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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* 96.2 (SPRING 2009)

JANICE NEULEIB

This spring issue of the *Illinois English Bulletin* blends essays by the IATE fall conference presenters and by teachers discussing issues of testing, grading, formal assessment, and ethics. The first section of the *Bulletin* begins with an essay by the keynote presenter at the fall conference in Oak Brook, Tim Duggan. Those who attended the session will delight to see that Duggan has given us the text of the original songs he sang in the presentation. He also makes an argument for lively and original teaching practices, an argument that those of us who teach teachers will find useful for our classrooms. Those of us who bought his CDs can combine his voice with the text of the poems for our students.

The three essays that follow deal with the investigation of a historical character and his or her work. Martha Modena Vertreace-Doody studies a woman who worked for civil rights

at the time of the Civil War, while Gary Anderson studies the action in *Late Wife*, and Marilyn J. Hollman investigates her reactions to the works of an Illinois writer and editor. All three open new territory in the reading of fiction and nonfiction.

Tisha Ortega, Stephen Heller, and Pennie Gray bring up important issues relating to assessment. Ortega shows how to engage students in doing well on standardized tests, while Heller explains his growing professional objections to giving students credit for attendance. Gray traces her journey toward helping her students become developers of their own assessment tools. Her detailed essay is filled with great ideas and applications. Finally, Jason Dockter tackles the more and more vexed question of plagiarism, showing how students can learn from discussions of ethics rather than be penalized for rules they may not understand.

My thanks go to the authors for their intense and diligent work and to Sarah Haberstich for her constancy, long-suffering patience, and amazing skills as a copy editor and fellow editor for these essays. Her work is essential to the quality and elegance of 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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101 CONFERENCES: TAKE A CLASSIC AND MAKE IT CURRENT

Illinois Association of Teachers of English Keynote Presentation
Delivered October 17, 2008, at the Marriott Hotel,
Oak Brook, Illinois

TIM DUGGAN
NORTHEASTERN ILLINOIS UNIVERSITY

Note: The following text is adapted from a keynote speech that included a musical performance of sonnets of Shakespeare, original songs based on plays of Shakespeare, recitation of poetry from The Canterbury Tales*, and a musical performance of John Donne's "A Valediction Forbidding Mourning." References to several of the songs have been omitted, and related material has been added.*

It is nice to be with you. When teachers get together, in person or in print, we do so as much for the camaraderie we feel and the pleasure of seeing friends as for the recognition of our shared mission. "It is nice to be with you" is a daily phrase used by one of my professional mentors, Michael Roche, when he greets his students. According to Roche, who teaches criminal justice at the University of South Dakota, a simple recognition to students of the pleasantness of a classroom, of

the sanctity of our shared purpose, of the individual efforts made to come together in one room at a scheduled time can make a difference in how we feel about our work, and how our students feel about the work we require of them. But for English/language arts teachers working every day in schools across our state and our country, this opportunity to take time out from our work to renew ourselves, to share ideas, and to gain perspective, offers a more complex pleasantness. Our professional gatherings give us the opportunity to say, "It is nice to be with you," with the subtexts, "Thank you for being here" and, perhaps more importantly, "Thank you for doing what you do every day." In that sense we gather with a desire to find support for and edification of our own teaching ideas just as we come to find what works for others and to make their ideas a part of our teaching. I am happy you are out there in your schools, doing what you do.

I love our profession, and I love the people who work in it. I also love the materials with which we work. I love the literature, the writing, the media. Even though we argue about what constitutes a "text" and other professional matters, we can't escape our passion for language. I am fascinated by the new directions our field is taking, yet I also love the traditions we build upon. In our conference theme, "take a classic and make it current," we see the intersection of new and old. What may be taken as a source of conflict between those clinging to the old and those embracing the new need not be a conflict. As an example, in recognition of my feelings of the pleasantness of having this opportunity to speak and write about our work, I offer a Shakespeare poem, Sonnet 18:

> Shall I compare thee to a summer's day?
> Thou art more lovely and more temperate.
> Rough winds do shake the darling buds of May,

And summer's lease hath all too short a date.
Sometime too hot the eye of heaven shines,
And often is his gold complexion dimmed;
And every fair from fair sometime declines,
By chance or nature's changing course untrimmed;
But thy eternal summer shall not fade
Nor lose possession of that fair thou ow'st
Nor shall Death brag thou wand'rest in his shade
When in eternal lines to time thou grow'st
So long as men can breathe or eyes can see,
So long lives this, and this gives life to thee.

Who ever suffered from being offered a poem to begin a conversation, a meeting, or a reading? A classic poem like the sonnet above won't harm anyone. I teach at Northeastern Illinois University, working with secondary education majors. One of the things I tell my students is that we don't have enough poetry in our lives, which gives me license to read a short poem before beginning any other business in the class. They generally accept the premise, and they sometimes accept the poetry. We don't stop to discuss the short poems that start our classes unless the students request a discussion of the poem. What they recognize is that the sharing of the poem brings us a little closer together, even if we have difficult assignments to complete that day. What I recognize is that I can find ways to bring in an old, dusty poem and offer it as something new to enliven the reader, thus fulfilling the promise in the poem's final line, "So long lives this, and this gives life to thee." In that sense, the first step in taking a classic and making it current is taking the classic off the shelf and giving it to the reader, making that introduction for our students.

I will return to the image of making an introduction between our students and great literature of the past, but in

order to make fuller sense of our conference theme, I first want to touch upon a few related strands of thought. The first strand involves perceptions. By perceptions I mean the ability to see what we do and the materials we work with through a variety of lenses. How we perceive our intents, our methods, and our students affects our attitudes and our performance. The second strand of thought I'd like to explore juxtaposes our sense of the value of the past with what may be called the tyranny of the present. Perhaps we can examine how classics allow us to escape the present, not just as in the pleasure of escaping into a good read (although that is a valid activity), but to escape to the past in order to grow, to gain skills, and to gain perspective for living more sanely in the present. A third strand of thought to examine is *how* we spend time with literature. By this I mean what we do with literature beyond reading and how we invest time and tools in order to earn the dividends of understanding and appreciation. Finally, I'd like to explore the idea of telling stories just for the sake of telling stories. Speaking of stories, here is a story I am told is true. It happened in Sioux City, Iowa, a long time ago. It is reprinted here in verse:

> In the town of Sioux City on the western frontier
> Two households grew strong through the prosperous years
> But the feuding between them caused trouble and death
> For two star-crossed lovers, Romeo and Juliet
>
> Romeo's father raised cattle and swine
> And Juliet's pa dealt in grain and moonshine
> And he held a big party on a hot summer's night
> Where Juliet met with Romeo 'neath the balcony light
> The coyotes were howling the night birds did cry
> They held one another as if they would die
> Cast aside family hatred, it was love at first sight

And Juliet said to Romeo as she kissed him good night
My love is as wide as the prairie, my bounty is as boundless as the sea
And parting is such sweet sorrow my dear
That tomorrow if you'll arrange it I'll exchange vows with thee

In a secret ceremony the next afternoon
In the presence of a preacher they stood bride and groom
Then Juliet went home to prepare for the night
But in the streets of Sioux City, Romeo found a fight
With a gun, Juliet's cousin at Romeo took aim
But a friend stepped between them and the bullet found him
A plague on your houses! he yelled as he died
Romeo stabbed the cousin then went to Juliet's side
In Juliet's chamber 'neath the cover of night
They loved 'til their skin felt the breath of daylight
They held one another as if they would die
Then Juliet said to Romeo as she kissed him good-bye
My love is as wide as the prairie, my bounty is as boundless as the sea
And parting is such awful sorrow my dear
Get out of town quick, but please come back for me

Just moments after Romeo left her to mourn
Juliet's parents came into the room
Juliet, we have arranged for you to marry this week
She cried, NO! and her pa said, Go die in the street
All alone Juliet drank a quart of the shine
Fell into a coma, it seemed she had died
Romeo rushed back to her as soon as he heard
Killed himself by her bedside, moments later she stirred
And she said, My love is as wide as the prairie
My bounty is as boundless as the sea
And pulling the knife from his pocket she cried
Dagger here is thy sheath, husband I follow thee

In the town of Sioux City on the western frontier
Two households endured many sorrowful years
Put their feuding behind them but they'll never forget
Those two star-crossed lovers, Romeo and Juliet

A true story, so I am told. Such a song/poem challenges us to perceive the classic story in a new set of clothes. Is it such a stretch to place Romeo and Juliet in a midwestern American town in the frontier days? Such a leap allows us to imagine them living today, or to see them in the young men and women falling for each other in our midst. Perception can be a doorway, a window, or a wall. When it is a wall, we are confined by the way we have always perceived something, whether that thing be a person, a work of literature, or an institution. We cannot escape our earlier interpretation, and so we condemn the object of our perception to live in the small room we have created. Perception as a window implies that we can see other ways of understanding the object of our perception even though we have a difficult time going there in our minds. We may be able to see Romeo and Juliet in western gear, even if we would prefer that they wear Italian garb from the 14th century or from Renaissance England, at least. Perception as a doorway implies that we are willing to look actively for ways to re-create our understanding of the work.

Using perception as a doorway, we can make classics current by actively reinterpreting the stories and themes and connecting them with our times by manipulating their elements or by playing with settings, forms, etc. as theater directors have done so for years. Not all manipulations will be successful, but the act of perceiving a play as a song or a song as a play, for that matter, or seeing a work in a new context, will break us out of the perceptual chambers we may have created. Our students also may have preconceived

notions of what English classes offer, and we can challenge their perceptions by inviting them to manipulate the literature they read into different genres or by presenting the material to them in unconventional ways. If students experience a poem such as Sonnet 18 in a musical setting or, even better, if they are asked to set the poem to music themselves, or incorporate another medium, their perception of the poem will change. One advantage we have today over our teaching ancestors is the variety of tools, from digital photography to streaming video and Web-based publishing formats, students can use to develop interpretations of classic or contemporary literature. Contemporary literature itself is created in a variety of formats, from graphic novels and e-zines to traditional print formats. Classics often translate well in interpretation to contemporary formats. New movies based on Shakespeare's work continue to emerge nearly every year.

