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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 1,500 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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INTRODUCTION TO THE *ILLINOIS ENGLISH BULLETIN* 97.2 (SPRING 2010)

JANICE NEULEIB

This issue of the *Bulletin* speaks to many important conflicts and joys in current English and Language Arts instruction. The poems by Kathryn Kerr that begin the issue address teachers' dilemmas in dealing with their students and themselves. Susan Spangler's essay on Shakespeare asks us to rethink our views of teaching the bard and makes suggestions for those changes. The next essays by teachers Colleen Hiles, Michelle Ryan and Jennifer Gouin recount the struggles teachers have with challenges to their curricula and teaching and ways to meet those challenges. Kate Norcross and Jordan Neville approach issues of reading the language of texts, in Norcross's case the language of academia and in Neville's case the language of his military experiences. Ardis Stewart and Andrew Bouque and Dawn Forde offer us lessons to take and use or refine for our own classrooms. These

writers give us much to consider and to use in our own work. They bring us insights into the changing nature of the worlds of scholarship and the classroom. My thanks go to all these writers and especially to Tara Reeser, Director of the English Publication Unit, and to Sarah Haberstich, Assistant Director, for their editorial and supervisory work on this publication.

CALL FOR SUBMISSIONS TO THE *ILLINOIS ENGLISH BULLETIN*

As the written forum in which Illinois English teachers share their ideas, the *Illinois English Bulletin* welcomes all kinds of materials related to the teaching of English.

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 8. 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 10).

Thank you for reading, supporting, and contributing to the *Illinois English Bulletin*.

Submission Guidelines

(See page 10 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.
- Attached to an e-mail message addressed to the editor, send an additional copy of the manuscript in an MS Word or PDF attachment. See below for manuscript formatting guidelines and information you should include in your e-mail message.
- In your cover letter (mailed with hard copy) and in your e-mail message (with electronic copy attached), include the following information: your manuscript title, name, mailing address, institutional affiliation, and phone number. Also indicate whether you are currently a member of the Illinois Association of Teachers of English (IATE). State that the manuscript has not been published or submitted elsewhere.
- Manuscript formatting guidelines: follow the current *MLA Handbook* guidelines for parenthetical in-text citations, the works cited section, and other technical elements; follow NCTE's "Guidelines for Gender-Fair Use of Language"; place page numbers at the top right corner of every page; type and double-space throughout (including quotations, endnotes, and works cited), with one-inch margins all around.
- 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.

Submission Deadlines

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 mailed to the special editor for that issue and postmarked by the previous January 31. Please see the most recent fall issue of the *Bulletin* for special submission guidelines and contact information 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.

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THREE POEMS

KATHRYN KERR
ILLINOIS STATE UNIVERSITY

The Wall

More than thirty years—
it hardly matters.
She leads these quiet girls
down the pathway, a busload
of tired children who came
to sing and see the Capitol.
Dressed alike in white shorts
and blue tees with musical notes,
they can turn fierce or tender,
her granddaughter, most of all.
It doesn't matter.
But she knows where to look,
and when she sees his name
spelled out across her thighs
she stoops to touch the initial,
touches instead his bony shoulder,
as he wraps her in farm-boy arms,

pressing his hip bones into her memory.
She smells his shirt, the floral
fabric softener his mother used,
and kneels, hot tears on her cheeks,
her forehead cold against that wall.
The girls stand swallowing,
afraid to touch her or speak
or meet any gaze, even reflected.

Elegy for Nathan

He always sat in the corner of the room opposite the door.

He worked a factory shift after class, some miles away.

The first few weeks among Normal school students, he tucked his long hair in his shirt. He wore a sparse beard, stained feed cap, tattered dark clothes.

He wrote a dialog of a young soldier refusing prostitutes, of being teased, manliness at issue.

He wrote of finding the crack house and carrying his former girlfriend out the door, taking her home, putting her on the sofa.

He silenced the class with a sestina about street people on winter nights, but found his best work in little pieces of prose clenched tight as a fist.

His notebook, hand bound, tied with thongs, smelled of leather, smoke, male.

On the supple paper his pen inked characters like calligraphy, cryptic and dark.

What My Students Learned about Writing Fiction[*]

Be prepared for change.
Don't assume the car will start
when you've robbed the bank.
Be prepared to grab the robes
from a nearby priest and humbly
stroll past that tragedy.

Plan ahead.
Don't arrive at your door without
a key or at class with no pen.
You can't play your hand
too soon nor keep
the pallbearers waiting.

Show, don't tell.
Let the sparrow fold
its wings, tuck its beak
back into neck feathers
and drop silently. Spread
the wings gracefully.
Land without comment.

Hold attention with details.
Let the sparrow be male
with his little black beard,
the sparrow whose toes
pinken in the cold,
one toe with a scab.

Nothing is set—revise.
Make it a pigeon,
a lusterless sick one

[*]First published in *The Teacher's Voice,* Vol. 1, No. 4, Winter 2005

whose wings don't open,
whose open beak bleeds.

Everything can change.

Kathryn Kerr has taught writing and poetry at Illinois State University for ten years. Previously she taught college biology and high school English and science. She has published poems, essays, scientific articles, and art and book reviews.

EVERYTHING OLD IS NEW AGAIN: TAKE A LOOK AT SHAKESPEARE

SUSAN SPANGLER
STATE UNIVERSITY OF NEW YORK AT FREDONIA

There is no doubt in my mind that Shakespeare is beloved of English teachers. The National Council of Teachers of English reports that Shakespeare is at the top of the "Ten Most Frequently Required Authors of Book-Length Works, Grades 9–12" (qtd. in Prose 77). Most of us would agree that Shakespeare's works are incredible, but we also probably understand and appreciate those works much more than our students do. In my years in secondary classrooms, I saw students struggling when they read Shakespeare, frustrated to the point where they would give up because the pay-off of enjoying it came at too high a cost. Students spend so much time decoding the words that they miss the rich metaphors and imagery that Shakespeare provides us. In an effort to make up for their students' reading struggles, teachers lecture on the plot, or worse—reduce the plays to "a vehicle for the soporific moral blather [students] suffer daily from their

parents…. English—and everything about it that is inventive, imaginative, or pleasurable—is beside the point in classrooms, as is everything that constitutes style and that distinguishes writers, one from another, as precisely as fingerprints or DNA mapping" (Prose 78).

Because of the difficulty the majority of students have with reading Shakespeare, teachers have several options. Those who teach Shakespeare to the general student population "may fall into the uncomfortable habit of trying to cajole [those students] into enjoying Shakespeare's plays" (Strickland 170). We point out every pun and play on words so that students will see that Shakespeare is fun to read, and we assign the reading, play the tape, and watch the movie. Years after graduating, most these students will remember Shakespeare only as an author who, though they were told was brilliant, clever, and witty, remains elusive because they couldn't easily understand the language.

Another option is to reserve Shakespeare only for the most academically accomplished students, upper level/college bound classes. Of course, many freshmen struggle through *Romeo and Juliet*, but most students who aren't among the elite will never experience *Hamlet* or *King Lear*. *Hamlet* routinely tops the list of works students write about on the Advanced Placement Literature and Composition test. In this way, the study of Shakespeare has become a sign of cultural elitism. Only the best and brightest can be taught to understand Shakespeare. Writing in the introduction to *Riverside* Shakespeare, Harry Levin says that Shakespeare's works have "been accorded a place in our culture above and beyond their topmost place in our literature. They have been virtually canonized as humanistic scriptures…" (1). It is clear that Shakespeare is an acquired taste, much like the opera and ballet, while Broadway shows will suffice for the

general population. The implication is that only selected students can handle reading Shakespeare and discussing it with any coherence.

In order to foster the same kind of appreciation we teachers of English have for Shakespeare in our students, we need to do more than the usual classroom activities of read the play, listen to the audio tapes, take a test, and see the movie. Let me propose a radical new (?) idea: Have students watch a performance of the play before they read. Better yet, see several performances of the play (live or on film) before students read. If students are to appreciate the plays fully, they must see them as originally intended, performed. As Levin reminds us, "In reading and studying Shakespeare, at best we merely approximate the actual conditions of his art. All too frequently we forget that it was designed to be projected vocally and taken in by the ear" (10). The stage is the medium through which teachers can help students both understand and find value in Shakespeare's work.

Objections

Some may feel that Shakespeare's texts are sacrosanct and that students *need* to read it (just as they did) in order to capture every nuance of the language. In reality, Shakespeare's texts are anything but sacred. Educators might forget that the plays weren't even produced in written form until the First Folio was published in 1623. Shakespeare himself had no hand in this publication, having died seven years earlier. The First Folio was edited by Shakespeare's theater partners, actors who had played some of Shakespeare's famous characters. The Folio itself contained copies of copies of original drafts as well as original drafts that Shakespeare actually wrote (McDonnell 153), so numerous changes could have been made anywhere in the copying process. The original scripts were for

the actors, not the audience. Actors received only their lines and necessary cues, copied from the promptbook. The text for the audience was the performance itself, not the script.

Texts have also been bowdlerized, stripped of any references to sex (gasp!!). While this practice of editors makes Shakespeare "safe" to teach to a class of hormonally-imbalanced freshmen, it also makes the plays boring or incomprehensible in parts. Strickland reports that students "often remark that they didn't like [Romeo and Juliet] in high school, that it seemed boring, or that it didn't make much sense (174) because of missing parts.

Hamlet provides a good example of this practice of sanitization. Ophelia's songs in Act 4 give the audience insight into her relationship with Hamlet. In uncut form, Ophelia sings a song that some have interpreted as being about her relationship with Hamlet:

> Then up he rose and donned his clothes
> And dupped the chamber door,
> Let in the maid, that out a maid
> Never departed more.
> By Gis and by Saint Charity,
> Alack, and fie for shame!
> Young men will do't if then come to't,
> By Cock, they are to blame.
> Quoth she, "Before you tumbled me,
> You promised me to wed."
>
> He answers:
> "So would I 'a' done, by yonder sun,
> An thou hadst not come to my bed"
> (Shakespeare *Hamlet* 4.5.52-67).

If her song is indeed in reference to Hamlet, there's a clear indication that she and Hamlet have been lovers and that he has

jilted her. In a typical high school anthology, Scott-Foresman's *England in Literature*, these verses are cut in order to prevent (one can only assume) student questions about Ophelia's virginity or discussions about extra-marital sex.

But in cutting these verses, editors have rendered Ophelia's cause of madness and motives for suicide less convincing. There is no reason for Ophelia to be so upset about Hamlet's frightening behavior in Ophelia's room in Act 2 unless he had already promised her something. And was Ophelia so upset only by her controlling, domineering father's death that she went mad and drowned herself? I'd think she'd be, at least partially, relieved that she was finally free of his domination. Wouldn't the explanations for her actions be even more plausible if students knew that her lover, Hamlet, suddenly rejected her, then killed her father and abandoned her? The removal of this part of the "sacred" text makes at least Ophelia's motivations much harder to understand and find believable.

Some educators feel that students need to practice decoding tough texts in order to become better readers, and Shakespeare's texts provide that opportunity. After all, if they can read the exalted Shakespeare, they can read anything! My major objection with this assertion is that students spend so much time decoding the words that the meaning is lost. As a result, the teacher usually ends up explaining the plot to the students. Alternatively, students might be asked to paraphrase ("put it in *modern* English"—it's *already* in modern English!) the text, something we don't usually ask them to do with other works. What they can't do alone becomes more complicated in a group situation, and again, it's the teacher to the rescue. There is little incentive for students to continue decoding on their own or even attempting to do so when they know the teacher will eventually provide them

with the facts they need to know to pass the test. Because of the problems with decoding, reading Shakespeare is also a major frustration for struggling readers. Teachers who went into education because they loved literature cannot understand the difficulty students have because the meaning is so clear to them. English teachers are experts at making meaning from words; students are not, and some have no desire to be. Why force them to read Shakespeare, which wasn't meant to be read in the first place?

I agree that students need excellent reading skills to be successful in school and that students should read literature in classrooms, in part, to hone those skills. The problem is that many teachers of English haven't taken courses on teaching reading, so they don't teach reading skills to their students. In fact, Meeks and Austin assert that one of the myths of teaching English is that "reading is hard to teach, and if I have to teach reading, then I won't have time to teach literature" (80).

A recent article by Fred Hamel in *Research in the Teaching of English* also supports the claim that English teachers don't expect to teach reading skills in their literature classes. According to Hamel, some teachers feel that students should be able to read before entering an English class. One teacher in his study implied that teaching reading is "not the objective of literature classes" (66). Hamel's article makes it clear that at least some teachers believe that a literature class *builds on* reading skills instead of *teaches* reading skills. Besides, aren't their other texts on which students can practice their reading skills? Isn't Shakespeare a text we want students to enjoy instead of just consider a reading exercise?

Benefits

In spending less time decoding the texts, students and teachers will have more time to explore the reasons why teachers

love Shakespeare in the first place, the language. Comprehending more than the plot takes higher-order thinking skills. As Francine Prose claims, "Teaching students to value literary masterpieces is our best hope of awakening them to the infinite capacities and complexities of human experience, of helping them acknowledge and accept complexity and ambiguity, of making them love and respect the language that allows us to smuggle out, and send one another, our urgent, eloquent dispatches from the prison of the self" (83).

By experiencing Shakespeare first on stage, students can develop higher order skills by concentrating on the rich language Shakespeare is beloved for instead of decoding basic words. Once students have experienced Shakespeare "live," they can spend more time examining just what makes Shakespeare's language so rich, how language does more than just convey meaning, but HOW it means.

Take for example, the characters in *Twelfth Night*, whose words both build and reflect their personalities. Orsino's first response to Curio in Act 1 reveals his narcissism through an apt metaphor. When Curio asks if he will hunt the hart, Orsino responds,

> Why, so I do, the noblest that I have.
> O, when mine eyes did see Olivia first,
> Methought she purged the air of pestilence.
> That instant was I turned into a hart,
> And my desires, like fell and cruel hounds,
> E'er since pursue me" (Shakespeare *TN* 1.1. 19–24).

By using one pun (hart/heart), Orsino turns this metaphor around on himself, the center of his world. Through this turn, he indicates his main personality trait, narcissism. It's all about him. We realize he is pursued by his own desires instead of believing his claim that he is pursuing Olivia.

As the play turns into a screwball comedy through the tropes of mistaken identity and cross-dressing, Sebastian appears as the voice of reason and balance in a topsy-turvy world. His role is reflected in his speeches, mainly composed of balanced constructions, such as this early passage describing Viola, his twin:

> A lady sir, though it was said she much resembled me, was yet of many accounted beautiful. But though I could not with such estimable wonder overfar believe that, yet thus far I will boldly publish her…. She is drowned already, sir, with salt water, though I seem to drown her remembrance again with more" (Shakespeare *TN* 2.1. 25–31.)

Later, when Olivia has mistaken him for Cesario (his twin), he provides more balance:

> This is the air; that is the glorious sun;
> This pearl she gave me, I do feel't and see't;
> And though 'tis wonder that enwraps me thus,
> Yet 'tis not madness. Where's Antonia then?
> I could not find him at the Elephant;
> Yet there he was; and there I found this credit,
> That he did range the town to seek me out.
> His counsel now might do me golden service;
> For though my soul disputes well with my sense
> That this may be some error, but no madness,
> Yet doth this accident and flood of fortune
> So far exceed all instance, all discourse,
> That I am ready to distrust mine eyes
> And wrangle with my reason, that persuades me
> To any other trust but that I am mad,
> Or else the lady's mad" (Shakespeare *TN* 4.3.1–16)

Who else but a twin could provide the balance needed to ensure a happy ending for the other three main characters? Without that balance, the love triangle created in Act 1 would remain unresolved. That balance is reflected in Sebastian's speech, something students will never get if they spend all their time decoding what he's literally saying.

