have to learn how to write a structured, thesis-driven essay in order to meet the writing standards established by the state, in order to pass the test. It also is an excellent way to teach students formal organizational skills and to allow them simply to relay information. And students in this modern, standards-based educational system become proficient at this kind of structured writing early. However, this structured essay form does little to encourage the development of voice or personal writing style. Strong voice and interesting writing style move proficient students beyond mere proficiency, beyond minimal state standards. To develop these qualities, students need options.

That the thesis-driven structured essay is a useful tool for academic writing is undeniable. However, it may not be the only way, or even the best way for students to report their discoveries. Students must become competent at structured writing by the time they take the Ohio Graduation Test in the tenth grade. But besides seeing that they master that set of skills, we are pedagogically obligated to move them beyond,

to teach them to explore, to experiment, to try new ways to communicate what they learn and what they know.

In a sense, different forms of writing are not merely different forms of *writing*, but different ways of using words to explore and understand the world. So a haiku is as different from a thesis-driven, five-paragraph essay as a sculpture is from a photograph. Both of these forms are valid, and just as sculpture and photography explore the human form in vastly different ways, so do the haiku and the traditional academic essay allow students to explore their learning in vastly different ways. This underscores one of the weaknesses of the standards-based curriculum we have been mandated by the state to implement. Such a curriculum assumes that all writing is equal and that it is all in some sense the same act that serves all purposes equally. So students are not required to master, nor even attempt, many forms of "creative" writing. Recognizing the shortcomings often inherent in formal, thesis-driven essay writing, we were led to wonder how students might best inquire, present the results of their inquiry, and present those results with voice, style, and freshness. Is it possible, and valuable, to merge academic and creative writing?

That led us to the multigenre paper.

> A multigenre paper arises from research, experience, and imagination. It is either an uninterrupted, expository monologue nor a seamless narrative nor a collection of poems. A multigenre paper is composed of many genres and subgenres, each piece self-contained, making a point of its own, yet connected by theme or topic and sometimes by language, images, and content. (Romano, *Blending Genre*, x)

Multigenre writing allows students to do everything they would do in a traditional kind of assignment—ask

questions, conduct research, examine literature, present what they learn—but multigenre writing empowers students by giving them the freedom to do all of these things in ways that are most meaningful to the students themselves. Multigenre writing has the potential to remove the teacher and the teacher's biases from the center of the classroom activity, replacing them with the student and the student's needs and strengths. Thus, we reasoned, with multigenre writing the teacher gets what she needs—evidence of inquiry and learning—and the student gets what she needs—choice and voice.

Multigenre is not a new idea. A simple Google search on the term "multigenre writing" turns up more than 6,000 responses. Websites offer suggestions for using multigenre writing at every grade level, from elementary school through graduate school, and in every conceivable discipline and for every conceivable purpose. While the rest of the world seemed to be singing the praises of multigenre writing, our experiences with the form ranged from limited to nonexistent. It was thus reasonable for us to explore using the form as a way of allowing our students to conduct a traditional academic inquiry in a most nontraditional way.

The first thing we had to do was learn—we both studied Tom Romano's *Blending Genre, Altering Style: Writing Multigenre Papers*. We browsed the internet to examine what other teachers have done, how they crafted their assignments, what they required of their students, and how they evaluated them. Armed with knowledge gleaned from Romano and other teachers, we began to craft the assignments. We wanted to examine different academic goals for the multigenre writing, as well as look at the use of such projects with students of various ability levels.

For this project, we each began with assignments we had used in previous classes. Becky, teaching two twelfth

grade honors classes, instructed her students to select and research the life and works of an author, always part of an extensive study. J. D., teaching an eleventh grade Pre-AP class, instructed his students to research an original essential question. Giselle O. Martin-Kniep defines the essential question as the kind of broad-based question that leads to extensive inquiry rather than to specific answers:

> They transcend cultural and age boundaries in ways no other questions do. They are universal. They are never fully answerable…Essential questions lead to the realization that knowledge is an ongoing search, and one that makes life worth living. (2)

We both required students engaged in these activities to conduct traditional research, including the use of detailed, annotated bibliographies and citations. However, in lieu of a traditional essay, we challenged young scholars to report what they had learned in a multigenre format. Further, we did not require student researcher-writers to use citations as they would have in a traditional research paper, but only that they include such citations when directly quoting a source.

To broaden our inquiry, we also designed multigenre writing assignments for students in heterogeneously grouped elective literature courses. Becky's assignment targeted students in two Bible as/in Literature classes, and J. D.'s those in two mythology classes. All of these classes included students of vastly differing abilities, from AP-level and honors students to those on a general education track. Rather than conduct formal research, these students were challenged "to explore, to examine, to illuminate" characters, stories or themes from their respective courses of study. The specific assignments for all of these classes are available in Appendices A–D at the end of this document.

Before students received the assignments, we conducted a survey to gauge their attitudes toward academic writing and research, and to allow them to reflect upon their own experiences merging creative and academic writing. Also, as part of the assignment, we required that students keep writer's journals to reflect on and respond to the experience of crafting a multigenre paper. These surveys and journals were to be the means by which we would measure the outcome of our investigation. All of these assignments were long-term projects, so both of us created mini-lessons and auxiliary handouts to teach the various genres and distinctive features of the multigenre paper. We gathered and distributed examples of multigenre papers for our students to study. We set up a writing schedule giving students short-term deadlines—a couple of pieces due for peer conferences each week. We held periodic conferences with our students and we kept our own research journals. The students worked on their multigenre papers for about eight weeks.

Student Product

Primarily on the strength of anecdotal evidence—casual discussions with students and thirty-one combined years of teaching experience—we approached our research question armed with a series of suppositions:

- Students enjoy writing, and they tend to prefer writing with fewer restrictions.
- Students *really* enjoy writing creatively.
- Students feel overly restricted and just plain bored with traditional research- and inquiry-based reporting methods—the thesis-driven five-paragraph essay.

- Under the right circumstances, students are very capable of figuring out what they need to know, learning it, and reporting it.

Based on these assumptions, we reasoned that by approaching the inquiry-based research and academic paper in ways novel to the students, we might capitalize on students' positive attitudes and avoid those characteristics of academic writing they view with less enthusiasm. Specifically, we believed that we could have students do original research and academic inquiry, report it in ways most meaningful to the students, generate real learning, and have a good time doing it.

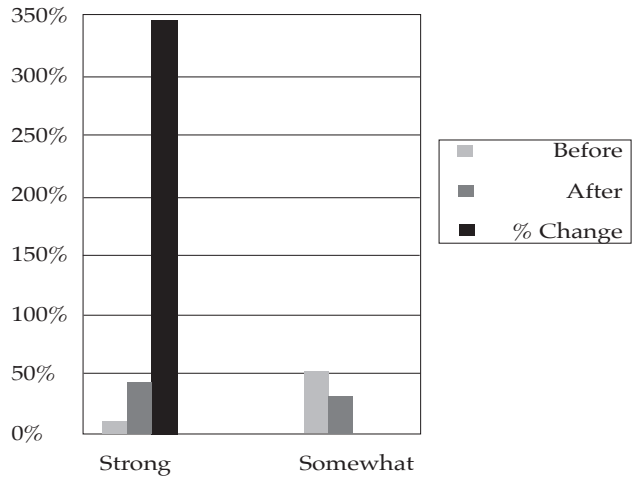
Before making the multigenre assignment, we gauged student attitudes with a brief, formal survey. We asked students about their attitudes toward the research- or inquiry-based academic writing process; about their experiences writing in various genres; about their attitudes toward their own writing, whether traditional or nontraditional; and about their experiences in using creative writing as a tool for reporting what they had learned. This introductory survey was followed at the conclusion of the assignment by a complementary survey which asked students about their attitudes toward research- and inquiry-based writing; about what they perceive as the usefulness of various genres within those kinds reporting; and about their perceptions of their own voices and styles. Copies of the surveys are included in Appendix E at the end of this document.

On the sole basis of the students' own assessment, as reflected in the survey results, using the multigenre writing process as a way to report the results of research- and inquiry-based study yielded what we regard as astonishing findings. Overall, students' positive attitudes toward the research and inquiry process increased exponentially as a result of combining traditional means of inquiry with multigenre reporting.

Before students saw the assignment, 11 percent strongly agreed, and 51 percent somewhat agreed, that they had a positive attitude toward this kind of writing process (Figure No. 1). Eighteen percent strongly agreed and 48 percent somewhat agreed that multiple genres would be useful in reporting what they had learned (Figure No. 2). Twenty-two percent strongly agreed and 37 percent somewhat agreed that their writing voice was "unique, lively, vigorous, interesting" (Figure No. 3). These statistics affirmed our assumptions that students enjoy writing, and that they tend to prefer writing with fewer restrictions. What we found most significant—though we had predicted a similar outcome—was the dramatic shift in student attitudes after using multigenre writing as a way to present research and inquiry results.

Figure No. 1: Generally, I have a positive attitude toward research- and inquiry-based writing.

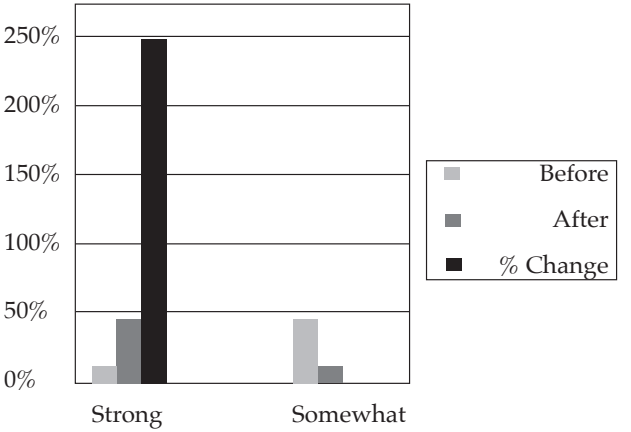
	Strongly agree	Somewhat agree
Before	11 percent	51 percent
After	38 percent	34 percent



After completing the multigenre papers, 34 percent somewhat agreed and 38 percent strongly agreed that they had a positive attitude toward the research- and inquiry-based writing process. This represents a 345 percent increase among those who strongly asserted a positive attitude toward the process (Figure No. 1). Eighteen percent of the student respondents somewhat agreed, and 45 percent strongly agreed, that using a variety of genres was an effective way of reporting what they had learned. This represents a 250 percent increase among those who asserted strong agreement (Figure No. 2). Thirty-two percent somewhat agreed, and 46 percent strongly agreed, that the "multigenre approach has helped me to make my voice unique, lively, vigorous, interesting." This represents a 209 percent increase among those registering strong agreement (Figure No. 3).

Figure No. 1: Using a variety of genres is an effective way of reporting what I have learned.

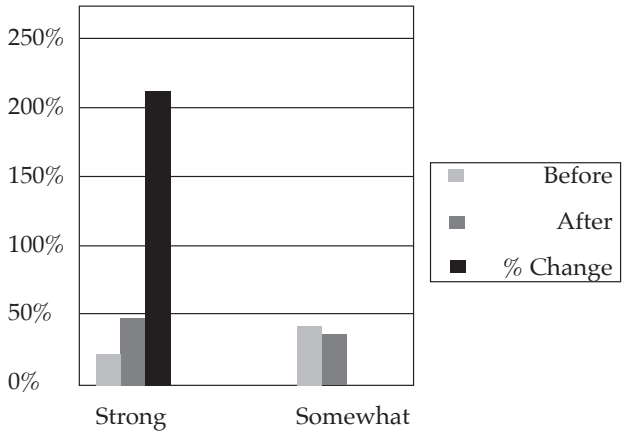
	Strongly agree	Somewhat agree
Before	18 percent	48 percent
After	45 percent	18 percent



These survey results alone are gratifying. At the outset of this assignment, we had hoped to accomplish three things: to merge the academic and creative writing processes; to encourage students to think and learn, to report what they had learned; and to improve students' skills as writers. The strong shift in student attitudes toward the research-inquiry and reporting process may be skewed in part by the students' own overwhelmingly positive experiences with multigenre writing. And it may be that when next these students are assigned a research project in a purely traditional format their attitudes will revert. But, we believe these results affirm our initial thesis, that students can experience a great deal of success and gratification by combining the academic and creative processes. Moreover, the survey results are merely one standard by which we measure the results of our research.

Figure No. 3: Multigenre writing has helped me to make my voice unique, lively, vigorous, interesting.

	Strongly agree	Somewhat agree
Before	22 percent	37 percent
After	46 percent	32 percent



There remain the teachers' perceptions of the results of student endeavor, and the students' own writing journals, the latter of which offer a running commentary on the process the students undertook in this assignment.

Writer's Journals

Over the course of this project, we read more than 100 writer's journals, several times, during the students' study and reporting process. Students were instructed to make entries in their journals at least with the completion of each separate piece of writing in their multigenre papers. Most met this standard; many exceeded it considerably. Many of the entries were merely explanations of a particular piece of writing—a poem or narrative—and offered little in the way of illuminating the process of discovery we were hoping to track. Some entries, however, were most instructive, and revealed much about students' thinking and writing processes. In many cases, these processes were profound and highly detailed.

Examining student reflections on this assignment led us to a number of conclusions:

Multigenre writing allowed students to be creative by permitting them to use a wide variety of genres. The project led many students to attempt kinds of writing they never had explored, and it forced them out of their "comfort zones." Despite the fact that students often rankle at being told to write a rigidly structured, thesis-driven theme, it is a familiar structure, and one in which many have a high degree of success. Giving them options is both liberating and vexing.

Rebecca, an Honors English student researched the life of 18th century satirist, Jonathan Swift. Rebecca chose a wide variety of genres to report what she learned. Her paper began with a poem that summarized the major events in Swift's life.

The next piece was an original drawing of a stained glass window depicting Swift and his career as a clergyman. To communicate about Swift's romantic interests, Rebecca wrote a love letter from Swift to his paramour, Stella, and a stream-of-consciousness piece from the perspective of Vanessa, Stella's jealous rival for Swift's affection. Because Swift was a political satirist, he was often at odds with British royalty. To communicate that conflict, Rebecca crafted not one, but two paralle, double-voice poems—one with the voices of Swift and Queen Anne of England and the other with the voices of Lemuel Gulliver and the queen of Lilliput from Swift's masterpiece *Gulliver's Travels*. Rebecca also brought her readers to Swift's deathbed with a touching piece of historic fiction. About her finished product, Rebecca says, "Each piece I wrote shows a different side of Swift. One essay could have never done him justice."