While such format shifts can be fun and enlightening, perhaps a more important perceptual shift required of us in order to "take a classic and make it current" involves how we define our students. In a recent *English Journal* article, titled "Dear Mr. Shakespeare: Please Stay out of My Middle School Class," Mike Roberts claimed that students should not read Shakespeare in middle school because they aren't ready for it. Roberts advocates a steady diet of adolescent literature until students are intellectually and emotionally ready for the complexities of Shakespeare. I couldn't disagree more. Not ready? Robert Frost once said in an interview about writing poetry that one has to start with insufficient knowledge or no one would write a poem until the age of 50. The same can be said of reading classic literature. While reading the Roberts article, I was reminded of a phone call I received recently from the 12-year-old daughter of some family friends, asking me what "come, Graymalkin" means from the text of *Macbeth*. She was writing

a play for Halloween, and she "really likes *Macbeth*," but she did not know what that phrase meant. She took it upon herself to call me because she was interested and wanted to know. Some of my most memorable experiences in the profession have come while watching children in elementary and middle school read, interpret, and perform scenes from Shakespeare with their own original music and set designs.

Not ready? I was also reminded of the son of another friend, a sixth grader, who was reading *The Odyssey* for class. His dad asked him what he thought of it, and the boy replied, "It makes me feel important." Perhaps the classic work of Homer, while a challenge to read, can convey those feelings of self-worth more so than a contemporary story. Perhaps in the struggle of reading, our students gain a feeling of importance, but it also comes, surely, from the process of transporting themselves imaginatively from our world to the world of Odysseus. As teachers we encourage those transports by making classic literature a part of our curriculum.

Beyond struggle and self-worth, there are other benefits to spending time in the past through great literature. Obvious benefits include learning something about the people and practices of the past. We do not have to bog our students down with long introductions to the context in which a medieval poem was composed or the historical events surrounding an ancient play. We can let the literature itself suggest the time period and use the literature as a springboard into student-directed exploration of the past. Student-initiated projects around the historical contexts of literature can provide differentiation in the products they produce and can help students gain individual expertise.

I believe students should spend some quality time in historical eras. Another mentor of mine, Thomas Bestul, who teaches medieval literature at the University of Illinois–

Chicago, recently told me that as medieval literature scholars retire, many universities are not rehiring the positions. Rather, they are letting the positions die or are shifting the money to new lines in contemporary literature specializations. Apparently, the demand among English majors for courses in the literature of the past is declining as the demands of the present gain prominence. This trend is also reflected at the high school level. In *Reshaping High School English,* Bruce Pirie mused that perhaps we should rename our field "cultural studies" instead of limiting it to "English" or "language arts." Cultural studies courses have great value, as do many varieties of contemporary literary studies, but I am concerned about what we will lose as the trend continues. Perhaps I'm getting old myself, but I treasure the fact that after 25 years, the opening lines of the "General Prologue" of the *Canterbury Tales* still leap to my mind every spring:

> Whan that Aprill with his shoures soote
> The droghte of March hath perced to the roote,
> And bathed every veyne in swich licour,
> Of which vertu engendred is the flour…

Quaint, I know, but the poem is one that I live with. It has become a part of me because a teacher introduced me to it and guided the relationship. No one has to make this poem current for me; its currency is in how it inhabits me today and how I spend time in the poem's company. While I enjoy Pirie's argument that our world is full of different manifestations of "text" that must be interpreted, even if those texts are image-bound or nonverbal, I have too much respect for the work of sociologists, psychologists, and other social scientists to want to tread there too heavily. We have plenty of responsibility within our special province of language arts, even in a present that redefines text and language almost continuously.

In a sense, spending time studying the classics of literature releases us from the tyranny of the present. A difficult poem from another time period demands close attention, demands systematic thinking on a deep level, and demands the patience to look up terms or reread passages over and over again in hopes of gaining some comprehension or insight. The present, with whirling images and sound bytes, interprets for us and leaves nothing to the imagination. Reduction of complex life themes to digestible "tracks" may allow us to turn our attention to the next whirling image, but it does not make those life themes and issues any less complex. I am afraid that the tyranny of contemporary society, with the pace and the panic for what is new and continuous competition for our attention, disables us from thinking deeply and experiencing deeply—something that the slow, methodical work of reading classic literature develops. The payoff for those who learn how to struggle with difficult texts is the ability to exercise greater critical thinking and to apply those skills and perspectives to the time we spend in the whirling present. Reading literature from another time period also allows us to experience the thinking of someone from another time period, which we can then bring to bear on the present.

Perhaps ironically, marrying classic literature to contemporary media provides students the outlet for expressing their gained understandings and may also encourage them to spend the necessary time reading and thinking about the work in order to develop contemporary manifestations of their understanding. If a student is to develop a Web site or a video based on a work of literature, the stakes are high for them to understand what they are presenting. Students will commit to the necessary time to study.

Inherent in any conversation about teaching literature, whether contemporary or classic, is a consideration of *how*

we spend time in the company of the text. I have already implicitly examined the processes we engage to teach literature, from the time-honored work of slogging through with dictionary in hand to incorporating media tools, twisting formats, and reinterpreting settings. Spending time in the company of literature implies that we respect what the literature has to offer and that we respect our students' developmental need to experience the literature firsthand. In *Experience and Education*, John Dewey argued that the best kind of educational experience is that which leads the learner to want to have another, similar experience, perhaps a deeper experience. Sheridan Blau claimed that teachers need to teach in a way that compels students to experience what the teacher experiences while preparing to teach, so that the students learn themselves, rather than simply witnessing their teacher's learning in the classroom. Certainly, our conferences and professional journals are among the best ways to find quality ideas for teaching literature, but I would encourage you to gauge each new teaching idea with an awareness of what it implies for the time students spend with the literature. Will that time be heavily connected to the text itself? Will it allow for reflection and expression? Will it give the students responsibility and self-direction? Will it provide an experience that leads the student to desire another experience? Once we've brought students and literature together under our guidance, we hope our students will continue the relationship in our absence.

The best tool we have is the literature itself. We can trust great literature precisely because it has survived. Poems survive because they use language in ways that continue to fascinate us. Stories survive because they are good stories and humans like good stories. When we congregate, we tell stories. We tell stories about our classrooms, knowing that

others will reply with their own tales. We love stories not only for what they teach, but for the sheer joy of experiencing vicariously the lives of others, even if those others are ancient heroes, medieval monks, or hobbits and elves. I have two young children, and, like many of you, I spend time watching DVDs they like, sometimes over and over again. My son, in particular, likes *Toy Story*, but not the movie so much as the bonus feature that shows the animators talking about the making of the film. One day I was watching the interview with John Lasseter, the director, and his colleagues. One after another of them mentioned that although they knew they were creating the first ever full-length feature film using computer animation, the elements that would ultimately make the film worth watching were story and characters, story and relationships.

Stories survive because they are stories worth telling and worth hearing, again and again. *Jane Eyre* is a story worth hearing, reading, or seeing. So is *Their Eyes Were Watching God*. *Macbeth* is a powerful play with powerful poetry and language, but it is also a powerful story worth retelling, in whatever format. As a song, *Macbeth* may come out like this:

Double, double, toil and trouble
Fire burn and cauldron bubble
Come here running on the double,
Listen to the tragedy of Macbeth

A long, long time ago in Scotland lived a King,
his name was Duncan
He survived a bloody rebellion with the help of brave
Macbeth
Duncan gave Macbeth great honors, land and title
from the losers

But Macbeth first heard that news from witches on
the heath
Macbeth, you shall be king, said the witches
Scared Macbeth and his buddy half out of their
britches

Macbeth went home and told his wife, she said, Let's
take the old king's life
Then you can be king, and I'll be queen, and won't
that be swell?
Macbeth said, Don't think I can do it, she said Mac,
there's nothin' to it
Just screw your courage to the stickin' place, and we
will not fail
That night the king came to their home to rest
Macbeth stabbed him repeatedly in the chest

Double, double…

Spoken: Then things got messy, you see, the king's son, Malcolm, he went off to England to raise and army to fight Macbeth, and he was joined there by Macbeth's great rival, Macduff. So Macbeth became king, and Lady Macbeth became queen, which she liked very much.

Then Macbeth got sick and bloody, hired thugs to kill
his buddy
'Cause the witches said his buddy's sons would be
kings
The thugs then tried to kill the son, but he lit out like
a fox on the run
And his daddy's ghost went and haunted Macbeth at
his feast
Macbeth went to the witches for more news
They said, No man of woman born shall harm you,
dude

But beware Macduff and moving trees
Macbeth said, What the heck is that supposed to
mean?
They said,

Double, double…

Macbeth killed Macduff's wife and children then he
heard an army from England
Was coming his way (with Malcolm and Macduff,
dressed like trees)
Then Macbeth's wife lost her marbles, went sleep-
walking and she babbled,
Out damned spot, out I say, and died, may she rest in
peace
Macbeth looked out and he saw the forest movin'
And he knew by that that he was losin'

And he said, Tomorrow and tomorrow and tomorrow
creeps in this petty pace
From day to day to the last syllable of recorded time
And all our yesterdays have lighted fools the way to
dusty death,
But enough of that, I'm losin' breath, it's time to fight
or die
Macduff burst in and he said, You bloody villain!
You killed my wife and my chillun!

Macbeth said, You can't hurt me Duff, although
you're lookin' rough and tough,
The witches said I shan't be harmed by a man of
woman born
Macduff said, That's a fine prediction, but I came out
by caesarian section,
Ha, ha, ha, the joke's on you, now pick up your
sword!