Seeing Shakespeare on stage instead of reading also gives us the opportunity to discuss different interpretations (plural) of texts rather than one (the teacher's) interpretation. According to the director of the Munroe Park Theater Guild, Kevin McSweeney, "a script is not a sacred artifact. It is something to be molded and abused in some circumstances. Ironically, the script is often seen as something evil: The longer you hold it in your hand on stage, the more it inhibits what you as an actor are trying to accomplish." The job of a director, along with others involved in a dramatic production, McSweeney continues, is to build upon a text's foundation through interpretation, which in turn helps define the script. "Before the production team and performers crack the binding, the script is a series of semantic statements that have no meaning in and of themselves. In Hamlet's terms, the script is just 'words, words, words' with very little substance. The interpretation brings to life these words and makes them dynamic and powerful. In a way, directing a show is like doing a 'reading' of the text."

After watching several different performances of the same scene or entire play (in no more time than it takes to read), students can discuss more than the plot and the language. They can discuss the different "readings," interpretations, or visions of different directors, created by the actors' inflections and non-verbal communcation. Does Kate the shrew make a deal with Petruchio and split the money he wins in his final bet? According to at least one production

I've seen, she does. Or does she earnestly change her attitude about relationships between women and men? According to other interpretations, she does. The text itself can give some clues, but *The Taming of the Shrew* is much changed depending on the director's interpretation. Teachers can enrich students' understanding of the play by exposing them to several interpretations and discussing the plausibility of each one.

Students can also begin to study the literacy of the image by seeing a Shakespeare play. In *Literacy in the New Media Age,* Gunther Kress asserts that the image is gaining new dominance over writing, causing a revolution in literacy (1). He writes, "*The world told* is a different world to *the world shown*" (1). Simply, seeing something (like a play) is often more powerful than being told, as in the case of reading. Words' meanings can change infinitely based on the non-verbal communication, such as pitch, tone, rate, and gestures that accompany them. And teaching strategies to interpret *the world shown* will become part of English teachers' work, adding yet another kind of literacy to our expanding subject area.

Something that students cannot get from merely reading a play is the feeling of community with the other audience members while in the theater as well as the actors on stage, similar to the fellowship one might experience while in church. In a movie theater full of strangers, we are conditioned to be respectful of others' viewing enjoyment, but in a live theater, a feeling of community can be established as the audience reacts to the actors on stage. Levin points out that Shakespeare's stage brought actors and audience "together in a vital interrelationship" (15).

Modern actors confirm Levin's claim. Nikki Lask-Aitken says,

> When working in rehearsal, you don't get that kind of feedback or those reactions that a live audience gives

> you. Therefore, you begin to find yourself in something of a groove where things just fall into place, and you do the same thing over and over again. A receptive audience, meanwhile, will change everything. If they're laughing and enjoying what is going on, you are more likely to take that into consideration and possibly take some risks with your movements or inflections—you want to continue to receive those reactions. One of the main reasons an actor is onstage is to receive those receptions—we don't expect glory, but we do expect to entertain.

Director and actor Kevin McSweeney also agrees with Levin:

> The audience has *a lot* to do with performance. The mood of the audience can have an incredibly huge impact on the dynamic of the actors, especially in comedies. For instance, when rehearsing a comedy, the energy level begins to drop as rehearsals progress. The jokes are no longer funny to the production team or anyone who has watched the show through the rehearsal period. The final dress rehearsals are really a bore; we need the interaction. We'd deliver the lines, and there would be silence in the auditorium. The next night, when people are laughing, the dynamic changes. In a way, the audience charges us. A dialogue is happening: we are delivering our lines, and the audience is responding.

When I'm sitting alone watching a comedy on television, I rarely laugh out loud. But in communal situations, I find myself laughing sometimes just because of the laughter of other audience members. I believe this is the philosophy behind laugh tracks in sitcoms. Producers want to make you think you're having a good time when you're watching television, and if

you think (subconsciously) that other people are watching along with you and find the show humorous, you're more likely to, too.

Bringing this discussion back to Shakespeare's theater, I don't think that today's theater experience can match the community that gathered in the Globe. Nowhere else could you find members of royalty sitting in the balcony above the blacksmiths that shoed their horses besides the theater. Shakespeare's plays brought all levels of society together in one place to create a cultural event. Queens and commoners now had something in common, the appreciation and enjoyment of live theater. That kind of diversity doesn't happen in today's theaters, and it certainly doesn't happen in the classroom where Shakespeare is read.

As I implied before, Shakespeare has come to belong to the bourgeois, out of the realm of the common student. If only the elite in a school read it, and only the most advanced of those understand it, what chance do average students have to appreciate Shakespeare as average citizens did in Shakespeare's time? If they could become part of the community formed by the audience, they'd have a much better experience with Shakespeare and would continue to enjoy it throughout their lives. And if that happens, then I foresee Shakespeare losing some of its snob value and becoming a democratic art form that all can participate in.

Yes, it will be hard to organize a trip to the theater for students. Even though many local theater companies and colleges produce Shakespeare plays each year, tickets can be expensive or hard to secure for larger groups. Permission slips will have to be distributed, signed, and collected, and some students won't remember to return them on time. Busses will have to be hired and chaperones arranged. But isn't fostering a love of the most popular and beloved writer in the English

language worth the complications live theater creates? Instead of continuing to pay lip service to the value of Shakespeare and then complaining that our students don't enjoy it, we need to be more active in creating an environment in which students experience the best we can do as educators. If we are to give Shakespeare's plays the place in our literature classes many think they deserve, we have to do more than we are doing now to promote students' appreciation of Shakespeare that will complement our own.

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RESPONSE TO BOOK CHALLENGES: ONE SCHOOL'S EXPERIENCE

MICHELLE RYAN
LINCOLN COMMUNITY HIGH SCHOOL

JENNIFER LESTER GOUIN
LINCOLN COMMUNITY HIGH SCHOOL

Overview/Background

Most schools, at some point in time, encounter at least one parental challenge to a book in the curriculum. At our school, Lincoln Community High School in Lincoln, a school of approximately 900 students, our English department has experienced two such challenges in the last three years. In the first instance, our (now former) superintendent removed the book *10th Grade* by Joel Weisberg as the sophomore summer reading assignment immediately following a parent complaint. In the process, he disparaged the English department in the local newspaper for what he considered an inappropriate choice, despite the fact that he had not read the book or spoken to a member of the English department concerning

the rationale for selecting the text. An excerpt from that letter written to parents stated:

> Do we accept something at the lowest common denominator and provide it as our recommendation to the entire sophomore class? I say no. We're better than that. I think, in retrospect, all English staff agree with our position on this. There are clearly parts of his story that are offensive and inappropriate for sophomores in high school. In my view, the selection of this book for the summer reading program represents a tremendous lack of judgment. The book will not be discussed or assessed in our curriculum at Lincoln Community High School. Our staff will make other arrangements for appropriate reading material once the year begins. (qtd. in Frost)

He later apologized to the department for these ill-chosen words (and inaccuracies in speaking for the English department), but that apology was never made public. At the time of our second challenge, he was no longer superintendent, but his words still had repercussions.

The Challenge—Round One

The second book challenge began in the summer of 2008. A small group of parents objected to advanced sophomores being assigned Abe Lincoln Award nominee *The Tenth Circle* by Jodi Picoult for summer reading. The novel tells the story of 14 year old Trixie Stone, a girl who is raped by her ex-boyfriend at a party. The event is a catalyst for Picoult's exploration of how one act of violence impacts an individual and the bond between parent and child. The text includes a graphic novel that depicts Trixie's father's allegorical journey to Hell as he deals with the tragic events. The main parental objections involved language and sexual content, specifically a four page portion of the text

that describes the events preceding the rape. One parent stated the following in the local newspaper the *Lincoln Courier*: "This book contains such explicit sexual material and profanity that I cannot be more specific (here)… The book is hardcore pornography and I cannot emphasize strongly enough the inappropriateness of this book" (qtd. in Frost). A concerned parent objected first to the teacher, and when she was not happy with the book still being a part of the curriculum, her complaint was forwarded to the department liaison. After the department liaison contacted the parent and, again, did not comply with removal of the book, the complaint was then sent to the principal, who contacted the teacher for clarification about the reading assignment as well as an alternative text, an option that is typically provided for students when the original summer reading assignment is given.

In response to the parents' concerns, the teacher elucidated her reasoning for choosing the text. In a letter sent to parents she stated:

> Summer reading assignments are given to serve two purposes: to augment and prepare for the classroom experience and to get students reading and exercising their brains in the summer months. …The selection of *The Tenth Circle* was not intended to encourage any of the behavior in the book, but rather to encourage discussion and thought about the choices made and the consequences of those actions. (Keith)

The teacher also alluded to the text's thematic connections (being true to oneself) to other texts studied in the accelerated sophomore curriculum: Shakespeare's *Hamlet* and *The Taming of the Shrew,* Chris Crutcher's *Staying Fat for Sarah Byrnes* and *The Sledding Hill*, and *Speak* by Laurie Halse Anderson. *The Tenth Circle* was intended to be discussed in conjunction with

excerpts of Dante's *Inferno*, obviously a more difficult piece, one which lends itself better to a classroom setting rather than an independent reading for the summer. The teacher also offered the students the choice of reading Dante's *Inferno* as their summer reading selection. Most parents were satisfied with that outcome; however, a very outspoken few were not.

Unhappy with simply having an alternative text provided for summer reading, a small but vocal group of parents approached the superintendent in order to make a formal request to have the book removed from the LCHS curriculum. He scheduled an informal meeting in the library with parents and teachers. While the intention of the meeting was to dialogue peacefully about *The Tenth Circle* as a summer reading choice, the meeting's atmosphere was quite contentious at several points. First, the parents were given an opportunity to explain why they felt the book was an inappropriate choice. One parent cited the use of the "f-word…40 or 50 times… It's just so inappropriate for something (like this) to be taught in the classroom… It was pretty blatant. If this were a magazine that a kid brought in, it would be considered pornography" (qtd. in Frost). One parent went so far as to say teachers have no business teaching morality. Unfortunately, he was ignoring the fact that Illinois School Code states that

> Every public school teacher shall teach character education, which includes the teaching of respect, responsibility, fairness, caring, trustworthiness, and citizenship, in order to raise pupils' honesty, kindness, justice, discipline, respect for others, and moral courage for the purpose of lessening crime and raising the standard of good character." ("ilga.gov")

What better way of modeling both positive and negative examples of good character than through literature!

> Eventually, as sometimes happens when groups with dissenting positions meet, the meeting degenerated into complaints about a variety of literary choices including Chris Crutcher's Staying Fat for Sarah Byrnes and Philip Roth's The Plot Against America.

Our Response

During the first challenge (of 10th Grade), our English department did not formally change our procedures for adopting books in the classroom. We always have and still do use award-winning, professionally recommended literature as the basis for our selections. A department member would initially propose a text for a course, and the department would informally evaluate the validity of the text. Upon its acceptance, the title would be included in the curriculum. At that point, the administration would be informed of the choice, and it was the understanding of the faculty that the principal would read the material and object if she deemed it appropriate. In truth, our recommendations were rarely, if ever, questioned. However, when the second challenge occurred, it was clear that we needed to cultivate the perception that parents were involved in the reading choice process; however, we needed to be sure to create an arena in which parents felt as if they had input without directly petitioning for curricular advice or direction from the public.

At the initial informal meeting after the challenge was made, several teachers from the department, as well as other members of the faculty, stood in solidarity. Michelle Ryan, a member of the LCHS English department, represented the Illinois Association of Teachers of English. Our goal at the meeting was to respond to questions and concerns parents had about the choice of *The Tenth Circle*. While our responses did not seem to appease the parents in attendance, our superintendent was

quick to point out that "you have a group of professionals here who are very good at what they do" and agreed with the teacher-generated idea that an advisory committee be formed (qtd. in Frost). We were understandably impressed and touched by our superintendent's praise of and confidence in us. We had been lashed in the media three years before and again now, and we had been battling a public firestorm of malcontent.

Despite the good feelings engendered by our superintendent's support, we seemed to accomplish very little in the informal meeting. We did manage to maintain focus on *The Tenth Circle*. When parents veered off-topic to discuss other books in the school's curriculum, the superintendent reminded them that the issue at hand was one specific book. We did establish that senior-level texts were "off the table." We affirmed our intention that an alternative reading will always be given for summer reading selections, and we established the need to begin formalizing the procedure for selecting texts.

The parents accepted the idea of an advisory committee, so it became the priority for the department. Now, behind the scenes, the English department liaison along with other members of the departments created an application form for committee member candidates (Appendix 1). In addition to the application process, we also created a generic form to guide committee member response to texts and to facilitate meeting discussion. In anticipation of the eventual first meeting, we also spent some time developing an agenda that would help clarify and solidify our goals for the committee. We wanted to be sure to guide the direction of the committee without appearing to have a hidden agenda.

The Challenge—Round Two: The Board Meeting

Despite our good-faith efforts to form a committee, some parents were dismayed that the book was not being removed from the curriculum completely. Therefore, they decided to file a formal request for removal of *The Tenth Circle* from the curriculum, and they placed themselves on the Board meeting agenda. (Appendix 2) In the few weeks prior to the board meeting, the parents ran ads in the newspaper requesting that other concerned parents attend the meeting. Notwithstanding the media blitz, fewer than 10 parents were in attendance at the October board meeting. The parents were given 15 minutes to address the board. In the presentation, the spokesperson for the parent group stated that she wanted a removal of the book from the curriculum but not from the library; she also wanted formalization of the process to choose books, including more parental control over the teachers' choices. To describe the presentation as anything but one meaning to incite shock and anger from the board members would be to misrepresent the events. The parents' intentions were to cite the offending four-page section from the novel, hopefully camouflaging the merits of the text. And, through their dubious primary intention, they single handedly managed to vilify the English department who assigned the text. Thankfully we were not alone in our attempt to halt this attack on our professionalism and curricular choices.

Our Response

In preparation for the board meeting, the English department spent many hours debating the manner with which to respond to the assault. As any teacher can imagine, even if he or she has not been in the same position, the immediate reaction is to become defensive. We spent every breath we could muster maligning the parents who were, as we saw, the

root of our problem. We spent time self-justifying and only after allowing ourselves sufficient time to be angry did we recognize that our anger was not going to solve this issue or prevent another one like it from occurring in the future. Even though we felt as if our ethics, morals, education, and professionalism were being attacked, we vowed to take the higher ground. We knew that ultimately, these parents were acting out of love for their children, and they could make choices for their children; we didn't agree that they had the right to make choices for the rest of the student population.

Therefore, the English department, as well as other members of the faculty, decided to present a unified and dignified front, one we hoped would silently speak to our confidence in the curricular choices we had made and would be made in the future. We did not formally address the board at the meeting, but did present the board with a letter from the IATE in which the curricular decision and rationale for selection of *The Tenth Circle* were supported. (Appendix 3) Claire Lamonica and Karen Coats, professors from Illinois State University attended the meeting and gave support for the committee formation and teacher cooperation while emphasizing our professionalism and ability to choose appropriate texts. We also had personal communication from Jodi Picoult to share with the board. Her response to our reading challenge was simply:

> Oh, yeah, this happens all the time. If these parents would take their heads out of the sand they'd see the story as a cautionary tale AGAINST teen sexuality. Pornography is defined as graphic images meant to excite—that's not the point of *Tenth Circle* at all. Instead, it's a look at what's really happening in schools to educate and inform.

> Trust me, there's nothing in that book that kids in you school don't already know about or participate in! (Picoult)

The National Association of Teachers of English had indicated that they would send a response to the board as well, but we wanted to hold something in our hip pocket if the issue was not presently resolved. We were extremely grateful for the support of our administration, other members of our faculty whose attendance at the board meeting spoke volumes, and of the IATE and our colleagues at Illinois State University. As English professionals, we are so fortunate to have knowledgeable and willing people in organizations that are merely at our fingertips.