Kenneth is a 10th-grade student in a heterogeneously grouped mythology class. Elsewhere, Kenneth is enrolled in general education classes. Through much of the mythology class, he earned C's and was marginally involved in class activities. He chose as his topic the "quest" motif, and set about to describe his own dreams and aspirations in the same terms as the heroic quests we had read and discussed in class: *Jason and the Argonauts*, *The Twelve Labors of Heracles*, *The Odyssey*, and *The Epic of Gilgamesh*. It was a singular achievement when Kenneth submitted his completed paper, and his pride in the accomplishment was evident. He described the connections he'd made in an early journal entry:

> While I was writing this biography piece I was just thinking about my dream. I was relating myself to the quest motif that we have read about in class. Kind of like Jason (had) to get the Golden Fleece basically to survive and that's exactly how I feel about rapping.

The project allowed students to report what they had discovered through multiple intelligences. Besides using a wide variety of written-word genres, our students produced compositions in a dizzying array of alternate forms: drawings, board games, etchings, collages, sculpture, photography, video, music performance, music composition, and interpretive dance. For some students this was an opportunity to tap into familiar talents and interests. For others, it was the chance—and the challenge—to explore modes of expression they never would have considered.

Beth, an accomplished flutist, sees the world through musical eyes. To represent the psychological stages of Sylvia Plath's life, Beth performed three classical flute solos. Senior Sarah explored the biblical book of Job and decided that the best way to portray Job's isolation was by sculpting the scene of his suffering in a closed jar. Erica took the challenge of communicating in many genres to expand her creativity. Besides her written pieces, Erica wrote an original song and filmed a documentary about the life of King David. In her writer's journal she recorded, "I was allowed to be creative and learn in my own way…the multigenre format enabled me to expand my thinking and explore my topic in a way that me, personally, could learn the most."

Brittany is a 12th-grade general education student enrolled in mythology. Though she never said as much, we get the impression that she had prior experience with the multigenre approach. Almost immediately she selected her topic—the Trojan War—and set about creating the centerpiece of her paper, a board game based on the familiar story of Paris and Helen, Achilles and Hector, Odysseus and the fall of Troy. "I'm really excited about the multigenre project," she noted in her first entry. "I like it because you can't really be wrong in it. It's awesome because it gives you a chance

to really be creative rather than writing the same old lame papers we usually do." The student responded initially to the "fun" inherent in the multigenre paper, and to the safety of the form ("you can't really be wrong"), but it was evident that she had made the kinds of deeper connections that a student can make only if she is actively engaged in the process of inquiry and discovery:

> I really like the topic I chose (Trojan War). I find this mythical war very interesting. I've seen all three versions of the movies made…I think I'm going to use the theme of overwhelming pride and the way Helen causes this war (the power of a beautiful woman/the way a woman is passed around). Overwhelming pride plays a huge role because almost all of your big heroes and main characters end up dying from their pride, such as Agamemnon.…He even sacrifices his daughter for smooth sailing to Troy. But in the end his wife slaughters him. The woman thing is a huge role…

The repetend, one of the defining qualities of the multigenre paper, requires deep connections and higher-order thinking. It is the component of the paper students tend to find most confusing, most challenging. Romano defines the repetend as "the unexpected repetition of a word, phrase, sentence, or passage. Unlike the regular appearance of a refrain, the repetend gains power and impact by its unexpected use" (*Blending Genre* 154). For purposes of this project, we instructed students that the repetend might be thought of as a motif, or theme, or repeated image that appears periodically in the paper, a thread that runs through and unites the entire paper. Students used the repetend with varying degrees of success—and with varying degrees of grace—some insisting that they never were able to identify that single unifying element. We noticed that in

some cases, though the writer might not see a repetend emerging in her paper, we were able to detect such patterns. It is suggestive of the psychology of creation that motifs might appear quite without the writer's being aware. The search for such patterns, which requires great synthesis and great understanding on the part of the writer, is very much at the heart of the multigenre paper. It is also a defining characteristic of research and inquiry themselves, and is indicative of higher order thinking. Without fail, the very best papers were those in which the writers spent great time considering the repetend, and searching for the structure and form underlying their discoveries.

Honors senior, Kate, researched author Aldous Huxley. Kate was stumped as she began her paper. She had lots of information, but no focus. But she started writing, and as she wrote, she had one of those lightbulb moments. Huxley, a writer renowned for his vision and insight, was temporarily blinded by disease as a teenager. That experience changed Huxley forever, and out of it grew his love for writing. Blindness and vision became the centerpiece of Kate's paper. She wrote a poem entitled "My Eyes," and a news story with the headline "All Eyes on Huxley". As a visual element, Kate created an abstract art piece of eyes. Her final piece—and the one she took the most pride in—was a science fiction short story about one of Huxley's descendants hundreds of years from now living in the brave new world he envisioned. The final line of Kate's piece, as the protagonist of her story is about to be arrested for resistance is, "Oh, Aldous, why did you have to see this? Your vision is both a blessing and a cusrse."

Zoe is an Honors/Pre-AP English student, who came to this process with extensive experience in academic and scholarly writing. She is a gifted writer, but lamented in an early response to her instructor, "I don't think that there have

been enough opportunities since about ninth grade to write different genres. Generally, our writings are research papers and analytical papers and not enough chance is given to write creatively." Zoe quickly decided what her topic would be. She posed the question: "Does art change society or does society change art?" It took her some time to find the repeating pattern that would hold together her paper. However, when she did identify her repetend, the process of inquiry and discovery indicated careful and deep thought, and real understanding of her topic:

> I think my repetend will be the *Three Dancers* by Pablo Picasso. This piece shows the feelings of the era, and is a good piece of art work. It is balanced. It has unity and all of the other elements that are required and used in art…Pablo Picasso's work is a very good example of how art reflects society. Picasso's blue period was a time of depression and sadness. It reflected the general views of society.

Identifying the repetend was not always as easy, or as natural. Nor did all students recognize it when it emerged. Jessica is an accomplished writer, a student in both Honors English and in the heterogeneously grouped mythology class. She wrote two multigenre papers, and in both she reported difficulty identifying a repetend. In his response to her mythology paper, Jessica's instructor identified a repetend for her, an ingenious use of the writing process itself as a touchstone for the story she was telling. Yet, when she submitted her writer's journal for her essential question, after having written two multigenre papers, she observed, "I really didn't understand the repetend (even in the one in First Period I guessed at it and took one that worked)." She might well have regarded this as a failure on her part, but in both papers the repetend

was evident, and in both papers the repetend contributed to the overall strength and final success of the paper.

Nearly uniformly, students registered surprise with the results of this project. Almost as universally, they were pleased with the product of their labor. Jessica, an Honors English student, called the project "overwhelming. I mean that in a good way. Some of the things that exploring the question brought up in my mind were things that were hard to get out of my mind. It was surprising." It seems almost a truism that all teachers would like all of their assignments to have the kind of "staying power" Jessica describes. How often are our assignments forgotten as soon as they are submitted? How often is a piece of writing completed in a perfunctory manner, and its effects dismissed by the very student writers for whom the assignments are supposed to create a lasting lesson?

Not only did they learn a great deal about the topics they had chosen to study—and we should expect this in any project that requires inquiry or research—but they reported that they learned much about writing. In the process of this assignment, partly as a result of the requirements we placed upon them, many students discovered they have an affinity for certain kinds of writing—especially poetry—that they had rarely, or never, attempted.

Honors English student Kayla makes precisely this point in the concluding reflection of her writer's journal.

> When writing this multigenre paper I noticed a number of things. Writing in so many different ways made it possible to explore all aspects of my topic. It also allowed me to write about something that I feel is important rather than what someone else does. It was a much more well-rounded project than any other I've done before. I learned a lot about myself as well as just general information.

Kayla's classmate, Erika, lamented that she knew little about poetry, wrote it infrequently, and generally was dissatisfied with her efforts. Yet, as part of her multigenre paper, she wrote a compelling and haunting multi-voice poem recounting the dark ironies surrounding the terrible events at Columbine High School on April 20, 1999. Reflecting on her final product, Erika concluded that "Overall I am very happy with my paper…. Writing in different genres was a really good way to explore my question from different angles. I don't often get to write poetry (that's a good thing) so I guess that was good to try out. It was kind of difficult because I was forced to write in genres I don't normally do."

Several reluctant learners were surprised that they actually had a good time with this assignment. Senior Scott, the one who sits in the far back corner and does just enough to get by, said, "I was surprised when I started to work on the project that I liked it. I enjoyed working on it because I learned more…" Justin, said, "I really liked this project, which is odd because I hate English."

Students came to an awareness of and a respect for their own unique voices as a result of this process. Erika, who had asserted that "My voice sucks no matter how hard I try," observed in the end that "It's weird how before I would begin writing a piece I would know if it would be good or not. If I was interested deeply about the subject of the piece, or if I liked writing in that genre, then it would turn out to be pretty good."

Some students reported that this assignment was the first in which they were encouraged to explore their own voices. Some students reported that they were unaware that they had a discernible voice. A common theme that emerged among students suggested that student voice simply is not a consideration in most academic writing.

Perhaps most compelling and provocative, however, is the fact that after completing this assignment, students simply could not wait to share with their peers what they had created and what they had learned. Because of the scope of the project and the personal nature of the creation process, most students were deeply invested in their multigenre papers. Having been given the freedom to express what they had learned in the way that best suited their topic and their own personalities, every student had something they were proud to share. They also were eager to experience what their peers had created. That rarely happens when a class shares five-paragraph essays. Senior Anna observed, "These are much more interesting to read than an essay about our author would have been."

Case Studies

The purpose of the following case studies is to demonstrate how students used the multigenre format to conduct original inquiry or research, and to report on the results of their inquiry. We wish both to highlight the various ways students used the multitude of genres at their disposal, and to document the processes—problems as well as triumphs—they experienced as they created their papers. Not all of the examples in these studies are those of motivated or typically successful students, and not all of the students profiled in this section of the paper enjoyed the multigenre paper. The point, of course, is not that students should like the assignment, although that is always a bonus. The purpose of this project, as with all classroom activities, is to promote learning. We believe this is a representative sample and gives ample evidence of successful learning, and the successful merger of academic inquiry with creative writing.

Bradley

Brad is a junior enrolled in general education courses. He is a friendly young man, but he is not particularly outgoing. Each morning he arrives early to class and talks with a small group of friends—not from this class—who gather at his desk. He appears to initiate the conversation very rarely. He does engage the classroom teacher in conversations, however, and appears to prefer the company of adults to that of his peers.

Brad is not a highly motivated student. He does not exhibit the skills associated with successful scholarship, including writing skills, research skills, basic inquiry skills. He also does not appear to engage the material presented in this elective course at a particularly high level of thinking. During most of the semester-long course, Brad produced little work, earning an F for the first quarter, almost exclusively the result of his failure to produce anything that could be evaluated.

It was difficult engaging Brad in this multigenre paper. There were at the outset many false starts. Several peer editing sessions passed before Brad produced a work suitable for sharing in the group—that is, a work that was complete enough to generate any peer responses. For a long time, I despaired of ever having a project from this student. During conferences with the student, he seemed to be detached from the process and unsure about how he could or should proceed. At some point during the process, a number of things seemed to come together. The class was studying the Greek story of Theseus. We also were engaged in a detailed class discussion of the characteristics of the hero. Brad seemed interested in the story and in the idea of the hero and the quest motif in literature. At the same time, I presented a handful of mini lessons designed to help students explore different kinds of writing for use in their multigenre papers.

Brad apparently never had written poetry. He immediately was drawn to a simple poem form, the acrostic poem, and began to work with poetry using his name and the characteristics of the hero. In studying the life of Theseus, Brad was able to make some connections with his own life. One acrostic poem used the name of Theseus, and the other Bradley:

ACROSTIC	ACROSTIC (BRADLEY)
T—ough	B—alanced
H—astey [*sic*]	R—abelias (rebellious)
E—gress	A—ir head
S—hameless	D—auntless
E—gocentric	L—azy
U—nconquerable	E—asygoing
S—killfull [*sic*]	Y—oung

I reproduce the stanzas here exactly as he wrote them. The poems are remarkable for their very existence, but also because they indicate a kind of introspection that I had never seen before in this student. The first also suggests that Brad understood something of the character of Theseus. In his writer's journal, the student noted regarding the acrostic poem about himself, "I thought it was a great idea since I'm trying to compare myself with Theseus, and I've already done an acrostic about him. And…Mr. Simpson himself also noticed that myn (mine) and theseus name has the same amount of letters in it." The connection seems simple enough, but it proved to be a starting point for Brad.

The student also produced a personal narrative, which he described in his journal as "my best piece of writing… because I describe my lives relationship with theseus's life. I also took a lot of time to get it done." It was here that Brad

revealed the connection he had made with the questing hero of Greek tradition. He chose as his repetend the "quest within a quest." Theseus is left by a royal father to be raised by his mother alone, and in time the youth undertakes a journey to discover his father, and thus to discover his own identity:

> Ever since I was little, I realized how good and how bad the world can treat you, which lead [*sic*] me to realize I don't belong. I've always thought that as I live my life that there was somewhere else I'm supposed to be. As my days slowly pass I've begun to live the life others want me to live. I think as I live this life that I'm finding out more about myself and how I think I should be. I've also come to believe that I am probably going to "find myself" when I'm living the life of an adult and doing more of the things I want and need to do to live a better life.

In the end, this student submitted about half of what was assigned. What is remarkable, though, is that he turned in this much, when he had submitted little else up to that point. Remarkable as well is that with his inquiry into the character and experiences of Theseus he managed to strike a chord inside himself, and make a connection. I believe, based on my experience with Brad, that the multigenre format—varied genres rather than a single thesis-driven five-paragraph essay—gave this student the freedom to write about his discoveries with a reasonable expectation of success.