They fought and fought, soon Macbeth was dead
Macbeth he stabbed him then chopped off his head

Double, double…

My own practice of adapting classic literature to contemporary music and lyrics provides me with entertainment and allows me to spend more time in the company of the literature. Macbeth's story, in a sense, then, is also my story, or his story is a part of my story, who I am, who I have become. I live with these stories because I play the songs, and I believe that students should have the opportunity to take pieces of literature with them on their life journeys. If they have a passage from Chaucer they can recite 25 years from now or a favorite passage from Donne, Dickinson, or Hughes, it may well be that we helped make that possible by requiring them to show something for the time they spent together with the literature.

Finally, we must remind ourselves that the literature teaches much more than we do. Students will learn much more from Shakespeare or Homer or Twain than they learn from me. My job, our job, is to make the introduction and guide the relationship in its early stages. A deeply moving example of this idea is provided through a current endeavor called the Philoctetes Project. Inspired by Johnathan Shay's *Achilles in Vietnam* and directed by Bryan Doerries, a group of actors reads scenes from Sophocles' plays *Ajax* and *Philoctetes* to audiences of war veterans struggling with issues like post-traumatic stress disorder or traumatic brain injury. According to Doerries, "These plays intimately depict soldiers struggling with psychic wounds and chronic illnesses, and have something relevant and universal to say to soldiers today." Following the readings, the audiences, which also include

spouses and other family members of the soldiers, discuss their feelings and thoughts about what was presented. The power of Sophocles' work as illustrated by the Philoctetes Project lies in its deep parallels to current situations. In this sense, perhaps we do not have to take the classics and "make" them current, for they remain current of their own accord, and their inherent greatness is the source of their survival.

I expect that what I am saying about literature is true of all the disciplines. Students learn more from mathematics itself than from the teacher of mathematics. They learn more from biology than from the biologist, and they learn more from history than from the historian. As teachers, we simply need to exercise awareness of how we can best bring our students together with knowledge. For English teachers, developing good reading habits, providing opportunities for discussion and writing (plenty of it), and utilizing our growing arsenal of media tools all combine to establish relationships between students and literature that may last a lifetime. Broadening our perceptions of what classic literature can become, spending quality time with literature in our classrooms, and honoring the function of stories in our lives will help us in our efforts. More importantly, relationships with great literature will enhance our students' lives.

I appreciate this opportunity to share my thoughts, my stories, and my songs with you. I hope you will give yourselves permission to join the voices debating the important issues in our profession, including the function of classic literature in our curriculum and the value of contemporary cultural studies. Most of all, I wish you success in your efforts to teach your students to function more fully in their worlds and to enjoy the fruits of their learning.

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Tim Duggan teaches for the Teacher Education Department at Northeastern Illinois University and for the Center for Talent Development at Northwestern University. He has published articles in several journals, and his new book, Advanced Placement Classroom: Hamlet, *was published in 2008 by Prufrock Press. His latest musical recording is* Language Arts 201.

CANDLE & MATCHES: FOLLOWING ELIZABETH

MARTHA MODENA VERTREACE-DOODY
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Rereading Thoreau's *Walden* as I took the bus home from my college, having taught two composition classes, I found myself asking—perhaps for the first time—how many different kinds of woods there are, how I would know if I were in one—and which one—and how I would know when it was time to leave. These questions arose even stronger for me one afternoon at Michigan State University, where Robert L. Root, Jr., read from his book *Recovering Ruth: A Biographer's Tale*, which narrated his search for Ruth Douglass, whose journal he encountered in the Clarke Historical Library located at Central Michigan University where he is a professor.

Root revealed the process he used to uncover journals, newspapers, maps, and travelogues, which provided local color, depth, and outside perspective to Douglass's journal. As Root drew me deeper into his discussion, he detailed his growing commitment to finding Douglass beyond her journal.

After a while, he realized that his quest had taken on a personal significance. The more Root learned about Douglass, the deeper was his sense of personal connectedness to her and her historical period.

When Root—albeit unknown to himself—challenged me to do as he had done, I accepted his challenge, with three conditions. First, I decided to find a journal by a woman unfamiliar to me, so I could approach her life without a rolling barrel of presuppositions. Next, I sought to avoid anyone who espoused the negative, destructive "-isms" that poison the minds and hearts of so many. Finally, I would explore the first journal I encountered, irrespective of its length or literary quality. When I stumbled upon the *Diary of Mrs. Joseph Duncan (Elizabeth Caldwell Smith Duncan)* nestled under a pile of 1950s yearbooks in the Illinois Room of Prairie Archives bookstore in Springfield, I realized that in some magical way I had met my challenge.

Elizabeth Caldwell Smith Duncan was the wife of the sixth governor of Illinois, Joseph Duncan. Transcribed by her granddaughter, Elizabeth Duncan Putnam, and published in the *Journal of the Illinois State Historical Society* in 1928, Duncan's diary begins in November 1824 when she was a 16-year-old student and ends in January 1825, a few days before the death of her mother, Hannah Caldwell Rodgers. One entry exists for 1836, with regular entries from January 1841 to January 1848. Delving into the journal provided me with ideas for poems leading in hitherto unexplored directions. Root's lecture and subsequent reading resurfaced for me as a map I could follow into the wilderness with Root as my pathfinder. However, substantial differences exist between Root and me in terms of our goals. Root transcribed Douglass's journal, meticulously annotating as much of it as possible. His book details the process of his search, his desire to substantiate everything and assume

nothing he could not prove. Such guidelines were consistent with his goal—to write a solid biography with nothing omitted, nothing unproven, reflecting an allegiance to the truth and what actually happened. Thus, his research culminated in his scholarly edition of Douglass's journal, "*Time by Moments Steals Away": The 1848 Journal of Ruth Douglass*, adds to the growing body of knowledge about her life and times.

Facing the challenge of crafting my poems, I knew that, ultimately, I would have to straddle the fence between biography and fiction. Because little is known about Duncan, I would have to place her among people she had never met, experiencing circumstances I have no proof ever happened. At the same time, I had to make sure these people and events would be consistent with her times and her personality, as her diary and letters reveal her to the reader. To be true to her, I would have to immerse myself in her life and times in order to select what stories to bring forward—historical or created—following the chronology of the diary and letters. In some of my poems, Duncan responds to situations she mentions in her written materials; in others, I select events suggested by issues surrounding her.

In addition to transcribing the diary, Duncan's granddaughter included "A Brief Synopsis of the Life of a Pioneer Woman," which cited many of the tangential events I investigated. In 1836, a severe winter overtook the Midwest. Duncan makes no mention, neither in her letters nor in her journal, of a windy frigidity that froze riders to their saddles. My poem, "Sudden Change Day, December 20, 1836," seen on page 35, reflects the historical records addressing that event as well as her domestic life at that time.

Terese Svoboda, in "Nebraska and the World," published in *Prairie Schooner*, explores the nature of the obligation a poet has to facts. Using Nebraska as a metaphor for

the world, her poem and the essay that follows it open the exploration of exoticism beyond a consideration of what is weird or different. Seeing the exotic involves seeing Nebraska as the world, finding the world in whatever setting the writer describes using the imagination, so the world and Nebraska are both real and imagined.

While writing these poems, I felt a tug at both ends of the creative impulse. On one hand, I sought historical accuracy. On the other hand, I wanted to convey the emotional context of the times through Duncan's responses to the situations I had created. The emotional intensity, or the truth of the experience, takes precedence over a rigid narration of the literal details in an experience.

When I entered Duncan's life, I knew that I would eventually want to take other people with me through my poetry. Therefore, I faced the challenge of choosing the specific events I would include and those I would omit. Duncan's life spanned an era in American history that was at once exciting and troubling. Westward expansion opened up new territory for exploration and settlement at the expense of Native American nations. In the North and South, the work of African slaves laid an economic foundation, which would support the States for years to come. It is no wonder then that throughout this period, Duncan would hear of wars and rumours of wars, with the Civil War and Lincoln's assassination as pivotal events.

Several letters address the question of slavery. Her husband manumitted the slaves, whom he inherited from his father, believing that slavery left them unable to fend for themselves. My poem, "Piasa Bird, 1837," seen on page 36, alludes to his concerns. Duncan's diary and letters reveal her opposition to slavery. In letters, her daughter expressed racist sensibilities. Consequently, I wanted to include poems in

which Duncan reacted against her, but in a manner that was believable and consistent with her nature. My poem, "Invisible Light, 1859," seen on page 40, emerges from this tension, with circumstances in part created, in part actual. Because part of the Underground Railroad ran through Springfield, I posited that Duncan saw Harriet Tubman and two escaped slaves seek shelter in an abandoned barn. Knowing her daughter's opinions, Duncan diverts her attention away from the window. This incident never happened. In the spirit of historical fiction, I created the scenario as a stage whereon I could display Duncan's response to her daughter's racism.

African-American, I braced myself for the varied opinions and innuendos about slavery I would unearth as I gained access to letters written to and by Duncan. Because of the great gaps in time the diary omits, questions arise just as this reader would like answers. To obtain more evidence, I mined the documents in libraries across the Midwest, such as the Illinois History Survey at the University of Illinois, the Chicago Historical Society, Illinois State University, and Davenport Public Library in Iowa. Through the generosity of the Daughters of the American Revolution who own the Duncan House at 4 Duncan Place, in Jacksonville, Illinois, I gained access to many documents germane to my study. The Duncan House was the residence of Governor Joseph Duncan, Elizabeth Caldwell Smith Duncan, and their children.

When complete, my poems will represent a wide time frame, from the hardships that Duncan faced in the early days of her marriage to her husband, whose political career took him away from home for long periods of time, through the advent of the Civil War and its aftermath, to the untimely death of her husband and her long widowhood. Some of my poems, such as "Blacksmith of Grand Detour, 1837," seen on page 38, and "Chicago, 1852," seen on page 39, place her

within the context of groundbreaking events such as the Chicago Fire and the invention of the self-scouring plow, which greatly helped farms spread.