It would be fictionalizing our story to assert that the board meeting was without its bristling moments. Despite our intention to maintain the high road, there were moments when some of the more animated members of the English department did everything they could to maintain a positive air and not respond to the parents' insinuations. And, honestly, although we felt as if we had the support of our administration for the actions that we had already taken in responding to this challenge, we were tense with anticipation as to how our temperamental board might respond. In the past, they had been questionable at best. Nevertheless, despite the parent presentation, the Board President indicated that the school board would not take action on the book, stating that the board "doesn't try to micromanage the teachers" (qtd. in Frost). The board was satisfied with our efforts in creating a Curriculum Enhancement Committee, and so, our English department again began preparations for what we hoped would be a process that did not become too tedious for us, yet provided a voice that a few of the parents so desperately seemed to need.

The Curriculum Enhancement Committee

Given the overabundance of time and effort given to responding to parental inquiry since the beginning of school, after the October board meeting, our department and school finally had an opportunity to formalize the Curriculum Enhancement Committee. The school made the member applications available in the school office and on the school website, and, because of the intense interest in the "porn" that we were distributing to our students, we spent the next several weeks awaiting the deluge of applicants. We assumed that the selection process would be highly competitive and stringent. Unfortunately, very few community members and parents applied to serve on the committee, and we received no student applications.

Our intent was for the committee to be made up of the following: superintendent, principal, one board member, one junior student, one senior student, two English teachers, one teacher from another curricular area, two parents, and two community members. To form the committee, however, due to lack of interested parties, we had to allow parents to fill the role of community members, and English teachers to fill the role of other curricular area teachers. Basically, we resorted to begging to get people to serve. The building principal selected the committee members, and the first meeting was scheduled for December.

In the time that passed between the initial complaint (two weeks before the start of school…right inline with when most students start their "summer" reading) and the first Curriculum Enhancement Committee meeting in December, the use of *The Tenth Circle* had become a mute point. The teacher who had intended to use the text in class had to make other arrangements because no formal decision had been made about its inclusion in the curriculum. She did use the graphic

novel portion of the text and also supplemented with Dante's *Inferno*. Therefore, we were unsure of the purpose, content, and direction of the first meeting besides what we had informally put in an agenda.

Lack of direction for the committee was obvious as the first meeting progressed. Parents on the committee felt it necessary to revisit *The Tenth Circle* and its inclusion in the curriculum despite the Board's decision. We tried to reiterate that the agenda for the first meeting was simply to establish guidelines for and the purpose of the committee, and instead we spent the greatest portion of time debating issues with the text that had long since been resolved. To move forward and to practice the purpose for which the committee had been created, prior to the first meeting the accelerated sophomore English teacher proposed a change in the summer reading assignment for accelerated sophomores to *The Story of Edgar Sawtelle* by David Wroblewski. The committee members were informed of this choice and asked to read the book before the next meeting. Due to lack of direction and the parents' well-intentioned but erroneous ideas about their role on the committee, the teachers attending the first meeting left feeling aggravated at the manner and expectations with which the parents approached the meeting.

With the second meeting's purpose clearly established, we approached the time with confident anticipation. The new summer reading choice, *The Life of Edgar Sawtelle*, had little if anything to contend, and we hoped that the ensuing discussion would be productive and a positive launching board for the foundation of the committee's purpose. We weren't naïve enough to believe that the parents would come to the table with an unequivocal acclamation, but we felt that this meeting, as compared to the previous one, would leave us feeling a sense of accomplishment. As we expected, the parents

brought a list of questionable sections in the book, and by list, we mean an itemized-by-page-number analysis of everything from the use of the Lord's name in vain, to the use of the word "bitch" (the book's central character is part of a family that breeds dogs and the term is used to refer to the female dog), to instances where students might learn to use ether for hurting animals rather than the medical way in which it is discussed in the text, to the four instances an expletive is used (other than the technical term mentioned before). By the end of the meeting, overwhelmingly the committee decided that the text would be an appropriate piece of material to be used with accelerated sophomore students, one which would facilitate the students' access to and understanding of *Hamlet*.

As the school year progressed and our Curriculum Enhancement Committee evolved, the meetings fell into a recognizable pattern. English teachers would suggest new texts for consideration for summer reading titles, the group would read and evaluate those texts in preparation for the next meeting, parents would voice concerns and questions, teachers would respond to those concerns and questions, and ultimately, the books would be added to the summer reading list. The teacher requesting the addition of the book was never asked to be present at the meeting, leaving the English teachers on the committee the responsibility of justifying the text, a job made easy because of the communication within our department.

Over the course of the five meetings since the genesis of our committee we have learned that a few of the parents seem to have their own agenda: to suggest the inclusion of a certain few titles that may or may not fit thematically and/or appropriately at a specified grade level but which is done with such repetitiveness that the committee has learned the recitation by heart. We have also had to cope with the fact

that one parent in particular is using the committee as a vehicle to question the English department's ability to create a comprehensive curriculum for Lincoln Community High School that would be approved by universities and colleges in the state. We did, however, accomplish a summer reading list that was created by the English department, approved by the Curriculum Enhancement Committee, and adopted by the school board. (Appendix 4)

The Future

Only time will tell what will become of this committee: will it become defunct, or will it continue to evolve in such a way that it becomes beneficial for both the parents and teachers rather than the burdensome meeting that everyone creates excuses to avoid? If the five meetings this year are our guide, we venture to guess that the committee will become an antiquated step in our process of choosing texts, only to be revived if we face this issue again. By May, the meetings had already metamorphosed into an informal reading group sustained by one parent who did not want to see the group dissolve. Without additional texts to evaluate and with no meetings scheduled over the summer, there is little chance that the committee will become the Phoenix within our school's process of making curricular choices. Unfortunately, if this committee meets its end, we are left with questions about issues that have yet to be raised, much less answered: what would happen if there were a stalemate over a particular text and the parents adamantly opposed its adoption, what happens if we negotiate a text that is not in the summer reading but rather is a required curricular text during the school year, and what happens if a different curricular area wishes to adopt a text? All of these questions are important to consider as we look toward the future.

Lessons Learned

This book challenge and subsequent events offer lessons that vary according to the people whom they affect. Every school district needs to be reminded to always be prepared for such challenges. You can never make everyone happy regardless of measures taken. The loudest cries will be the ones dealt with; however, those who cry the loudest don't necessarily win, but they do create situations that can either tear a district apart or build positive relationships among all parties involved. Fortunately for us, we are on the winning end of this particular conflict. We have come out of this situation virtually unscathed. We did not lose any texts from our curriculum, and the issue went no further than our local arena.

We have a difficult time speaking for parents as to what they may have learned from this situation. Acknowledging the biases created in the authorship of this article, we hope that the parents involved have learned that while they may have a voice in curricular discussion, they do not have a voice in curricular decisions. We hope that, because of the way in which our department and high school responded to this situation, they feel confident that their children are in good hands. We hope that they have learned that we are professionals who endlessly try to create meaningful learning experiences for our students.

It is hard to quantify how much we, as teachers, learned in this process. The most basic lessons are obvious: procedures are created and used to avoid conflicts such as ours. English departments should have a formalized procedure for making curricular decisions, even though they may believe reading challenges will never happen. Second, the teachers were reminded that it is good to be prepared with a plan for parental complaints. While we all go to conferences or talk to colleagues who have read good books, it is important that

each teacher, if he or she is lucky enough to be in a position to have the freedom to choose books, should be sure that the rationale is clear for texts chosen for the classroom. Third, on a lighter note, more students than we ever could have imagined rushed to read *The Tenth Circle* and have continued to do so all year long, creating an opportunity for dialogue between parents and students, students and teachers, and teachers and parents. And finally, English teachers, especially those in Illinois, are fortunate to have resources such as the Illinois Association of Teachers of English, whose membership and leadership consist of the brightest professionals in the state, women and men who are willing to take time out of their busy schedules to help even the smallest constituents tackle such large issues as censorship. Despite the headaches and stress caused by this incident, it did have a twofold positive result: our department truly rallied for a cause, and our teachers reminded themselves, as they vocalized for others, the reasons why we choose our texts and what we find to be important for our students to learn.

And our students—because it is for them that the battle was truly fought—no matter the side of the line in the sand they seemed to find themselves, because of allegiance or defiance to their parents or their teacher, we hope they have learned that something you believe in is always worth fighting for. We hope they have learned responsibility in journalism through classroom discussions of inaccuracies about the situation as written in the local paper. We hope they have learned how to justify and rationalize choices in a mature and responsible way. We hope they have learned that they are loved…both by their parents, who strive to keep them safe and yet, rationally or irrationally, sheltered from the world; and their teachers, who want nothing more than to create a rich learning environment, filled with novels that they can

love and use to grow into the people who are able to make appropriate choices, regardless of which side of the line in the sand on which they fall.

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PLAGIARISM-FREE RESEARCH PAPERS

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Every year I teach the English AP research paper in the spring semester. Along with the daffodils and tulips, up spring my plagiarists. Every year I deliver my usual antiplagiarism speech, the woeful tales of past plagiarists receiving naught for their stolen efforts. Nevertheless, every year students plagiarize, usually unintentionally, until this year because they used PaperToolsPro, software that helped them prevent plagiarism and enhance their learning. To my delight all my students turned in their own words, ideas, analysis and synthesis.

Admittedly, I was skeptical about any program preventing plagiarism. Can software really help prevent something so endemic in our schools and in our culture? I was shortsighted. This program assisted my students with every step of the research process from brainstorming to creating the bibliography, to focusing on analyzing and synthesizing their topics. The days of collecting manila envelopes chock-full

of random, barely legible note cards are over as well as the associated opportunities for inadvertent plagiarism. While I used the program with my English AP class, not all my AP students were motivated to demonstrate their outstanding reading, writing, and organizational skills, but this program brought out their best work. Thus, I believe it would help students of all levels of ability in secondary school because it provides the support and means they all need to complete this complex assignment.

PaperToolsPro centralizes the research process by allowing students to take comprehensive notes from their sources with descriptor and keyword identification, to create bibliographies and appended citations in all major styles, to organize their information with a search query, to maintain an Ideas Page for brainstorming, and to transfer notes with citations to an outline or draft. Through the search query function, the entire process streamlined my students' ability to organize their information by descriptors, keywords and citations appended to each note.

My favorite aspect of the software is that students monitored their own work. On the Ideas Page they brainstormed and scaffolded ideas and shared their insights with their collaborating partners. One student said, "PaperToolsPro was extremely helpful for my group…it kept all of our ideas organized. We used the Ideas Page to create a calendar for ourselves and write little notes to each other with reminders… We could always log onto PaperToolsPro to see where everyone was in the process. It kept us focused so we knew our goal throughout and didn't get distracted." This function of the program enhanced student learning by providing a place to make KWL lists to activate prior knowledge and to synthesize new knowledge. Displayed on the main page, it gave constant focus to the entire project and a context for

each note entered. In any extended project, students need to monitor their own progress by constantly engaging in relevant dialog with themselves about their topic.

From my experience, students plagiarize, intentionally or unintentionally, because putting the research into their own words appears to be a daunting endeavor. Faced with the stack of sources to digest at 10 PM the night before the project is due, they feel unequal to the task of analyzing, paraphrasing and synthesizing information, and thus they cut corners. Unaccustomed to handwriting note cards, or handwriting anything in our digital age, they will skip taking notes altogether and copy text into a draft with minor alterations, sincerely believing they are using their own words. Because my students were comfortable with the digital medium, they worked on their research over a longer time span. The software, which enabled them to translate the original quotation into their own words as soon as they typed in a note, eliminated any need or opportunity to use plagiarized material. Periodically, I had my students email me their notes and bibliography so I could monitor the quality of their sources, the depth of their Ideas Page, and the synthesis of their research. Viewing each note with a hyperlink to the original online source, I could easily assist those students grappling to convert difficult language into their own words. No longer did I struggle to decipher illegible handwriting on 3 x 5 note cards retrieved from the bottom of a book bag. Any questionable paraphrase or summary provided a teachable moment with those students while they worked on the notes, certainly a more educationally productive discussion than an accusatory one when I used to return a plagiarized paper with a failing grade. This approach encouraged a collaborative, rather than distrustful or antagonistic tone to our relationship.

Because paraphrasing a passage in their own words and voice extends from the first to the last note entry, the students had done a great deal of the synthesis of their topic before they actually wrote the draft. As another student said, "… researching Sartre and his philosophy of existentialism can often be confusing if simply read directly from the source. By providing an opportunity to translate somebody else's words into my own while having the direct quotation right there, I was much better able to understand certain concepts." Too often students scroll through web pages looking for the main ideas rather than reading details carefully. By taking focused notes in their own words from a copy/pasted online passage, they transformed detailed information into their understanding of the material, rather than just skim for disparate highlights. When students genuinely understand the material, they take pride in doing their best work rather than plagiarize. Another student said, "When it came to writing the paper, it (PaperToolsPro) simplified the process because I had already restated my sources in my own words." Because the notes were in their words, sentences, and voice, much of the paper had been written before they began the draft. Ultimately, I read confident papers that demonstrated depth of understanding.

Instead of organizing their information by sources, my students organized their notes by ideas. Because notes were identified with descriptors and keywords, students efficiently searched for related notes using the program's search query. One student said, "Having three different keywords made me think more about what that specific piece of information meant as a whole to my project." Too often even adept students do not have the level of organization to analyze how one piece of research speaks to a complex project as a whole. Add poor organization to high school students' pre-existing

feelings of insecurity and trepidation about the research paper, and English teachers and their students are thrown into plagiarism's perfect storm. Students found the organizational assistance of the program's organize/search especially helpful because from prolific notes, they could search for explicit information by specific keywords. My students experienced smooth sailing instead of the perfect storm.

Many said that they will use this software in college and beyond because its organizational assistance streamlined their method of research so that they could process information at a higher level. One of my best writers in class said, "The centralization of the entire research process helped me to make better decisions before I started to write my paper, and to make better decisions about what exactly to include as I researched."

We strive to teach our students "to make better decisions" to use good information with integrity. Helping students make better decisions is the hallmark of this program. A plagiarism-free cycle of research papers is a rarity in our hyper-connected cyber world. This English teacher's huzzah is in order for a program that nurtured daffodils worthy of a poem by Wordsworth.

Colleen Hiles is an English teacher at Glenbard South High School in Glen Ellyn, IL. She teaches English 4AP, Senior English, Sophomore English and Achieve Gifted Seminar. In her eleven years teaching at Glenbard South, Mrs. Hiles and her entire department are always searching for ways to help students avoid plagiarism and write in their own words. Using Paper Tools Pro helps her teach students the value and uniqueness of their own voices.

STRUNK, WHITE, WILLIAMS, AND STYLISTIC DIFFERENCES IN TWO *COLLEGE ENGLISH* ARTICLES

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Introduction

Less than two months ago, concerned Massachusetts citizen Andrew Charig wrote a letter to the *New York Times*, which was published on their website. In the course of his letter, Charig criticizes an argument advanced by Ammon Shea to not condemn nonstandard grammatical forms because Shakespeare and Chaucer, darlings of the canonical literary establishment, often used nonstandard forms. "Shakespeare wrote before English was standardized; Chaucer before it was English at all," Charig asserts. Then he makes a heavy statement: that "With computer communication threatening to corrupt our language beyond intelligibility, it is more important than ever to uphold usage that has precedent and to limit change to what is sensible and useful." According to

Charig, our authorities ought to be such stylists as Fowler, Strunk, and White, rather than Shakespeare or Chaucer.