Katie

Katie is an honors student in English, a talented writer and a gifted and experienced scholar. Though she is a capable writer of the thesis-driven, five-paragraph essay, it is clear that her interests and strengths lie in more creative areas. In

comments on her initial survey, Katie professed a generally positive attitude toward inquiry and research-based writing. She also asserted her belief that she has a strong and unique voice. However, at the same time, she said, "I've been given mostly research papers to write and not really any creative writing opportunities." In some ways, Katie was the ideal subject for this activity: a talented writer and an experienced and eager scholar who has been given few chances to meld those two interests.

The point of departure for the student's research focused on the essential question, "Can a person be defined, and can that definition be known by anyone but the individual himself?" Her paper was a heady and engaging discussion with herself about the definition of individuality, personal growth, and spiritual destinations. Katie was a serious researcher, and included in her final product not only a notable corpus of personal reflective writing, but auxiliary pieces from other sources, most notably a song, "The Best Imitation of Myself" by the contemporary musical group Ben Folds Five. In part it reads:

> I feel like a quote out of context
> Withholding the rest
> So I can be free what you want to see
> I got the gesture and sound
> Got the timing down
> It's uncanny, yeah, you'd think it was me
> Do you think I should take a class
> To lose my southern accent
> Did I make me up, or make the face till it stuck
> I do the best imitation of myself
>
> Maybe I'm thinking myself in a hole
> Wondering, who I am when I ought to know

> Straighten up now time to go
> Fool somebody else, fool somebody else. (Folds)

The overall effort was beautiful. It met and exceeded all of the standards of the assignment. It was filled with energy and with evidence of real inquiry. But it was not an easy road to travel, not even for this gifted young person who identifies herself very much through her creative energies. Nearly as fascinating as the multigenre paper itself was Katie's writer's journal, which was a chronicle of personal artistic and intellectual struggle. The entries in the journal were written as a series of letters to her teacher:

Second undated entry

> Dear Mr. Simpson,
>
> I'm approaching this a little cautiously because essential questions seem useless to me to try and debate. Plus, I'm confused as to how I will get everything to make sense and what all my paper will consist of.
>
> I've never been given the freedom in a paper.

Third undated entry

> Dear Mr. Simpson,
>
> I wrote a poem that expresses myself in it. I'm going to try and fit it into my topic. I'm a little scared of this assignment.

Fourth undated entry

> Dear Mr. Simpson,

I think you're crazy and there's no way I can do research on this topic!

…oh, never mind. I'm sorry!

I found stuff!

☺

Entry dated 12.2.04

!!!BREAKTHROUGH

Dear Mr. Simpson

I think I just wrote something good.

I wrote times for each statement, such as "@9:45 p.m. I hate apples." And so on…stating that if I'm defining myself a certain way, my opinions are always changing as well as the experiences I go through which, in the end I can only look back (on) and finally state who I am, define myself! ☺

Entry dated 12.5.04

Dear Mr. Simpson,

Frustration consumes me.

Entry dated 12.15.04

Dear Mr. Simpson,

It's been almost a week since I worked on my paper. *Moby Dick* has kept me from it, sort of.

I keep getting great concepts but I go to write them and

it no longer seems to be such a great concept due to my lack of ability to use words well. Bleh. I started a poem that will be like:

"I am…

I am…

etc."

That I thought might help as a repetend to slip in every so often.

(*Note: In an earlier journal entry, Katie had expended considerable energy trying to identify the controlling motif of her paper. She settled on the repeated phrase "I am."*)

Undated entry

I really do like this assignment but since I've never had complete control of a paper like this I'm afraid I'm doing everything against the rules, all the time.

Undated entry

(*Note: The following journal entry appeared by itself on a page. I believe it was the last entry before I asked the students for concluding observations.*)

I feel accomplished.

Final undated entry

My successful pieces are successful because they were my original ideas with heart and soul put into them. My passion, I think, shows on my successful pieces. I think that the ones that fall short of success are those that aren't

> unique sounding. Maybe I ran out of ideas by then.
>
> I definitely discuss my topic a lot but I think that I also created others and focused on some of those as well. By creating more questions though, more possibilities are created or spawned. Overall, I really am happy with my multigenre because it has allowed me to get creative as well as reflect on myself.

In light of the final product, which was a fine and deeply personal intellectual, aesthetic, and emotional quest, Katie's writer's journal is an important and informative document in itself. It tells the story of search and discovery, and ultimately of the triumph of learning which are the purposes of inquiry and research. This academic labor is well-represented in a profoundly creative package, thus demonstrating the efficacy of the multigenre approach to research writing.

Zoe

Zoe is an honors student, quiet and thoughtful, a talented writer, and a successful scholar. Like Katie, Zoe is an excellent candidate for this research project. She is capable of writing precise prose and careful analyses—she has been trained to do so for years—but she is much happier, much more comfortable with fewer of the restrictions she might call artificial. There is a sense that she is not as confident in her academic writing as she is with her creative efforts, and that the latter permits her to cut loose and write in a way that reflects her own personality, attitudes and values. Zoe also is an artist, so it is logical that her multigenre paper focus on art.

This student was extremely pleased with the multigenre approach to research reporting. In her closing survey she judged the format as useful both in helping her to explore her unique voice and style, and in presenting the results of her

research—that is, the multigenre approach was as useful to her as a reporter of research as the traditional, thesis-driven essay. "I don't think that there have been enough opportunities since about ninth grade to write in different genres," she observed in her opening comments. "Generally our writings are research papers and analytical papers and normally not enough chance is given to write creatively." She went on to describe her favorite writing assignment from her sophomore honors class—"a memoir project, consisting of multiple genres."

Zoe's first journal entry was a personal letter to me, thanking me for the opportunity to write a multigenre paper. "When writing research papers and formal essays, I never feel that it is appropriate to bring my voice out…I love the chance to get out of my 'student self' and just be free to write."

Like Katie, Zoe had difficulty at the outset researching and writing about her essential question: "Does art change society or does society change art?" In the end, she chose to examine the works and lives of famous artists and mimic their works in her own writings. Her first piece of writing, "The Picasso," was an attempt, she explained, to reflect cubism.

The Picasso

The art. Society changes. Art changes.
Who changes who?
Art is words.
Painting. Music.
Shape our society. Society shapes
Them.
The art. Is not smooth always.
It does. Not.
Always have to

Flow.
Art does not have to
Make sense. To you.
Or to me.
It is
What
It is.
What the author
Painter, composer. Intended
It to be. You can't
Change it. Because
Then it's not. What
It meant.
To be.

"The Picasso" evidently began as an essay, but "it makes more sense as a poem," she concluded. It is an appropriate and powerful introduction to a paper that deals with such a question, and it gives strong evidence of having been produced by a student who studied both poetry and the principles of cubism enough to merge the two in an original piece of verse.

The writer goes on to combine such diverse elements as biography, photo essay, pencil sketches based on the photo essay, letters from architect Frank Lloyd Wright, a newspaper review of Wright's design for the Guggenheim, and a dramatic self-portrait as she explores the chicken-egg question of the transforming power of art versus the irresistible influence of social pressure. Zoe's sources indicated such varied works as Billy Collins' *Poetry 180*, Tracy Chevalier's *The Girl With a Pearl Earring*, the history of the Guggenheim, and an article from Art Journals titled "Questions of Influence: Influence of Questions." Clearly this is a student of art who researched

extensively, learned much, synthesized, and created a compelling argument based on her research, all on her own terms. Her journal reflects a near obsession with the issue. "I keep thinking about my essential question," she muses. "Is all of the art we have just a reflection of society, and what the artists were forced to create, or did artists create our, and past societies? It truly is driving me crazy. I just can't stop thinking about it. My question really boils down to self-reliance. Are artists self-reliant, or are all of their ideas fed into them? How do we know?"

It's hard to look at a work like this and deny the value of multigenre writing in reporting traditional research findings. Zoe herself must have the last word on the issue:

> The multigenre format enabled me to discover different ways to effectively convey myself. I explored the different genres, and was able to step out of the boundaries of a formal research project. It enabled me to have fun. Successful pieces are pieces which the author can put all of their creativity into, and in the end the piece is a part of the author. It describes the author in all senses, and the author's passion for the piece can be vibrantly displayed.
>
> Pieces fall short when the author is not willing to pour themselves into the piece. It is when you write the assignment to simply just get it done and nothing more. When an author isn't inspired by the piece, then in my estimation, it falls short.
>
> I think my paper answers my question. Throughout the pieces I realized how both scenarios are true. Art can change society…. Society can also change the art.

Eric

Senior Eric is a perfectionist who is good at everything he does. He takes every AP and honors-level class offered and is a star athlete in three varsity sports. He loves to learn. And he loves a challenge. What Eric created went far beyond any teacher's expectations. His multigenre paper was thoughtfully conceived, well-constructed, and complex on many levels. It demonstrates the depth of his learning and insight, and it demonstrates how a project of this kind can stretch students to think, create, and take risks in ways that traditional academic writing never could.

Right away, Eric knew he wanted to study C. S. Lewis, an author he had loved since he read *The Chronicles of Narnia* as a child. And even before the assignment was officially given, Eric started studying Lewis's *The Screwtape Letters*.

Eric's research of Lewis's life led him quickly to his repetend—transformation. As a young man, Lewis had been a religious skeptic, but as he tried to disprove the philosophy of Christianity, he became one of its most outspoken converts. Eric saw a parallel between C. S. Lewis and the biblical Paul who was transformed from a persecutor of the early church to a martyr for its cause, so he decided that to use the idea of transformation as his repetend.

Eric titled his multigenre paper The Road to Damascus / C. S. Lewis: A Transformation. The cover of the paper is a piece of art that transforms. To begin, it shows a man walking alone down a road. But when you raise an attached flap, two other men appear. The single man represents Paul; when the flap is lifted, the three men represent Lewis, his brother, and his mentor.

Interspersed throughout the paper are a series of haikus that communicate major events and relate to the changes Lewis went through. Also interspersed throughout the paper

are a series of letters written in style of Lewis's classic *The Screwtape Letters*. In that novel, a senior demon and his nephew, Screwtape correspond about Screwtape's patient, the human he is assigned to keep out of the grasp of God's forces. Eric wrote a series of letters from the demon assigned to C. S. Lewis to his senior demon mentor and also a series of letters between Lewis's guardian angel and his mentor. The letters mimic Lewis's style and also communicate important information about Lewis and his transformation.

Eric mimicked Lewis's style again when he wrote a dialogue between two characters in *The Lion, the Witch, and the Wardrobe*, another Lewis classic. In the novel, Lewis simply tells his readers that Aslan, the lion who is a symbolic Christ figure talks with Edmond, the young boy who betrayed him. Eric wrote the conversation for his readers and in it he emphasizes the way that Edmond is transformed by Aslan's forgiveness.

Eric wrote a simple obituary for Lewis, but then he complemented it with a creative piece in which Lewis's mother's Bible recounts the difficulties in his life and his conversion to Christianity.

The piece, however, that will remain the most memorable to his classmates, is the conclusion—an interpretive dance. From the first day the assignment was given, Eric vowed he would do an interpretive dance. The class thought he was joking, but Eric wanted a challenge that just writing didn't give him. He found the perfect piece of music, "Lazy Days" by Enya, and choreographed the transformation of a caterpillar into a butterfly.

Michael

Michael loves to write, loves to think, and loves to stir up controversy. For his multigenre paper, he decided to examine

the motivation of the biblical Cain, the first murderer. Genesis tells the story in just a couple of paragraphs, so many questions are left unanswered. Michael saw something universal in Cain, a man who in a fit of jealousy took the life of his brother and was cursed to wander the earth for the rest of his life. So Michael explored Cain's story from a number of different angles and perspectives.

His "masterpiece" was a twenty-page science fiction short story set in the far-off future after a nuclear holocaust. Cain and Abel work for the government at a facility designed to filter radiation. Their demanding boss is Iam. When Cain forgets a deadline and Iam scolds him while praising Abel, Cain snaps and murders his coworker. He is punished by being sent out of the safe facility and into the dangerous wilderness.

Michael also created a film, a twenty-minute epic in which toys irreverently, and quite humorously, portray the biblical characters. A double voice poem, "The Other Side of Servitude," explores the rivalry between Cain and Abel, and the poem, "The Awakening," imagines Cain's thought as he prepares to and actually murders his brother. In a first-person narrative, Michael imagines Cain's thoughts as he wanders the wilderness alone. Finally, Michael created artwork with Microsoft Paint.

This project took Michael far beyond where any traditional academic writing could have. It forced him to contemplate the literature more deeply and more fully than any essay prompt would have. It stretched his writing skills and allowed him to create pieces that were meaningful and important to him. He became passionate about his subject matter because of the way he was permitted to discover and report on it.

Conclusion

We began with the question of whether it was possible—and valuable—to merge creative writing and traditional academic inquiry. Our research led us to the conclusion that the multigenre paper can meet all the requirements of a research paper except…there is not a research paper. However, the multigenre paper led to learning that would have been impossible with the traditional, thesis-driven essay. Students themselves recognized that they were able to report what they had learned more effectively, and in a more interesting manner, using the multigenre format. Because of the multigenre format, students worked harder at their research and inquiry, reading more broadly and deeply, studying literature much more carefully than they ever would have to write a five-paragraph essay. It may be that in a traditional, thesis-driven essay, there are limited kinds of information that students are looking for to meet the requirements of the assignment, but because of the almost limitless options available in the multigenre format, students found themselves researching, studying, learning in all kinds of ways they never would have considered in a traditional academic writing assignment. Students learned to communicate in forms they had never experienced—from double-voice poems to interpretive dance. A student who chooses to explore his topic through interpretive dance must first research interpretive dance and music. Thus, students conducting multigenre inquiry, in the end, learn much more than what they merely have to learn. They learn what it is that they must learn and then learn how to find it.

