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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* 94.2 (SPRING 2007)

RON FORTUNE AND JANICE NEULEIB

A common theme running through the essays collected in this issue of the *Bulletin* focuses on the relationship between student needs and the pedagogies teachers at all grade levels develop to transform needs into new knowledge and new abilities. The range and complexity of the needs addressed in these essays only begin to suggest the magnitude of the task teachers in English classrooms deal with on a daily basis. As impressive as the teachers writing here are when responding to the needs they encounter in their classrooms with intelligence and ingenuity, they are most inspiring in the quiet sense of celebration noticeable in their reactions to the changes they see their students undergoing.

Douglas Fisher and Nancy Frey focus their discussion on a student who seems completely indifferent to the learning

opportunities a classroom provides. At the outset of the experience recorded in the case study they describe, the student involved would seem to have to take a step or two forward to become a reluctant learner. Yet, the essay chronicles a remarkable transformation in which the student moves from seeing limited attendance and class participation as conditions of his parole to recognizing a genuine value in the work the course required of him. At the heart of the transformation is a teacher who combines a concern for the student as a person with purposeful instruction. In the end, not only does the student learn to value his experiences in the classroom, but just as importantly, the changes reflected in his experiences significantly improved his ability to read and write.

Sarah M. Lushia describes a series of writing prompts that she developed using the picture books of Chicago author W. Nikola-Lisa. Of particular interest in the approach she describes is its attention to a diversity of cognitive orientations students bring to our classes. Recognizing that all students don't learn in the same way, the discussion explores using the visual features of a text as a way of providing students with an alternative avenue into critical reading. Again, the essay exhibits a sensitivity to who students are and what they bring to the classroom as ways of helping them find a way into reading that means something to them and that can offer a foundation for their future learning.

Edwina Jordan's essay describes her experiences as an instructor in an Upward Bound program in Peoria, which is dedicated to helping high school sophomores and juniors with low self-esteem and motivation realize their potential to become more successful in their academic work and in their lives beyond the classroom. Here again, the discussion details a range of imaginative and student-centered pedagogies used to bring them to a level of accomplishment few thought possible

at program's outset. The program combines classroom studies and field trips to generate a level of student engagement that genuinely lays a foundation for future success.

Richard Holinger writes about working at the other end of the educational spectrum as he details his approach to engaging top-ranked students in a junior-level high school honors course. Although the students in the class are committed to succeeding academically, their resistance to some of the material covered in class amounts to downright hostility. Specifically, they challenge having to read a slew of texts that are standard in such a course. The essay describes a pedagogy that, rather than ignoring or dismissing it, uses this hostility to engage students in the process of literary critique and helps them realize the purposes of the course in spite of their initial resistance to the novels scheduled for study in the course syllabus.

The initial audience for Carey Applegate's discussion consisted of teachers attending the fall 2006 conference of Illinois Association of Teachers of English. They attended a session during which she explained a pedagogy designed to help students learn "to play and to think about things in nontraditional ways." The essay describes a cubing exercise developed by a NASA engineer and examines its application in a high school English classroom. The exercise fosters the ability to view problems from a range of perspectives and in its classroom use can help students reflect more deeply on the subjects about which they read and write. Again, the key to learning in the pedagogy presented here is student engagement, but, in contrast to Holinger's approach, which surprises students into learning by taking advantage of their hostility to the material, this approach surprises students into learning by breaking habits of perception and inviting them to see things in entirely new ways.

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 10. 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 12).

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

Submission Guidelines

(See page 12 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 fifty words or fewer. (Blurbs for manuscripts with multiple

authors should total fifty 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 editor by the previous November 1.

To be considered for inclusion in the summer issue, materials must be received by the editor 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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MORE THAN INSTRUCTION: THE MOVES OF AN EXPERT ENGLISH TEACHER

DOUGLAS FISHER AND NANCY FREY

There has been a great deal of professional discussion focused on struggling adolescent readers over the past decade. As a profession, we have learned a great deal about what works and what doesn't work (e.g., Biancarosa and Snow, Graham and Perin). We know, for example, that skills and strategies are important. We also know that isolated skills instruction is not likely to result in significant gains in overall reading comprehension (Ivey and Baker). Further, we know that adolescents who find reading and writing difficult need instruction that is directly linked with their current skills and needs, rather than instruction that is based on the average ability of students in the class (Fisher, Lapp, Flood, and Moore). Similarly, we know that schoolwide approaches to literacy instruction at the middle and high school levels are promising ways to focus instruction on struggling adolescent

readers (Fisher, Frey, and Williams).

If we know all of this about instruction for struggling adolescent readers and writers, what is the problem? What is missing from the educational experiences of these students? And, most importantly, what can be done about it? To answer these questions, we will consider the experiences a struggling adolescent has with school. In this case, Gabriel has an excellent teacher who understands the needs of her students. We'll focus on Gabriel's experience, as collected in a case study over the course of ninety-one school days, and then share our thinking about the moves his teacher made, beyond instructional strategies, to ensure that Gabriel progressed in his literacy achievement.

Gabriel—Conditionally Willing to Learn

Gabriel finally joined the English class on the third day. Apparently, he had decided not to get up early for a 7:30 AM class until his probation officer informed him that this was a violation of his probation. Gabriel is considered to be "goth" by his peers. He wears black clothing with pins and stickers all over it and loves music. During the first term of his ninth grade year, he failed all of his classes and was sent to juvenile hall for a crime he committed. He returned to school a few weeks before the end of the term. When the new term started, Gabriel decided not to attend much school.

Upon his arrival to class, he was provided a writer's notebook like every one of the other thirty-one students. The class was a "required elective" designed as part of the school's initiative to address struggling readers. However, the school did not want to make it a remedial class and instead required all of their students to complete the course. The class was called Genre Writing and focused on the types of writing that comprised the high-stakes state assessment: persuasion,

summary, technical, and response to literature. The class met ninety minutes per day for one term (ninety-one days), as the school operated on a 4x4 block schedule (Canady and Rettig). In this schedule, students complete the equivalent of a year-long course in a term and then are scheduled for four new classes for the second term.

Like the majority of the students in the school, most of the students in the class read significantly below grade level (Gabriel's Analytic Reading Inventory [ARI] indicated that he read at the second grade level in English and his Gates-MacGinitie scores were 3.1 in vocabulary and 2.9 in comprehension). Students in the class spoke six different languages and 70 percent of them were English-language learners (Gabriel spoke Spanish at home with his family). Every student in the class, including Gabriel, qualified for free breakfast and lunch.