At the beginning of his letter, Charig also takes a moment to lament the death of prominent critic William Safire, who had written prolifically about language for the *New York Times Magazine* between 1979 and his death in 2009. Charig claims that Safire "most likely was the foremost expert on the American language." Safire's *On Language* column tackled such linguistic phenomena as the surge in use of the words "anomaly" and "expediency" in the media and "the trendy *the*" (used as a demonstrative modifying a proper name, as in '*the* cellist Yo-Yo Ma') ("Newswords"; "Vogue-Word"). In a tribute to Safire, columnist Ben Zimmer celebrated his ability to challenge both linguistic prescriptivists and descriptivists. Although Safire was concerned enough about usage to admonish Safeway stores to change their signs from saying "Ten Items or Less" to "Ten Items or Fewer," he could also accept and even enjoy changes taking place in language. For Safire, certain linguistic changes were not bad, "provided the result is more precision, added color, or greater expressiveness" (qtd. in Zimmer).

Charig and his hero Safire present two different responses to change within English. To one, English is on the verge of being twisted "beyond intelligibility" and needs to be held back by adhering to "usage that has precedent" and only changing "to what is sensible and useful"; to the other, English is interesting even when it changes, provided those changes add to rather than detract from the semantic richness of the language. However, both suggest that English is changing, and Charig argues that these changes can affect the "intelligibility" of language. Their positions raise several questions. How dramatically is English changing, and how significantly do these changes affect clarity of language? In

Charig's terms, do we side with the authoritative precepts of Strunk and White, or strike off with Shakespeare and try what is new and nonstandard?

Universities find themselves in an unusual position in such wars over the significance of change and intelligibility in the English language. With a sense of tongue-in-cheek, linguist Robin Lakoff writes that the goal of the university is "the production of *truth*, or *knowledge*" (156). With such a noble goal, universities must be sensitive to communicate this "truth" to society in as clear a manner as possible. However, as Lakoff notes, academic style often obfuscates this knowledge rather than making it clear. Furthermore, this obfuscation is often "intentional and intrinsic to the institution" (156). This complicates the debate over changing patterns of usage and style in language. At times, these changes may not be intended to add clarity or variety, but rather to make communication more ambiguous.

The university's mission of producing and communicating knowledge sometimes extends to educating the public on how to effectively use language to communicate knowledge. In American universities, English departments find themselves saddled with the task of teaching students to become effective writers, and often supply graduate students to teach first-year composition courses. One might expect the English department to be authoritative on issues of usage, style and clarity in English, since it is concerned with the English language. The field of composition explores writing pedagogy. The existence of a course such as "Applied Grammar and Usage for Writers" indicates the importance given to issues of usage.

As people who focus their research and practice on the teaching of writing, one might think that English professors should be clear, polished writers themselves. However, given

Lakoff's pessimism regarding the obscurity of academic writing, what level of intelligibility might we expect in composition studies? Charig's letter suggests other questions. Have usage or style patterns within composition studies changed over time, as Charig argues has taken place in mainstream English? In addition, have usage patterns and style patterns moved away from "precedents" set by authorities such as Strunk and White?

An examination of two articles in *College English*, a prominent journal for composition scholars, may provide some data to discuss changes (or lack thereof) taking place in academic English patterns, whether these changes affect clarity, and whether these changes undermine "authoritative" rules for style.

Methods

This study will examine two articles from *College English*, one from 1939 and one from 1999, to track stylistic changes over the sixty years separating the two articles. First, I will evaluate the articles using some of the rules found in the "authoritative" standard of Strunk and White's 1918 edition of *The Elements of Style*. Second, I will evaluate the articles using some of the principles expounded by Joseph Williams in *Style: Ten Lessons in Clarity and Grace*. It is difficult to determine a uniform method of evaluation because Williams' approach differs from Strunk and White's approach. The latter present their precepts as straightforward rules to be followed: "Use the active voice," "Do not join independent clauses by a comma," etc. Williams presents his "lessons in clarity and grace" in the form of principles that can be used to revise writing and make it more effective. Williams' principles often seem more nuanced than Strunk and White's, as Williams takes more time to describe how to achieve qualities of clarity

and grace while Strunk and White are fairly brief in stating their rules. Because Strunk and White's rules are simple and prescriptive, all I needed to do to track conformity to them was to count the number of times that an article "broke" one of their laws. It proves more difficult to create a rubric using Williams' guidelines. Even though his principles are less definite than those of Strunk and White, the two articles transgress Williams' principles more freely. Rather than catalog each instance in which a phrasing broke with Williams' guidelines, I chose to list several examples from each article with a brief commentary.

The different approaches of *The Elements of Style* and *Style: Ten Lessons in Clarity and Grace* highlight an important point about prescriptive language evaluation: "rules" of writing can change over time, just as language changes over time. In addition, the "rules" of writing change depending on the context and audience for writing. An article submitted to the *New Yorker* will have vastly different "rules" than an article submitted to a local paper, and a speech written to be delivered at a convention of insurance workers will have different guidelines than a church sermon. We might be mislead by flatly equating language decline with stylistic change in articles that were written sixty years apart. What was considered acceptable usage in 1930 may not be appropriate usage sixty years later, and vice versa.

Interestingly, composition scholars have a somewhat ambivalent position towards such a prescriptivist handbook as *The Elements of Style*. Some of this may come from changing perspectives on grammar and usage within composition studies. According to James C. Raymond, "grammatical questions asked by readers in the forties…reveal assumptions about the nature of language and the nature of grammar that most readers, I think, would find naive" (553). Questions of

usage and style are not hot-button issues for many composition scholars; on the contrary, they are slightly disturbing. In an article analyzing the style of the Unabomber and his use of *The Elements of Style*, Catherine Prendergast reflects on the aversion that many composition scholars feel to Strunk and White's book, commenting that fifty years after its release, "composition scholars and *The Elements of Style* have been in something like a fifty-year standoff" (10). When a special, 50th anniversary edition of *The Elements of Style* was released, it contained appreciative blurbs from a variety of celebrities and scholars, but none from composition scholars. To Prendergast, this is "a statement of the field's general disregard for Strunk and White and the style they have so successfully promulgated" (10).

Given this aversion, it may seem strange to try and analyze articles in *College English* through the lens of Strunk and White. However, the purpose of this study is to explore whether academic writing style in English studies has shifted, and whether English scholars consciously or unconsciously hold to style guidelines similar to Strunk and White's rules.

The first section of results evaluates the articles through portions of the "Elementary Rules of Usage" and the "Elementary Principles of Composition" sections of *The Elements of Style*. I selected the first four of the eight "Elementary Rules of Usage" (see Table 1 for a list of the rules). I selected two of the eight "Elementary Principles of Composition": "use the active voice" and "omit needless words." To gauge adherence to the "use the active voice" rule, I counted the number of passives that I found. Determining whether a word was "needless" and could be "omitted" was a greater challenge; hence, I have listed each instance in which I felt this rule was violated.

The second section of results examines the articles through the lens of Joseph Williams' guide to style. Each article went against his recommendations several times. It can be difficult to determine when a sentence violates a style principle, because Williams' guidelines are suggestions for how to achieve a particular stylistic effect rather than prescriptive rules. As a result, I chose to provide several examples from each article, rather than exhaustively categorizing each violation.

Context

College English (*CE*) is one of the premier publications of the National Council of Teachers of English (NCTE), a professional body of English teachers working at a variety of levels of English education. According to James Raymond, *College English* first came out of the *English Journal* in 1939 (553). The *English Journal* had been the only publication of the National Council of Teachers of English; *College English* provided an outlet to focus on issues relating to college teachers (Christenbury 8).

Although *CE* publishes articles in composition studies, it has a much broader focus. According to the *CE* website, "CE publishes articles about literature, rhetoric-composition, critical theory, creative writing theory and pedagogy, linguistics, literacy, reading theory, pedagogy, and professional issues related to the teaching of English. Each issue also includes opinion pieces, review essays, and letters from readers" ("College"). As a publication of NCTE, it is concerned with questions of teaching, but approaches English studies and English teaching from a variety of perspectives.

CE has not always published articles in all of these categories. During the years between 1939 and 1987, significant changes took place in the types of subjects considered

worthwhile. James C. Raymond writes, "*College English* readers are no longer interested in what were once lively discussions about particular questions of usage and grammar. As a profession, we generally assume that the only authority for usage is actual practice in whatever universe of discourse we happen to find ourselves" (553). In addition, Raymond asserts that the changing nature of scholarship in composition caused a shift from a broad-based, clear-cut notion of composition to a much more nuanced, complicated view of the field that includes "the displacement of traditional notions of author, text, reader, and meaning" (554). Also, under the helm of editor Richard Ohmann, the journal began to favor more general articles that would prove more interesting to readers than literary criticism of a particular writer or work (554). These three factors contributed to a shift in the types of articles published by the journal.

"The Success of Freshman English," the first article this study will examine, appeared in the journal's inaugural issue, October 1939.Its author, Fred Dudley, taught English at Iowa State College. Dudley's article defended the freshman English class largely by describing the model for freshman English at Iowa State. Though many today could find fault with his views on what he calls "that inevitable fringe of very Freshman class made up of the illiterate, the indolent, and the hopelessly incompetent," his subject matter is still relevant today for debates over how first-year composition should be taught (24).

The second article, "Crossing Borders: The Two-Year College," appeared in the July 1999 issue of *CE*, nearly sixty years after Dudley's article. It defends community college professors as scholars and teachers who are just as important as teachers at research institutions, and argues firmly for the inclusion of two-year college professors as "legitimate members of the academy" (722).

Data—Part 1

Table 1: portions of "The Success of Freshman English" demonstrating errors from the "Elementary Rules of Usage" section of *The Elements of Style*:

Rule	Number of instances found in which the rule was broken	Instance
Form the possessive singular of nouns with 's	None	N/A
In a series of three or more terms with a single conjunction, use a comma before every term but the last	None	N/A
Enclose parenthetic expressions between commas	None	N/A
Place a comma before and or but introducing an independent clause	None	N/A
Do not join independent clauses by a comma	None	N/A

Table 2: portions of "Crossing Borders: The Two-Year College" demonstrating errors from the "Elementary Rules of Usage" section of *The Elements of Style*:

Rule	Number of instances found in which the rule was broken	Instance
Form the possessive singular of nouns with 's	None	N/A
In a series of three or more terms with a single conjunction, use a comma before every term but the last	*1	"It is indeed time for more of us who teach at the two-year college level to write about our work; to present papers and to publish" (726).
Enclose parenthetic expressions between commas	**None	N/A
Place a comma before and or but introducing an independent clause	1	"We give presentations and we publish" (729).
Do not join independent clauses by a comma	None	N/A

*This is quoted from Howard Tinberg's book *Border Talk*, and is not Madden's actual writing.
**On at least one occasion, Madden uses dashes instead of commas to enclose a parenthetical expression, and on at least one occasion, he uses parentheses, but I chose not to count these as errors.

Table 3: portions of "The Success of Freshman English" demonstrating errors from the "Elementary Principles of Composition" section of *The Elements of Style*:

Rule	Number of instances found in which the rule was broken	Instances
Use the active voice	approx. 29	N/A
Omit needless words	10	"the largest ~~single~~ task of any college department of English"; 22 "any success ~~whatever~~"; 23 "escape of student and teacher ~~alike~~"; 23 "his ~~own~~ experience"; 23 "which has been quoted ~~before~~"; 24 "from the student's ~~own~~ experience"; 25 "~~It must be admitted that~~ the danger of artificiality is ever present"; 26 "some ~~little~~ taste of academic leisure"; 29 "but see to it that they ~~also~~ have opportunity"; 29 "the hiring of outsiders over ~~the heads of~~ able men with good records"; 30

Table 4: portions of "Crossing Borders: The Two-Year College" demonstrating errors from the "Elementary Rules of Usage" section of *The Elements of Style*:

Rule	Number of instances found in which the rule was broken	Instances
Use the active voice	approx. 38*	N/A
Omit needless words	5	"if my ~~own~~ experience and the changes in my ~~own~~ department"; 722 "Professional development and achievement are encouraged and ~~financially~~ supported through travel money," 723 "most PhD programs look ~~very~~ much as they did fifty years ago"; 725 "provides graduate students with a glimpse of what it's like to work in a variety of institutions before they ~~actually~~ enter the job market"; 726 "~~The fact of the matter is that~~ too few community college teachers are writing about the work that they do"; 726**

*four instances come from quotations of other people.
**this is quoted from Tinberg's book *Border Talk* and is not Madden's writing.

Data—Part 2

An evaluation of the two articles revealed several instances that violated Williams' principles:

From "The Success of Freshman English"

Example 1: "Accepting much of what Professor Campbell so vigorously says in his essay by that title, we yet believe that Freshman English is succeeding—not perfectly, but better this year than five years ago; and we expect it to succeed still better five years from now" (22). This is a very wordy sentence.

Example 2: "Any success whatever in a Freshman composition course depends, first of all, upon the escape of student and teacher alike from this dead, musty air into the invigorating atmosphere of real communication" (23). This sentence provides an example of what Williams calls "metadiscourse," or "discourse about discoursing" (47). "First of all" could be considered metadiscourse. Specifically, this is a "sequencer," or a word that indicates sequential order (49). Williams acknowledges that at times metadiscourse is just fine, but in this passage it seems unnecessary (47).

Example 3: "Through simple narrative and descriptive presentation of his first clear memories, his early school days, his changing fears and hopes and admirations and misconceptions, he discovers, first, that his past is interesting to himself, and then, gradually and somewhat to his surprise, that it is interesting to others" (23). This wordy sentence also features metadiscourse and loads so much information at the beginning before announcing the subject that the reader begins to get lost.

Example 4: "Meanwhile, through the models used in class and through a modest program of "outside" reading he is breaking down slightly his distaste for books and finding

that certain literary forms which he has feared—biography, say, or novels of some standing—are good reading after all; that here and there, even in a famous and therefore avoided book, he can find ideas and experiences vitally related to his own" (23). This left-loaded, sixty-nine word sentence also includes metadiscourse.

Example 5: "In composition, even during the review and increasingly afterward, the emphasis is upon clearness, effectiveness, smoothness, genuineness, and variety rather than upon rules" (24). This sentence features several nominalizations. Williams defines a nominalization as "a noun…based on, derived from, communicating the same information as a verb…or adjective…" (212). In this passage, some of the nominalizations are clear*ness*, effective*ness*, smooth*ness*, and genuine*ness*. Williams treats nominalizations unfavorably.

Example 6: "Ideas in the articles read are connected with campus problems or other interests common to the students; simple comprehension is achieved, so far as possible, not in a vacuum but in connection with those interests; and particularly the writing problems are so designed that ideas from the textbook supplement and stimulate ideas from the student's own experience" (24–25). This sentence uses the passive, violating Williams' suggested principle of making the subject the doer of the action (8). In this example, the passive makes it sound as though the freshman English program at Iowa State happens magically by itself.

From "Crossing Borders: The Two-Year College"

Example 1: "Building on Henry Giroux's use of the same phrase, he defines 'border crossings' as 'excursions between ways of knowing…' (722). There is a nominalization: the word "Building."

Example 2: "The evolution of two-year college faculty themselves is the most important enabler of border crossings—an evolution profoundly influenced by the working conditions, institutional expectations, and self-images of faculty at each school" (723). This sentence includes unnecessary words ("faculty *themselves*") and an awkward phrase—rather than saying that this "evolution…is" an "enabler," Madden could have phrased it that this "evolution enables."

Example 3: "The attitudes of graduate students are strongly influenced by their mentors. They are not likely to change their opinions about employment in two-year colleges…" (724). These sentences violate the principle of clarity; it's initially uncertain what "They" refers to at the start of the second sentence.

Example 4: "…what he found most refreshing about my students was their unpretentious honesty" (727). This could be more compactly rephrased as "he found my students' unpretentious honesty most refreshing" (or, to avoid the clunky phrase "my students' unpretentious honesty," "he found the unpretentious honesty of my students most refreshing").

Example 5: "Teaching "Intro to Lit" in many colleges and universities is still seen as an onerous task and relegated to teaching assistants, adjuncts, or faculty low on the pecking order" (728). This example has the nominalization "Teaching" and a wordy subject.