The traditional, thesis-driven, five-paragraph essay will never go away. It serves a function and has an important place in every student's basic store of knowledge. But the traditional essay is best suited to teaching the traditional

essay. Recognizing this, and in light of the results of our research, it may be that the traditional essay should be taught and learned as one of many vital genres rather than as the sole tool for scholarly writing. However, the results of our research suggest that the freedom and the options afforded students by multigenre writing are at least as useful to students in framing and presenting the results of their inquiry. Our research has included a broad selection of students in two quite distinct school populations, and yet the results are remarkably similar: Whether reporting from formal research or from thematic inquiry or from response to literature, student writing was vigorous, lively, and filled with voice. At the same time it conveyed our students' scholarship as effectively as in a traditional format.

And they had fun.

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J. D. Simpson earned his BS and MAT at Miami University, in Oxford Ohio. He is in his 20th year teaching AP Language, junior English, and Mythology at Hamilton High School, in Hamilton, Ohio. Before teaching, he worked as a newspaper reporter and editor in Gainesville, Texas, and in Hamilton, Ohio.

R. L. Simpson spent 30 years teaching high school English, most of them at Edgewood High School in Trenton, Ohio. Through those decades, she also taught Speech, Creative Writing, Journalism, Drama, and Theater Appreciation. She earned a BS and an MAT at Miami University, in Oxford, Ohio. She is retired and thoroughly enjoying every minute of being a full-time grandmother.

CURRICULUM FOR A CAUSE: SUCCESSES OF ECO-CONSCIOUS CURRICULUM INSIDE AND OUTSIDE THE ENGLISH CLASSROOM

MICHAEL SOARES

Standing next to the Chicago River on Michigan Avenue, insulated from curious Chicago pedestrians by skyscrapers and television cameras, Illinois Governor Pat Quinn conducted a press conference. After speeches from various government officials, teachers, and students, the governor finished signing the documents in front of him and called out, "Where's Mr. Ritter?" Paul Ritter, science teacher at Pontiac Township High School, stepped forward. "These belong to you," said Quinn, pressing Illinois House Bills 2056 and 2053 into Ritter's chest and sharing a look of accomplishment with those in the crowd, many of whom were involved with the genesis of the bills. "Take these, they belong to you" (Ritter). After years of development and thousands of hours of work, Ritter, his students, and the PTHS teachers dedicated to the

program had realized their dream of protecting the Illinois water supply by witnessing legislation inspired by the National Prescription Pill and Drug Disposal Program (P2D2) passed unanimously by the Illinois Legislature and signed into law by the chief executive of the state.

Far from merely changing the way Illinois now disposes of unused and unwanted prescription medication and controlled substances, the program has forever changed the way many teachers in Pontiac and other cities approach innovative teaching. Using the real life success and applications of P2D2 to galvanize the potential of students, many of whom typically performed marginally, teachers are animating them to levels of achievement demonstrated on the nightly news. The scene in Chicago was far from the culmination of the program's success; as more teachers incorporate elements of the program into their classrooms, and as more communities adopt the program, the full potential for eco-conscious curriculum has yet to be realized. Like the Chicago River, famously reversed and ultimately reaching the Gulf of Mexico vicariously through other rivers, P2D2 has filtered its way throughout the country, and now to other continents, by word of mouth, media exposure, and the sheer will of its directors and their students. From presenting P2D2 to members of the American Medical Association in their downtown Chicago skyscraper boardroom to competing in the United Nations-sponsored Volvo Adventure Awards competition in Sweden, and with interest pouring in weekly from countries as diverse as England and Paraguay, students have taken reading and writing far beyond the boundaries of classroom walls and have shown the world the potential of "curriculum with a cause."

Since 2003, Ritter has been inspiring students in his classroom to take conservation seriously, pioneering programs such as the Storm Drain Stenciling initiative and the

Ecology Billboard project in Pontiac and other communities in central Illinois (Ritter). However, far from being merely a "science" initiative, the P2D2 program from the start maintained a cross-curricular mandate which calls for a variety of disciplines including social studies, English, art, graphic design, music, and even agriculture. In fact, curriculum can be developed from any discipline following the basic tenet of P2D2's core philosophy: "water is life." Collaboration established when multiple classes from different disciplines worked simultaneously toward the same objective resulted in a sense of community among the students in the building, which in turn encourages them to reach out into their community outside the building. Furthermore, once students became invested in the concept that they were participating in a project that protects the environment and by virtue themselves, the emphasis shifted from the assignment being about "school" and instead about something that they were doing to "make a difference."

In this fashion, the P2D2 program swiftly grew its own legs, earning allegiance from administrators and educators, and in particular English teachers such as myself who saw this program as an opportunity to inspire students to write in a variety of prose and poetry formats. The culmination for all students from the spectrum of disciplines was a previously nonexistent excitement for coming to our classrooms for eco-conscious initiatives and a noticeably increased personal ownership for the projects at hand. Ultimately, P2D2's success as a curriculum-shaping program lies in its ability to take students out of their comfort zones and provide them with high-impact and long-lasting conservation lessons that reach far past the high school campus to make positive changes in the community, and ultimately the world. Furthermore, colleagues involved in the program have had the unique opportunity

to teach, observe, and, at times, collaborate with students, revealing their often hidden talents, and motivating them to develop a rich tapestry of public service and accomplish lofty goals. Best of all, the eco-conscious projects can be easily tailored to a particular classroom's needs and also to fulfill Common Core Standards which call for real-life applications of curriculum.

How does a concern about prescription pill disposal wind up influencing the way English teachers facilitate reading and writing in their classrooms? The answer lies in the history of the way the program was developed. Groundwork for P2D2 began with the speculation of what one should do with expired and unused pharmaceuticals. Simply dumping drugs down the drain or flushing them down the toilet seemed undesirable at best, and suspicion that they would eventually make their way to the water supply was troubling. Seeking resolution, Ritter took the problem to his classroom and invited his ecology students to brainstorm solutions. Originally conceived as a simple research project, Ritter and his students began to uncover what he describes as, "startling information pertaining to the effect of pharmaceuticals on the quality of drinking water around the world" (Ritter). According to the program website, students "found that scientists with the United States Geological Society have detected drugs such as antibiotics, anti-depressants, birth control pills, seizure medication, cancer treatments, pain killers, tranquilizers, and cholesterol-lowering compounds in varied ground water sources" ("History"). Even more disquieting research surfaced revealing that waste water treatment methods in local facilities were never intended to remove such chemicals and, in fact, were incapable of doing so, concerning scientists that "in humans, the chemicals in our water supply could increase rates of breast, testicular, and

prostate cancer, as well as lower sperm counts and disrupt hormones" ("History"). Students ultimately determined that, based on the evidence, the safe disposal of prescription drugs was not currently a viable option. Determined to change that, Ritter and his students began creating a program that would provide this service, setting into motion a phenomenon which would ultimately spread across the United States and even draw interest from abroad.

In my sophomore English II classroom, students collaborated with their peers from Ritter's ecology course to conduct research for P2D2, using MLA style documentation to cite their sources. MLA practice was essential for their later projects of composing research essays. Once the need to take the program outside of the school to city officials became apparent, the writing assignments were geared towards writing letters which would present P2D2 in a positive light and solicit support for taking it community-wide. Later, as the success of the program became apparent in Pontiac, other nearby communities sought to collaborate. As the program expanded, and not satisfied with direct contact to local legislators, students began writing for the P2D2 website, composing text to reach a far larger, even global audience.

The program gained velocity when Ritter's students were contacted and recruited by Illinois lawmakers to help write the program into a bill. Immediately other classes at PTHS, primarily at this point English and social studies, accelerated their involvement. Megan Bozarth, social studies teacher at PTHS, began the process with her sociology students by writing letters in support of the proposed legislation for House Bills 2056 and 2053. As these letters were composed, students from my Rhetoric II Honors course carefully peer edited each letter for content revision and conducted research to check and verify facts.

Now billing itself as "a collaborative effort between communities, local pharmacies, police departments, hospitals, city officials, students, and more," the program gained steam in the community, garnering support not just from school teachers and administrators, but also local officials ("History"). With the help of city administrators like Pontiac Street Superintendent Chris Brock, local pharmacies were convinced to allow customers to bring in unused prescription drugs. Likewise, police stations opened up their doors, using repurposed mailboxes to safely and securely serve as drop-off receptacles. Students provided the public with written descriptions of the plan's procedures and benefits with several articles published in the school's newspaper, the Chief, which in turn has articles reprinted in the town's local newspaper, the Pontiac Daily Leader. Students also began writing summaries of P2D2 in several of my English courses, and a combination of the best writing was posted on the program website. Therefore, as a result of student research and writing, those dropping off unused prescriptions could be confident that instead of going into the water supply, their unwanted drugs would be sent to an eco-friendly facility where they would be responsibly incinerated, which in turn would create clean energy to be harnessed and used elsewhere.

In reaction to the success of the program both inside and outside of the classroom, the faculty directors of P2D2 and their students continued to develop relationships with media outlets, including central Illinois local television and radio stations from Bloomington and Peoria, IL, to increase exposure for P2D2, propelling the program beyond Livingston County and statewide. Other PTHS faculty members were enlisted for their expertise, including Keith Schmink, whose music students composed original music and for a program theme song, and Nick Vogt, whose art students regularly

create banners and paint murals on rain barrels for P2D2 presentations around the state. Most apparent in its success was the continuing efforts of Bozarth to collaborate with my English class with her sociology students in writing appeals to representatives and senators to support bills concerning funding of the statewide implementation of P2D2 by placing an additional $20 fine on illegal drug possession convictions in Illinois. This funding would pay for the shipment of unused prescription drugs collected to the incineration facilities at no cost to the taxpayers. The bills passed unanimously through the Illinois House in the spring of 2011 and eventually made their way to the governor's desk. On August 24, 2011, Gov. Quinn signed the bills next to the Chicago River and in the presence of Ritter, Bozarth, legislators, and the students who made a small-town program a statewide phenomenon (Spencer).

As student participation in Pontiac's homegrown program advances, P2D2 continues to attract high-profile media coverage. In early June 2012, Ritter and five PTHS students traveled to Sweden to compete in the United Nations-sponsored Volvo Adventure Awards. The competition began by honoring P2D2 as the number one innovative and groundbreaking eco-conscious program for a "greener future" in the United States. Twelve groups for countries around the world were then flown to Sweden to compete globally. The P2D2 team returned home as third place world champions. Here at home, the program has expanded across the country, having been adopted in twenty-two states including Alaska and Hawaii. In Pontiac, the impact of these programs has a strong local resonance, prompting Pontiac citizens such as Street Superintendent Brock to reflect, "I also find it amazing with the different efforts that have been brought forth from the students is that that these projects that have been presented to

our community and have been embraced, rely on very little in the way of public funds…the effort they have made and accomplished is remarkable."

Despite the high profile exposure of P2D2, the possibility of classroom implementation remains the most exciting aspect for many teachers at PTHS, in particular the close-knit, collaborative trio of English, science, and social studies. For example, in 2009 The Medicine Chest: A Collection of Safe Disposal Curriculum Activities and Service-learning Resources was published by the University of Illinois and funded by the Illinois-Indiana Sea Grant Program. Subtitled "A collection of safe disposal curriculum activities and service learning resources," the project was an opportunity for PTHS educators to develop environmentally conscious curriculum and research pre-developed lesson plans. From an English classroom standpoint, teacher and student engagement stimulates the creative impulse, which is often stymied by overwork and overcrowding. Following the lead, inspired by the program, and eager to combat detractions to classroom creativity, I created the "Eco-ku", a hybrid of haiku and pro-environment ideology, born of an effort to modify an ancient poetry form for a contemporary purpose, and resulting in a new lesson pairing literary and ecological concerns (see Appendix).

The reinvigorating effects of civic activism as teachers and students engage conservation through curriculum has become essential to meeting the needs of the community and also in preparing for the rigors of the Common Core Standards. P2D2 is versatile enough to accommodate most, if not all, of the ELA Common Core State Standards. For example, focusing on my high school classroom, my students have for example created "reasoned arguments," written "informative and explanatory texts," evaluated "multiple sources of information" from multiple mediums, "created

writing "integrating and citing textual evidence"—the list goes on. Speaking standards were met as our students testified in front of the Illinois House, at the American Medical Association building in Chicago, and competing in Sweden. Even literature standards can be addressed by incorporating environmentally themed fiction. Ultimately, the potential of programs such as P2D2 is only limited by the imaginations of those responsible for their implementation.

On July 20, 2012, "Water is Life: Developing eco-conscious curriculum as an avenue to teacher/student influence in the classroom, the capital, and the environment" was presented at the NCTE-WLU conference in St. Louis by myself, Ritter, and Bozarth promoting P2D2 as a way to "reclaim joy in teaching, learning, and research" by creating and modifying content designed to motivate students about the environment and the very water they drink. For educators, the combination of fresh perspective on curriculum and the opportunity for making a difference is a powerful force; likewise, the realization that students embracing the enhanced curriculum will step far beyond the confines of the classroom as their skills are flexed in an attempt to capture other hearts and minds, injecting into them a zeal for saving the Earth through our water supply, is a strong motivator. For Pontiac Township High School students, the program has taken them to the capital of Illinois for House and Senate sessions, and later to Chicago to watch the governor sign their bill, and to even an international competition, engaging them on a level unparalleled to the confines of classroom walls.

APPENDIX: LANGUAGE ARTS LESSON—P2D2

The Eco-ku

Objectives

Students will:

1. Work in a cooperative learning environment to employ figurative language, written in haiku format, to express a message of ecological importance to a greater audience.

2. Confer with classmates regarding format, message, and editing issues.

3. Present their "eco-ku" orally to the class along with appropriate illustrations, graphics, and explanations.

ELA Common Core Standards

The lesson plan addresses, but is certainly not limited to, the following standards:

Reading Standards for Literature 9–10: 4, 6, 10

Writing 9–10: 4, 5, 6

Language 9–10: 3, 5a, 5b

Materials

Notebook paper, pen, magazines, construction/printer paper, markers or other drawing/writing utensils, tape or glue, scissors, stapler

Procedure

Background and Overview of the Lesson:

Eco-ku are a hybrid of ancient Japanese poetry and a contemporary awareness of environmental needs in our community. Written in haiku form, eco-ku are created to carry ecology-oriented messages to the public. The eco-ku lesson plan was inspired by the P2D2 project and conceived as a device to interest students who were not ordinarily high achievers in language arts courses, but were heavily invested in local ecology projects. Through their efforts in writing eco-ku, students will be simultaneously exposed to a new form of critical and creative writing as well as given an opportunity to articulate the pro-environmental message of programs such as P2D2.