During the first session that Gabriel attended, he did not open his notebook. He sat patiently in class, behaved himself, and waited for the bell to ring. On his way out, the teacher said to him, "Thanks for coming today; I hope to see you tomorrow!" Gabriel responded, "Yeah, okay then."

The next day Gabriel did not come to school, but the following day he did. The second time Gabriel came to class, he did not participate in the required opening activity (Bell-work writing) but he did participate in the Power Writing (a timed writing activity to promote writing fluency, see Fearn and Farnan). During the three one-minute sessions, Gabriel's most fluent effort was eighteen words in a minute. He averaged three errors per sentence during this first timed writing. Importantly, these eighteen words were on topic.

Over the next week, Gabriel attended class every other day, predictably. Each day, he participated in the Power Writing, but no other writing tasks. His teacher welcomed him

each day and thanked him for joining the class at the end of each session. In addition, the teacher frequently asked Gabriel about his band and how their practices were coming along. After several weeks, Gabriel began staying after class to talk about his band, their performances, and the strife among the members.

Following the Power Writing session twenty-three days into the course, the teacher introduced the genre of summary writing. She had selected an informational text about Phineas Gage, a railroad worker who, in 1848, survived a rod shot through his head. Gabriel was very interested in this story and participated in the class discussion. At one point, he said, "That really happen to that guy? He got a thing through his head?" This was the first time Gabriel spoke in class. The teacher continued the lesson and the whole class generated a collaborative summary of the article.

Consistent with his pattern, Gabriel did not attend class the following day, but the day after that he did. Upon his early arrival (eight minutes before the bell rang), the teacher questioned him about his attendance. Gabriel responded, "my probation officer told me I can't miss two day in a row or I go to Juvie [Juvenile Hall]." Again, Gabriel did not respond in his notebook to the daily Bellwork, but did participate in the Power Writing. The summary writing for the day was done in small groups with each group being given a different selection from *The Worst-Case Scenario Survival Handbook*. Gabriel's group's section focused on what to do if attacked by a bear. He reported out for his group, wildly waving his arms and saying, "you cain't be scared, you gotta scare it away. Yeah, you see, yell and don't be scared. You gotta scare it." The group-written summary of the article was well done, but the handwriting was not Gabriel's. The teacher noted that Gabriel and the other members of the group all participated

in the discussion of the text and agreed on major points of the summary, but that other students wrote.

The following day was a Friday. As always, the teacher stood at the door and greeted each student by name as they entered and collected their writer's notebooks. To her surprise, Gabriel was walking down the hallway. This was the first time he attended school two consecutive days. Also to her surprise, Gabriel responded to his first Bellwork. The prompt read, "What would you do if you were caught in an avalanche?" Gabriel wrote about "making space to breath" and "calling help when it stoped."

On this day, students were asked to select any article from the newspaper, cut it out, and write a summary for the article. Gabriel selected a story about the Grammy Awards. When asked by the teacher about his choice, he said that he was interested because there was a picture of Sting. Gabriel read the article and wrote the following summary, "Sting whent to the Grammy. They gave awards for music the best in kinds. The show last three hours with many performances." While he used specific words from the article, he did not use any phrases or sentences from the author. While he had difficulty with the structure of his writing, it is important to note that his ideas had developed and that he was trying to communicate via written expression.

During this independent writing time, the teacher walked around the room and spoke with students individually. The teacher asked Gabriel about bands he liked but confessed that he didn't know any of the ones that Gabriel listed. The teacher then asked if Gabriel could write down a list of groups that she should learn more about, and she asked Gabriel directly for "a beginner's list of bands that you like. I need to learn more about the bands so we can talk about the music you like." She then asked Gabriel about the Ramones

(an older "punk" band). Gabriel's eyes lit up and he said, "You know the Ramones? They's old school, but cool."

Teacher Moves that Matter

Of course we could have focused on the instructional moves this teacher used with the class to develop their writing skills, and she used a number of them. We could have focused on the individualized instruction that she provided Gabriel and several of his peers, which she did on a regular basis. However, what we really noticed about the flow of this classroom were the moves that the teacher used to ensure that Gabriel was comfortable, welcomed, and able to learn. We have clustered these moves into four categories: relationships, purpose, text selection, and classroom structures.

Relationships

From greeting students at the door for every class meeting to discussing student work individually with students, it is clear that this teacher valued her relationship with her students. She made Gabriel feel welcome each time he entered the classroom, even if he didn't come to class every day. She also expressed interest in Gabriel's life and the things that he found important, such as his band. The connections she established with her students, including Gabriel, allowed her to focus her interactions on things that were of interest, to motivate her students and their writing, and to humanize the school experience.

Because she had such a good relationship with the students in her class, disruptions, rude behavior, and such were minimal. The students knew that their teacher cared about them, that they would not be harassed or embarrassed in front of peers, and that they would be treated with dignity. When asked about this in an interview at the end of the school

year, Gabriel said, "It's cool she knows me. I sent her a pic of our show and she wrote me back. She wants me to do good but doesn't call me out." Perhaps the best indicator of their mutual respect was his handwritten invitation to one of his band's shows.

Purpose

In addition to genuinely caring about her students, Gabriel's teacher was very purposeful in her interactions and assignments. Rather than use strategy after strategy, this teacher focused her instruction on key areas of student need. For example, she ensured that each student had a writing fluency goal and measured progress on the daily timed writings against that goal. While these goals were not public, students often displayed a great deal of excitement when they met a goal.

In addition, her write alouds, think alouds, and modeling were purposefully connected with the genre under investigation and the types of errors she was seeing her students make. Students clearly understood the purpose of the instruction and what was expected of them. When asked about this, Gabriel noted, "It's clear. You know what you gotta do. You know how she wants it. But it's not just like 'do it my way,' 'cuz you know she worries about us. She thinks I can go to college and study music and bands. Maybe trust? You know. You do it all 'cuz you trust her?"