Example 6: "There is reason to believe this is the kind of research most productive at the two-year college" (725). "There is reason to believe" is a wordy phrase.

Note: while collecting data, I also noticed that the articles do not always use commas in the same way. When relating a complex list, Dudley's article uses semicolons to set off different

items in the list and commas within these sections: for example, "Ideas…are connected with campus problems or other interests common to the students; simple comprehension is achieved, so far as possible, not in a vacuum but in connection with those interests; and particularly the writing problems are so designed…" (25). However, Madden's article uses commas where Dudley would use semicolons: "They said their departments were looking for faculty members who could convey a love of writing and literature, who could teach introductory, survey, and theme-based courses, and who might even use texts in their courses that they were reading for the first time" (724). Although the articles are similar in other measures of style, this point of punctuation may have changed over time.

Conclusion

This type of survey is limited in what it can uncover. Because style is often connected to context, it is difficult to develop a consistent rubric to evaluate appropriate style in two articles that address different contexts. However, exploring these articles did reveal some interesting findings.

The lack of grammatical errors in both articles may be due in part to the extensive training and literacy possessed by many English studies scholars. Forming standard singular possessive nouns with 's or avoiding comma splices may come easily to these writers. However, although mechanical and grammatical errors are typically absent, stylistic challenges abound. Passives, left-loaded sentences, nominalizations, and long, syntactically complex sentences are common in both articles (although "The Success of Freshman English" seemed to have more long, tortuous sentences than "Crossing Borders" did). Why might this stylistic tendency exist in articles almost sixty years apart? These articles were published in a

scholarly journal, so they met editorial requirements in spite of their difficult style. Perhaps this indicates that academics approve of such a style, just as Lakoff suggests. Verbosity and complex syntax could be an accepted part of writing like a professor or a composition scholar. Joseph Williams writes, "Every profession, of course, demands from its apprentices… the special accent that testifies that a writer is familiar with and accepts the implicit values which define that profession…. It is profoundly unfortunate for us all…that the tone most academics assume—unthinkingly or deliberately—makes their prose so resolutely inaccessible" (28–29). It seems that some stylistic elements of this academic tone have not changed overmuch through the years. We might ask, then, with Williams: what are the "implicit values" that lie behind the quirks of academic prose?

How do we, finally, respond to such egregious issues of style in academia? Do we fearfully claim that language is losing its intelligibility, like Charig? Do we poke fun at the obscurity of academic prose while maintaining a sense of seriousness, as Lakoff does? Perhaps we might react by asserting our own favorite "authority," whether it be the hard-line rules of Strunk and White, or the more general precepts of Williams. Whatever our feelings, I propose that we respond to academic prose by avoiding its excesses in our own writing, without becoming self-righteous in our condemnation of all things wordy and confusing. As these two articles suggest, academic prose style has a time-honored—if convoluted—history.

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FALL IN

JORDAN NEVILLE
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Part I: The Van

The South Carolinian heat does not begin to dissipate in September. It remains as stifling as it was at the height of August, except in the morning. In the mornings, as the sun was coming up, it was crisp and cool and if you've been in the state for a while and grown accustomed to the weather, you'll probably need to wear a jacket. We were uniformed in our dress greens for the day. There were seven of us: Drill Sergeant Brown, myself, and five other trainees. We were climbing into a large, maroon van; the windows of the van were heavily tinted and you had to be careful climbing in because it took a moment for your eyes to adjust to the dark. It was about six in the morning. We were shivering as the heavy van door shut; but we all knew that by the time we arrived where we were going, it was going to be hot.

"Ya'll got it too good, privates. Ya'll got it too good." This was the common, if not only, reply a soldier would get from

the steadfast Drill Sergeant Brown, not only in response to complaints about the heat (or eventual heat, as it was always such a terrifying prospect that some of us would start to complain about it before it even arrived), but for any grievance a man or woman of lesser rank may have been brave (or stupid) enough to address to our leader. At times D.S. Brown would make this proclamation if he only *anticipated* grumbling from the ranks. If we were told, that when we returned home from our training, we would, that night, be having a "barracks party," D.S. Brown would almost certainly follow up the announcement with, "I don't wanna hear no complaining. This ain't nothin'. Ya'll just got it too good, that's the problem, privates. Ya'll got it too good." "Just 'cause we could have it worse, don't necessarily mean we got it good," Specialist Soles would sometimes mutter from the back of the platoon. "What's that, privates?" "Nothing Drill Sergeant!" I hated the way he said, "privates," the way he drew out the word as if savoring it like a tasty morsel of whatever.

"Barracks party" is a typical Army term. I don't know where or when it originated but, somehow, you know it after being in Basic Training for only a few days. It refers to a mass cleaning of the barracks, including scrubbing the latrine (restroom) floors and buffing the hallways after laying down a shiny coat of wax. They do not end after Basic Training either, they continue as long as you live in the barracks, even if it's for years. (I know several people who got married for the sole purpose of being allowed to move out of the barracks.) Everyone hates these mass cleanings and with good reason. The phrase, "Be All That You Can Be" never reverberates in your mind so loudly as when you're standing out in the hot sun in your brown, Army-issue T-shirt, your camouflage BDU pants, with a cigarette dangling from your mouth as you stand lazily over a silver trash can with a hose, letting

the water slowly fill up the can while you stare off into the distance, trying to get rid of some foul odor. There is no sense of irony in calling these sessions a "barracks *party*." The term is a bitter one.

"Everyone in here, privates?" D.S. Brown asked.

"Yes Drill Sergeant!" all of us, loudly. You finished every response with "Drill Sergeant" and never casually. You said it with gusto and enthusiasm, no matter what you were asked or what you were told to do.

"Awe-right, let's go."

And we pulled away from the barracks, leaving the rest of the trainees to do the cleaning, and headed towards, what would turn out to be, our last funeral.

The six of us had been put on "Funeral Detail" and had been on the detail for just under a month. "Funeral Detail" is not something every soldier gets put on; there are probably plenty of veterans who would not even recognize the term.

Anyone who is a veteran is allowed to have a military burial. There is a professional guard for each of the branches of the military and these soldiers, who practice every day, are used for the funerals of high ranking persons such as General's or Colonels, sometimes even for politicians like Presidents or Senators. For everyone else, all of the grunts, the NCOs, the junior officers, the privates, those *always* at someone else's command, there was us. We were still trainees. We'd graduated from Basic Training (BT) only a few days prior to being "volunteered" for "Funeral Detail." This was AIT, or Advanced Individual Training, which follows directly after BT and is where you learn the job you're going to perform for the duration of your enlistment.

"Volunteered" is another one of those great, ironic military terms. It means to be *chosen* by someone else for a job no one else wants, and where declining, or choosing not

to partake, is not an option. The meaning of the word is completely inverted, turned inside out. You do not offer yourself, or give, or perform anything based on your own decision. "Get up n' go," a "Gung-ho attitude," altruism, these words all become disconnected from the meaning of the word volunteer; they become moot points. It now means something that happens *to* you, instead of something you choose to do. You no longer volunteer, you *get* "volunteered."

Anyway, that morning in September, we were heading to our sixth funeral.

I was seated in the very rear of the van. I always chose to sit as far away from DS Brown as possible. I never really felt comfortable speaking freely in his presence and felt more at ease the farther away from his large, protruding ears I was. I was seated next to Specialist Soles. On the bench seat in front of us sat Pvt. Sheppard and Pvt. Ruhe. And in the front-most bench seat was Pvt. Grice and Pvt. Ortiz (I had to feel a little sorry for Ortiz as, not only was he right behind DS Brown, who was driving, but he had to sit next to Grice as well). Pvt. Littlejohn was sitting in the passenger seat up front.

These trips usually afforded us at least a little pleasure. They broke up the monotony of the past four months. We got to get out of the barracks, away from Ft. Jackson. We got to spend a few hours just kicking back and relaxing as we drove across South Carolina. We got to see the state through the heavily tinted windows of the van as it barreled down the highways and rural roads. We got to chat idly about any number of things.

Of course, there was a sense of something more significant taking place. We were headed to the funeral for a man who survived the Vietnam war. We believed we were a part of something, some large entity of which each of us was a small

but vital segment. A giant machine moving in one direction. And this connected us to this man and to every other soldier known and unknown to us. We were special, not as individuals but only as pieces of this large thing, separate from the rest of the population.

It is no accident that the men and women of the armed forces can come to feel this way. We had been led to this place, worked on and adjusted until, even those of us who diligently kept a cynical edge to our devotion couldn't help but buying into the concept when certain occasions arose. They start the process on day one, primarily through the use of language. You learn how to march, you learn hand-to-hand combat techniques, you learn how to shoot an M16 effectively, and the proper way to throw a hand grenade. You run and do pushups and sit-ups until your body begins to change. But more than all of that, I believe it is language which is used to shape and mold us into what is desired: beings who feel more natural as a small segment of the whole, separated from all those individuals running around outside the walls of your Fort. And of course you must be willing to be cut down for those on the outside because that's your job, your purpose; it's the reason why everything around you exists, and it's why they've spent hundreds of thousands of dollars to train you.

The Drill Sergeants in Basic Training love to bring up the amount of money that has been spent on your training "so far." I heard it many, many times throughout my eight weeks there. I believe it served two purposes. The first, is to provoke a feeling of guilt about complaining and especially about wanting and attempting to get out of the Army (I'd say a good ten percent of the people I was in BT with tried to get out for various, usually concocted, reasons. A few even succeeded).

The second reason is almost the complete opposite of the first. The money is brought up to make you feel good about yourself, to make you feel special and important because, they sometimes added, your *worth* that much. And, of course, 99.9 percent of us have come from poor families in small, rundown towns and apocalyptic inner-cities. A hundred thousand dollars is unimaginable.

It's an effective use of language and is an extremely easy tactic to employ; you simply throw it out there and it will have one of the two possible effects on nearly everyone.

Of course we never discussed these things.

"You guys think that um, that uh, people with A.D.D. are um, less uh, sus…um…I mean…do you guys think that people with A.D.D. are, that it would be harda to brainwash them?" Ruhe asked. Ruhe was from New Jersey and he spoke with a thick Jersey accent. He was one of at least four people I would become friends with who were from New Jersey. I'm still trying to lose the last traces of their accent from my own speech.

"Man, what the hell are you talkin' 'bout Ruhe?" Sheppard said with a harsh sarcastic edge that he seemed to say everything with. Sheppard was a preacher's son from Atlanta, Georgia. He was a very religious man; we would have many vigorous debates on that subject for the next year and half or so. He was always a good sport about our very strong disagreements on the merits of religion and our friendship was, I believe, strengthened after each of our heated debates. We never walked away mad. We were almost always laughing. Sheppard also had one of the dirtiest mouths I've ever heard on anyone; having served in the military, that is saying a lot. I could actually hear the frustration in his voice during our conversations on those trips because DS Brown had a strong aversion to swear words, even Sheppard saying, "What the

hell…" was risky. So he had to make a conscious effort to "keep it clean." His words actually came out in a sort of stilted manner during these trips. The inability to swear interrupted the flow of his everyday speech.

"Wudda you mean, 'Wudda'm I talkin' about?'" Ruhe said.

"You think it's harder to brainwash someone if they have A.D.D.?"

"Well, yea. Come on, think about it. Being brainwashed takes…if you can't pay attention, how could you be brainwashed?'

"Come on, man! You're just sayin' that cause you can't pay attention to shit and you wanna make it seem like a good thing. Like you ain't all messed up," Sheppard said accompanied by his customary maniacal laugh.

"Let's watch the language back there privates," DS Brown said.

"Sorry Drill Sergeant," Sheppard called up front.

"But think man. If I'm…let's say I'm in that…what's that guys name? That cult leader guy, that guy from down in Texas or wherever?" Ruhe asked. Everyone turned to Soles for the answer. I knew what Ruhe was talking about, as I'm sure one or two others in the van did as well. But we usually deferred to Soles to answer these types of questions. Everyone, even some of our drill sergeants from Basic Training, looked at Soles with a reverential awe. He was a college graduate. He'd graduated from Michigan State with a degree in mechanical engineering. He could have gotten a good, high paying job in the private sector; or at the very least, he could have come in as an officer and received much higher pay and not have had to take as many orders. But he chose to enlist instead. He was either crazy or someone to be highly respected. Most of us chose the latter.

"Are you talking about David Koresh?"

"Yea, 'at's the guy. Suppose I was in that guys lair or whatever…"

"Compound."

"Yea, that thing. Suppose I was in there right? And we're all sittin' there and that Koresh is going on and on for hours and everyone's all sittin' there all paying attention and whatnot. Meanwhile I'm sittin' there thinkin' about some girls and ya' know, whatever, and all of the sudden I hear from up front, 'I am the lamb of God. You must worship me and gimme all yer money.' You know, and I like, snap out of it and look at the person next to me like, 'Da hell did he just say?' But dey can't even really answer cause dey all brainwashed." There was a few moments of silence as this idea settled in.

"Man, yer crazy," Sheppard finally said.

Ortiz, a square-shaped man with a large head, born in Boston, the son of Puerto Rican immigrants, turned around to face us and said, "No, no. That Ruhe is right. It does seem to me that being brainwashed…or hypnotized even, requires a certain amount attention."

Grice saw this as the moment to offer up his wisdom. Pvt. Grice was six-foot-four and probably weighed about a hundred and forty pounds, maybe less. He was from North Carolina or "North Kakalaky" as he almost always called it. "Shoot. I can't be brainwashed no how, by anybody. I'll tell that Koreck…shoot, I'll hip-toss 'im to the ground and step on his head is what, he he he," Grice said and laughed and was ignored. Knowing Grice for six months was knowing how to mentally remove someone from the room or the truck as completely as is humanly possible. The way he spoke, the words he used and the ideas they evoked were so objectionable or foolish that, eventually, he could say practically anything without consequence. He once told us that he didn't were a

seatbelt because if he was ever in an accident he would just catch himself on the dash. Once, we were standing around talking about a lieutenant who was new to our unit. She was a very attractive woman. She was African-American. And we were talking about how pretty she was and someone said, "What do think, Grice? You'd like to get with her right?" And Grice responded, "Shoot, I stick wit' my own kind." The group standing around him when he said this consisted of three white guys, two sergeants from the Philippines, three black guys, and two Puerto Ricans. No one got angry. We just shook our heads, perplexed.

"So what yer sayin' is: You can't think very clearly but at least you can think for yerself?" Sheppard said.

"Somethin' like 'at."

"Awe-right, Awe-right. I got ya. Maybe yer not *all* crazy, Ruhe," he said, nodding his head.

"Thanks, Shep. Ya bastard."

Part II: Falling In

The first real encounter a new soldier has with language that has any effect on him or her is with the word "You." When an enlistee first arrives at Basic Training, they don't start with the pushups and sit-ups and running right away. You fly out of whatever major airport was built nearest to your home with a small group of people like yourself, deliriously tired from having been awakened at 4:30 a.m. both that morning and the morning previous to have your uncomfortably invasive physical, to decide what job you want after trying pointlessly to understand the vague descriptions in the book they give you five minutes to look through, and finally to take your oath, surrounded by shadowy faces, in a darkened room, staring at an American flag which hangs enormously at the

front attracting all the light. You walk through the airport, your hands a little jittery from the lack of sleep and the nerves, you look enviously at the other travelers and wonder where they're going, looking at the departure gates, Hawaii, New York, London, Tokyo with the take-off times trailing the destinations and none of the people sitting in the chairs waiting to be called look like they belong in any of those places; you feel they won't truly appreciate the experience that awaits them, but you would if that's where you were going. But you're not.

So you get on the plane and fly out to one of the handful of bases that conducts Basic Training; my group went to Ft. Jackson, South Carolina. You look at the group you're with and wonder how friendly you should get with them. Will they be in Basic Training with you? Will they be your bunkmates and long-term friends? Or will you never see them again? I kept to myself. I never saw any of them again.