In its initial run, the eco-ku lesson was an astounding success, generating interest from both the governor of Illinois and school districts statewide. Although this lesson plan was designed primarily for high school sophomores and keyed accordingly to the appropriate Illinois Learning Standards, modifications can easily be made for different age levels.

1. The lesson will begin with a teacher-led discussion of the haiku format:

   Haiku Rules
   - Has three lines
   - Has 17 syllables
   - Has five syllables in the first line, seven in the second, and five in the third

2. Next, analyze and discuss an original composition from the instructor:

Example Haiku written by Mr. Soares
Sitting in the sand.
Wave touches foot and pulls back.
Old sand trades for new.

3. Using the Smartboard, explore haikus further on http://www.haikusociety.com, discussing content and counting syllables.

4. Eco-ku Explanation: "Haiku-writing is an ancient Japanese practice that tries to capture a 'moment in time,' much like a snapshot. For this project, you will consider what you have learned about our environment today and programs such as P2D2. Ultimately, you will create 'eco-ku' based on those concepts. You will either cut out or create three pictures and write an eco-ku poem for each. These three poems need to be turned in as a book with your name on the cover."

5. In groups of two or three, students should begin discussing haiku and ecology,culminating in the creation of eco-ku. Magazines should be available for students to find pictures that will accompany their eco-ku; conversely, they may create their own pictures by drawing them (or creating them on a computer). For verification purposes, the students will confer with each other on format and syllable count. When a student has created three eco-ku, he or she should use available materials to construct a "book," gluing or creating a picture for each eco-ku. In addition, the student should add a cover incorporating his or her name into a title.

6. Before students submit their eco-ku books, they will have their work peer reviewed by those in their groups. Any corrections can be made at this time.

7. Finally, students will use their eco-ku books to facilitate an oral presentation replete with any explanations necessary. Students making the oral presentations should be prepared to answer any questions from fellow students concerning the message of their eco-ku. Please see PTHS student-created eco-ku on page 63 at: http://www.iiseagrant.org/education/medicinechest/TheMedicineChest.pdf

Rubric

Timely Completion:Was it done on time?
Yes No _____(5 pts)

Basic Criteria Met: Did it follow the prescribed pattern?
Yes No _____(5 pts)

Creativity: Is it imaginative? Eye-catching? Colorful? Neat?
_____(5 pts)

Correctness: Are there errors in spelling? Grammar? Syllables?
_____(5 pts)

(Total) _____(20 pts)

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Michael Soares has taught English at Pontiac Township High School since 1997 and is the faculty sponsor of the school newspaper. He received his Master's in Literature from Illinois State University in 2004. Interests include using eco-conscious curriculum in the English classroom and dystopian literature studies.

ORLA CRILLY SPEAKS: IRELAND'S JOURNEY THROUGH LIMINALITY

ADRIANA GRADEA

Orla's Duplicity

Ni Dhuibhne's "The Dancers Dancing" is a coming-of-age novel, set mainly during an Irish college (read camp), in the western part of Ireland, in 1972, where children from all over the Republic of Ireland and Northern Ireland go in order to be immersed in the Irish language and culture. Orla Crilly lives in Dublin, with an English mother and an Irish father, which makes them a symbolic, liminal family, replicating Ireland's situation at a smaller scale. Orla is the child, thus representing the future in her family. She is the future that appropriately emerges from both Irish and English heritages.

Ni Dhuibhne purposefully dresses Orla in the Irish flag (*The Dancers Dancing* 11), which establishes in no uncertain terms that Orla is to be seen as more belonging to Ireland. Symbolically again, Orla is, however, a certain "New" Ireland,

and her dual nature resulting from her dual heritage is at the center of the novel. She is a Gemini sign, on which she childishly blames her "tendency to duplicity" (10), a fundamental concept of the novel. She clearly inhabits the realm between such dualities as rural/urban, traditional/modern, or old/new. In all of the binaries, Orla feels so conflicted that she feels like she has to be two people in one (30). She thinks that she has to keep her friends on one side and her family on the other in order not to spoil her reputation, or she thinks "she'd be done for" (30).

Kelly J. S. McGovern links the "in between" element of the novel to the narrative, which developing between 1972 and "Now," contains Orla's camp narrative as a frame (251). The significance is established when in the first chapter the concept of "in between" is first explained: "What you can't see is what it is better not to see…say nothing and say something and in between, in between, in between, that is the truth and that is the story" (*The Dancers Dancing* 2-3). The novel then places Orla "in between" all the binaries just as she is in between girlhood and womanhood or Englishness and Irishness: "Orla of the double allegiances, Orla of the city and the country, Orla who belongs in both places and belongs to neither" (29). The liminality becomes central, and it is a place for Orla to inhabit.

The historical times, namely, 1972, when the Celtic Tiger was less than an ambition, as well as the socioeconomic conditions, render Orla a child still under the spell of all things English. In postcolonial theory, this is mimicry or the "attempt of the colonized to be accepted by imitating the dress, behavior, speech, and lifestyle of the colonizers" (Tyson 427), but it is also "the sign of a double articulation" (Bhabha 86). Orla is thus the symbol of a larger concept. At the personal level, it is Orla's mother (Elizabeth) that exerts

a stronger influence on her, not the father. Elizabeth herself passes her time between "holidays in the West of Ireland and dimming dreams of England" (*The Dancers Dancing* 76), and because she is English and Protestant, she takes precedence over Orla's father, who is Irish and Catholic. In her father Tom's words, "[Orla] will be [Elizabeth's] daughter first and foremost" (106). It is not hidden from us that Tom's mother, Maureen, takes a long time before accepting Orla. Orla's family history embodies the very historical becoming of Ireland: from the mixed marriage that the colonized Ireland was, this New Ireland blends both elements in her.

However, these elements require some reconciliation. In her family, her mother is the "urban fox," and her father is a hard-working man, with whom sadly Orla does not talk enough, but who nevertheless loves her dearly as Elizabeth lets us know: "'Orla is the apple of Daddy's eye'" (121). Her mother is also the landlady, a capitalist, almost an exploiter of others, in Marxist terms, not unlike the colonizing British Empire. Moreover, the name Elizabeth poignantly reminds of two of the most prominent British Queens, one past and one present, which provide another set of brackets delimitating the "in between" this novel is fundamentally about.

While Orla is conflicted about Irish things partly because of the traditional and rural elements that compose them, she definitely aspires to the upper class some of her colleagues belong to as part of the urban/modern element. Her family's socioeconomic situation is reason for shame when she compares herself with other colleagues. Orla loses her innocence at the age of eight when she has to give up her room for boarders, a decision her mother makes for extra money. A child becoming so aware of class and social condition is not necessarily an uncommon one. But in Orla's case, this awareness only adds to her insecurities and larger

sentiments of shame silently experienced. St. Peter thinks that Orla experiences "falsely, of course" (34) that the Gaeltacht is a place of the child, and the Irish College is a place of "equality that isn't possible in Dublin, land of 'What Does Your Father Do?'" (*The Dancers Dancing* 134). In Ingman's interpretation, however, Orla's influence of the urban, patriarchal culture diminishes throughout the novel (136) as she moves through her journey of becoming.

Through Orla, we learn that in the early 1970s, the struggle to raise consciousness about the importance of being Irish was still countered by the desire to be English or as close to England as possible, a result of the postcolonial mimicry tendency. This aspect is evident when, in chapter "The Unchronicled Jouissance of the Summer Bus Journeys When You're Young," they pass through Northern Ireland, where they find merchandise they idealize, like Mars Bars. The children feel the economic difference between the British Empire and Ireland and do not have the critical thinking yet to understand it is a result of colonization precisely as any nation coming out of colonialism would need time to develop a certain historical consciousness.

McGovern points out that in the same chapter Orla is annoyed grown-ups are served first (246), making the argument that children are "pawns" and denied rights: "Children are there to carry out adults' orders, first and foremost. Their feelings, and adults do not believe they have any, simply don't matter" (*The Dancers Dancing* 137). The passivity to which children are forced makes Orla experience yet another level of suppression in the power dynamic that replicates that between the paternalistic colonizer and the infantilized colonized.

While Orla likes English merchandise, she does like, however, in the Irish/English binary, the new Irish names

of places that used to have English names: "Irish restores to them dignity and elegance. She even loves her new Irish name, Orla Nic Giolla Chrollaigh, of which "she thinks it looks lovely, with its conglomerations of consonants, its long string of words. She thinks it looks difficult, and important" (31). Orla's liking of her Irish identity is hope that she will eventually make peace with parts of Irishness she still has to come to terms with.

Another binary of the novel, similar to the tradition/modernity one, is that of the rural/urban. Orla is a Dubliner, that is, a city girl. She and her mother are the "urban foxes": "Buying…clothes is one of the great joys of Orla's life. Shopping with Elizabeth is the highlight of her week" (94). Belonging to the city, she belongs to modernity as it is understood in industrialized Europe. However, as soon as Orla is immersed in the more traditional, rural part of Ireland, her urban mother becomes remote and even ignores Orla by not writing, a highly significant estrangement, as we shall see. Consequently, Orla feels almost abandoned in her new rural, traditional environment, and thus, she misses the other half of the rural/urban binary.

Caitriona Moloney in "Re-Imagining Women's History in the Fiction of Eilis Ni Dhuibhne, Anne Enright, and Kate O'Riordan" says:

> Ni Dhuibhne's postmodern method goes beyond parallels with myth to reiterate the motifs of ancient Irish myth in a contemporary context, suggesting new modes of interpretation for both. Ni Dhuibhne uses a narrative strategy of intertextualizing old Irish myth with contemporary stories, a technique that emphasizes the longevity of practices that silenced women in literature and history. Myth may be the repository of lost histories, memories repressed or denied. (1-2)

Caitriona Moloney analyzes Ni Dhuibhne's short story "The Mermaid's Legend," which retells the myth of the mermaid who marries "a passionate Irishman" but who deserts him and their children (2). This myth is subtly touched by the folklorist Ni Dhuibhne in *The Dancers Dancing* in Elizabeth's attitude of incommunicado. Although not a mermaid, Elizabeth is also a kind of outsider, as she is British. While it is Orla who leaves for the Irish college, it is Elizabeth, however, who does not keep in contact with Orla, refusing to write, as if abandoning her. Orla suffers because of her mother's absence from her life at that moment and feels forsaken, especially when the other girls continue to connect with their mothers by means of the letters they receive.

Still, Elizabeth is a complex figure in the novel as she transcends binaries. Orla is thinking of her mother's traditional role in the house, in spite of her entrepreneurship: while Elizabeth does not drive and assumes a more traditional role as a mother, she does hope for Orla to drive one day (75). The father, on the other hand, is given a more traditional role, that of the hard-working breadwinner (see 121). Thus, the rural/urban dichotomy is closely linked to the traditional/modern one.

On the other hand, in the double old/new, Orla clearly favors the new. "Old times. How Orla hated them," she thinks (12). Definitely, for the better first part of the novel, Orla prefers the terms in the binaries that refer to the new, the modern, the urban. It is mainly in the Irish/English duality that Orla seems to be more conflicted (e.g., she likes her name in Irish), which again is not by coincidence. Orla's fascination with English things and her purism concerning the English language (28) are both postcolonial sentiments. However, stronger than those feelings is what Geraldine Moane describes as the second pattern characteristic for the

postcolonial Irish society, which is the denial and doublethink. In "Colonialism and the Celtic Tiger: Legacies of History and the Quest for Vision," Moane points out that dualist oversimplifications have been some of the legacies of Irish history. She rightly states that writings on colonization reflect the creation of false polarities, as in Manichean duals: "the division of the world into opposing categories of 'us' and 'them,' of 'good' and 'bad,' of 'black' and 'white,' of 'rich' and 'poor' (109). Orla finds herself for the better part of the novel in between such polarities. At the same time, the denial and doublethink apply best to sentiments she harbors for her Auntie Annie.

Among the feelings Orla is hiding are shame with respect to her socioeconomic condition, to her round figure, and to parts of her family heritage. As we have seen, Orla constantly compares her family's social status with her friends', and this is reason for concern for her. But her body description is also significant. McGovern interprets Orla's fatness as a "growing sideways, a kind of growing that is not 'growing up'" (243), which is in the same line with Ingman's interpretation. She points out that the culture in which Orla grows up suppresses the body, which affects women in particular (135). Obviously, Orla perceives it as a shortcoming and reason for embarrassment.

On the other hand, the embarrassment Orla feels for Auntie Annie is the strongest of all. Annie is not perfect (see description in *The Dancers Dancing* pp. 136–143, and in the short story "Blood and Water" in *Midwife to the Fairies*, pp. 53–63, where the same character is further developed along the exact same lines). Orla feels almost compelled to reject her aunt, wishing she had not existed, at one point almost abandoning her on the verge of death. Clearly, Orla is in the denial phase Geraldine Moane describes in her article as part of postcolonial sentiment. Orla will not cope with someone

who could not possibly compare to her hip middle class colleagues.

Strikingly, however, Orla resembles her aunt physically. Annie comes from her paternal side of the family, which establishes between these characters a more intrinsic connection on the Irish lineage. Denying Annie, Orla denies a part of herself, just like she denies her body when she does not make peace with her being fat. She finally accepts Annie, but this is due in large part to the fact that the others appreciate her first, e.g., the teacher wants to record Annie's stories, the other girls praise her cottage. These actions rehabilitate Annie in Orla's eyes.

At the symbolic level, Orla, as the embodiment of "New" Ireland, needs to make peace and accept Annie, "Old" Ireland, and by doing so, Orla can mature. "New" Ireland comes of age when she acknowledges that the "Old" Ireland has stories to offer, i.e., folklore, myths, and fundamental wisdom coming from immemorial time, making up a heritage that needs to be acknowledged rather than denied if it is to be taken into the reborn future.