I had to be wary of allowing Duncan to become me, and that, somehow, I would use her experiences as a mouthpiece to voice my 21st-century attitudes. While she provided some financial assistance to abolitionist causes, she was troubled by the violence of their methods. Although she insisted that women be educated, she emphasized a woman's role within the home as paramount. While very active in various women's and church groups that focused on social action, Duncan tended to stay in the background of political action, seeing to the smooth running of domestic life within the house. On occasion, she would speak her mind, but never in competition with her husband.

As my collection continues to grow and—in the spirit of my mentor, Robert Root—as my commitment to Elizabeth Caldwell Smith Duncan increases, I take those cautions to heart.

Sudden Change Day, December 20, 1836

For days heaviness thickens overhead;
a black cloud erupts into storm
as wind pours through Elm Grove.

In an instant the bottom falls—people say
water freezes in ripples, ducks trapped where they sit;
riders encased in rime on saddles.
The wheelwright finds a spotted fawn, newborn, under hawthorn,
wrapped in a glister of ice.
I cling to my husband's waist,

his back, warm and sweaty in firelight, the cedar scent of his cloak

on his shoulders. Our three youngest whimper between lightning
cracks in thundersnow
when crashing timber sends them
hiding under quilts on our bed.

Giant deer, I tell them, felling dead trees,
bracken so you can play. Our six-year-old leads the others
back to their cots to dream of wings in a forest of leaves
and think of deer.
New morning: a turkey vulture

rides the lift of air over the Sangamon, while a heron folds its leg
in sleep where willows stand in their untroubled
reflection as the day rolls over.
What shakes us—in our trembling—
spares us for another day.
Ice breaks underfoot
at my window. A doe paws the hard ground, lifts her head;
her ears, great cones scooping
the sound of my breath as dark globes of her eyes stare
at the babe nestled at my breast.

Piasa Bird, 1837

On the bluff near the Mississippi, near Alton—the same
where a mob shoots five rifle balls
into Elijah Lovejoy who writes against slavery; Elijah,
his given name, a prophet's call to witness
and die—a painting of the Piasa Bird, cave-dweller
which fed on the Illini.
Folks tell the story over hearth pots—
remember wings thunder
over the wetline,
blood on sand. Prayer. Fasting.
Then Manitou dream-walks
with Chief Ouatoga—whispers
what's weakest skims water.

Full Harvest Moon, a flock of sparrows
starts from bracken to elms as if leaves fly
to barren branches. Beyond the four winds,
the sun stands still.
The tribe in teepees, twenty
warriors crouch in bushes, rocky fastnesses—
aim bows, quivers of poisoned arrows.
In warbonnet, the chief as sacrifice
chants his death song.

November foretells peace whose price
is silence when stones blind windows;
the minister, dead in the arms of his friend.
The Alton Observer rends pages
in grief, the press thrown from the warehouse.
Metal words of freedom
scatter on the river.
Storm-Bird sinks talons in the chief who clings
to elm roots. Wings show the underbelly,
its shadow rides the tide. Arrows free Ouatoga.
Thunderer plunges to the Mississippi
whose waves sweep ashore toxic bones.

Hatred drinks where water turns foul. My husband
sees a muddy river cresting
half-free, half-slave.
He does not hear the story
the old ones know by heart.

Blacksmith of Grand Detour, 1837

What John Deere finds—leaving
Middlebury by canal boat, lake boat,
stagecoach—the flat Midwest
does not turn for a New England plow made for light
sand, not dark richness of soil which clings to cast-iron
as tillers scrape clean the bottoms every few steps—

each furrow a reason to give up,
go back under a dying sky; forget
midnight dreams that homesteaders dip
in beeswax, travel candles, slow burning
on moccasin trails—until he forges moldboards from polished steel
of a broken saw; tests the plowshare on Crandall's farm

near Grand Detour. Piecework. Self-polishers pass
from hand to hand as dust
carries the news: how quickly land readies
for grain in its green days. At night,
dry wind awakens a rookery of crows that caw
to a Ladder Moon riddled with clouds.

My husband, governor, plans to grow more hamlets, villages, cities,
saying we eat the dirt that feeds us.
The judgment in their claws.
The land stripped raw. The hunger that food leaves.
Tell me, smithy, crafter of miracles,
when floods and fire sow dropseed, bluestem, sideoats,
will I always hear prairie tallgrasses ripen as far as I can see?

Chicago, 1852

Above New Salem, a brew of stars
cools behind mills on the Sangamon: grist, saw, carding;
the blacksmith; general stores;
stagecoach stop; the post office
where Lincoln worked; houses
where families grew roots—
all long since abandoned. Our oldest, Mary Louisa, yearns to see

a living city, a world which widens for her as she grows.
So, off to Chicago, to watch
a new shop on Lake Street
make ready for trade—P. Palmer's Dry Goods and Carpet.
Wares from the Orient, Europe—
where widows of quality, meager substance,
can go unescorted.

After July robs me of Ann Elizabeth, Hannah—one, old enough
to marry, give grandchildren
to my old age, I want Mary to taste
summer's grace. Elm Grove gathers
woolly worms, not brown
with a black stripe, but dense black—fur coats thickening for winter
when shoots you plant slough their leaves

into the softness of Earth. Seven of our children
follow you. Sprung from an odd seed batch,
pole beans wind in both directions
around posts. The first cicada sings on my window—
in three months, first frost. Darkness clots the field
as deer stand still, listening for your footsteps.
The trees move.

Invisible Light, 1859

Dusk, as if a vulture swallows the gibbous moon.
At the petticoat mirror, my Julia
scowls at prairie mud on her hemline;
summons our chambermaid.
For our trip to New York—Genin's Bazaar
for a Jenny Lind Riding Hat—staying at the St. Nicholas Hotel,
Julia wants an evening dress for the ball;

servants to keep her gowns clean,
blouses ironed.
She knows her father freed his inheritance of slaves, preferring
the sweat of unbound hands
to the fruit of chains. The mirror scatters candlelight, firelight
across oak floors
as if Elm Grove traps fireflies. She sees

three deer trail woods'-edge to a dead farmer's barn
where the tang of sour milk
clings to rotted stalls, rank hay.
I clap my hands, saying, come dance with your old mother,
no taller than spring corn.

I spin my half-grown daughter—skirts swirling—
into laughter—away from looking
through a glass darkly, from seeing in the window—face
to face—not three deer
following the North Star,

but two strong men, a woman with no fear in her eyes.
Dawn washes away the sliver
of moon. A heron, creekside, shares her catch with her shadow.
On the fainting couch, the new dress.
The maid, asleep on the floor.

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CLAUDIA EMERSON'S *LATE WIFE*: AN ABSENCE FINISHED

GARY ANDERSON
WILLIAM FREMD HIGH SCHOOL

Late Wife: Poems
Claudia Emerson
Baton Rouge: Louisiana State UP, 2005
54 pages (paperback), $16.95

One of the most satisfying literary reading experiences is a narrative told through poetry. In recent years, several excellent books of poetry, each focused on a single story, have found their way through the publishing industry's usual indifference to verse. These include Ted Kooser's The Blizzard Voices, the saga of a devastating 1888 Great Plains storm; Tyehimba Jess's Leadbelly, a biography of the great folk singer, much of it told in blank verse; and Natasha Trethewey's Native Guard, the author's own multiracial history set against the backdrop of the South's pursuit of racial integration since the Civil War (awarded the 2007 Pulitzer Prize in Poetry).

One of the best in this genre is Claudia Emerson's *Late Wife*, a complex, dramatic narrative revealed through poetry. Emerson's book, which earned the 2006 Pulitzer Prize in Poetry, is a presumably autobiographical account of the breakup of the narrator's first marriage and the beginning of her second marriage. Potential readers who simply want to read stories in paragraphs and sentences should not be put off by the idea of experiencing Emerson's compelling narration just because it is told in verse. The forms of these personal poems emerge naturally from Emerson's everyday language. She does not engage in obscurity or enjambment calisthenics. The stanza lengths and line breaks enhance the poems' meanings without drawing attention to themselves.

The book opens with "Natural History Exhibits," a poem that establishes several of the book's motifs. On the surface, this four-part poem deals with women interacting with snakes. The first section reaches into the narrator's past: "I grew up around / women who would kill any snake" (1). In the second section, the narrator describes viewing live snakes in a museum, and the final two sections deal with a snake found in the silverware drawer of "the first old house we rented" and how it disappeared within the house, foreshadowing the trouble that festers in the house and marriage (1).

In only one of these sections do we read about what is usually considered a "natural history exhibit," a museum display focused on some aspect of nature. But that is exactly Emerson's point. The home that is established early in this book and the complex marital relations that go on inside it are themselves natural history exhibits of a sort, and throughout the book, Emerson presents them as such—interesting tableaus that place her readers in a rhetorical position similar to those viewing natural history exhibits in a museum.

"Divorce Epistles," the first major section of *Late Wife*, presents the arc of a failed marriage through letters from the wife to the husband. As we read these letters, which are actually artifacts extending the natural history metaphor, Emerson's use of personal pronouns draws us deeply into the emotional life of the wife, "I became formless as a fog, crossing / the walls, formless as your breath as it rose / from your mouth to disappear in the air above you" (5).

We learn that the wife sees her life as a kind of natural history exhibit and the items surrounding her as artifacts. In "Surface Hunting," she writes about her husband's passion for, "the tangible / past you could admire, turn over / and over in your hand," items such as "[s]pearpoints, birdpoints, awls, and leaf- / shaped blades surfaced from the turned earth" which she compares to:

> the hours
>
> of my own solitude—collected,
> prized, saved alongside those
> artifacts for so long lost. (9)

The wife's attitude toward her life is revealed subtly but powerfully as Emerson describes the couple's everyday activities and other events in their lives. In "Eight Ball," for example, her view of the marriage is easily deciphered as she describes playing pool with her husband:

> It was always possible
> for you to run the table, leave me
>
> nothing. But I recall the easy
> shot you missed, and then the way

we both studied, circling—keeping
what you had left me between us. (13)

Perhaps the most powerful evocation of her emotional state occurs after a potentially dangerous but ultimately minor fire in "Chimney Fire": "But slowly the fire turned back, receded / to the familiar—rise of smoke, banked coals, / my eyes, my mouth filled with ashes" (12).