When you get off the plane, you no longer have time to look at and envy the other travelers, you have to find your bag and the sergeants who will lead you to the bus that will take you to base.

When you step off the bus you're expecting to be greeted with screaming and yelling and barked orders from angry faces the way you've seen it in movies since you were a kid. But it's not like that. Because a new soldier must be "processed." This can take one to three weeks depending on when the company you'll be training with is ready to receive the next crop.

There is a cadre of sergeants walking around with the big, round, brown hats, but they lack the hard-edged authority of real Drill Sergeants. But the faux-DS's do start the process of breaking down individualism. All your clothing is replaced with camouflaged Battle Dress Uniforms (BDU's). The men

have their hair shaved off, the women get theirs cut short (some of the guys complained that this was unfair but I found it pleasantly, surprisingly, humane). Many of us are issued our BCG's or Birth Control Glasses which are large, brown, plastic glasses that cover half your face and weigh about a pound. They call them BCG's because the handsomest man alive, walking through an all-girls school, wouldn't get a second look wearing those things. And no trainee is called by their name. We are only referred to as "You" or "Hey You!" "Hey You, get over here!" "Hey You, straighten your head gear!" "Hey You, You, and You, get a broom and sweep this area."

And this occurs after all the traveling and stress. And you're on this large, imposing Military Fort, surrounded by well trained, serious people. The succession of events and the setting go a long way towards making the language effective. Your family is hundreds of miles away and you're a generic "You."

Being referred to in this way over and over begins to wear you down. I found myself, after a few days, feeling surprisingly angry. The urge to scream, "I have a name damn it!" can be over whelming. But eventually you accept it and you respond to it and when you hear that awful voice say "Hey You!" your head turns in it's direction along with fifty others. And the process has begun. It's as if the colors of your newly issued uniform have started bleed ever so slightly, staining the skin underneath; by the time Basic Training is over, taking off your BDU's won't necessarily remove the camouflage.

After your processing they ship you on to real Basic Training. Here when you step off the bus you are immediately attacked by three Drill Sergeants screaming at you to find your duffel bag; all of the large, green, cylinder-shaped bags had a name stenciled on them, they were laid out along the sidewalk in front of the barracks in no particular order.

And then they tell you to "fall in." This means to line up into ranks as quickly as possible. This is a phrase that becomes like an alarm. Every trainer has purposely unreal expectations as to how quickly people can move; they act as if they want you to be in perfect formation before they get to the 'n' in in. And we were punished for not doing it quickly enough or perfectly enough. The goals were unattainable, and everyone knew it, yet we continued to scurry and fret each time they called it out.

Then they switch, seemingly arbitrarily, to more positive ways of reinforcing behavior. They use encouragement.

And you learn the way a soldier speaks. This occurs to the point where you have to relearn the alphabet in order to communicate effectively. 'A' is now Alpha, 'B' is Bravo, 'C' is Charlie and so on. For the rest of your life, it seems, you'll never spell anything out in simple letters again.

You learn what all those old movies got wrong. For example, many new trainees think that when signing off the radio you might say, "Over and Out." Which you never would. Both "Over" and "Out" have separate meanings. "Over" means, "I've said all I have to say for now. Do you have anything else you wish to convey?" This will usually be said by the person receiving the incoming call even until the very end of the interaction. The person who initiated the call will almost always be the one to say "Out" as this means there's nothing left to say, the conversation is over. So most transmissions end with one person saying, "Over" and the other person clicking on his hand receiver to say "Out." This will always be the case unless the soldier being called is of a much higher rank; sometimes they'll just say "out" when they're done talking.

Another big one is combining the terms, "Roger and Wilco." You'd never say those two words together. They also

mean different things. "Roger" simply means, "I understand what you have said." That's it. "Wilco" is a little more complicated as, like many Yiddish terms, it says two things with one word. "Wilco" means, "I understand what you have said and I will comply with your request." So this might be said if an *order* was given over the radio as opposed to just *information*. I always found "Wilco" easy to remember because it sounds like "will comply" mashed into one word; I don't know if this is where the word came from or not but it sounds likely.

And then there are so many substitute words. A shovel is not a shovel it's an Entrenching Tool or E-Tool. A land mine is not a land mine it's an Anti-Personnel mine. A hat is not a hat, it's Head Gear. Being punished by excessive pushups, sit-ups, and a variety of other physically painful exercises or positions (including the "Dying Cockroach" which is when you lie on your back and put your feet and arms into the air and hold them there until further notice) is not referred to as punishment or even Physical Training, it's called being Smoked. Gas is not gas, it's Fuel. Pulling weeds and maintaining the grounds around base is called Area Beautification. Men aren't men and women aren't women, they're Soldiers.

Once, while in Advanced Individual Training, I was walking back from the dumpster to the barracks, where the platoon was engaging in some area beautification. A Drill Sergeant sidled up to me and walked along side with his head turned in my direction, staring intensely, with a wide grin on his face. This DS was one of the "hard-core" military guys, one of those, *"I love the smell of napalm in the morning,"* kind of guys. He was very adept at putting a young trainee ill at ease. He was a short man with a mustache like a whisk broom. "How's the beautification going, private," he said. "Good, Drill Sergeant." "Just good. What's going on over there?" I didn't know what to say. I was nervous. I blurted

more than said, "Well, the girls are taking care of the back area there, Drill Sergeant." "The *who*?" he said. It felt as if the sun had inched slightly closer to the Earth. "Um, the girls," I said again. I didn't know if he was asking me to repeat myself or if he wanted me to modify my answer to his original question; the only thing I knew for certain was that my answer was wrong. "*The who*," he said again. This DS was not a shouter, his voice took on an edge that was more frightening than full-on yelling could ever be. I had no idea what to say, so I said the first thing that popped into my head. Hesitantly, reluctantly I said, "The *women*?" It was instantly obvious that this was not the response he was looking for. On the other hand, it did cause him to finally, at last, avert his crazy-eyed gaze. I don't know if he simply gave up, had his fun, or took pity on me, but he shook his head and said, almost kindly, "How about 'The Soldiers?'" "Yes, Drill Sergeant." We're all Green here, private." "Yes, Drill Sergeant."

"We're all Green here," was a phrase that was used from the first days of BT. It referred to race, gender, religion, everything. We were all equal according to our rank, which was easily visible on both sides of your collar and the front of your head gear. Of all the language in BT that was used and that was at least somewhat effective, this may be the best and most positive one. When I am completely honest with myself, I know that I found hearing it and saying it to be, at times, comforting; and at other times I found it slightly maddening. I'm sure many others felt that way too. And yet it worked along side all of the other techniques to remove distinction and personal identity. And in people like Grice, and a few others I met, it shows how growing up with a language of casual racism makes it so much more difficult, if not impossible, for the idea to ever fully take root.

O'Brien explains to Winston Smith, in Orwell's *1984*, that what he is doing, by employing certain tortures and techniques, is emptying out every last ounce of "Winston" and replacing him, or filling him up, with the ideology of the Party. It would be a gross exaggeration and completely absurd to say that this is exactly what is attempted on the men and women in Basic Training. Although it feels more like it in Basic Training, because you are allowed no books, no TV, no movies, and no music, the Army is not trying to wipe out every part of individuality that exists in it's soldiers. Once you're done with training you can buy a car, listen to music, and watch TV, and read whatever you want. You can decorate your room however you want, as long as it's spotlessly clean come inspection time and it causes no problems with your roommate. In fact, I think the biggest influences on me were the *individuals* that surrounded me day and night, especially the ones with whom I was put on "Funeral Detail."

But a part of that Orwellian notion does exist within the military and is used as a tool for incorporating young persons into the ranks. It's just not as complete, or as harsh, as it is in that famous novel. People will respond more desirably when a combination of punishment and positive reinforcement is used. This is how the Army works and is therefore probably more effective than the severe tactics of Orwell's nightmarish world.

Part III: The Funerals

At first, we assumed that we were lost. I didn't know from where D.S. Brown got the directions but they seemed to have led us to nowhere. The van crept along, slowly, each of us with our heads facing out the windows in different directions looking for any sign of life. We must have spent half

an hour driving around this way before D.S. Brown spotted a building.

Turning down the cracked cement road, we pulled into the parking lot of what looked like a shack of some kind, a crooked wooden sign above the door read "live bait" in hand painted letters.

"All right, Privates, I'm gonna see if they have a phone in there. You guys wait here," D.S. Brown said. I think he was slightly embarrassed by the fact that we were lost.

We sat in the dim atmosphere of the van, talking and feeling tired from the trip. I was nervous about the fact that it seemed we were going to be late for a *funeral*! I pictured all the dead man's relatives sitting in a church, staring at the lifeless body in the open casket, impatiently swatting at flies, waiting for the strangers to show up so the ceremony could begin. I pictured all of their worn-out and grief stricken eyes staring at us as we tentatively made our way into the church trying desperately not to make too much noise.

And as I thought about that, I thought about the speech D.S. Brown had given earlier as we drove across South Carolina. "Now look, Privates," he said, "Some people don't necessarily have a positive view of the Army. Now this guy here, he was in Vietnam, ya see. There is some controversy there. The thing is Privates, that all these Vets are allowed a Military burial. And that comes with money, ya see. A big portion of the cost of the funeral is paid for by us. And so we go in and we do it, we just do it, Privates. But there are folks who'll arrange for a Military burial simply to get the money, to have the funeral paid for. Only reason I'm tellin' ya'll this now is, is that I spoke to the gentleman on the phone and he didn't sound too friendly to me. I been doin' this for a while now, Privates and I've got some sense of when people feel a little funny about us comin' in and doin' our thing. You just

be respectful, keep your eyes forward at all times. We'll be fine."

As it turned out we were pretty close to where we were supposed to be. D.S. Brown came out of the rustic bait-shop, nodding his head in the way he always did when he had something figured out.

"All right, Privates, we're gonna sit here for a minute. Someone is driving over here to lead us to this place. Apparently *all* of these streets are unnamed."

"Why didn't they tell us that when they gave us directions?" Soles was the only one brave enough to ask Normally D.S. Brown would attack such a question as insubordination but this was a singular situation.

"They did give me street names over the phone a couple of days ago. I guess the locals have names for the streets that everyone around *here* knows. I told 'um I ain't from these parts. I ain't even from this darn state, Private," D.S. Brown said, referring once again to Soles as Private even though, because of his college degree, Soles was already a Specialist, which is three ranks above Private. I think it bothered Soles at first but he eventually got used to it; D.S. Brown could *not* get used to the fact that there was a Specialist in AIT.

Fifteen minutes later a solitary pick-up truck, whose primary color was rust, came roaring out of the woods, down the ancient concrete road, at an insanely fast speed. He zipped into the parking lot and came to a halting stop. It wasn't hard to spot us. We looked like aliens just flown in from Mars.

"You fellas the guys," the young black man behind the wheel said more than asked.

"We are," D.S. Brown said, resisting, it seemed to me, the urge to call this young man Private. I imagine it was hard for him to talk to anyone under the age of twenty-one without using his authoritative Drill Sergeant's voice.

"Folla me," the driver said. We jumped back into the van and followed the old truck down the road. We drove a few miles before the truck turned down a dirt road. It seemed unreal that there would be *anything* along that desolate dirt path, let alone a church or a funeral home.

The road was made of a very red looking dirt; it looked more like rust than soil. On both sides, spread out as far as you could see, were tall trees whose green branches began to sprout off ten to twelve feet up their thin brown trunks. I had never seen wilderness like this before. It was a forest but there was hardly any foliage. The floor of the wooded area was comprised mainly of the same red-tinted dirt that our van was traveling down. And the trees were spread out in an unusual way. There were three to four feet between each thin, round trunk. They were not laid out in a landscaped manner but in a natural, pattern-less order. I was used to the woods of Illinois, where you could barely see ten feet in front of you the forest is so thick with trees and bushes and weeds. But here you could see deep into the woods. I could see a stark white rabbit scampering about at least fifteen yards into the trees. Yet it still had that closed in feeling of the most densely wooded forests because where the branches of the separate trees met, ten feet in the air, they came together in a mish-mashed way that covered the forest like the top of a shelter. And so the area was heavily shaded and dark; little broken beams of sunlight somehow managed to penetrate the thick covering to shine down like miniature spot-lights at random intervals. The place gave me the creeps.

Soon we had traveled far enough into this area that the concrete road from which we turned off was no longer visible. I believe we went at least two miles into the woods before, at last, we came upon a small wooden church. The church was a white square of a building with a tiny white steeple on top. It

looked like it could maybe hold twenty-five people comfortably. The space it occupied had been cleared of just enough trees to make room for the holy structure, the sun shining down on the building like a square-shaped spot light from above, illuminating the fresh, white paint.

There was no parking lot, the few cars present were parked along the edge of the dirt road. We pulled in behind the truck that led us here.

We came to a stop and opened the van door. We stepped right into the square of bright sunlight and were blinded momentarily. We had been in that van for so long and the windows were so darkly tinted that our eyes were not ready for light that strong. Slowly we regained our sight. After the initial disorientation wore off, we walked, tremulously, into the church. Inside there were six rows of pews. All except one bench was filled with mourning relatives, their heads bowed. No one was making a sound. Up front, on a small elevated stage covered by a thin crimson carpet, was a closed coffin, next to which was a poster board with a large picture of an elderly black man's sullenly smiling face. Above the picture was the name Reginald Smith, below was simply written: Veteran.

There is no language quite so loud as when a room full of people do everything in their power to avoid looking at you directly. Being in the Army you sort of feel out of place and yet welcome wherever you go (this applies only to the states of course). But now it felt as if my uniform was emitting rays stronger than the sun. It was just as dangerous to look at it as it was to wear it.

And still we went through the motions. We marched to the front of the church and took our places: three of us on each side of the coffin, D.S. Brown at the front, leading the way. Every movement is precise. You keep your head and

eyes straight forward. You turn or pivot on an exact point. You act as a machine. And even though I couldn't see them (I did my job well) I felt Reginald's relatives, his kids and siblings, walking out of the church, trying to ignore the military's presence; as if the casket were simply going to float out of the church and over to the graveyard (Actually, I'm not sure you could even call it a cemetery. There was no area cleared for the cemetery as there was for the church. There were just random tombstones laid out between the trees wherever space was available).

So all of our painstakingly practiced, precise, military movements towards the makeshift graveyard were made to feel ridiculous. There was no reverence in what we were doing. We were greeted with down turned eyes.

We laid the coffin down above the hole that was dug up between two trees. We pulled the flag that had been draped over it taught between us. D.S. Brown stood at the end, folding the flag into a triangle, pulling it from our unmoving hands. As the fabric slid through my fingers, all of my actions and the actions of my fellow soldiers felt, in that moment, preposterous and absurd. I looked at Littlejohn who was directly across from me, trying to see if he felt anything similar. But I couldn't tell. We were well trained and our faces showed no emotion.

It was my first adult encounter with disillusionment. If the Army, in Orwellian fashion, had emptied "us" out and filled us back up with "them" like filling a glass with water, then the silence of that departed veterans family was like a small crack forming on the side of the cup. I could feel the water drain out slowly and painfully. And yet I couldn't blame that family. He was their father, husband, and brother. They had every right to feel about him and the military anyway they wanted to. It wasn't us as individuals they hated. It was the

Giant Green Thing to which we belonged. And suddenly, being a small part of that larger, greater thing didn't feel natural or right. I wanted to be judged as me and I knew right then and there that I wouldn't be, not for many years to come.

I've never taken pleasure in writing about myself, at least not in any direct way. I do enjoy writing fiction. I like making things up and I do so as a hobby; not that I'm any good at it yet. Writing about myself directly and forthrightly has always felt unnatural and leaves me feeling uncomfortable. Author Michael Chabon has written that when he first began writing, reading pieces he'd composed about himself or that were based on real incidents from his life was a somewhat painful experience. Mainly, he felt, because the pieces didn't ring true, they seemed disingenuous. When he wrote fiction, however, he did so with much more authority and what he produced felt more earnest and truthful.