More critical, McGovern sees Aunt Annie Crilly as a damaging representation of the Irish nation, as a woman from which "New" Ireland has to detach herself. She points out that Annie:

> serves as a crippling metaphor from which Orla must save herself…she is hard of hearing. She tells stories… but is deaf to the contemporary world…. While Orla's queerness serves the novel's rendering of a new alternative to traditional representations of the nation, Annie's body is made literally crooked as a meditation on how damaging the tradition of personifying Ireland as a female has been to Irish women. (255)

While McGovern's argument makes sense as she sees in Annie a counterpoint in support of Orla's new role as a less traditional representation of Ireland in the new age (accentuating on her queerness), I would argue that the message of the novel is precisely this reconciliation with the past Annie represents, at the same time as she needs to come to terms with the left-hand side of the binaries, that is, accepting the old, the traditional, the rural, and the traditional depiction of "Old" Ireland. If we accept that by bestowing upon Annie the quality of a storyteller she becomes the repository of folk stories and myths, and knowing that Ni Dhuibhne is a folklorist, it is more likely that not Annie's physical weakness and imperfection is emphasized here. On the contrary, her storyteller quality saves her from being seen as a simple flawed product of nature, making her a symbolic figure instead, one that has better qualities than Orla initially thinks.

Orla's Voice

As we have seen, early in the novel, Orla appears dressed in the Irish flag (11), which establishes in no uncertain terms that Orla is to be seen as Ireland. McGovern clarifies that "rarely, if ever, until Ni Dhuibhne dresses Orla in the Irish flag, has Ireland's avatar been both female and child" (245). Thus, both Orla's Irishness and girlhood/femininity come to the foreground in the novel in this episode of the orange shoes. Growing up as a girl in the historical time of the seventies and in a "discursive tradition where femininity has been tied up with national representations" (244), Orla is bestowed special qualities.

Orla's feminine/childish qualities add to her being "in-between" binaries throughout the novel, as we have seen. At the intersection of the binaries analyzed above stand two more motifs that cross the novel diagonally: the burn and the

dance. These motifs are woven into the novel's texture and are meant to transcend the children's class, age, gender, and all other differences, uniting them and placing them in an inner circle of commonality. These motifs have been analyzed in Christine St. Peter's article "Burn, Road, Dance: Eilis Ni Dhuibhne's *Bildungsreise*," where it is shown, among other things, that rivers represent change. Also, the dance with its rhythm symbolizes movement, transformation, and becoming, but also participative energy that can involve groups of people for the purpose of a larger good. Change and transformation are precisely what *The Dancers Dancing* emphasizes.

Orla is the character that the novel follows in her change and transformation. McGovern presents Orla in her article as an exceptional character, one that does not fit patterns and is groundbreaking in the Irish literature. She says that:

> Orla is Ni Dhuibhne's experiment with representing contemporary Ireland as a study in hybridity. She embodies binaries that help form the Irish imaginary… she has to embody these binaries if she is to figure as a new national ideal, but her "in between" existence alienates Orla from her friends. At the same time, it is not "normal" for such an astute and complex Irish girl to figure as Ireland. (254)

Indeed, Orla is an extremely complex character, and her struggle to emerge from binaries is the novel's documented story. By the time her narrative voice is heard in the last chapter of the novel, she is changed, and not just in age. Ireland comes to life anew, many years after the 1972 Irish college when she had exercised the right to a voice in the solitude of a cavern. That episode happened in nature, and nature is associated at a primary level with Mother Ireland and femininity in an fundamental way.

From the beginning, the burn is the place where the girls go, with joy and excitement, for purification. This motif is developed in what St. Peter calls a "five-part drama" (32). That is the place where the girls talk about their future, especially in the first scene at the burn, the chapter "Washing" (*The Dancers Dancing* 4–5). St. Peter says:

> each of the five subsequent scenes will move (will have moved) Orla, the drama's protagonist, one step closer to crucial understandings of female embodiment and sexuality, her own and that of the women who come to that stream before her, leaving behind clues to secret knowledge buried "in the mud" that the reader was promised in the first chapter of the novel. (33)

Orla, like the other girls, is fascinated by the rawness of nature. In one of her escapades through the wilderness, Orla finds herself in a cavern (200–202). Whether nature represents here femininity or the traditional way of seeing Ireland, she immerses herself in these ideas entirely. Moreover, it seems this is a place where Orla can be herself and find new facets of herself she has not explored yet. And it is here that she finds a voice. In the episode of her liberation from constraints, she shouts at the top of her lungs that she can do what she wants, even words she would never think to utter under normal circumstances.

The episode is significant in that it releases dormant energies into a space where she feels safe for doing it. She feels safe in her femininity, but also in the traditionalism of Ireland that Gaeltacht stands for. However, talking about nature, McGovern points out that "Identification of femininity with 'nature,' the 'natural,' and the Irish landscape can further eclipse feminine subjectivity" (248). At some level, nature is femininity, and thus the girls' connection to the

burn in unanimous *jouissance* is their finding a home, a place where they can become themselves, or their future womanly selves. Ingman, however, dismisses the link between women and nature as an "age-old essentialist link," so going more in depth, she employs Kristevan theory in discussing the role of the nature here (134). The *border* between nature and culture is where Kristeva locates women (135).

Opposite nature, there is culture. The culture in which Orla was raised is the city, a patriarchal society, and it is one in which the body is repressed. Kristeva, in *Powers of Horror* concludes that "Christianity seeks to suppress the female body, the abject, in the name of the Father" (qtd. in Ingman 135). Throughout Orla's stay in the west, however, Ingman observes that the urban culture's influence on Orla diminishes, and that "her concern over details of social hierarchy, the shameful poverty of her home in comparison with Aisling's, for example, lessens: 'She is beginning to feel liberated from the comparisons that rule her life in Dublin'" (*The Dancers Dancing* 136, qtd. in Ingman 136). Indeed, a gradual change happens to Orla, at more than one level. Most importantly, Orla learns that she is not all culture (137). Orla has grown from that point to the final expression of a narrative voice.

In my view, the episode when Orla shouts in the cavern is a precursor to her becoming the first person narrator in the last chapter, when she is a fully-grown woman and when she has found her voice. Talking about Orla's adventure in the cavern, Ingman says: "In contrast with life in Dublin where girls are told what they must do so often that they lose all sense of themselves, immersion in the otherness of nature reveals to Orla a primal, instinctual, fearless self (136). Also, the view that the nature is purer than the culture left behind "is in itself a construct, programmed into her…'by history and the tourist board' (*The Dancers Dancing* 163, qtd. in Ingman 137).

When Orla becomes the narrative voice in the last chapter of the novel it is the "Now" that together with the first chapter frames the novel like two brackets. As McGovern observes, the novel is organized as a parenthetical structure: "The novel's parentheses—the structural bracketing performed by the first and the last chapters, the bracketing of references to particular political movements—echo the instantaneous movement of transformations, while the repeated vacillation simultaneously undermines the stasis a transformation might achieve" (251). The novel is thus structurally contained and becomes itself something "in between," as the beginning had warned.

When Orla emerges as a narrator, in the chapter "Now," she is near a heritage center that is "vast as a cathedral," emphasizing that Ireland has arrived a long way at the appreciation, paralleling worship, of its past: "it's the Gaeltacht triumphant" (*The Dancers Dancing* 239). Orla has found her voice together with Ireland, which has found a new identity. Orla's femininity, as well as her Ireland, have grown and are now emerged from being hidden in a cavern in the natural landscape into the open. Orla has emerged from the dualities that had characterized and troubled her forming years. She left behind insecurities and shame. Giving a voice to what Orla stands for, the novel states loudly and clearly that the new Irish woman lives in a new Ireland where she has a voice and something to say.

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Adriana Cordelia Gradea (n. Cordali) was born and raised during the communist period, in Cluj-Napoca, an important city in the Transylvania region of Romania. She studied art in high

school, philology at Babes-Bolyai University in Cluj-Napoca, and international relations at School of Advanced International Studies of the Johns Hopkins University in Bologna, Italy. In the United States, she lived in New York City, Norfolk (VA), Seattle, and Philadelphia before moving to the Peoria (IL) area. Currently, she is a PhD candidate at Illinois State University in Normal, IL, specializing in rhetoric and cultural studies. Her interests are in rhetorics, visual culture, transnational literatures, post-communist and post-colonialist studies, and cultural theory.

LESLIE & LYNETTE

MARK MAXWELL

People have asked me more times than I care to recall what I was thinking about when Lynette Fromme pointed her pistol at me. The answer is never the same twice. My answer always depends on who is asking the question. This may seem disingenuous, but despite the wide variety of answers I have come up with over the years, I feel secure in saying that every answer has been the God's honest truth. It's not so much that your entire life really flashes before you when you are confronted with your own possible demise. More likely, in a moment such as the one I experienced on September 4, 1975, one simply becomes keenly aware that one's mind is always in many places at once. One's awareness is instantaneously sharpened when staring into the barrel of a gun, and in such a heightened state, one can hear many voices chattering simultaneously in one's consciousness.

So the question "What were you thinking when Squeaky Fromme pointed a gun at you?" is a very difficult one to answer, and my habit of altering my answer to fit the questioner and the context of the question began almost immediately after the incident took place. Family, friends, colleagues, and the media all wanted to know: "What went through your head in that harrowing moment?"

The first time I revealed that I had an awful lot on my mind that day was when Barbara Walters asked me the question.

I told her I was noticing what a clear, sunny, bright California day it was. I said I was concentrating on the hands I was trying to shake, looking into the eyes of those people who had lined the sidewalk to meet their President. I said I was still hoping to heal our nation's wounds by being the People's President. I mentioned that the Secret Service had warned me against this unscheduled walk across the capitol lawn to Jerry Brown's office. I also admitted to Walters that I wanted to meet Brown in person so I could size him up and find out if he would be a serious threat in the upcoming presidential race.

"There were lots of other things on my mind, too," I said. "Like what," Barbara wanted to know. "Like the SALT II talks and arms reduction. Like The Jews sticking it to the Egyptians. Like Kissinger failing to convince Israel to get the hell out of the West Bank. Like the bright red dress Squeaky Fromme wore that day as she made her way across the lawn to shoot me."

"What else?" Walters asked in her patented Elmer Fudd voice, assuming I was still withholding something. "When you saw Ms. Fromme raisng the gun, what were you thinking then?" she asked.

"Oddly enough," I said, seizing the opportunity, "my first thought was about the Backfire Bomber."

"What about it?"

"Someone had asked me a question about it earlier in the day, and I was wondering if it would indeed turn out to be a reliable replacement for the B-52."

"And when Miss Fromme pointed the gun right at you, what then?"

I wanted to tell Barbara Walters that I was not going to play this game with her. I knew she was trying to embarrass me just as those jerks on *60 Minutes* had done to Betty only a week before the assassination attempt. Walters wanted me to say something like I wish I had smoked some marijuana with my daughter that morning. Or I wished I had gotten drunk on Bloody Marys with Betty at breakfast. Or I wish I had engaged in an orgy with the secret service agents and their private crew of concubines before strolling out onto the capital lawn to shake hands with the California electorate that day. Of course, I was not going to say any of those things, but still Ms. Walters waited, impatiently drumming her manicured pointer finger on her knee.

"What then, Mr. President? When you stared into the cold, black, steel nozzle of your fate? What were you thinking just then?" Barbara asked, lowering her voice to an intimate whisper.

"Nothing," I said. "My mind went blank when I saw the gun," I said. "I was aware of nothing but the sunlight, the red dress, and the gun itself. That's all."

Of course, nothing could have been further from the truth. As I've already said, I'm convinced the mind is never blank, especially not at a moment like that. But even an honest man has a right to sometimes keep certain thoughts to himself.

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Dear Pigs & Sheep of America:

Not that I owe any of you an explanation, but so much has been written, so much has been said, and now that my own end is drawing near, I feel I owe it to myself and my foolish hopes for humanity to set the record straight.

Everything that has been said about me, both in print and on the airwaves, has been completely true, but none of it is the Truth. That's the way it is with facts. They are the branches, but one cannot see the roots by staring at the branches. One might notice the diseased, yellow streaks on the leaves, or the dry bark on the stiff twigs that support them. But such recognition is not a direct indication of the nature of the wickedness that has invaded the soil and poisoned the hulking root structure that splays itself and its shredded tendrils outward, the length of a football field, in every direction. For that, one must abandon the evidence above ground and start to dig. But in this country, no one digs, you dig? And therein lies the most obvious and simple reason for my actions on September 4, 1975.

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On the phone in Air Force One, flying home from California that day, Betty was the first one to ask me about what she called my "final thoughts." I told her the truth, or some of the truth. I told her that when I saw the gun, I was recalling the scandalous way in which Betty and I dared to date before her divorce was legally finalized so many years earlier. I told

her how attractive I thought she was that first night when I coaxed her out for drinks. I told her I was thinking about the day we got married and how I had mud on my shoes when I arrived at the altar because I had been campaigning that morning at an outdoor rally. I didn't tell Betty, though, that my mother had persuaded me to marry her because I was already thirty-four by then, and as a congressional hopeful, Mother thought being newly married would help my chances in the election. Nor did I tell Betty that I was thinking about how she always put too much mayonnaise in her ham salad. Another thing I didn't tell Betty was that Ms. Fromme's shaky finger on the trigger also made me recall my first true love, Phyllis Brown.

I couldn't tell Betty about Phyllis's legs, for instance. How long and slender and smooth they were. How Phyllis's shinbone seemed to shimmer when the sunlight hit it. How Phyllis could melt me with a twinkling wink or a carefree toss of her long blonde hair. How Phyllis had gone on to become a glamorous New York model, appearing on the cover of *Cosmo*. How I ached to marry that woman who had made it to the big time and had outgrown Grand Rapids, Michigan. How I still had that *Cosmo* issue stashed away in a file drawer. How I still took it out and masochistically stared at it from time to time to remind myself of Phyllis's beauty. How I still wished to this day that I had been courageous enough to leave home when Phyllis beckoned me to New York. How that magazine cover had kept me going all these years when Betty sometimes couldn't.

These were things I kept to myself. But these were things that did indeed cross my mind when I saw the gun emerge from out of its duct-taped holster underneath the red dress that sunny day in September of 1975.