By the end of the "Divorce Epistles" section, the marriage collapses, and the "late wife" motif emerges. In "Possessions," the narrator contemplates how her former husband may have packed the belongings she wanted from her life with him, "the way / you might have handled a dead woman's possessions—when you could no / longer bear to touch them" (18). She also realizes that his "lover" may have "packed the many boxes herself, / released from secret into fury, that sick of the scent of me / in the bed, that wary of her face caught in my mirror" (18). The narrator takes a lover herself but writes to her former husband that "it ended badly, but to some relief. / I was again alone in my bed, but not / invisible as I had been to you" (20).

The final "Divorce Epistle" is "Frame," a poem that brings together the notions of natural history exhibits and a late wife as the narrator suddenly finds herself "admiring for the first / time the way the cherry you cut and planed" for the hallway mirror frame "had darkened, just as you said it would" (21). This mirror, an artifact from her earlier life, literally reflects her current state but is framed by memories that she is now able to consider peacefully.

The second section of *Late Wife* is "Breaking Up the House." The poems here deal with various ways that a sense of absence is created and accommodated in one's life. "My Grandmother's Plot in the Family Cemetery" describes a

grandmother's status as a "second wife" (a reinforcement of the "late wife" motif), how she was treated in the family, and how it is reflected in her burial plot. In the poem "Breaking Up the House," the narrator describes how her mother, "only eighteen— / her mother and father both dead," was forced to "break up the house, reduce / familiar rooms to a last order, a world / boxed and sealed" (25). Here again we see how accumulated possessions, originally meaningful to the possessors, eventually become more akin to artifacts or exhibits.

The natural history theme is explicitly enhanced in "The Audubon Collection," a poem about John James Audubon's method of first killing wild birds before preserving them in his art:

> He preferred
> to work from the dead; the certain
>
> stillness afforded the intimacy necessary
> for this much detail, the captured-
>
> alive too resigned or terrified,
> the preserved too perfect a lie. (32)

"The Audubon Collection" is followed by "The Practice Cage," another poem featuring a wild bird. While out on a morning run, the narrator discovers a hawk trapped inside a batting cage on an athletic field (ironically, "the home of the Fighting Eagles"). As she approaches the hawk, she expects it to be agitated and angry, but she finds "instead the taming of despair—his eyes / resigned to this, to me, softened somehow / as though with forgiveness" (34–35). We presume that this narrator is an extension of the wife in "Divorce Epistles," so her assumptions and realizations about the hawk's outlook while

trapped in this cage are poignant and further illuminate her attitude toward that earlier marriage. After she frees the trapped hawk, she is "elated" to know that every time she passes this cage, she will "see again in that familiar emptiness / something we had revised, an absence finished" (35). This elation suggests that "emptiness" and "absence" are not necessarily permanent; we can do something about them if we so choose.

This notion is reinforced in the next poem, "Atlas," which describes finding a rather grisly photography book picturing catastrophic injuries of Civil War survivors. The soldiers are shown with missing limbs side-by-side with photographs of them wearing crude prosthetics, "inventions of wood, leather, metal" (36). The narrator is drawn to the "shared expression" on the faces of those wearing the devices, "resolve / so sharply formed I cannot believe / they ever met another death" (37). This book of photographs is another "exhibit" involving loss or absence, if you will. Just as with the trapped hawk, however, the loss is somewhat redeemed by the realization that, with "resolve," the emptiness can be accepted with a degree of peace.

The final poem in the middle section of *Late Wife* is "Migraine: Aura and Aftermath." The narrator describes her perception during a migraine episode that "part of the world disappears" (38). She is "deceive[d]…to believe reality itself / has failed" (38). The hawk in the batting cage, the wounded Civil War soldiers, and the wife in the "Divorce Epistles" section could easily relate to this perception. In the aftermath of the migraine, however, the narrator is "relieved" and "restored to the evening of a righted room," suggesting again that even in the face of extraordinary challenges, the possibility of a worthwhile future exists (38).

In the final section of Emerson's collection, "Late Wife: Letters to Kent," the epistolary form returns, creating the

intimacy and immediacy of the "Divorce Epistles" section, this time with a decidedly different tone. The narrator is now the wife of a man whose first wife has died. The concept of "late wife" takes on two meanings, depending on two definitions of *late*: Kent's deceased wife is his "late wife," certainly, but his second, more recent wife is also his "late wife."

The natural history theme quickly returns in this section with "Artifact," a poem describing how her husband first lived among his deceased wife's possessions for three years, then gave away most of them. The narrator seems unsure of how to feel when she is told that his first wife made the quilt on the bed, "after [they] had slept already beneath its loft / and thinning, raveled pattern, as though beneath / her shadow, moving with us, that dark, that soft" (41). Other artifacts emerge in successive poems as the narrator discovers the first wife's "daybook of that last year" (44) in a box of photographs, as well as her driving gloves in "the trunk / of what had been her car" (49).

In "Old English," the couple's sheepdog dies, and the narrator buries it for her husband with the respectful realization that "[e]ven the expected, smaller death recalled / the other" (52). She then "transplant[s] sedum from the garden / to mark the place and obscure it," suggesting that she is willing to acknowledge the first wife's role in her husband's life, just as she wishes to secure her own place in it (52).

This security evolves, not surprisingly, by the accumulation of joint possessions, more artifacts of their burgeoning history together. In "Stringed Instrument Collection, " her husband begins the new hobby of crafting musical instruments, "mandolins, / mandolas, guitars—cutaways, dreadnoughts— / the upright bass" (51). He considers "them not as possessions but as guests who will survive you, pass to other hands the way they passed to yours" (51). The narrator

is pleased when the couple's voices and laughter echo in the instruments' bodies and are "for now, sustained" (51). These instruments and the "sustained" sounds within them belong solely to this husband and wife, not the earlier husband and wife.

In "Leave No Trace," the couple goes on a nature hike. The wife describes their experience as a "slow, / collective wearing away of stone" (53). She tells her husband that "the trace left that day was as intangible as what the raven's / wing leaves behind it" (53). The poem ends with her "eye fixed on [his] back on the trail just ahead" as they forge their own relationship and acknowledge its role in what might be considered natural history (53).

In the book's final poem, "Buying the Painted Turtle," the couple comes upon two young men playing roughly with a turtle; they buy the animal from its tormentors and release it back into its natural surrounding, probably saving the creature's life and definitely influencing its future. The poem and the book end on a quiet note acknowledging the importance of such gestures: "We did not talk about what we had bought— / an hour, an afternoon, a later death, / worth whatever we had to give for it" (54). In this case, the husband and wife have not purchased a possession destined to become an artifact; rather, they have made a positive contribution, together, to the flow of natural history.

Although conveyed in poetry, Claudia Emerson's *Late Wife* is as rich in character, plot, theme, and all of the familiar elements of literary craft as any novel or memoir. The graceful language and useful messages in this remarkable book will captivate its readers.

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ON THE INTIMATE EDGE: THOUGHTS ON WILLIAM MAXWELL

MARILYN J. HOLLMAN
CHICAGO AREA WRITING PROJECT

If you were to draw a diagonal line down the state of Illinois from Chicago to St. Louis, the halfway point would be somewhere in Logan County. The county seat is Lincoln, which prides itself on being the only place named for the Great Emancipator before he became President. Until the elm blight reduced it in a few months to nakedness, it was a pretty late-Victorian and turn-of-the-century town of twelve thousand inhabitants. It had coal mines but no factories of any size. "Downtown" was, and still is, the courthouse square and stores that after a block or two in every direction give way to grass and houses. Which in turn give way to dark-green or yellowing fields that stretch all the way to the edge of the sky.

From "Billie Dyer" by William Maxwell,
All the Days and Nights, *p.221*

Memory and its complications permeate the fiction of Illinois writer William Maxwell—born in Lincoln, Illinois, located between Normal and Springfield, in 1908, and died in New York City in 2000.

But I cannot remember how I came to first read Maxwell—I believe it was his novel *Time Will Darken It* which I bought for a quarter from the discard shelf in my own childhood library in Dumont, Iowa, 15 or more years ago. The book fascinated me and led me to find more of his novels and to begin championing him. Part of the attraction was the sheer easeful beauty of the prose, but more of it, I think, was my recognition of people and places and behaviors reminiscent of my own childhood, many of them behaviors—like my grandmother's slipping a tortoise hairpin into her braid more firmly or "souvenirs" which hadn't registered or that I had forgotten—the deep ruts of country lanes and still August air over cornfields during the Sunday drive out to see the crops. Two generations removed from Maxwell, novelist Donna Tartt (*The Secret History*) also discovered a shared childhood with Maxwell—she recalls the wide lawns, the shady streets, the visit to the cemetery on Sunday afternoons in her small Mississippi city. Another thread of their connection: the Illinois Central Railroad.

I suspect another pull was the child of his landscapes and my own remembered experience, that of one who is somehow on the sidelines although not precisely excluded. Ab in *Time Will Darken It* perks her small ears up at a conversation between mother and father. She is irritated when her uncle's stronger voice across the room covers their conversation. The consummate literary insider, Maxwell remained a vulnerable, curious outsider on the watch for betrayal and intimacy. At some point later in his life, much honored and loved, Maxwell told writer Charles Baxter, "After I left Illinois, I was always a tourist, wherever I was" (*Portrait* 86).