Text selection

The third move regularly observed in this classroom centered on text selections. The texts used for think alouds, group work, independent reading and such were interesting and engaging. For example, after reading about Phineas Gage, students in the class were observed Googling him to find out

more. During their work on summaries, the teacher selected a highly motivating series (Worst-Case Scenario) that captured the interests of her students. During the unit on summary writing, students were engaged in small-group academic talk about the topics they were writing about. True, some of this academic talk was "one-up" stories in which they explain how someone they knew had it much worse. Regardless, these interactions were focused on the topic at hand and served to engage students, build background knowledge, and facilitate vocabulary knowledge and use.

These nontraditional texts, texts that most students had not seen and were fascinated with, served a strategic purpose. In addition to ensuring that students would want to read them to find out more, the students in this class also wanted to write in response to these texts.

Classroom structures

Unlike most English classrooms that operate day after day in a whole group format, Gabriel's classroom was structured around the idea of scaffolding. Each class period provided time for students to work with the teacher, with one another, and in isolation. Each period opened with Bellwork—a writing prompt that was connected with the content of the class. Following the Bellwork, students talked about their responses with a partner and then with the whole class. The teacher then modeled a reading or writing strategy through a think aloud. Together, the Bellwork, discussion, and think aloud lasted fifteen to twenty minutes. Students then worked in groups on specific tasks related to the purpose the teacher established with the Bellwork and think aloud, such as the summary writing task Gabriel's group completed. During this time, the teacher met with small groups to provide guided instruction. This allowed her to focus on specific needs that she

identified from her students' daily writing. These small group sessions lasted approximately twenty minutes and changed regularly. During the transitions from one group activity to another, students engaged in daily timed writings. The class ended with independent reading and writing activities aligned with purpose. These independent activities provided the teacher with information about who needed reteaching and the next steps she would need to take for instruction.

When asked about the classroom structures used in his English class, Gabriel said, "In most classes, you just gotta listen all day. We do things…we work…we write. And we meet with her and she helps us more personally. You gotta do the work or you're not ready for your meeting. It's like at work, you know, you gotta be ready when your boss calls you. She doesn't blow when someone's not ready like I would. I get twisted when someone in Verbal Diarrhea [his band] isn't ready. I try to be ready for my meeting now."

Gabriel—The Difference: Attendance, Instruction, and Motivation Play in Learning

Over the course of the school year, Gabriel's attendance improved dramatically. From the low of 50 percent during the first few weeks of the term, Gabriel ended the school year with 95 percent attendance, a rate that is consistent with students in suburban schools. This change in attendance pattern was captured by a call Gabriel made to his teacher a few weeks before the end of the term.

Gabriel was late for school and the school has a lockout policy. Once the bell rings, classroom doors are locked and students have to sit in the cafeteria for the entire period. If they miss six classes and don't make up the absences after school or on Saturday, they automatically fail the class. On the morning Gabriel was late, he used his cell phone to call

his teacher. He asked her if she'd come to lockout and get him for class. In his words, "Can you get me out of there? I'll come if you do. I ain't gonna just sit in there, I'll stay home instead." The teacher agreed to collect him from lockout so that he could participate in the class.

In addition to his change in attendance, Gabriel's achievement improved. His writing fluency increased to an average of thirty-one words per minute while the number of errors per sentence decreased to 1.8. The end-of-year Gates-MacGinitie assessment demonstrated an increase in vocabulary (from 3.1 to 5.5) and comprehension (from 2.9 to 5) and his Analytic Reading Inventory scored just below the fifth grade level.

The year that Gabriel connected with school was the year that Gabriel progressed in his achievement. It was not that he was unable to learn to read and write at increasingly sophisticated levels, it was that he had yet to trust anyone to teach him. As teachers, we need more than a pile of strategies to reach our struggling readers. We need to care about them deeply, show them that we care, plan purposeful instruction with texts that capture their interest, and trust them to learn.

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LEARNIN' WITH YOU THIS WAY: USING CHICAGO AUTHOR W. NIKOLA-LISA'S PICTURE BOOKS IN MIDDLE AND HIGH SCHOOL CLASSROOMS

SARAH M. LUSHIA

W. Nikola-Lisa is a prolific picture-book author. His interest in children's books began in the late 1970s when he took a job as an elementary school teacher. His first job was at an alternative school where he was the head teacher for grades one through six in an arts-immersion curriculum. Working in this environment soon taught Nikola-Lisa the necessity of reaching an audience of various chronological ages and learning abilities. This awareness is evident in his picture books and is part of what makes them such valuable, potential teaching tools in middle and high school classrooms.

Eventually, Nikola-Lisa moved from this teaching position to one teaching second grade in public schools. But this move did not cause him to abandon the immersion-based cur-

riculum in which he had come of age as a teacher. In the public school he continued to use this curriculum and emphasized a literature-based reading program. Because of the many years he spent teaching using this immersion-based curriculum, Nikola-Lisa was exposed to a countless number of children's books for a variety of ages, which eventually caused him to develop an interest in the picture book as an art form.

At the same time he developed this interest, Nikola-Lisa decided to leave his teaching position and go back to school himself. He applied and was accepted into National-Louis University in Chicago and moved to the city in 1986 to pursue his PhD there. At National-Louis he studied reading and Language Arts with an emphasis in children's literature. After receiving his degree, he accepted a faculty position at National-Lewis, where he still teaches.

Nikola-Lisa began, as he states on his Web site, to become "more systematic and serious" about submitting his works for publication after accepting his faculty position at National-Louis. His perseverance paid off, and in 1991 his first picture book, *Night Is Coming*, was published by Dutton. Nearly two decades later, Nikola-Lisa has twenty such books to his name.

Nikola-Lisa is also still interested in teaching youth. He pens articles for teachers about the writing process, offering them ideas and prompts to create a fun and productive learning environment in their classrooms. The full text of one such article, exploring the evolution of the tale of John Henry, titled "John Henry: Then and Now—Retelling of an African American Folk Story," can be found online at: http://www.findarticles.com/p/articles/mi_m2838/is_n1_v32/ai_20610471.

In his spare time, Nikola-Lisa travels the country doing school visits, lectures, workshops, and book signings. His presentations for young children are generally based on the

art of storytelling, frequently employing puppets to help tell tales. But Nikola-Lisa also does workshops for middle and high school children. These workshops center around the 6+1 Trait Writing model, which I've outlined below for those not familiar with it.