***

It has been widely assumed that my childhood experiences are to blame for my actions that day. Is it true that I was regularly forced to eat dinner in the kitchen while my mother and father and sister and brother ate together in the dining room? Yes, it's true. Was there any stated reason for this arrangement? No, only that I was a bad girl and did not deserve to eat with the others. Did I feel left out, unloved, and unlovable as a result of this treatment? Of course. Did my crew-cut father often beat me? Yes. Did he beat the other children, as well? No. Did this make me feel angry, confused, hurt? Did it turn my eyes to steel and transform my skin to the general pallor of a freckled zombie? What do you think? Did my father rape me repeatedly and tell me how much he hated me while he was doing it. Yes. So? Are you starting to feel pity or sympathy for me? I hope not. Is it fair to assume that these experiences made me do what I did in 1975? Absolutely not. They may have led me to strap the gun to my leg, but it was not these long-ago events that caused me to unstrap it and point it at the unelected King of the World.

Much, too, has also been said and written about my relationship with Charlie Manson. As if somehow, it explains or perhaps excuses my actions. Maybe I was possessed by him? No, obsession is not possession. Maybe as a member of The Family I had been so influenced by Charlie's violent behavior that I no longer understood the difference between right and wrong? But Charlie was never violent. And there

never is nor never was such thing as right and wrong. Maybe he fulfilled my need for a father figure? No doubt. Maybe he twisted my mind with sex? Maybe he taught me how to screw before I was even liberated enough to say the F-word aloud? Indeed. Maybe he stared at my naked body for hours before touching me? He did. Maybe his fingertips were butterfly wings alighting on my skin when he finally explored me before entering me? They were. Maybe he closed his eyes and smiled when he rode me? Yes, he closed his eyes and smiled, and tipped his head back and stopped moving and just hovered there like a worker bee bringing the goods home to the hive. And maybe he hovered like that long enough to teach me how to let go of this world and awaken in a new one. Oh, yes. And maybe when he wasn't loving me with his body, he was loving me with his pure mind—a prison-yard Buddha who had found the only truth that matters in solitary confinement. And maybe his vision set me in motion on that warm September day in Sacramento in 1975. But again, it was not Charlie who slid that heavy .45 caliber weapon out of its leg holster and aimed it at the King's crotch. It was me. I did that.

Perhaps I did it simply because I was a product of my times—a Flower Child who had witnessed Dallas and Nam and the Watergate Hotel, a once-wholesome and gifted Westchester Lariat who sang and danced with her troupe at the White House; later, a black-eyed and bruised redhead who served well as every Redondo teen citizen's object of scorn? Or possibly it was that little dog I used to pet—the neighbor's Beagle, the one who had some sort of skin disease. Hell, maybe

> Fabian or the Beatles or Frank Zappa made me do it. Yeah, maybe.
>
> But eventually, we have to dig deep enough to get beyond the maybes. Eventually, we must find the Truth, or we will perish. Likely, we will perish either way, but there are some ways of dying that would seem more honorable than others. Better to die knowing you deserve death, for instance, than to die wondering why this is happening to you. So what I offer you here is knowledge. Every little bit helps, I hope. Of course, every little bit puts us further into conspiratorial alliance with the Beast, too, but that's a given one must ultimately learn to accept.

***

When one of my half brothers asked me what went through my mind the day one of Manson's soldiers tried to erase me, I told him I was thinking about my real name. I was born a King—Leslie L. King, Jr. to be exact, though when my stepfather adopted me at the age of three, my name had been changed to erase the man who was my real father. Leslie L. King, Sr. had been my mother's first husband—an abusive bastard who disappeared shortly after I was born. When my mother remarried, she insisted that she and her new husband change my name. "That man was no King," she'd said, "and I won't have my son wearing his name like a crown of thorns all his life." Of course, she didn't tell me any of this until I was twelve, which is right about the time I started stuttering in school. You don't need a social worker to explain that.

My stepfather was a good, honest man, but finding out at that age that the man I had called Dad all my life was not

my real dad wrought havoc on my psyche for a while. Some might say it screwed me up for life since it's probably what drove me into politics.

What I told my half brother was that the glint of the sun on the hammer of Fromme's gun sent me reeling back to the day Leslie L. King, Sr. strolled back into my life. I was seventeen and working at Bill's Diner flipping burgers that day. It was about 115 degrees in that kitchen, and a substantial lunch crowd sat waiting for their greasy meat when my father walked through the entry and set off the door chime. I had a habit of always shooting a quick glance over my shoulder to see who was coming in, and I remember wondering who this stranger was.

He swaggered in wearing a suit and hat despite the heat, and he had a woman on his arm who looked to be the type that knew how to make the most out of what she had to offer in the way of looks. Her blonde hair was a little frizzed, her nose a little pointy, her hips a little too narrow, but somehow she carried an air of artificial elegance and grace. She was the kind of middle-aged woman most middle-aged men would whistle at if they saw her walking down the street, though I suspect few of them would marry someone like her.

I turned back to the grill, pressed the bloody patties into the steam, wiped my forehead, flipped the burgers, and then set up buns on plates with lettuce, tomato, and raw onion. Just then, I heard Bill call my name. He was standing at the register with the strangers and wagging his finger at me. I wiped my hands on my apron and made my way around the stainless steel counter where the heat lamps hung over a plate of fries.

I gave Bill a look as if to say, What's this all about? But he walked away.

The stranger extended his hand to shake mine. Cautiously, I extended my own. Then the man spoke.

"I'm Leslie King," he said, his slippery voice sliding around in his throat.

The woman smiled politely at me—a little embarrassed, I suppose.

Leslie King spoke again: "I'm your father, son. Your real father."

Nobody said anything for a moment. The customers seemed to be watching us out of the corners of their eyes, their lips hovering over their meatloaf or JELL-O or Dutch pie, or whatever they were eating, in mid bite. Dishes clanked behind the counter in the sink.

Leslie King, my father, the man I had not seen or heard from in over fifteen years, the man I did not even know existed until recently, said, "I'd like to take you out to lunch, son."

My response came quicker than I could even think it. "I'm working," I said.

But Leslie said he had solved that little problem by stuffing a twenty-dollar bill into Bill's hand the moment he walked into the restaurant. Over by the register now, Bill looked at me, winked and then nodded as if to say, "It's okay, kid, take the afternoon off. I got you covered."

Outside, my father introduced his woman friend to me as his wife and led me to his brand new Lincoln. "Just picked this baby up in Detroit," he said. I wasn't sure if he was talking about the car or the woman since he slapped her on the ass at the same moment that he kicked the car's rear tire. Then he opened the door for me. "I figured since I was in the area, I'd stop by to see you and introduce you to the wife," he said.

We drove to the Cherry Room for lunch. I ate spaghetti. Leslie King and the woman he called his wife ate prime rib and mashed potatoes. They each drank a tall Tom Collins. After he sucked his down, he ordered a shot and a beer, and

the woman giggled, waving her hand when he offered to order her some more "hair of the dog."

While we ate, Leslie King asked me questions about the football team at my high school. He said he had heard I was a heck of a ballplayer, wanted to know if he'd see me in the pros one day. He said it would make him proud if his boy made the big time.

I said as little as possible, sizing him up while I chewed and swallowed, feeling the strands of spaghetti slide down my throat.

When lunch was over, he drove me back to Bill's so I could finish my shift. I said thank you and started to walk away from his big shiny Lincoln, but he tapped the horn and called me back to the driver's side. I hesitated, but a twisted sense of obligation got the better of me. As I shuffled back across the gravel lot toward him, I could see he was reaching into his back pocket. Through the open window, my father handed me a twenty-dollar bill. Then he glanced up into my eyes and seemed to be thinking about something. He slipped his fingers into his wallet again and pulled out another bill—a five. "There," he said, "you go out and get yourself a nice suit for graduation, all right?"

He nodded as if he were proud of his generosity and then waved and drove off, showering me in gravel dust as he sped away. Standing there with his money in my hand, I knew I would never see him again, and I knew too that a plate of spaghetti and twenty-five bucks were all I would ever get from him. And a few years later, when the Detroit Lions offered me $2,800 to play pro ball, I knew I had no choice but to turn them down.

***

All I ask is that you do not make assumptions. Do not, for instance, assume that A + B = C. "A" is "A," and "B" is "B," and putting them together would logically lead to "C," but there are so many other ways to get to "C" that the presence of "A" and "B" does not necessarily mean that these variables led to "C." As any first year psychology student will attest, correlation does not always imply causation. So if you want to know why something happened, look beyond the nature of "A" and "B" because so many other variables are always present that, in the end, you might discover "A" and "B" had nothing whatsoever to do with the arrival of "C."

You see, by the time I became a gun-toting, would-be assassin, a whole lot of "A" and "B" had gone down, but so had a lot of other crap—little stuff, like the gluttonous white Continental that rolls through its red light and into the intersection when you're in the middle of the crosswalk; or the pig who threatens you with a loitering charge because you're sleeping under a shade tree on a hot afternoon; or the peeling paint for which you paid full price because you believed the ads in the daily newspaper that guaranteed a single coat would do the trick; or how about the *headlines* in the daily newspaper? These are things that mattered more to me than anything else in 1975.

It wasn't the King himself I was after that day. Naturally, I did not approve of his policies, but that is irrelevant; I would never attempt to kill someone because of his policies. In Truth, he was not really the target. He was merely a symbol of the target. As the

only *literally* unelected King, he represented all the *figuratively* elected Kings who have "served" us. Killing him, if I had succeeded, would have been like a volunteer from the city's Parks and Forestry Department knocking on your door to wave a sickly branch in your face: "You got to get somebody out here to pump this here tree's roots full of Arbotech or you're gonna lose this big ole bitch." Think of me as the syringe that was sent to heal us with one fatal injection to the King's scrotum.

But if you care to really do some digging, I suggest you look beyond the King's sagging sack to the Nation's swollen prostate. Start with the documents you claim to cherish and uphold. Start with Jefferson. Start with We the People. A diseased nation that cannot rely on its elected officials (or unelected officials, as the case may be) has no choice but to heal itself, or it will ultimately surrender itself to tyranny. We hold these Truths to be self-evident. If Life, Liberty, and Happiness are threatened by those who claim to represent us, it is our right, our duty, and our obligation to take matters into our own hands. Revolt is not a dirty word. It is the purest, most beautiful, most American word ever spoken or writ.

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"I was thinking about betrayal." That's what I told my Chief of Staff when he asked the question.

"Ah, yes," he said, as if he knew exactly what I meant. But I could tell he had no idea I was talking about him and everyone else like him—those men who had put me in this

position in the first place, the men who had betrayed our nation in an effort to save a drowning man who was one of their own.

I'm convinced there is nothing left to say about Dick Nixon that hasn't already been said, but still there are eighteen and a half minutes of tape unaccounted for, and so Nixon remains in our nation's consciousness even to this day, and it is true he was on my mind that day when I faced death.

"That man is not a public servant," the woman in red screamed as she reached for her gun. And she was right, of course. In the strictest sense, I was never elected to the highest office in the land, nor did I ever aspire to it. But I was not Macbeth either. I did not kill my king in order to take his place. He had beheaded himself without anyone's help, least of all mine. And here I was, shaking hands with the People, trying to bandage the wounds he had created in all of us as he swung his mighty blade wildly before slicing through his own neck. And my prize for this effort was a loaded .45 pointed directly at my midsection on a gorgeous afternoon in the Promised Land.

But the mind is unpredictable, and the lessons of our youth revisit us in times of peril. My mother had always taught me to believe that all people are more good than bad, so despite my contempt and resentment for the man who had put me in the line of fire, I recalled at that moment the day he announced his resignation to the cabinet. On that day, I was filled with pity and compassion for our fallen leader.

We were all seated silently around the oval table in the cabinet room in sullen anticipation of the announcement. When he entered the room, we rose and waited for him to be seated at the head. It was apparent he had not slept in days. While his suit was pressed, it sagged on him as if he had lost weight during the ordeal. The shirt collar seemed to constrict

his fleshy, stubbled neck even though it too hung loosely. His eyes were sunken and hollow, his skin, yellow and hanging off him as if his blood had already been drawn and he was awaiting an infusion of formaldehyde.

He told us to be seated.

Then, and this is the saddest part, he began the day's briefing, talking earnestly about the economy and the Soviets and the Middle East, planning our agenda for us as if Woodward and Bernstein had died decades earlier in back alley abortions; as if he was not aware that he was about to be tried, convicted, and quite possibly imprisoned; as if it was just another day at the office.

He spoke for thirty-five minutes that day before finally arriving at the real issue of the day, and when he told us of his decision to resign, there was no contrition, no admission of fault, no recognition of failure. He merely stated the facts about losing support in the Senate and the necessity of stepping down.

I felt so sorry for him that day that I actually wept as he walked out of the room. And in September of 1975, when I nearly took the bullet that should have been directed at him, I was overcome once again by that sadness. I was about to be shot dead in his home state only a few miles from where he was enjoying an early retirement, thanks to me, and instead of anger to which I was more than entitled, I felt compassion.

My mother would have been proud, I suppose. I, on the other hand, was disgusted with myself.

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> How many Pigs and Sheep among you have actually read the Declaration, or the Constitution, or for that matter, the Geneva Conventions? How many of you

who claim to love this country and what it stands for actually understand what it stands for? Complacency is not a prerequisite for Freedom; it is the antithesis of Freedom, which is always agitated, always itching for a fight, always performing exploratory surgery on itself. You who have never tasted soybeans and brown rice believe that Freedom can be purchased at the Ford dealership. You who have never camped out under the Redwoods believe Freedom is a pair of Calvin Klein jeans. You who have never sucked the nozzle of God's anointed one think BAND-AIDS inspire blood to coagulate. What you don't understand is that Coca-Cola and crude oil don't mix. What you refuse to see is that the game of golf is a form of hypnosis. What you have ignored is that McCarthy is alive and well and has no plans of resigning any time soon. And nobody in Washington has the gonads to fire him either. They didn't in 1975, and they still don't today. Do you know who was the King's Chief of Staff in 1975? The same S.O.B. who was running the Department of Defense under The Shrub—thirty-one years later. Never was elected, never will be, but he got to decide, in the name of preserving American Ideals, which turban-headed slobs lived and which ones died during the War on Terror. You know who was the chairman of the Republican National Committee in 1975? The same CIA slimebag who fathered the unelected Shrub, who spent eight years on the throne, urinating on the Constitution. Face it, nothing changes unless We the People strap a pistol to our leg and dare to cross the line in the freshly mowed lawn, willing to unload one glorious gory round at a time.