Then, too, Maxwell and I share the journey from small, rural setting, to major state university, to a more urban life. However, there the comparison ends, because Maxwell

became an inhabitant, even authority, in the world of letters. More important, perhaps, was his gift for friendship. The poet Edward Hirsch, himself from Illinois, says of him, "He seems never to have resisted a generous impulse" (*Portrait* 194).

Maxwell attended the University of Illinois (U of I), then Harvard for an MA, returned to teach at the U of I, but by the mid-30s published his first novel and began his 40-year-long "second" job as fiction editor for the *New Yorker*. Arguably, in the latter job, he influenced American fiction in the 20th century more than anyone. John Updike, John Cheever, J. D. Salinger, Eudora Welty, and Sylvia Ashton Warner are on the list of writers he worked with—they speak, and spoke, highly of his skills but equally of his tact and his desire to forward the interests of the work. He was generous with their worlds as he is with the one he creates for us. But, no one reports he minced words about a piece of writing in the interests of a false kindness.

"Billie Dyer," (its introduction heads this essay) is a late story, from 1989, and it shows us that Maxwell never left behind the place and people of his first 14 years. However, this story also highlights the continuing reflection and sensitivity he brought to the life and moral landscape of Lincoln, Illinois.

Billie Dyer, Dr. William Dyer, a prominent physician, was a real person, son of Harriet, one of the African American women who worked for Maxwell's family. In two stories, this and one other about Dyer's mother, the Maxwell narrator (pretty clearly the author) demonstrates how time and change enlarge understanding and enrich the human spirit, even one already so in tune and generous as his. In those two stories, the reader sees Harriet and daughter Thelma with his mother, anew. Maxwell explained, "I tried…to see my mother as an adult would have. Allowing her to be less than perfect…" (*Portrait* 203).

Of all the things to like about this opening paragraph to "Billie Dyer," not the least is its movement—from the theoretical "If you were to," through time and space, "all the way to the edge of the sky." I like to say you tumble through time and space, but if so, it's a pretty controlled tumble. There's a lot of Illinois between its two largest urban "centers," which are, after all, on the edge themselves. This is something easy, for those of us cozy in Chicago or its suburbs, to forget.

In this story, of all stories, he introduces Abraham Lincoln* and identifies him as the Great Emancipator, nudging us into the story of the late 20th century and a Lincoln, Illinois, that belatedly recognizes one of its heroic sons, Dyer. Next we see the non-beautiful elm "blight" and "nakedness." In one sense, the characters, especially the children, in Maxwell's novels are always "naked" in the confiding, intimacy we access to their observations, fantasies, shortcomings and dreams. Here's a passage from *They Came Like Swallows*:

> Bunny drew his knees under him and looked out. The room was reflected in the window pane. He could see nothing until he pulled the curtain behind his head. Outside it was quite dark, as his mother said. Light from the Koenig's window fell across their walk, across the corner of their cistern. If he were in the garden now, with a flashlight, he could see insects crawling through the cold grass…. The curtain slipped back in place. Once more he could see nothing but the reflections of the room. The night outside (and all that was in it) was shut away from him like those marvelous circus animals in wagons from which the sides had not been removed. (49)

These children—you can think of them as one—are simultaneously intensely interior, self-conscious in all senses

of the words, *and* intensely curious and focused outward. Most readers, I suspect, will see Bunny as a stand in for Maxwell. Another writer said of him—no child like the ones in his books could become anything else BUT a writer. In his introduction to a collection of literary studies, *The Outermost Dream*, Maxwell writes of himself, "I can never get enough of knowing about other people's lives. It is why, when I open the morning's newspaper, I turn first to the obituary page, hoping for more than the end of the story" (ix).

In novel after novel, we meet this interesting, alert child who turns to his mother, as "though she's the sun." Then she dies. Maxwell was ten when his mother died suddenly in the influenza epidemic just after WWI. Because this loss occurs in novels throughout his writing career, I'm tempted to say that Maxwell never really "got over it." Of course that implies that some people *do* "get over it," which is naïve. An adult version of that child comes to understand in one story that "my father really was a good father," and, in an earlier novel—I'm tempted to say "version"—there is narration, without interpretation, of the tearing grief of the husband who paces relentlessly through the house after the fateful phone call, over and over again, hand firmly on the shoulder of the ten-year-old son.

Understanding the older brother may have come harder. But, a short story published in 1965 lets us in on a meeting of brothers in a Chicago hotel for dinner. The younger is a painter in New York, newly married to a beautiful, young woman (Maxwell's wife was both a painter and exceptionally beautiful), the elder is a successful businessman still back home in Lincoln. I feel uncomfortable as I read that story—as though I'm not supposed to be here after all!—and at the end, the younger brother, who I've been "behind" all the way, looks down and sees his brother's gloved, artificial hand. I

gulped. Maxwell's older brother lost his leg above the knee when William was just a baby.

Reading these books and stories as I did—whenever and however I felt like it—makes me think that randomness can be a virtue. By the time I read that Chicago story—"A Game of Chess"—I knew quite a bit about the fictional world and the, supposedly, "real" world of this Lincoln-born-and-bred family. When I, too, "saw" that gloved hand, my gulp was for Bunny, and I remembered him cowering under the covers the morning after his mother died, hearing the thud of brother Robert's wooden leg on the floor as he adjusted its straps. It was also a gulp for the older brother whose own losses as well as energy and carelessness, I had come to take for granted.

The thump of the wooden leg on the floor emphasizes Maxwell's lack of sentimentality even when the subject matter is so delicate and intimate and often so everyday—the inky fingers of Limey, protagonist of *The Folded Leaf*, as he listens to his U of I professor talk about Shelley or the green-and-white chintz in the bedroom that Harold occupies in *The Chateau*, a novel "starring" a young American couple, newly married, mostly set in 1948 postwar France. We also get observations like these from *Time Will Darken It*: "The sounds of an evening party breaking up are nearly always the same and nearly always beautiful" (46). I admire the different resonances of the two "nearly's." And:

> Of the literary arts, the one most practiced in Draperville was history. It was informal, and there was no reason to write it down since nothing was ever forgotten. The child born too soon after marriage…whenever his mother's name was mentioned, it was inexorably followed by some smiling reference to the date of his birth. (248)

Those last lines come from one of the many set pieces throughout Maxwell's novels and stories. They are part of a longer ladies-who-lunch narrative, and they come as close to being savage as I think Maxwell ever comes. These women playing cards with their hats on, eating cheese-and-pimento sandwiches with tomato aspic, show little mercy; they know enough never to be absent. Yet there is some tenderness when the reader winces at the tight pumps squeezed onto swollen feet. Another novelist of the Midwest, Sinclair Lewis, gives us the savageness in *Main Street*, but not any of the tenderness. Garrison Keillor perhaps comes closest to Maxwell's delicate balance of savagery and tenderness, but Keillor tends to go for the laugh. Maxwell knows to let it come, if it will.

Where does Maxwell fit into our American canon? You've likely already thought of William Faulkner with his mythical Yoknapatawpha County where characters star, return as supporting actors, die. I also thought about Updike, first published by Maxwell, and his obsession with the "Rabbit Angstrom" of small-city Pennsylvania. Among Maxwell's other writers, there is Cheever and the Connecticut suburbs of martinis, swimming pools, and adultery, as well as Salinger whose characters rarely left the Upper West Side and who also appear and reappear, find their own voices and then retreat—or die. You may think of contemporary writers who fit in here—Philip Roth and his Zuckerman, for example.

Maxwell also chronicles domestic life and the family—the breakfast table conversation, the cluster of objects left on the mother's dressing table, the china on the tea table of an English professor's drawing room. Think of Tom Perrotta, of Michael Cunningham, of Susan Minot and Sue Miller, of Richard Ford, among current novelists. In this passage from Maxwell's short story, "The Man in the Moon," notice the details of family dinner, filtered through memory as in a magic lantern show:

> Not long ago, by some slippage of the mind, I was presented with a few moments out of my early childhood. My grandfather's house, so long lived in by strangers, is ours again. The dining-room table must have several leaves in it, for there are six or eight people sitting around it. My mother is not in the cemetery but right beside me. She is talking to Granny Blinn about… about?… I don't know what about. If I turn my head I will see my grandfather at the head of the table. The windows are there and look out on the side yard. The goldfish are swimming through their castle at the bottom of the fishbowl. The door to the back parlor is there. Over the sideboard there is a painting of a watermelon and grapes. No one stops me when I get down from my chair and go out to the kitchen and ask the hired girl for a slice of raw potato. I like the greenish taste. When I come back into the dining room I go and stand beside my uncle. He finishes what he is saying and then notices that I am looking with curiosity at his glass of beer. He holds it out to me, and I take a sip and when I make a face he laughs. His left hand is resting on the white damask tablecloth. He can move his fingers. The catastrophe hasn't happened. I would have liked to linger there with them, but it was like trying to breathe underwater. I came up for air, and lose them. (260)

Then, there are earlier writers, some American, some not, who come to mind: Henry James escorting American women about Europe, Jane Austen playing whist in country houses and her successor Barbara Pym among her jumble sales and one-room "bed-sits." I add these to Maxwell's own favorites, Chekhov and Tolstoy. Prince Andrei's death attended Maxwell's own last days as friends came to read *War and Peace* aloud when he became too frail to hold that big book. One regret about dying, he said, was that one couldn't read Tolstoy again.

Of his reading, Maxwell wrote:

> Because half my professional life was spent in being an editor and editors work close to the page, obsessed with whether or not the writer has said what he meant to say, when I read for my own enjoyment I cannot—or mostly do not—read authors whose way of writing doesn't give me pleasure. But of course style is not in itself enough. *One wants blowing through it at all times the breath, the pure astonishment of life.* (*Dream* xi; emphasis mine)

For this Illinois writer, and New York sophisticate, the breath and pure astonishment began and ended here in the center of the state, in the leafy streets and houses off the courthouse square, rippling, reflecting, reminding, refracting, relentless, "stretching all the way to the edge of the sky" ("Dyer" 221).