6+1 Trait Writing

(See Web English Teacher at http://www.webenglishteacher.com/6traits.html for more information on this type of writing as well as prompt ideas, lesson plans, and possible assessment rubrics)

1. Ideas: knowing the storyline and being able to state ideas, details or examples that are important and relevant to this storyline.
2. Organization: internal structure of the piece—does it have a beginning, middle, and end? Does the sequence of ideas and events make sense?
3. Word Choice: awareness of language and understanding that there are different ways to express oneself through language depending upon the situation.
4. Sentence Fluency: awareness of the rhythm and flow of language and the use of more complex phrase and/or sentence structures.
5. Voice: "proof" of a writer existing behind the writing. Includes elements such as style, tone, individuality, and the ability to evoke an emotional response (if appropriate for the forum).
6. Conventions: accurate use of grammar and mechanics to gain mechanical correctness.
7. Presentation: awareness of how spacing, layout, graphics, handwriting, and other visual traits help determine the effectiveness and "readability" of a text.

What I find most compelling and useful about this writing model, and what I wish to focus on here, is the seventh trait. This trait, presentation, pays special honor to visual literacy. While many schools across the nation are beginning to understand the importance of using/teaching visual literacy in classrooms, there are still many schools in which visual literacy is not utilized to its fullest capacity.

It has been estimated that nearly 80 percent of the information an average person takes in daily is provided for them visually—through TV, billboards, books, magazines, posters, road signs, the Internet, video games, and countless other visual sources. The children in our classrooms today have grown up in a highly visual culture, yet texts and instruction for children above elementary school age often are based primarily on words. Students are given unillustrated novels, textbooks that might contain an image every few pages, and notes written on the board or presented through PowerPoint projections.

Bringing images into middle and high school classrooms through such supplemental materials as picture books offers students an immediate way to connect with the material at hand. Even if they can not understand the text or the information in the text is new to them, they have spent a lifetime practicing and mastering how to read images, and therefore can immediately find their way into the text/idea through these images.

This becomes especially important in inclusive classrooms where, much like the students in Nikola-Lisa's early teaching experience, the students come to the classroom with a variety of backgrounds and abilities. Using illustrated texts to begin a conversation or activity in the classroom gives students who speak different languages and dialects, are below or above the average learning curve, or come from diverse

ethnic and cultural backgrounds a way into the lesson they might not otherwise have.

Likewise, allowing and encouraging students in middle and high school to concentrate on the seventh step of presentation allows them to use their skills in visual literacy to convey information back to you. It opens up another possibility for expression. This is especially important in the act of creative writing, where barriers such as a limited vocabulary, writing in a nonnative language, or having gifted students who might be able to think beyond the confines of their own vocabularies or words in general, might prevent students from fully expressing what they wish to say. This, in turn, may frustrate the students and prevent them from trying to explore their ideas more fully.

Below are some writing prompts that I've created based on selected Nikola-Lisa picture books that utilize the 6+1 Trait Writing model and offer a special focus on the seventh step. To encourage cooperation, group work, and oral communication, or to give those students who might not be comfortable expressing themselves in images a chance to work with someone who would prefer to express an idea in images rather than words, you might offer the opportunity for students to work in groups or pairs in addition to the opportunity to work singularly.

Sarah's 6+1 Writing Activity Prompts Based on W. Nikola-Lisa's Picture Books

Tangletalk

Write a short narrative or poem about a time when you felt you couldn't be understood because of the language or dialect you were speaking or because your tongue was all "tangled up" and preventing you from saying what you were trying to express. Pay special attention to the details, perhaps

even illustrating them, that make this moment stand out in your memory.

America: A Book of Opposites

Write and illustrate your own book of the "opposites" you see in this country. Pay special attention to which sides of these "opposites" your own life falls on, and perhaps spend some time considering what might be in the "grey area" between these opposites.

Bein' with You This Way

Write a rap, song, or poem about a time when you interacted with a person you wouldn't normally have interacted with and found yourself unexpectedly enjoying the interaction and/or learning something new. Pay special attention to the things that you saw as making you different from this person before you interacted with him or her and the things you found you had in common with him or her during and after the interaction. Provide an illustration to accompany your writing.

The Year with Grandma Moses

Compile a collection of your favorite pieces of artwork by a single artist and then write a narrative in poetry or prose to accompany the images. The narrative might focus on what you imagine the artist was trying to say and create with the artwork, it might focus on the life of the author or it might tell the story of how these images have affected your own life and/or what they mean to you.

It might be a good idea to create a classroom book from your students' works when they have finished, both to give them an even greater sense of accomplishment, and so you have examples to offer your later classes if you choose to

repeat this assignment or any assignment that focuses on visual literacy.

Below is a list of available titles by W. Nikola-Lisa. The titles I've used as a basis for the prompts above appear in bold print. For more information about W. Nikola-Lisa or to schedule an author visit, you can visit his Web site at: http://www.nikolabooks.com.

Books Available at Bookstores

1. *1, 2, 3 Thanksgiving!* Illustrated by Robin Kramer. Morton Grove: Albert Whitman, 1990. $6.95
2. *America: My Land, Your Land, Our Land*. Illustrated by multiple illustrators. New York: Lee and Low, 1997. $16.95
3. *Bein' with You This Way*. Illustrated by Michael Bryant. New York: Lee and Low, 1994. $16.95
4. *My Teacher Can Teach—Anyone!* Illustrated by Felipe Galindo. New York: Lee and Low, 2004. $16.95
5. *Setting the Turkeys Free*. Illustrated by Ken Wilson-Max. New York: Hyperion, 2004. $15.99
6. *Shake Dem Halloween Bones*. Illustrated by Mike Reed. Boston: Houghton Mifflin, 1997. $6.95
7. *Summer Sun Risin'*. Illustrated by Don Tate. New York: Lee and Low, 2002. $7.95
8. *The Year with Grandma Moses*. Selected writings and paintings by Grandma Moses. New York: Holt, 2000. $20.00
9. *To Hear the Angels Sing: A Christmas Poem*. Illustrated by Jill Weber. New York: Holiday House, 2002. $16.95

Books Available ONLY through the Author

(More info at: http://www.nikolabooks.com/booklist.html)

1. *Can You Top That?* Illustrated by Hector Viveros Lee. New York: Lee and Low, 2000. $15.95
2. *One Hole in the Road*. Illustrated by Dan Yaccarino. New York: Holt, 1996. $15.95
3. *Tangletalk*. Illustrated by Jessica Clerk. New York: Dutton, 1997. $14.99
4. *Till Year's Good End: A Calendar of Medieval Labors*. Illustrated by Christopher Manson. New York: Atheneum, 1997. $16.00