Still, as I've said, my motives were not purely political. They were religious and sociological and scientific and medicinal and economic and fatalistic too. But more than anything, I was motivated by hope. I came to believe that sawing off the legs of the throne might somehow enlighten the complacent. I hoped, perhaps foolishly, that my handgun would provide a wake-up call to sleepers and dreamers from Seattle to Kansas City to Baltimore. I hoped that when Washington descended into chaos and turmoil, We the People might finally recognize how far we had strayed from our mission. I hoped, quite frankly, that mine would be the first of many sad-but-necessary shots fired for the cause of Freedom. But, as everyone now knows, the gun never went off.

Some have said they heard a click as I pulled the trigger on an empty chamber. Some have said all I did was point my long barrel at his short one, and that I never engaged the weapon. This letter is not intended to put those speculations to rest. I will leave it up to the historians and psychoanalysts and gunsmiths to ponder the action of my weapon's hammer. My purpose here is to explain how the gun got from its holster to my hand and why I aimed it at the King. Truth be told, when I set out on my journey that morning, I had no idea if I would actually go through with it or not. And in all honesty, I still to this day do not know if I ever actually pulled the trigger.

***

Another thought I reported to someone somewhere along the way—I think it was one of the Secret Service agents—had to do with Lee Harvey Oswald. Strangely, I said, when I saw the gun emerge, I found myself wondering what Oswald ate for breakfast the morning he shot Kennedy. I was also wondering if he had contemplated what to wear that day; was he, for instance, wearing matching socks when he climbed the steps of the book depository? Perhaps most importantly, I was wondering if he really did act alone.

As a member of the Warren Commission I had told the world that Oswald had indeed been a solo assassin. But as a member of the Warren Commission, I also had reason to believe our final report was a sham. We knew, for instance, that Oswald had met with the Soviets in Mexico, but we had decided not to reveal this fact to the public for fear that it might embarrass the CIA, which had planted bugging devices in the Soviet embassy in Mexico. At the time, I was convinced the public should not know how we had obtained the information about Oswald's meeting with the Soviets because the information had been obtained illegally, but now, as the girl in the red dress raised the gun and pointed it in my direction, I wondered if we had made a mistake.

As the girl took aim at me, I imagined Kennedy's head blown apart in the back of that convertible in Dallas. I pictured Jackie O. trying to climb out of the car. Was she chasing her husband's brains or was she simply trying to escape the Kennedy curse? I recalled Jack Ruby's point-blank assassination of Oswald, leaving us all in a state of eternal doubt and suspicion. Here I was about to be blown into the history books by a handgun, and I couldn't help but wonder if maybe I deserved this fate. The girl in red might have been Oswald's lover for all I knew, or his sister, or a professional killer hired by the CIA, or a Soviet agent—why else the red dress?

Betty was not there to chase my brains that day, thank God. And the gun never went off, thank God. So I never had to face these questions quite so directly again. But they have continued to linger ever since. After all, I had trusted Nixon, and look where that got me, so who's to say my work on the Warren Commission was not part of some larger sham to which I had been completely oblivious all along? So many surveillance devices, so much eavesdropping. What kind of fool was I to trust anyone?

But it turned out the girl in red was just a garden-variety wacko, not a Communist stooge, and she was just following the orders of a Nazi-hippie nut job, so I let myself off the hook and never dug any further into the matter. Perhaps that is a blessing not only for me, but for our nation as a whole. No need to keep reopening that wound, right?

***

What I remember most clearly is the stunned look on his affable face. And I remember the way the warm breeze lifted the wisps of his graying strawberry hair. I remember feeling the weight of the gun in my frail hand. I remember thinking Charlie would be both proud and disappointed. I remember thinking my father would feel vindicated and validated. I remember thinking my mother would weep. I remember raising the barrel—how easy it was to lift such a heavy weapon and direct its nozzle at the groin of the President in broad daylight with hundreds of people watching and the cameras rolling. I remember the flap of his sport coat flying open so that I could zero in on his fly. I remember the sunlight speaking to me as if in a smile of approving applause. I remember a rustle

of leaves and an echo of yesterday's heat still surfing the air. I remember the astonished looks on the faces of the onlookers, frozen in fear and expectation, no doubt secretly hoping for the worst.

The rest is irrelevant. The gun never went off. "He is not a public servant," I shouted. But no one listened. And the gun never went off, so I was merely another crackpot, a lunatic whose father had abused her, a brainwashed member of The Family. "He's not a public servant," I screamed over and over as they tackled me to the ground and dragged me off to my cell, where I would eventually find the same enlightenment Charlie had found in solitary confinement. But what if the gun had gone off? What if I had crippled or killed that King, or at least rendered him sexless? Would you have forgiven the peanut farmer for his kindness? Would you have seen through the Hollywood veneer of the D. C. Cowboy? Would you have cared so much about a little fellatio in the Oval Office? Would you have allowed the Sons of the Father to steal the People's House?

***

"Trust in the Lord with all thine heart, and lean not unto thine own understanding. In all thy ways acknowledge Him, and He shall direct thy paths."

It's a mouthful, I realize, but this is the prayer I learned as a kid, and it's the prayer that got me through all the most difficult times of my life. Naturally, it was these words that bounced around in my head when young Squeaky Fromme took aim in my general direction.

I thought to myself, "Steely eyed redhead in a red dress at eleven o'clock. *Trust in the Lord*. Steely eyed redhead in red dress closing quickly. *With all thine heart*. Redhead reaching under red dress. *Lean not unto thine own understanding*. Duct taped holster, black handgun. *In all thy ways acknowledge Him*." Staring into the barrel. Her screaming, "That man is not a public servant." Redhead tackled by agents, the gun wrestled from her. Her screaming again, "The damn thing didn't go off." *In all thy ways acknowledge Him. Amen.*

But that thought—the prayer—that was my business. I've never shared that with anybody. For one thing it makes me sound like I figured God spared me because I was special somehow. In all honesty I expect I am about the least special man to hold the highest office in the land, but maybe in a way that's what makes me special. Maybe that's why I was spared that day, and again a week later in San Francisco when some other crazy woman actually did get off a shot at me. But if you tell people you think God saved you because He had some profound mission set aside for you, they'll think you're nuts, and rightly so.

Most likely my role in the big picture was simply to be a non-entity, the face of clumsy mediocrity, a forgettable asterisk in the parade of names who took the oath of office. If Squeaky Fromme, the Manson follower, had succeeded in assassinating me, I might have become a martyr, and I'm pretty damn sure that's not what God had in mind for me. Prayer or no prayer, I probably would have been spared that day; therein lay another reason for not telling anybody about the silent salutation I muttered when I saw Fromme's bony knuckle wrapped around the trigger.

I'm not a savior. On the other hand, dangerous duty called me more than once in my life, and each time I answered the call, trusting in the Lord with all mine heart, and each time

I was spared only to be called upon again. If I were a preacher, I'd say that's the only thing anybody needs to know in order to live a spiritual life.

Of course, I expect Ms. Fromme feels pretty much the same way. She would probably say that a dangerous duty called her to service in 1975, and she answered the call, and who am I to judge her version of spirituality (or her savior, even if he did carve a swastika into his forehead and inspire mass murder)? To him and to her, they were answering a call to arms not unlike the one I answered in 1942 after hearing the news of Pearl Harbor on the radio in my car.

Like many other young men of my generation, I volunteered to fight tyranny. I joined the Navy and helped command the USS Enterprise to the successful mass murder of a few hundred Jap soldiers who answered their own call to arms. Every man (and woman) does what has to be done and trusts that it will get him or her to the Kingdom, I suppose. Or at the very least, it will keep him or her alive to fight another day. It's tough to make sense of right and wrong when you've fought in a war, or followed a cult leader, or made a career out of politics. In the end, I suppose that's why I pardoned that son of a bitch who defecated on our national pride. We all do enough damage to each other in this life. Why not look for ways to heal when we can? Why not trust in something bigger than yourself to keep the ship afloat when the typhoon hits?

When the wind tips your vessel, and the rain pelts your men like daggers, and the planes tied to the deck slam into each other, and one of them catches fire, and the smoke fills the cabin, and you are charged with the duty of dragging the dead up on deck from the bowels of the ship, and you're told to abandon the sinking beast, why not shout, "Give us more time, we can right her!" Why not say a prayer, strap on your gas mask and extinguish the fires? Who knows, you might just

make it to shore without sinking. You might just win a medal of honor for your efforts. As a war hero, you might even earn a seat in Congress afterwards. Hell, you might actually rise to the nation's helm one day without even having to ride the typhoon-infested waters of the party ticket.

Who knows, maybe God did have a plan for me. Maybe Squeaky Fromme was part of it. Or maybe it's all a crapshoot, and my little prayer is a delusion to which I subscribed foolishly for far too long. Trust in the Lord and lean not unto thine own understanding, right? It probably doesn't matter much either way; the whole country is going to hell in a handbasket now anyway, which is yet another reason I never told anybody about the prayer I said when that Squeaky woman tried to end my life in 1975. People would have thought I was as nuts and she was, trusting in Lords who defy logic and somehow make sense to us anyway.

***

No matter. What is *is* and what was isn't anymore, as Charlie used to say. My only hope now is that somewhere, in some suburban tract house, a little redheaded girl with too many freckles is getting banged by her father and eating dinner alone, building up enough anger and hate to wake the rest of you up one day. Until then, I sleep well, knowing that I did what I could to set the alarm. Perhaps when the buzzer finally invades your slumber, you will hit the snooze bar. Or worse, you will simply name a new enemy, a new villain, and set your sights on fighting for Freedom on someone else's turf again while your own slips further and further from your grasp. But maybe, just maybe, one day a rebel will arrive and topple

your biggest, most diseased tree, and finally you will see that in its collapse you are Truly set Free.

Until then I await my own death with a clear conscience and Hope for humanity still lingering in my heart.

Sincerely yours,

The girl they call Squeaky

Mark Maxwell has been teaching English in Township High School District 214 for twenty-four years. He received his MFA in Fiction Writing from Vermont College. He is the author of the novel nixoncarver (St. Martin's Press). "Leslie & Lynette" is part of a collection of stories Maxwell wrote about the U. S. Presidents of his generation; the collection is called Kings of the World.

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We seek articles dealing with literature, writing, language, media, speech, drama, film, culture, technology, standards, assessment, professional development, and other aspects of our profession. Any combination of research, theory, and practice is appropriate. Some articles take a formal and conclusive approach, while others are informal and exploratory.

Book reviews, poetry, black-and-white photographs, and line drawings are also welcome.

When you are ready to share your work with your colleagues across the state, please consult the submission guidelines on page 168. We look forward to hearing from you. If you have questions or suggestions for the editor, please don't hesitate to get in touch (contact information on page

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(See page 170 for the editor's contact information.)

- Via U.S. mail, send one clean, paper copy of the manuscript to the editor. See below for manuscript formatting guidelines and information to include in your cover letter.
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- With both your paper and electronic manuscript submissions, please also include a biographical blurb of 50 words

or fewer. (Blurbs for manuscripts with multiple authors should total 50 words or fewer.) Blurbs usually mention institutional and professional affiliations as well as teaching and research interests.

- The *Bulletin* editor will acknowledge receipt of your manuscript via e-mail.

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You are welcome to submit your materials at any time to the editor of the *Illinois English Bulletin*. Traditionally, the *Bulletin*'s spring issue features shorter articles based on presentations made at the previous autumn's IATE annual conference. Summer issues may be themed or all-inclusive. The fall issue presents the "Best Illinois Student Poetry and Prose." The winter issue is the program for our annual IATE fall conference.

To be considered for inclusion in the spring issue, materials must be received by the editors by the previous November 1.

To be considered for inclusion in the summer issue, materials must be received by the editors by the previous January 15.

To be considered for inclusion in the fall issue ("Best Illinois Student Poetry and Prose"), materials must be submitted electronically through the IATE submission manager (iate.submittable.com/submit) by the previous January 31. Please see page 171 for the two-page special submission guidelines for fall issues. Please note that as of 2005, the poet laureate of Illinois will designate several of the poems selected for publication in the *Bulletin* as "Poems of Exceptional Merit." These poems will be identified in a message written by the poet laureate and published in this issue of the *Bulletin*. The

poets will receive a certificate from the poet laureate in the U.S. mail.

Editor's Contact Information

U.S. mail: Janice Neuleib, Editor
Illinois English Bulletin
Illinois State University
Campus Box 4240
Normal, IL 61790-4240
E-mail: jneuleib@ilstu.edu
Telephone: (309) 438-7858

CALL FOR STUDENT WRITING FROM ALL LEVELS FOR IATE'S BEST ILLINOIS POETRY AND PROSE CONTEST

DEADLINE: Submit all contest entries electronically through the IATE submission manager (iate.submittable.com/submit) no later than January 31, 2014.

FORMAT: Accepted file types include .doc, .docx, and .rtf.

COVER LETTER: The "Cover Letter" field must include:

- Full name of student
- Student's grade level at time piece was written
- Full name of school
- School's complete mailing address
- Full name of teacher (indicate if IATE member)
- E-mail address of instructor

IMPORTANT: The student's name, the school's name, and the teacher's name must not appear anywhere other than in the "Cover Letter" field.

LIMITS:
1) Five prose and ten poetry entries per teacher.
2) One thousand words of prose per entry; forty lines of poetry per entry.

SOME SUGGESTIONS FROM THE JUDGES:
1) Please see that students abide by the line and word limits. Have them revise and shorten pieces that exceed these limits.
2) Please emphasize to students that prose and fiction are not synonymous. Encourage them to explore the possibilities of expository essays, arguments, and personal narratives.

CONTEST COORDINATORS:
Delores R. Robinson
Illinois Valley Community College
IATE Prose Contest

Robin L. Murray
Department of English
Eastern Illinois University
IATE Poetry Contest

FOR MORE INFORMATION:
Visit www.iateonline.org.