[*]There are a number of stories about Mr. Lincoln and Lincoln, Illinois, including one in which he christened the town with watermelon juice. He visited on his lawyer's circuit, and another "circuit," Route, 66, brings folks to Mr. Lincoln and Mr. Maxwell's landscapes.

William Maxwell Works to Read with Students:

"Billy Dyer," *All the Days and Nights*. 1989.

So Long, See You Tomorrow. 1980.

"With Reference to an Incident at a Bridge," *All the Days and Nights*. 1984.

The Folded Leaf. 1945.

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HOW CAN STUDENTS BE MOTIVATED TO DO WELL ON STANDARDIZED TESTS?

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Wow! That looks like the report card of a straight-A student, doesn't it? But sadly, it is not. Those are the answers that David (names have been changed to protect the unmotivated) recently bubbled in on his standardized test. And even though David received an B in a class covering the same material, his test scores came back with the dreaded "does not meet standards" label. Why would David just bubble in all As? Because he just doesn't care. He doesn't have to pass the test, and he has no motivation to do well on it.

Unfortunately, David's teachers and school will be held accountable for his low test scores. Schools may even be closed if they don't make Adequate Yearly Progress (AYP) as part of No Child Left Behind. The challenge is how to make standardized tests a valid assessment of students' abilities when students will not put effort into doing well.

In a way, the school has failed David because they have failed to motivate him to do well on the test. He may even be recommended for remediation that he does not need, taking time and resources away from students who really do need it. David is in the group of students who could meet the standards, but it would require some effort from them and they just don't want to put the effort into it.

It is not usually the high-performing students who need motivation. They are often a group of students who will do well on standardized tests because they want to do well on every test they take. Nor does this issue pertain to very low performing students, who may have the motivation to do well, but will require intensive remediation to even pass the test.

So how do schools motivate students like David? The most obvious answer would be to make passing the standardized tests a requirement for graduation. However, the decision could have disastrous results. Indianapolis Public Schools recently made news for having one of the lowest graduation rates in the country, 30.5 percent. No doubt a factor involved in that statistic is that the students in Indiana must pass the Graduation Qualifying Exam (GQE) in order to graduate. Having to pass the test does not seem to be motivating the students. Almost 24 percent of the Indianapolis Public School class of 2007 were not able to pass the GQE (which tests ninth-grade-level material) despite having multiple chances to pass the test (Biddle). In fact, the class of 2011 will be the last class in Indiana to take the GQE. In David's school, half the students in his class would not pass if graduation were tied into standardized testing, including David himself.

In addition, Secretary of Education Margaret Spellings has issued new rules regarding graduation and testing that will go into effect in 2012 (Kingsbury). This is in response to the criticism that some schools may prefer to have low

performing students drop out of school instead of doing poorly on standardized tests that will affect the school's AYP. According to these new guidelines, a school's AYP will be evaluated both on standardized testing and how many students graduate within four years. Schools who require students to pass standardized tests in order to graduate will be facing a double whammy.

Schools are looking for other ways to motivate students to perform well on testing. The most intense areas of focus have been on increasing teachers' motivation and as well as students' motivation.

An obvious starting place would be with teachers. If teachers are more motivated to help students, maybe the students themselves will have increased motivation. It can be noted that elementary school students often want to please their teachers. Yet, this trend does not seem to continue in middle school and high school. Most of those students are not motivated to do well just because their teacher wants them to. In fact, the opposite could be true. Students could deliberately do poorly on a test in order to make their teacher look incompetent. Students in a high school in Sacramento were even accused of deliberatly failing their tests in order to make their principal look bad (Nichols).

Some school districts offer teachers monetary bonuses if their students do well on standardized tests. Teachers have mixed opinions about these bonuses. Teachers who do not teach subjects that are tested tend to be resentful because they may not receive bonuses. Yet they feel that they are also doing their part to help students succeed. Some teachers appreciate recognition for the extra work they do to prepare their students for testing.

Other teachers, such as Ms. Lopez, a teacher at PS 188 in New York City (a school that offers up to $3,000 in teacher

bonuses), feel that it doesn't change much. "We're here every day working and pushing: that's what we've been doing for years. We don't come into this for the money…" (Medina).

Giving teachers monetary incentives does appear to have a small influence on students' test scores. According to a study on teacher incentives and student performances by David Figlio and Lawrence Kenny, professors of economics at the University of Florida, students' scores have been improved by one or two percent by giving teacher bonuses (13). It was stated, however, that the most improvement was noted in schools who specifically targeted teachers to give the merit pay to and not a random distribution to all the teachers at the school. The schools that were mostly like to show a gain in test performance were poorer schools, who often had lower scores to begin with and more room for improvement. Interestingly, and perhaps not surprisingly, there was also a correlation with teacher salary. The higher the average teacher salary at a school the higher the test results tended to be.

For the most part, teacher incentives seemed to be limited to monetary bonuses. School districts have been much more creative with student incentives offering anything from increases in grades, to giving students bikes, cars, and cell phones for good performances on standardized tests.

Linden High School in California is starting a unique program this year that ties students' test performance with their grades. Students who score proficient or advanced on their standardized test will have their letter grades in English and math increased one grade. Students who already have an A in their classes will be invited to go on a class trip. Since the program was just started this year it is too early to know the results yet, but it does seem to be motivating some students.

"It's an incentive for me. I want to do well because I have a C in math," junior Ian Sunbury, 16, said. "I have a C

because I got a bad grade on one test. I think I can do well on this test and bring up my grade.… Yeah, it makes me want to do better" (Reid).

Teachers have also noticed that while in the past some students would race to finish the test as quickly as possible, students are now spending every last minute available working on the tests.

Some criticize the program saying that if the tests were tied to something the students really cared about, the school wouldn't need to bribe the students. It can be noted, however, the no one stated what that something was.

In Lansing, Michigan, students started taking the Michigan Merit Exam in 2007 ("Standardized"). Students are offered scholarship incentives up to $4, 000 for doing well on the exam. In the first year of the exam, students averaged 40 percent on the writing assessment part of this test. In 2008, the students showed a small improvement on the writing section increasing their average to 41 percent. The students' ACT scores did not change at all. Students averaged a composite score of 18.8 both in 2007 and 2008. It is possible that the scholarship incentive is only motivating the percentage of students who are college bound; the students who would be most likely to be motivated to do well on the test anyway.

Other schools have tried a wide variety of incentives for students who perform well on standardized tests. These can include pizza parties, coupons for fast food restaurants, limo rides, lunch with the principal, and time off from school. Some schools even offer raffles. Students who do well can have a chance to win a bicycle or even a car at the high school level. New York City's Education Department Officer Roland Fryer even suggested giving students cell phones (Grynbaum and Medina). Students who did well would receive a cell phone and they could get additional minutes by doing well

on future tests. His proposal did not go through due the fact that cell phone use is banned during the school day in New York City schools.

However, the largest and possibly most controversial incentive has been offering students money. Critics feel that students should not have to be bribed and that they should be intrinsically motivated to do well. Yet, giving students money seems to be having some measure of success.

In 2007, New York City schools launched the Spark program, which gives money to students who do well on the ten standardized tests they take every year. The money is donated by private organizations. In 2007, the Spark program gave out over $500,000 to 5,237 students in 58 schools. Students are enthusiastic about the program and teachers are seeing results. Students enjoy receiving a reward for academic success. They earn up to $50 a test. The money is put into a bank account that they alone have access to. Some students feel it is better to receive money than scholarships because they don't know if they are going to be attending college. It has made it more acceptable at school to be studying and to have academic success (Medina 1–2).

Some teachers who were skeptics at first are now supporters. They appreciate the change in students' attitudes. Lisa Cullen, a teacher at Middle School 302 in South Bronx, said, "I saw how it takes away the uphill battle you have trying to get students to study for tests" (Stuhldreher). She states that there is a definite increase in her students' effort and excitement.

The effort is reflected in students' test scores as well. At Middle School 302, students' English test scores improved 12 percent from the previous year. Their math scores improved by 15 percent.

Motivated by the success of the Spark program many of other school districts across the country, such as

Washington, DC's, are looking into adopting a similar incentive program.

In an ideal world, students would be intrinsically motivated to do well on tests and would not need any incentives. But the reality is that teachers and schools are being held responsible for students' performances on these tests. If students' scores were always a reflection of their knowledge and preparation for the exam then accountability would be understandable. But in a less than an ideal world where students don't always try their best, money incentives appear to have some success, both in motivating teachers and students. No doubt, in the future more schools will be looking for financial ways to motivate their students. There also may be even stranger incentives on the horizon, as schools become even more desperate to improve students' performances on standardized tests.

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ELIMINATING PARTICIPATION GRADES

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When I began my teaching career 20 years ago, I routinely included a participation grade. Whether I was unsure of my own rapport with students, or I was uncertain in terms of my expectations from curriculum, the participation grade acted as a type of buffer against any errors in the varied relationship between teacher and student. Such a grade not only rewarded students who were willing to volunteer their attention and responses in a public domain, this score also validated my own presence in front of the classroom. Indeed, I often felt that the participation was an academic thank you note to students for being more conscious in my classroom.

As I moved through my teaching career, and my confidence grew in terms of expectations of my students and their performance, I began to focus more energy on how to improve students' participation, as I was increasingly dissatisfied with *some* students participating, but not *all*. At this time I also began to question whether the participation grade actually

impacted student performance. I remember one student who, when she found out her participation grade was a C, raised her hand the next day to volunteer a response in class. After that, she returned to her silent demeanor. I also began to appreciate that genetically and culturally, some students are more prone to participate than others.

If the grade itself, then, was limited in terms of getting students to participate, I began exploring other teaching methods that would invite all students to participate. Enter Harvey Daniels, whose work with literary circles offered an accessible roadmap for students to bring their insights to the discussion table. Critics of this movement, which marked much of my work in the 1990s, cited a relatively inauthentic approach to the literary tasks—whether it's reading or writing—and that when we engage in the conversation, we do more than focus on vocabulary, or one key passage, both examples of the literary circle model.