Sarah M. Lushia has a bachelor's in English from PSUNY and a master's in children's literature from ISU. She is currently working on her PhD in English Studies, also at ISU. She is a proud practitioner of geekdom and a bookworm. She has taught composition and children's literature classes at ISU, and has also conducted workshops and classes for teachers' continuing education programs in Chicago in conjunction with the Gear Up Program. Her favorite way to survive a stressful day is to read Walter the Farting Dog *books aloud to whomever she can get to go along with her to the local Barnes and Noble bookstore.*

LEARNING—A SUMMER ACADEMY IN PEORIA

EDWINA JORDAN

Against the backdrop of terrorist threats, conflicts of the Iraqi War, games of world soccer, fences for our border neighbors, temperatures in the nineties in our midwestern community, and talks of billionaires' money, students sit in desk chairs in summer and study. This scene is repeated in cities all over the United States where Upward Bound programs offer students a chance to broaden their education. The staff at this Peoria-based Upward Bound program was challenged to offer multidimensional academic subjects for the learners. As a community college instructor of literature and composition, I, in turn, challenged high school sophomores and juniors to learn new information. My pedagogical approaches were not new, but what a task I faced. I have been teaching Upward Bound summer school classes for several years, and I also tutor during the school year.

Several months before the summer academy began, the Upward Bound teachers met with students and parents to

review key items of the program handbook, which outlined the philosophy of Upward Bound and expectations of the students. A contract must be signed by the parents and the students. Students are aware that they must respect adults and other students because they are selected to be in the program. We, about ten teachers and college student aids, discussed what our plans were for the next five weeks. I had a five-week summer program that met every day with the students to produce engaging assignments. At the end of the five weeks, the teachers and students selected their best pieces for publication. "Fun" and educational assignments were important. I assigned homework, awarded grades earned, nominated a student of the week, and shared educational information. Who are these students?

Some of their likenesses are low self-esteem, attendance of schools that have low state test scores and might be on the watch list, being considered at risk when the income status of their families is a factor in selection for the academy, and being nominated for lack of motivation while having the potential to become better. The potential for becoming a better student and raising their grades in academic subjects is the difference. The students must be willing to learn how to learn, how to study, how to cooperate, how to share with others, and how to be tolerant of others. Most of the students who attend the Upward Bound program are African American but a few students are Caucasian, Hispanic, or Asian.

For the composition class, I devised these assignments to work with all the students.

- Reading "My Turn" articles from *Newsweek*—discussion and writing assignments and responses to articles.
- Reading African American literature by Frederick

Douglass, Zora Neale Hurston, Margaret Walker, Alice Walker, Langston Hughes, James Weldon Johnson, Carter G. Woodson, and Richard Wright—excerpts of poems, position statements, short stories, and biographies.

- Celebrating Juneteenth.
- Viewing the movies *Coach Carter* and *Green Card*.

I developed a series of questions that related to these movies about decision making. *Coach Carter*—sports and studying; dating. Questions: What would you do? What are the parents' roles? If you were a friend of Coach Carter, would you advise him to handle the situation differently?

A sidebar…one student who owns a copy *of Coach Carter* walked up to me one morning and said she went home and watched the movie again—she admitted that she had seen the movie several times before but she enjoyed viewing this film again.

Role playing, movie critic: What comments would you make about the movie *Coach Carter*? Is the movie realistic or unrealistic?

Another movie that I think brings a different response is *Green Card.* All summer we were hearing news clips about immigration and our border neighbors. The movie *Green Card* brought to the surface these issues: values, family, immigration reform, arts, music, science, difference, and romance. The students were movie critics again but this time I found a difference in their responses—a gap in their positive views of the idea of immigration. In discussion, we addressed several key questions: What would you do? Would you hide an illegal alien in your home? Have you thought of the parents,

students, and friends who are and know people who are illegal aliens? What are some of the reasons people want to come to the United States? We accessed online information from the Library of Congress—information on other cultures and the view of ethnic America.

- Writing poetry. I handed out a list of words that the students could select from for their poem. I even wrote a poem for them titled "Day Lady." We shared, read aloud, and edited the poems, and we laughed. Most of their poems were love poems (the jilted type), some poems were about family (a baby, a grandparent, a mom, a deceased relative, etc.). One student wanted to read her poem during an assembly. She was coaxed by the entire class to read her poem about love spurned. The students wanted to clap, but I said the best we could do to promote our approval of the poem was to snap our fingers because we had classes in other rooms around us. The students really enjoyed this form of affirmation of their peers' poetry.

  A student, Jocelynn Wright, wrote in her poem:

  Essence of Me
  I am like a book
  Full of information.
  I am like a flower,
  I grow and grow.
  I am like numbers,
  People can always count on me.

- Writing journals. Students were invited to respond to the question, what do you do in your spare time? Many of the responses consisted of play video games. We discussed what video games they played. They

were asked to then explain, if you could create a video game, what kind of game would it be? If you would add an element for a game you enjoy playing, what would your add on be? One student wrote that he would create an Upward Bound game.

Summer Perks

The college student assistant hired for the Upward Bound Academy was a wonderful support for the classroom activities. Most of the college student assistants were seniors with strong commitments to teacher education. My college student assistant exhibited a visible closeness to the students. A number of questions were asked of her that we integrated into our class discussion: Do you study all the time in college? Do you live in the dorm? Do you take math? What is your major? She also helped me score the papers. We always added a positive note on the papers that were returned to the students.

Field Trips

In addition to classroom studies, the students had options to participate in field trips—historical tour of Peoria, a medical center tour, a museum tour, a visit to a local day care center, a campus tour, and other short trips. Some of the students were invited to engineering camps and cheerleading camps. Taking advantage of these summer opportunities is the key to broadening the students' view of the community and motivating them. The young people in the Upward Bound Academy are important to our community. Some of their poems about Peoria, Illinois, were published in the end-of-the-summer publication for parents, government officials, and other community members interested in the Upward Bound program. The successes of these young people keep the Peoria

community a vibrant place to live once they have graduated from college and have returned to raise their families and share their love of learning.