I have a similar reaction. Writing about myself feels like, what I imagine, driving after having been awake for forty-eight hours would feel like. I know I need to stay between those white lines but I'm finding it very difficult. My concentration keeps trying to slip away. And I have to concentrate *on* concentrating; I have to keep telling myself to pay attention to the lines and my speed and can therefore lose sight of the task at hand: to get home safely. Then there is that urge to simply let go. To drift off into dreamland and let the imagination take over.

I think I've won that battle this time. Certainly the military language used and the psychological effect it has, is as true as my memory, and the emotional investment I have stored there, will let me make it. The only facts that have been altered concern the soldiers present in the van.

I wouldn't actually meet Pvt. Grice for another couple of months. I'd first lay eyes on his lanky frame when Soles,

Ortiz (who *were* with me in AIT and *were* present in the van) and me flew down to Ft. Hood, Texas, were processed, and driven over to our unit. There'd we see Grice, leaning back in a chair with his long, skinny feet-like-a-clown's up on a desk, looking like the goofy proprietor of his own small, failing, business.

Soon after that Littlejohn would arrive and every morning at PT he'd make us all look bad. Ruhe would arrive a month after that.

Almost a year later Sheppard would arrive and the two of us would get assigned to a separate motor pool. He had a car, I didn't, and so each morning, lunch, and evening we would be in there together, sometimes arguing about creation, sometimes not.

I chose to put these specific soldiers in the van with me because they each spoke in a distinctive way and contributed greatly to the confusion with which I was met by my mom, brothers, and friends when I opened my mouth to speak after flying home on leave for the second time. My accent and usage alone could practically spawn the idea for a plot to a bad movie: a New Jersey guy with a sailor's mouth and a tough-guy attitude has to, for whatever reason, live in the deep south, where he comes face to face with the machismo attitudes of that region with comic results. I haven't spoken to Ruhe or anyone from Jersey in over two years and still that accent creeps into my voice from time to time; I have no control over it.

I don't know if any of the guys who were there felt the way I did at that funeral (there were a couple of deaths back home, one of which I flew back for and was a pall-bearer at, during Basic Training, only about a month before I was "volunteered" for Funeral Detail. So my emotions may have been understandably heightened). I have never asked them. Mainly

because I was not certain that I would be able to articulate how it was I felt sufficiently enough for them to understand and respond; I'm still unsure of that. And, of course, Ruhe, Littlejohn, Sheppard, and Grice weren't actually there at all; they were put there by me. But even with the small sin of moving people around in space and time, I sometimes wish I could go one step further. I'd like to be able to have us step out of that van door, the brightness of the sun blinding us momentarily, and to, somehow, have *something else* be there as our sight slowly returns.

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"THANKS FOR THE MEMORIES": CITING OUR WAY INTO OUR PAST EXPERIENCES

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If I learned anything in a writing course, it is to write from my experience. Even if I did not listen to my writing instructors, some of my favorite literary authors remind me to do the same. I include in all of my writing class syllabi a story Johann Wolfgang Goethe tells of a young poet who asked him for a writing assignment, and Goethe told him to write about an upcoming trip to Hamburg. When the poet returned with an emotional account of the son returning to his family and friends after a long absence, Goethe told him he wrote a generic story—had he written about his experiences on the actual trip, since no journeys are ever the same (different strangers in the inns, the carriage breaking down or not, etc.), then he would have had something. (*Conversations* 100) Goethe also advised that "Poetic content…is the content of

one's own life. That content cannot be given us by anyone… Ask yourselves with every poem if it contains something you have experienced and if that experience has made you grow" ("Further Advice" 210). Rainer Marie Rilke suggests writers "Pretend you are the very first man and then write about what you see and experience" (11). He warns against being general, and if you cannot find anything in your life to write about, well maybe you need to do something about your life (12). Jane Austen told her niece Anna to write about what she knew; as she knew nothing about Irish manners, she should not follow her characters to Ireland and report on their activities (269).

Telling my students to do this is one thing; having them actually write about their experiences beyond the required paper and occasional in-class free write assignment proved to be another.

While teaching a class in advanced exposition that looked at a number of creative nonfiction subgenres, by midterm, I became a bit frustrated with some of my students. Despite my journal requirement that they write on their own for a half hour a day (how else would they fill up their journals?) and do research for their essays, only a handful of them were doing this. Never mind our textbook, *Writing True: The Art and Craft of Creative Nonfiction* by Sondra Perl and Mimi Schwartz, had whole chapters devoted to the importance of journaling and research, not to mention numerous ways to get the students jump-started in their writing. No, the only writing I was seeing was what was assigned and research, if it was recorded in their journals at all, consisted of a solitary URL, such as http://webpage.acs.ttu.edu/cmcdouga/arkfootnotestext.htm, which does not give a clue as to what the subject matter of this site is (Plus this site is dead; I had the students try to access it and when they alerted me that

nothing was coming up on the computer, thinking there was something wrong with the URL, I countered with "And this tells you what? I use the information from this website all the time; luckily I have a paper copy." Oh. Got it.) or the cryptic "Research: talked to Mom" (When did you talk to Mom? What did Mom say? Five years from now, will you know what was Mom's information and what was Aunt Edith's information?)

I took some of the blame. Perhaps I should have given them an example of what "research" looks like when one talks to Mom (I added an example for them to look at). As some of them had pointed out in an earlier free write about a childhood memory involving food, they were surprised at how much they remembered once they started writing (but not before). They needed the prompt. For most of the students, this was their first time in a writing class of this nature and various invention strategies may not have been at their fingertips. So I sat down with my collection of creative writing books and started looking for invention exercises that would get them to produce the sort of writing I wanted to see in their journals—and that they would find useful five, ten, twenty years from now when they mine these journals for the gems they contain. Many of these books had exercises similar to those already in our textbook. Then I opened a battered copy of Hans Ostrom, Wendy Bishop, and Katharine Haake's *Metro: Journeys in Writing Creatively* I had recently snagged off a "free books" pile in the office.

Eureka! I had used *Metro: Journeys in Writing Creatively* before when freshman composition students asked for help in writing effective first paragraphs (190–193), which is why I pounced on the free copy, and I use Bishop's postcard invention exercise (for this particular class, I used self-portraits of various painters instead of landscapes) from *Released into*

Language in just about all my writing classes. While I actually found a number of exercises in several books, I particularly liked the one Bishop calls "Reading Yourself" in that it solved two of my students' problems: their lack of thorough research documentation and writing about their experiences. They could prove to me they actually do know how to properly cite document sources and, in fitting in with Perl and Schwartz's advice to capture small moments and to be surprised with what we write (24–25), they would beef up their journals with tales of their random experiences. I changed the name of the assignment; this initially caused groans, trembling at the knees, and cries of anguish…until they actually read the assignment.

The Annotated Bibliography of Reading

Wendy Bishop claims she stole this exercise from Rick Moody (6–7; the Moody essay is on 314–19). I stole it from Bishop. Billed as an invention/memory exercise, it is good for recording future writing ideas or what I know as discovery drafting, in addition to citation practice. For those who might want to focus more on reading, it records what the writer is reading at a particular point in time. If this exercise is done over a longer period, it provides a truer "bibliography" of reading and how what we read changes over time (and could lead to a possible reading analysis project).

While this project could be done over a longer period of time (a citation and memory each week), I had my students do this as one assignment. Parts I and II can be collapsed into one:

Part I: The Homework: Gather 10 "texts," literary and non-literary, from around your home. Bishop says to use 10–20, but I thought 10 was enough for my students. I used

5 for my sample (and 3 are included below). These texts can be CD liner notes, a credit card bill, books, magazines, e-mails, love letters, etc. The majority of texts should be print texts—literally found underfoot. Electronic texts you usually have to search for; however, I realize that a friend's Facebook page or an e-mail would also work for the assignment, so as long as it is an electronic text the student reads on a regular basis.

Due to the nature of my particular class, and my emphasis on research, I also allowed "personal interviews" as an oral text, although I did not specifically state this was acceptable; if my students read my sample of the assignment, they would see I used a telephone conversation with my mother. You can expand or limit the kind of texts you want students to gather and look at. Bishop's original assignment focused on reading texts; you hear a telephone conversation (unless you write it down and then you can read it). Due to the nature of the kind of writing my students were doing, they were talking to a lot of family members, and that has value to the writer as well.

Part II: Citing Sources: This can be done as homework or in the classroom. Take the 10 texts and cite them as sources in a bibliography or works cited page. As instructors, you will need to specify the citation style. I let my students choose whether they used MLA, Chicago, or APA, although I required MLA elsewhere in the course with the admonition that I have never had to cite in APA for any English assignment. The vast majority of my students are English majors, but not all of them are. If a source is not in the citation form book, or one of the several on-line citation sources, the students should use one that is similar to what they are trying to cite. Let's face it, not many of us cite to credit card bills or pizza

coupons in our academic research, but these texts work well for the assignment.

Part III: The Twist: To be honest, I really do not like writing annotated bibliographies (although I can understand why instructors assign them). I never found them useful in my writing process. But this annotated bibliography is different. Instead of summarizing the sources, write about a memory evoked by that source. Write until the memory is complete.

I provided my students with a sample to give them an idea of what I was looking for; I did five texts (I figured they would get the idea of variety and more than that would be overkill). Bishop includes Rick Moody's essay, "Primary Sources," in the anthology section of *Metro* as a different way of responding to the assignment.

Sample Annotated Bibliography of Reading:

1. **Crabtree, Amanda. "Corset Couture" Belle Armoire: the Artistry of Clothing and Accessories, 9.4 (July/August 2009): 49–57. Print.** When I went to pay my property tax bill, I parked across the street from Gridley Antiques and paid it a visit. Big mistake. I wasn't expecting to find anything; I just wanted to look. And look I did. I had just passed up a Victorian top (too small and condition issues), when I saw IT. Eleanor's dress. Well, it's my dress now, but it reminded me of Frank Benson's painting of his daughter Eleanor in a pink dress. The garden festival was in two weeks, so I wore it for that (I had taken the dress from the store to the mansion to show Jeannie before going home). At first when I got to the Garden Festival, I was told to stay in the mansion because it was damp from all the rain outside, but I didn't wear the dress to stay indoors. So, I hoisted my parasol, bunched

up my skirt in demure turn-of-the-century fashion, and walked around Sarah's Garden. I felt like I was in an Impressionist painting. The Tea Ladies asked if I could wear the dress to their next presentation (and that's how I got my picture in the newspaper). Then I got the call the museum needed costume guides for a Lincoln do, so it was back into the pink dress for that—I was asked it the dress was hot with its high collar and long sleeves, but it is actually quite comfortable—what's hot is all the modern spandex underneath it. I finished up with the Antique Auto Show (different dress, but same spandex corset so I move "correctly" with the dress).

2. **Hunter, Damion. Barbarian Princess. New York: Ballantine, 1982. Print**. I laughed when I saw this book in the university bookstore—whatever was Dr. Watkins thinking? The cover is a bright red with the title in gold foil letters. There is a decorative border inspired by Roman mosaics separating the text from the illustration. As for the illustration itself, red is still a predominant color, but it also has the beefcake hero with a woman clinging to his bicep and Stonehenge is in the background. Dr. Watkins, who was hardly beefcake centurion material, but rather winsome, laughed the first day of class about the need to sell books by their covers, and he assured us it really was a well-written historical novel. I don't know if this was for my British or Roman history class as it could have fit in both of the classes I took with Dr. Watkins (I'm guessing Roman though as the novel also deals with the eruption of Vesuvius).
3. **Rutter, John and the Cambridge Singers. Olde English Madrigals and Folk Songs at Ely Cathedral. American Grammaphone Recordings (CD) 1984**. I heard Ely Cathedral had a stained glass museum, so on one of my free

> days, I hopped the train to Ely. Talk about a step back in time; unlike the modern trains to London, the train cars to Ely looked like they had been new during WWII. It was a short trip on a sunny day, and the cathedral was not hard to find (what is it though about cows grazing in the church yard in this country?). I asked if I needed to show my student ID to get the admission reduced, and the lady laughed and replied that it was a church and they trusted me. I did see the stained glass museum (nice), but what really struck me was the Lady Chapel—the stained glass was gone and had been replaced with plain glass. This not only flooded the chapel with light, but the blue sky with puffy white clouds provided quite the elegant replacement for the brighter colors of cathedral glass.

Variations: I changed Bishop's original way of looking at the assignment (okay, I admit I did not realize her inspiration was in the anthology at the back of the book when I presented the exercise to my students), but my way can be varied as well. For one, you can use Moody and Bishop's suggestion and use the footnote/endnote function, with the memory text shifted to the foot or endnote for a more post-modern approach. Bishop suggests doing this exercise with books you would like to read, but have not (yet), or with reading materials you would like to have with you if stranded on a desert island. The Hans Ostrom exercise that follows Bishop's in *Metro* focuses on your own "canon"—so this exercise could link memories to the student's own "canon" of literature (7–8). Or, you can have the students use texts that represent different people in their lives: a birthday card from grandma, a sibling's comic book, or a parent's hobby magazine.

If the students need to master more than one citation form, the citation requirement can be adjusted (cite all odd

numbered entries in MLA, all even numbered entries in APA). If citing sources is not a priority (or even if it is), the students could add visual texts (family photographs, pictures of the covers of their favorite books, drawings, etc.) and use those as the prompts instead of the citation—or as illustrations to their memory stories.

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THE FASCINATION WITH THE ABOMINATION: PRE-READING ACTIVITIES FOR *BEOWULF* AND *GRENDEL* FOR DEFINING THE MONSTER

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Rationale for Teaching an Inquiry Based Curriculum

Recent research in literacy instruction emphasizes the importance of engaging students in the learning process more deeply by promoting inquiry into essential or key questions. One of the many benefits of an inquiry-based approach to curriculum design is that it provides students (and teachers) with clear objectives and a clear purpose for learning: "Cognitive science has demonstrated that one's purpose drives motivation and what one attends to, remembers, and then applies. Without purpose, significant learning is difficult if not impossible to achieve" (Wilhelm 2007). We believe that we can have a profound effect on student engagement in crafting

introductory/frontloading activities, or Gateway Activities (Hillocks 1995), that are firmly rooted in the inquiry and texts and tap into the prior knowledge of our students: "Students typically have some kind of experience that they can draw on to assist them with new learning. Unfortunately, students often view their personal knowledge as irrelevant to understanding schoolwork and flounder in areas where they could flourish" (Smagorinsky 2008). Like Smagorinsky, McCann and Kern (1987), we believe that our students are often more deeply engaged and better prepared to comprehend literature, even challenging and culturally/temporally distant texts like *Beowulf*, when they are "engaged in…activity encouraging them to probe a concept in terms of their own experiences and thus providing a cognitive map for comprehending the idea when they encounter it in the literature." The extent to which we, as teachers, hook student interest and ground learning in personal or socially relevant experiences has a direct effect on how engaged our students become with their own learning. According to Wilhelm (2001), if students lack what he defines as a "rich set of understandings around a particular topic," they will be unable to comprehend the text with which they are engaged.

Why Monsters?

When we began to explore the way in which we wanted our students to recognize the relationship between a society's dreams and fears, we preferred to approach the inquiry from a perspective other than simply analyzing the dominant culture's traditions and institutions. As freshmen, our students had already studied the significance of a hero—the epitome of a society's dreams and fears—so repeating this inquiry with the character of Beowulf in the epic poem would simply replicate experiences students already had. This curriculum

also contains John Gardner's *Grendel*, a novel which is narrated by the monster. Because Grendel tells the tale, Gardner's text provides readers with an alternative and not so favorable assessment of the Anglo-Saxon value system. Grendel's interpretation is important because the exile's point of view provides another way to understand how a society's values include and isolate those who encounter it, man and beast alike.