Professor Edwina Jordan teaches at Illinois Central College in the English and Language Studies Department. She has published in Arizona State English Teachers Journal, New York State English Teachers Journal, Ohio State English, Florida State English Journal, *and* Teaching English in the Two Year College. *She also participated in an NEH Summer Seminar entitled "Teaching Africa" at Yale University, received an award from the American Association of University Women, and was given a Jordan Fundamental Grant. Illinois Central College also awarded her a professional development mini-grant to prepare a new course involving the online delivery of course subject matter.*

ARGUING *THE SCARLET LETTER*'S DEMISE

RICHARD HOLINGER

I'll be the first to admit my mistake. From page one, my students needed more guidance to make their way unscathed through the famous novel. I sent them off on their own, however, with only study questions to lead them through the great briar patch of Romantic symbolism. Although most of them survived, they came out on the other side bleeding and angry.

Because this essay is, in a way, a story at heart, allow me to describe the setting and characters. Geographically, our school sits an hour west of Chicago surrounded by suburbs, at least one of which could be called a city. To our single-sex parochial school offering JROTC, students generally come from Catholic families, carry respectful—and sometimes impressive—GPAs, and often brag an alumni legacy. Specifically, the class in question, English 3 Honors, includes most of the top-ranked students in the junior class. That didn't mean,

however, as I learned soon enough, they could wrestle their Proteus to a standstill without help from Athena.

Soon after delivering the assignment to read chapters one through five and respond to study questions, I heard hostility whenever the novel's title or author came up.

Over two months, the resentment grew into a boil that had to be lanced; had I asked them instead to copy word for word the entire text of *Moby-Dick*, they would gladly have chosen it over plowing again through Dimmesdale's guilt, Hester's shame, Chillingworth's revenge, and Pearl's dialogue, celebrating every turn of the pen.

Therefore, I let them vent. Their essay question on the first semester exam went something like this: "Many of you argued vociferously that you did not like Hawthorne's novel; a few admired it grudgingly. Prove to me the novel's failing—or its success—as a great work of American literature."

I never saw students race through objective questions so fearlessly in order to help me understand the book's shortcomings. Dimmesdale's misery, Hester's ignominy, Chillingworth's vindictiveness, and Pearl's tantrums paled in comparison to their feelings at having to spend hours fighting their way through the labyrinthine prose.

They ravaged nearly every aspect of the book except its cover art, beginning with the drawn-out descriptions. "The overinflated story could be compared to a walk in the park," Nick suggested. "Instead of simply walking through the park, every blade of grass is described."

Karl expressed his frustration with style, literally: "The wordiness of every sentence confuses and puts the reader into an angry frenzy because of the inability to dissect a page-long sentence with outdated, ornate words."

Michael R. offered a psychological analysis. "This novel is self-destructive for teenage readers. My thesis epitomizes

what it takes to read the book, and that is Literary Conditioning."

Brian encapsulated many of Hawthorne's weaknesses in his critique:

> Hawthorne took an intriguing storyline chock full of the necessary ingredients to make it into an exciting read (sins! deception! out-of-wedlock sexual affairs, o my!) and sucked every last drop of interest out of it. How did he perform such a feat? you ask. By his verbose use of dialogue (look at me! I'm using "VERBOSE" just thinking about it!), there is a fine line between beautiful description and absolute wordiness, and Hawthorne crossed it immediately after the first line.

Eddie set his sights on the dialogue: "When the little girls speak to each other, saying how they will throw mud at Hester and Pearl, it is just ridiculous. No girl now would say, 'Come hither and let us fling mud upon them.'"

As wordy and archaic as they thought the prose, another aspect of style frustrated them even more. Brett complained, "like most Romantic writers, Hawthorne takes symbolism and beats the reader over the head with it. There is no need to search for a hidden meaning behind a character or object; it is spelled out." Charlie offered, "the ethereal A in the sky added nothing other than to heighten the feeling of ridiculousness."

All this description naturally leads to plot block. Michael R. asserted the plot "moves as fast as a tortoise pulling a Boeing 747 on a rope. Edgar Allan Poe's plot in 'The Fall of the House of Usher' keeps the reader feeling he is covering ground, whereas in *The Scarlet Letter*, you can read for an hour and in the book, five minutes have gone by." Eric concurred: "You can only talk about adultery so much before you beat it

into the ground, but Hawthorne managed to tack on another fifty pages."

As for excitement, "One of the scarce bits of action," Michael M. found, "was Hester on the platform in the beginning, and even that is pushing it." Peter described the slow pacing as "a death of action in the text. Books like *The Da Vinci Code* sell out because of an action-packed plot. Hester trying to raise Pearl, cope with Puritan society and deal with Chillingworth lacks the fast-paced action of 'car-chase' scenes that modern audiences want."

Sam resorted to Latinate terms: "This book uses *in medias res* in a bad way. The story of Hester's affair with Dimmesdale would have been much more interesting than its aftermath. The book starts in true falling action of a normal story, but still manages to drag on for a couple hundred pages."

"I expected a duel between Chillingworth and Dimmesdale," confided Bennett, "and what happens? Dimmesdale confesses, then dies for no apparent reason. Hawthorne could have intrigued the reader, but instead gives a morality check."

A few students gave the book, if not a positive review, a grudging acceptance: Anthony acquiescing that it "was not pure evil," and Cory pointing out the "accurate depiction of the period. The Puritan time frame was not one of car crashes and bomb explosions. It was a time of contemplation. Our society needs to look at different times to see how different we have become." Sam admired the novel "as a character study; like the movie *Jarhead*, you felt like you know the characters even though nothing happens to them."

As Pudd'nhead Wilson might have said, "Taken all around," even for the students who claimed to respect one or two aspects of the book, its dirgelike prose failed to rock these teenagers. "Our modern time affects how we view this story,"

argued Nick. "We live in a 'go-go' society where if a movie does not have what we want, we change the channel."

"This story is not relevant to our time," Michael M. argued. "People don't get forced to wear letters on their clothes or get exiled from town, or at least not that much. If reading this book wasn't majorly affecting my grade, I would have tossed it aside after the first chapter."

So, to paraphrase Fitzgerald, this has been a story of the teacher after all. I should have suggested earlier that the demerits posted on the bulletin board in the school's main hallway bear a resemblance to Hester's public humiliation; that the burka worn by Middle Eastern women announce second-class citizenship; that not farther than four desks away from any student probably sits someone who feels as displaced from the school's soul as Hester lived from the town's center; that no matter how great your fame or talent, you can always do something to anger others and find yourself targeted for exclusion and death, as Salman Rushdie well knows.

I haven't yet made up my mind whether to keep *The Scarlet Letter* on next year's reading list. Maybe I should listen to the rising voices of anger and angst. After all, it's just one book among many available. Substituting Miller's *The Crucible* would work as well. Besides, I'm reminded of Jeff Daniel's character in the film *The Squid and the Whale*, a college professor and washed-up novelist who, when hearing his son had to read *A Tale of Two Cities*, declares it "minor Dickens," then complains along the lines of, "Why do high school teachers always pick the worst books by the greatest writers?"

My first English graduate course was "Hawthorne." We read every novel and story he wrote. Even then the stories drew me in more than the novels, the short works brimming with edgy characters, quirky plots, and supernatural trimmings.

The longer works, as rich and ornamental as Hester's letter, simply put, belabored what soon became obvious. If that sounds as reductive as my students' essays, well, count me in with their numbers; they've got a point.

What's the real reason our curriculum included Hawthorne's "masterpiece"? We're a college preparatory school, and the notion that colleges expect our students to be versed in the canon has survived the era of postmodern deconstruction. As much as one would like to scoff at the tradition and declare it outdated as Shirley Jackson's lottery, the sacred list, at least for now, needs its congregation's attention.

Maybe, however, I could compromise. After giving it five minutes' thought, I came up with a plan. I would drop the turgid Hawthorne and pick up the turgid Melville. After forcing my students to read *Moby Dick* outside of class, with only study questions to guide their way not through the dark woods of Puritanical theocracy and hypocrisy, but through the self-destructive, insane obsessions of hunt and destroy, I'll give them the same first semester exam essay question into which a new title has been inserted.

The following year, it'll be *The Sound and the Fury*; the year after that, *The Golden Bowl*. And so it goes.

With so many great American novels at my dispersal—and disposal—I would retire before running out of juicy, ripe lemons to squeeze annually into literary lemonade. Though my students may not have appreciated Hawthorne's luxurious syntax or his favorite theme, "the magnetic chain of humanity," they learned about writing honestly in a voice all their own.

That's worth a hundred car chases and *Da Vinci Code*s.

Richard Holinger has taught English, creative writing and film at Marmion Academy, a college prep school, in Aurora, Illinois, for

over 25 years. His poetry, short fiction, creative nonfiction, and book reviews have appeared in over a hundred literary journals, including The Southern Review, The Iowa Review, Boulevard, ACM, Witness, The Midwest Review, Other Voices, *and* The Texas Review. *Honors include a poetry fellowship from the Illinois Arts Council, and two Pushcart Prize nominations. Six years ago he began writing a weekly column for his hometown paper,* The Geneva Sun. *He facilitates several creative writing workshops in northern Illinois, including The St. Charles Writers Group that meets bimonthly. He is also a member of the "Great Books Hour" discussion group, broadcast biweekly on public access TV stations in Chicago's western suburbs. Degrees include a BA from Hartwick College, Oneonta, NY, an MA in English from Washington University, and a PhD in English with a specialty in creative writing from the University of Illinois at Chicago. He lives in Geneva with his wife and two children.*

ACTING OUT AT IATE: A WRITING PROJECT WORKSHOP

CAREY APPLEGATE

When I dragged my tub o' bear feet, fairy wings, and princess tiaras up the escalator and across the beautiful foyer at the Pere Marquette at the IATE Annual Conference in Peoria, a few people shot me odd looks. When the Writing Project workshop that I was presenting began and I asked participants to come select several accessories from the wide assortment spread out on a huge table, I saw them look around nervously, and I wondered if anybody would be making a break for the door. Fortunately, they avoided implementing exit strategies and moved, instead, to the front of the room, sifting through the masses of feather boas, cowboy hats, light-up devil ears, and other random accessories that I'd borrowed from a few of my favorite quirky friends. As they put on their costumes and walked around the room, I heard them start to tease each other and saw

them start to get into character. I gave them a few minutes to get acquainted with their new personas, and then we all sat down to do some writing.

One of the best ways that I've found to engage students is to provide them with opportunities to play and to think about things in nontraditional ways. Not only does this give us the chance to have fun in the classroom, it also helps them to develop into more creative writers and critical thinkers. The writing activity that we did that day—a cubing exercise—was actually developed by a NASA engineer in order to help people look at a subject from six different perspectives (describing, comparing, associating, analyzing, applying, and arguing). It generally works very well as a brainstorming tool to explore new topics in the writing classroom and can be adapted, as it was here, for a creative writing classroom or, in different ways, as a composition exercise or one that helps to reflect on literature.

When we began writing, we spent about five minutes on each of the following questions, freewriting and developing our characters as we went (I've included excerpts from my own writing below).

> a. What does your character look like? Describe his/her physical appearance, clothing or costume, accessories. Be as specific as possible. Feel free to go beneath the surface.
>
> > *My character is a rockstar princess who kicks badguy a$$ from here to the moon (ALICE). She is sleek and refined, like a vampire slayer, but her hair is pink, short, and funky. She wears goth girl clothes and is very, very smart—which you can see in the way she looks at you across the room. She wears ballet slippers with colorful socks—the only color that she has in her outfit outside of her tiara.*

b. Who or what is your character similar to? How is he/she different?

My character is similar to Buffy the Vampire Slayer, Xena, River (from Firefly*) and the girl from* NCIS*. She is every warrior princess from history, every goddess who strode into a room with power and light and life. She is not the princess from* Mario Brothers*, the one who has to be rescued on any given day.*

c. Who would your character date? Who would he/she hang out with? List as many ideas as possible. Don't be afraid to be creative here: include everything that comes to mind.

My character, Terra, would date the quiet warrior, the one who's overlooked until the time is needed for him to step up and take charge. He would know that she needed to rule and would support her in her actions, but he would also be able to relate to her need for strength and courage in her daily life. Her best friends would be the town rebel and the town religious girl. They provide balance for her sense of duty. She also has a younger brother who hangs around and is like the court jester.

d. Describe your character's background. Where did he/she come from? What does your character's future hold?