We also knew that future inquiries would require students to define and explore good and evil in *Macbeth, Crime and Punishment,* and *Dorian Gray.* Frequently, when determining whether an action or person is evil or good, one often relies on a society's value system to make these judgments. If the individual is evil, he might be called a "monster." Therefore, whatever we used to initiate the discussion of value systems had to also prepare students to explore the dichotomy of good and evil.

Given these factors, we thought that an exploration of the monster seemed logical. First and foremost, the monster is compelling. We possess, as Marlow explains in *Heart of Darkness*, "a fascination with the abomination," for the monster often is an aberration and the antithesis of all we value (Conrad 4). Secondly, when conflict arises between "the other" and society, society relies upon these values to define "the other" as a threat. It is this conflict then between the society and the monster which highlights the values in consideration. Students can easily identify the values and threats because the conflict by nature exposes them.

Where The Wild Things Are: An Introductory Text to Develop Criteria for Monsters

Maurice Sendak's classic children's book, *Where The Wild Things Are*, has become a culturally iconic text for many

American children and parents since its original publication in 1963. It has enjoyed yet another round of interest in 2009 with its release as a feature film directed by Spike Jonze and screenplay by Dave Eggers. We feel this story provides a highly engaging entry point into the discussion about monsters, or "wild things," especially in ways we define monsters and their relationships to society. After all, most of our students are familiar with the text, and they find the prospect of reading and studying one of their well-known children's tales in high school unusual and entertaining. We have found that the Scholastic DVD, *Where The Wild Things Are…and other Maurice Sendak stories* (Scholastic / Weston Woods Studios 2001), is an excellent format to engage students in an analysis of the text. In addition to reading the story, students benefit from the narration and soundtrack, by Peter Schickele, as well as the simple but carefully crafted animation. These added dimensions provide depth and layers to the students' inquiry.

In this activity students watch the short film of Maurice Sendak's famous children's story *Where The Wild Things Are*. After watching the short film and engaging in a close reading of the text, students participate in a class discussion in response to questions that assist them in the development of criteria for monsters. They examine traditional notions and definitions of monsters and begin to define relationships between monsters and their respective societies. This activity elicits students' prior knowledge of societal and family dynamics, appropriate / inappropriate behavior, the nature of punishment and control, exile, and basic criteria for monsters in preparation for understanding analogous relationships in *Beowulf* and *Grendel*.

We have found that the most effective classroom procedure is to have them watch the short film once for pleasure and a second time with specific interpretive tasks. After the

initial viewing, we divide the class into thirds, asking each third to pay particular attention to different facets of the film: the animation and visual effects, the narration, and the musical soundtrack. The animation and visual effects might include the colors used, physical depictions of Max and the "wild things," and the animation techniques. We ask those attending to the narration to listen to variations in tone and inflection of the narrator, especially as he shifts from Max's home to where the wild things are, as well as anything else they might notice about how the narration affects our interpretation. We ask those listening to the musical soundtrack to note the types of instruments used, style or genre of music, or any other uses of music and sound that add to the text's message.

After the second viewing, we ask students to report on their findings. They make a variety of observations. The third who attend to the visual aspects of the film often report that the wild things appear as much like monsters as they do humans and whenever they move or act in monstrous ways, the animation lacks the fluidity and clarity of Max's movements. The wild things' motions are jerky and blurred, often seeming distorted, dreamy and surreal. Reports on the narration often reveal that the narrator's voice changes according to subject matter and perspective: the telling of the story associated with wild things and the deviant Max is gruff and abrupt, that of Max's imagination is much softer and dreamy, and that which depicts issues of control is very clear, monotone and deliberate (Max being sent to his room and Max taming the wild things). Their reports on the musical soundtrack elicit equally interesting findings: the story opens with a melodic classical piano that gradually gives way to a primitive, rhythmic drum beat and horns. Max's opening antics are accompanied by clarinet trills and punctuated with brief bassoon blasts. Harps and clarinets transform Max's room into a forest, and a collection

of drums, cymbals, horns, piano and other instruments compose the jazz of the wild rumpus and the emotional reactions of the wild things. Max's return home to his bedroom marks a musical return to the ordered and melodic classical piano. From this opening discussion, students begin to put in place an understanding that defining monsters or "wild things" is complicated. The ways in which we depict and describe them, contextualize and interpret them, has quite a lot to do with perception. There are indeed wild "others." Max, in fact, is one of us, but the wild things share human qualities and emotions; they aren't always out of control, and they even appreciate some of the same music as we do.

Guiding questions comprise the next part of this discussion, and students rely on the written text in addition to the visual and audible components of *Where The Wild Things Are* to establish criteria for monsters that will prepare them to identify monstrous characteristics in the next activity, *What is a Monster?*, as well as *Beowulf* and *Grendel*. It is at this point that we begin to shift our language about "wild things" to "monsters," a subtlety that students readily accept. We often put students in small groups to address these and report back to the entire class. Documenting the criteria on a white board or public space is helpful. We use a variety of focus questions, some of which are included here, and we would encourage teachers to craft their own questions as they see fit:

- Where, according to the text, do we find monsters?
- What are the characteristics of monsters? Pay close attention to the monsters' needs and desires.
- When is it that monsters tend to reveal their monstrous qualities?
- How does the text suggest we should deal with monsters and what do these techniques suggest about how we understand monsters?

> • What does the text suggest about who or what the monsters are in our lives? Are they accurate? Is the representation of monsters in this story consistent with the ways in which our society defines monsters?
> • What does this story suggest about the way we confront our problems? Explain.

We want our students to begin with an exploration of the specific, concrete details in the text and gradually move to more sophisticated inferential interpretations, but we have found that students are eager to share their findings here and often move quickly to sophisticated inferential observations about the text. Many of the connections students make with this text are relevant and applicable to *Beowulf* and *Grendel*. We find monsters in a variety of places, both near and far.

Max is a "monster" in the beginning of the text because he violates the order of the household: dressed in a wolf suit and moving wildly through the house, he hammers a nail into the wall to hold a tent (upon which he "hangs" a teddy bear), he chases the pet dog with a fork, and he threatens his mother's attempt to settle him, proclaiming, "I'LL EAT YOU UP!" (Sendak 5). Children are often accused of being monsters, and certainly some may be; yet students are quick to point out that those who accuse or define children as monstrous often do so because they cannot or choose not to relate with them. Max, then, is a monster to his mother because he wreaks havoc in the household while she, presumably, prepares his dinner. Some students have pointed out that they believe Max is just hungry, or perhaps "starving" for attention; Max's wild play is an attempt to occupy himself through play, and chasing "prey" is something a "wolf" would do. Maybe his mother should have put dinner on the table earlier? Others have recalled that in their own childhoods that saying, "I'll eat you up," is an affectionate expression used by parents and others

to express deep attachment and emotion for children, as in "you're so cute I could just eat you up." The fact that we use figurative language like this when its literal meaning is cannibalism (a fear shared by the Anglo-Saxon Danes in *Beowulf*) further complicates our understanding of the monster.

While Max is a homegrown monster, the wild things exist far away, across "an ocean…he sailed off through night and day…and in and out of weeks…and almost over a year" (Sendak 13–15). This distance is Max's imagination, a place he visits while confined to the isolation of his bedroom. These monsters fit traditional criteria for monsters through their "terrible roars […] terrible teeth […] terrible eyes [and] terrible claws" (Sendak 17–18), but students also discuss how they look a lot like people, just distorted. They have human-like hairstyles, noses, mouths, ears, and one even appears to be wearing a striped shirt. Their similarities to humans are many. As students further explore the monsters' emotional needs and desires, they discover that both monsters and Max have several attributes in common: they seem to desire attention; they crave structure and order, simultaneously desiring freedom and permission to have a good time; they want to be loved; they fear abandonment. These are among the many possibilities that students generate. Both Max and the wild things challenge a rigid definition of monster because they share so many common attributes.

We have found that students will engage in vigorous discussion about the implications of *Where The Wild Things Are* with respect to societal perceptions of monsters. Some of the discussion questions lend themselves to short, one page written responses through which students can continue their inquiry into monster criteria and definition while accessing even more of their prior knowledge (*What does the text suggest about who or what the monsters are in our lives? Are they accurate?*

and *Is the representation of monsters in this story consistent with the ways in which our society defines monsters? Explain).* The following excerpts of student writing reveal how students begin to put together "the cognitive map for comprehending the idea when they encounter it in the literature" as stated by Smagorinsky, McCann and Kern (1987):

> Instead of making the mother's problem of Max's behavior better, he goes to the land of the wild things where those monsters call him "the most wild thing of all." From him being called the "most wild thing" by a bunch of monsters, one can infer that he has become even more of a problem than before. The text therefore suggests that the only really effective way to deal with monsters is by showing compassion, kindness and understanding because it was only when Max's mother brought him a hot supper that he "left" the wild things and came home. Through the growth of the characters…one can see that most people like to ignore their problems and therefore they often enforce ineffective punishment causing their problems to become greater, such as the problems between Max and his mother. (Emily, 11th grader)

> …this text is consistent with the ways in which our society categorizes monsters because they both strike fear in others, act chaotically, and don't accept others unless you show that you are one of them…the author described the monsters as having terrible and vicious features like sharp claws and teeth. These monsters were supposed to scare others with their looks. 'Monsters' in today's society are categorized as monsters because they strike fear in others. These monsters in society may be homeless people, or drug addicts and individuals fear them because they believe these monsters may act

> violent towards them to get what they want…These people in society may not have jobs or families, which goes against everything society tells people to have, and this scares people for some reason. (Will, 11th grader)

Emily's response reveals how we often create our own monsters. She interpreted that Max's punishment actually makes him more monstrous as a consequence of failing to acknowledge and deal with differences and misunderstandings. For Emily, the text suggests that an empathic response to the monster is the only way to understand and effectively deal with the issue. Will makes the connection that our monsters today are people who we fear as a response to the threat they pose to our values. Homeless people, drug addicts, and the jobless threaten the societal values of domesticity, family, financial security, and a clear and rational mind. Utilizing a text like *Where The Wild Things Are* as an entry point into much more complicated texts like *Beowulf* provides students with an understanding of the monster as "other" and a powerful basis for establishing relationships between the fears and values of a society.

What is a Monster? Scenario and Ranking Activity

In *What is a Monster?*, students explore contemporary monsters from horror films in order to establish the relationship between the fears a monster represents and the values the monster threatens. Since we contend that the very fears a monster represents threaten the values a society possesses, we crafted an activity which invites students to develop this connection on their own. Students also need some practice in exploring this relationship in modern day examples before they encounter it within the Anglo-Saxon culture of which they know little. In addition, this process, specifically identifying the fears and the corresponding values that these fears

represent, becomes a necessary approach as students complete the exam and essays associated with this unit of inquiry.

Whenever teachers design a scenario activity, they should keep in mind that each scenario must elicit a different student response or add to the complexity of the inquiry question the students explore. In *What is a Monster?*, we needed to consider not only that these modern day monsters illustrate contemporary fears, but that they also prepared students for the fears that Grendel, Grendel's mother, and the Dragon represented for the Anglo-Saxons. After all, some fears speak to the human condition and traverse culture and time period. Students would also eventually rank these monsters according to the severity of the threat by providing rationales rooted in the fears the monsters elicit and the values the monster threaten.

We had our students analyze the following monsters: Freddy Krueger, Hannibal Lector, Brundlefly, the Hulk, Jaws, the Terminator, Sil, and Darth Vader (We acknowledge that there are other monsters both mythological and contemporary that could also yield a productive discussion). Students typically point out that Freddy Krueger, a monster who attacks its victims in their dreams, represents the fear of vulnerability as it is necessary for one to sleep; or that as a sociopath, Dr. Hannibal Lector's position as a psychiatrist makes his victims susceptible to his mind manipulation, the fear of placing one's trust in the wrong authority. Seth Brundle's transformation into The Fly, the result of a misdirected science experiment, illustrates society's fear that technology will bring ill rather than aid to those who use it. Students conclude that each of these monsters represent common fears in society: the Hulk represents the fear of losing control of one's emotions, JAWS threatens human superiority in the food chain, the Terminator, despite man's best efforts, is indestructible, Sil kills those

she mates with in order to repopulate Earth with her alien spawn, the fear of feminine sexuality and alien invasion, and Darth Vader's power over the galaxy reminds one the detrimental consequences of imperialism. Because the monster, the "other," is so fascinating to the dominant culture (we can include ourselves in this culture), a lively and passionate conversation ensues.

As part of this activity, students must determine whether the fears the monsters cause are real or imagined. We have students make these determinations in order to understand that sometimes society's fears are not necessarily actualities—that these fears are irrational and not substantiated by reality. At the same time, the monster themselves are the result of the writer's creation; and , as such, these monsters may be fictitious in nature. After all, we probably won't encounter the Brundlefly, a part man, part human abomination, on our way to work, nor is it likely that Freddy Krueger will murder us in our dreams.

Frequently, a monster will never have the opportunity to reenter the dominant culture as the dominant culture often defines and creates its values based on a these fears. It is unlikely that psychotherapy can cure Hannibal Lector or that Sil and her alien kin can forge a peace treaty with the world. In *Grendel*, the dragon tells Grendel that he is "the brute existent by which the [Anglo-Saxons] define themselves" (Gardner 72). In other words, the Anglo Saxons can only articulate their values when they begin comparing themselves to Grendel. Once these contrasts exist, Grendel cannot reenter the culture because it would force the Anglo-Saxons to acknowledge their own monstrous qualities—and societies tend to ignore their own faults. This activity, therefore, invites students to consider how the monster's existence shapes the very culture it threatens.

Many of the fears students identify in this activity relate to the fears they will encounter when they meet the monsters in *Beowulf* and *Grendel*. According to the scop in *Beowulf*, Grendel " prowl[s] through the dark" (Beowulf 86), shows anger but "never remorse" (137), and is "malignant by nature" (137). These characteristics resemble Krueger's power in the dreamscape, the Hulk's anger issues, and Hannibal Lector's cannibalism. In both the epic and the novel, Grendel and Grendel's mom possess an ancestry associated with Cain (*Beowulf* 106 and Gardner 51). Fear of familial transgressions dictating one's destiny arises in the Hulk's story, as Bruce Banner's father changes his own DNA and thus the Hulk genetic mutation is not of his doing. Grendel's ancestry also makes him half human and half beast like the Brundlefly for the scop constantly refers to Grendel and his mother as having both animal and human characteristics. Grendel's mom also takes revenge upon the men of Heroet, an action which is solely a man's responsibility. According to the Anglo-Saxons, a woman should "weave peace" (*Beowulf* 1942). She transgresses the role of femininity, much like Sil from Species, who uses her feminine wiles to kill the men with whom she mates. The dragon seems nearly indestructible as it kills Beowulf, the society's hero, just as the Terminator, Freddy Kruger or JAWS appears to be—after all, each of these monsters enjoy revenge in a series of sequels. Gardner's Grendel at first desires a relationship with the Anglo-Saxons [(*Mercy!Peace! (50*)], but once rejected, he chooses to terrorize the Danes as long as he lives. This change from good to bad resembles the transformation of Darth Vader. These connections are only a few of the many observations students make as they proceed through the inquiry.

Not only do the monsters in this activity prepare students for the fears they will encounter with the texts, the activity also

provides students with what Hillocks calls procedural knowledge (Hillocks 1995). This knowledge teaches students how to approach a monster in any text whether it be from popular culture or the canon—identify the fears that the monster represents, determine whether these fears are real or imagined, and then what values these fears threaten. And students will need to rely upon this procedure as seniors when they meet these potential monsters: Meursault from *The Stranger*, Gregor from *Metamorphosis*, Goneril and Regan from *King Lear*.

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