When she was very young, her father was attacked on the road by nasty beasties. Her mother ruled without him by her side for several years before she too was killed by peasants who were being led into battle by an evil cousin who wanted to overthrow the current rulers and take over the throne for her own. By the time Terra was sixteen, she was the queen of her domain. While uncertain in many instances, she hid

it well and became one of the best leaders in the country's history. She has dated very little because of her position, but she finds herself drawn to the quiet warrior who has always been around, a constant guard in her life.

In her future, she faces a battle with her cousin for the throne, a religious journey with her best friend (Maya, the religious one), and a happily-ever-after, but not in the traditional sense.

e. What roles does your character play in his/her life? How are those roles balanced? Does he/she have any alter egos?

She is queen, warrior, friend, lover, and (soon-to-become) mother. As queen, she is regal and aware of the rules of society, plays by them and breaks them when necessary. As warrior, she pushes forward when she is needed in order to protect her people. She is a good friend, placing her friends directly under the needs of her people. As lover, she is sweet and genuine, honest in her relationships. And as mother, she will become gentle and fun.

f. Consider your character's strengths and/or weaknesses.

Weaknesses:

Rushing in too quickly

Thinking about the societal implications of her actions when she should be responding with her heart

Strengths:

Pushing the boundaries, both politically and personally

Loving her people, engaging them in her day-to-day life (open-door policy)

As I wrote, I got more and more into my character and saw her change to fit my mood and the moment in which I was writing.

She became less "Carey" and more a separate individual over the course of the twenty-five or thirty minute writing period, and by the end of the exercise, I had all kinds of ideas about where she could lead me in my own writing.

After the writing exercise, we took a few minutes to go back through what we had written to clear up any inconsistencies or to add details. We then introduced our characters, talked about the basic personalities that had developed, and mentioned aspects of their personalities that had surprised or interested us.

Finally, the room of teachers brainstormed ways that this exercise could be used in a variety of classroom situations. Three of the activities that people came up with are as follows:

- Use the same activity and then having students switch gears to consider and then write for a rhetorical situation in which one of the characters would be their audience. How would they write for that audience? What kind of language would they use? What approaches would work? How would those elements change from character to character?
- Use the cubing exercise to analyze an issue or a subject as a way to brainstorm ideas for an upcoming essay.
- Select characters from a piece of literature that the class is studying and have students do the character analysis using the questions that we used in the creative writing exercise. Use those character analyses as a springboard for classroom discussion.

I have used this activity several times in my own classroom, with various objects, and for a variety of purposes. The first few times we did this exercise in class, I grabbed a couple of handfuls of pencils that ranged from standard-issue #2s to

grossly misshapen, "could-barely-be-called-writing-utensils" pencils. Some students reacted in relatively predictable ways, but all of them were curious about the object they found on their desks when they walked into class, and each student actively participated, most writing creative, quirky texts that they were only too happy to share with their peers.

When students insist they cannot write a full page, much less a five-page paper, this is a quick way to help them come to the realization that they *can* produce over a page (and usually much more) in a quick thirty minutes. In most situations, however, the exercise is used to unlock different perspectives on something—a pencil, a controversial topic, a belief—for the purpose of promoting discussion or prewriting.

Sometimes going outside of the box (ba dump bump) and bringing costumes, toys, or other playthings helps people—students and teachers alike—tap into their creativity in ways that a traditional class might not. And it's fun, really fun, to have the freedom to slip into another role for a day. For that hour we spent together at IATE, we became the Amazon princess, the medieval warrior, the spy, the flower-shop girl, and a slew of other characters.

The basic prompts for the cubing activity are listed below:

- Describing: Physically describe your topic. What does it look like? What color, shape, texture, size is it? Identify its parts.
- Comparing: How is your topic similar to other topics/things? How is it different?
- Associating: What other topic/thing does your topic make you think of? Can you compare it to anything else in your experience? Don't be afraid to be creative here: include everything that comes to mind.
- Analyzing: Look at your topic's components. How

are these parts related? How is it put together? Where did it come from? Where is it going?

- Applying: What can you do with your topic? What uses does it have?
- Arguing: What arguments can you make for or against your topic?

Further Reading:

Rowan, Kelly Jo. "Glossary of Instructional Strategies." 4 Sept. 2006. PlasmaLink Web Services. 12 Oct. 2006. <http://glossary.plasmalink.com/glossary.html>. 916 teaching strategies and methods, including cubing.

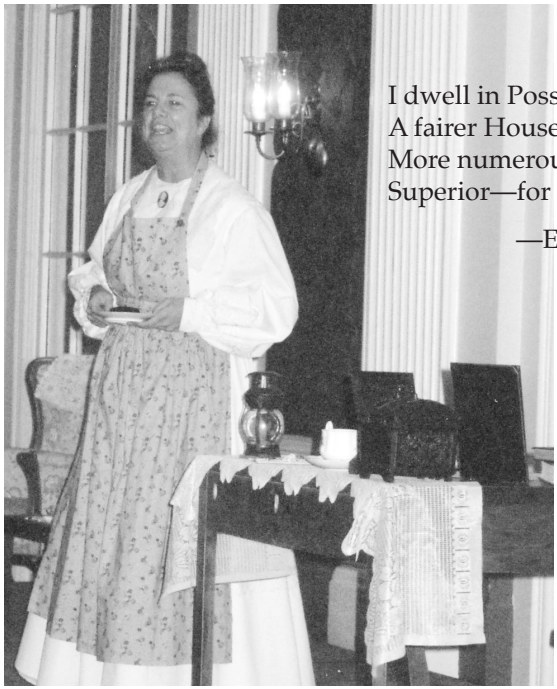
Carey Applegate taught high school in Indianola, Mississippi, and Washburn, Illinois, and was the IATE District Leader for Peoria during the 2005–2006 school year. She is currently working on her doctorate in English Studies at Illinois State University.

As seen at the 2006 IATE Conference:

paddy lynn storyacting

A professional storyteller and actress, Paddy Lynn portrays Emily Dickinson, one of America's most beloved poets. This extraordinary story provides insight into Emily's life, love, and inspiring poetry.

This is a must see for all High School Literature Classes, Libraries, Literary Clubs, Women's Groups, Museums, and all history lovers who want a glimpse into the real Emily Dickinson.



I dwell in Possibility
A fairer House than Prose
More numerous of Windows
Superior—for Doors

—Emily Dickinson

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