Daniels's work, however, resided in the larger tradition of the Socratic Seminar. Arthur Applebee's *Curriculum as Conversation* announced that we actually make meaning out of our reading and writing through our conversation. Like the Great Books program, modeled at St. John's in Santa Fe, or Notre Dame's own Great Books program, the smaller group discussion finds the greatest returns in terms of student engagement. My own classrooms have featured configurations that aspire to these small group discussions, and students work within these groups for several weeks at a time. Much of the research on authentic inquiry also encourages these small groups, especially if we diversify the activities to incorporate more open-ended questions (McCann, et. al.).

Not every student, however, has the same initiative to operate within a small group; further, questions persist about whether or not a small group will actually get the essential

ideas of a text. The first time I worked with small groups was with 10th graders and *To Kill a Mockingbird*. Each day the students came into the class with a question about the reading, as well as a passage that they wanted to share. At first, I was delighted that every student was speaking, and that they felt free to ask each other questions that would never have come out in the larger class. It was especially gratifying when these questions were at the plot level; so often we assume that kids come into our classes ready to think and discuss the bigger thoughts. Still, the students went through this entire unit without once making reference to the trial scene. Their questions remained focused on Scout, Jem, and Dill. And when I interjected with questions or guidance about this seemingly separate part of the text, the room returned to its uncomfortable silence.

As my teaching career evolved, I began to realize that the participation grade had very little to do with what the student was actually getting from the class. Indeed, the participation grade itself had only ever been about me. But if I could create a classroom whereby participation was the process, not the product, then the participation grade would have more meaning. That said, there would never by a label of "participation" under the report card; rather, the activities themselves would reveal the actual process. In so doing, a particular writing or reading score reflects as much about their participation as their end result.

This past spring my freshman honors students completed a movie trailer for the book *A Tale of Two Cities*. The energy during the creation of this project was palpable—unprecedented in my work as a teacher. For their final writing assignment, students wrote on what their particular trailer purported to accomplish in terms of Dickens's use of contrasts. They were also to identify how their particular role—acting,

editing, etc—helped contribute to the contrasts and overall effect. There was no participation grade, per se, because participation was a *minimum*, a base line expectation.

What about the bread and butter of an English classroom, however? Rarely, if ever, do we get to make movie trailers, and far more common is the experience of having to read text and come in the next day and do something with that text. If I commit to the idea of not having participation grade, but *every* student participating every day, what are some activities that keep everyone involved? Below are a few that I've employed over the years:

a. Choral reading. Students turn to their neighbor, and they read aloud a passage from the text. They take turns with new paragraphs, new speakers, etc. While they read, they note a specified task, such as author tone or mood. While the room does sound like a big echo chamber, students remain surprisingly on task.

b. Pair, share, all's fair. Once students have turned to their neighbors and addressed a particularly difficult passage or task, I start calling on them randomly. Usually I begin at the front of the row and work my way down. If a student doesn't have an answer, even having discussed the idea with a classmate, I respectfully thank him, ask for forgiveness for putting him on the spot, and move on to the next student. Critics of this cringe when students are called upon without their hands up. My philosophy is that every student needs to be heard from—before the whole class—at least once every day.

c. Writing every day. Whether it's out of class or in class, and whether it's their own questions or ones I may begin the class with—if students have their own thoughts on a piece of paper, it gives them something to respond to in class. If students are able to annotate their own texts, this activity works nicely in conjunction with any reading task, for students gain experience in directly interacting with text through the written word.

d. Small group work: students compose higher order thinking skills questions. Citing the text, students write questions that do more than "tread water" or stay in the same place, but determine a greater degree of depth, per my modeling of what these questions look and sound like. Students take turns serving as the "leader" of their group on this section of the text, and their challenge is to sustain the discussion for 15–20 minutes. What helps, I have found, is to tell students I am not interested in a "performance," so there is no need to speak up just when I happen to be monitoring this particular group. Besides, I already know who likes to talk.
e. Drop off the lowest grade of a similar task. For instance, if students are writing questions every day, and their earliest versions of questions are weaker, these are dropped, as students are demonstrating growth in a particular skill.

While many students do reach meaning through the spoken word, it is also the written word that reflects the synthesized thought process. What is common to all of the activities described here is the development of a risk-taking climate. How we foster students' willingness to interpret and analyze text—without losing sight of the academic tradition that has canonized this text—is a challenging task, and if it happens, it's because the teacher has created this through a blend of activities and lessons that inculcate a level of academic rigor. I again return to one of my first years of teaching, when we were reading *The Adventures of Huckleberry Finn*, and I invited my students to understand what "slang" was by writing in their journals all the slang they could think of, and then they would share these in class. It was the only time in my career where students swore freely, and I often look at that moment with sadness. Not so much that I regret my students swearing in class—and I'm sure they have long forgotten that—but because that was the only way that I felt I could relate to students. And why did I feel that? Because I was far more

atypical as a student then many of my students were (I was someone who was "made for school"), and I didn't want to come across as someone who was condescending, or somehow disappointed that they were different from me.

Looking back, I did a greater disservice to them, and was even more patronizing, by not modeling for them the very academic principles that I aspired to as a student. Therefore, the participation grade cannot be that salve that recognizes students' attempt to meet us in academic nirvana. Rather, it must be a process that expects students to understand the tradition that they are part of. Even when students are filming a movie trailer, if they are not understanding how Dickens uses contrasts, and they see no reason why a character lives or dies, then the assignment has been nothing more than an excuse to play with a movie camera under the pretext of an English classroom.

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ASSESSMENT IN WRITING: PROGRESS, IF NOT SUCCESS

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A Reflection upon My Thinking

After grappling with the assessment of writing, do I have more questions than when I began? Indeed, I do. But perhaps the most significant thing to note is that the type of questions I have now are distinctly different from the type of questions I had at the beginning of the semester.

I began hoping that I could fairly and accurately assess the writing of my students. As I prepared to embark on teaching a new writing intensive course at Illinois Wesleyan University, my questions and concerns centered mostly on survival: getting all those papers graded as expeditiously as possible without alienating or discouraging too many students. I worried about accurately assessing my students' writing among other things. Honestly, I was hoping for some magical strategy for assessing student writing without investing so much time that I had to completely sacrifice my

out-of-school life. I was searching for a writing assessment panacea.

But now my questions and concerns have a markedly different focus. No longer do I worry about expediency or fairness in assessment; now I am concerned with full disclosure, letting my students in on my beliefs and values as they relate to writing. I am far less concerned about accuracy in assessment and more concerned with using assessment as a teaching tool. And I've come to grips with the fact that writing assessment, no matter how well crafted, is time consuming, and that will never change.

At the implied literary behest of Bob Broad (*What We Really Value: Beyond Rubrics in Teaching and Assessing Writing*), I've spent a considerable amount of time thinking about what I value in writing, and not just what I value in my students' writing, but in all writing: my own, my children's, my favorite authors'. As a reader, I've always noticed when something works for me in a writing piece and when it doesn't. I've bristled when I've read writing that clunks, and I've smiled when the words click. But it has only been during this semester that I have begun to actually define what creates those clicks and clunks. Furthermore, I have realized that this awareness of my writing values and preferences must precede any assessment I implement. In short, I must be able to articulate or label what I value before I can possibly expect my students to meet my expectations. If I can't name it, I can't claim it, as the saying goes. This semester has been about claiming what I value.

But this process of defining my values has not been easy or smooth. My path of writing assessment discovery has been littered both with struggles and epiphanies, and I'm not finished yet. One such epiphany came during a class discussion about how some rubrics place organization and mechanics at the center of writing assessment thus emphasizing the value of

these two aspects of writing. It had never previously occurred to me that, while organization and mechanics certainly matter in a writing piece, they are not what most readers value and treasure in prose. Stressing compliance with rules about writing does not produce powerful pieces of prose (Wiggins 132). When I considered this, my previously used rubrics flashed before my eyes, and I shuddered at the frequency with which I placed far too much emphasis on organization and mechanics. I was guilty as charged.

Another epiphany struck me during a more in-depth discussion of mechanics with Janice Neuleib who shared her writing/shower analogy showing that aligning the surface features of a written piece to the intended audience and purpose was like taking a shower: no one rewards you for it but it's expected nonetheless. This led me to consider my expectations of my students and recognize that my expectations were actually impeding student progress and performance. In reality, I expected my students to struggle with the surface features of their work, and I was willing to reward them (with points) for not committing surface errors. I dangled a carrot for them, hoping they would feel motivated to attend to the surface features of their writing in exchange for a few extra points. What I now realize is that this stance implied low expectations. I presupposed flaws; I assumed mechanical difficulties. And as a result, I got what I assumed I would get. By giving points for surface features, I was telling students two things: that they deserved praise for attending to surface features, and that I expected some problems—and when those problems arose, I would punish them by deducting points. It was both a carrot and a stick I wielded.

My current thinking instead places an expectation of rhetorical competency squarely upon the students as authors. No longer do I intend to bestow points for appropriate use

of surface features such as those tried and true benchmarks of spelling, punctuation, grammar, and the like. Now, I will *expect* students to be aware of their language use rather than bribing or threatening them. I have removed the carrot and replaced it with—nothing. Of course, I know I may be disappointed from time to time. My students may fall short of the mark I have set for them, but at least they will know what I expect and will hopefully endeavor to meet my expectations. On my new rubrics, I will no longer have a category for mechanics and surface features with a correlated point value. Instead, I will merely deduct points from the final grade if students do not align their surface features to the requirements of the rhetorical task. In my courses, I want students to know that attendance to appropriate surface features is assumed. It's a given and thus not rewarded.

Another shift in my thinking involves the purpose of my rubrics. I am moving toward "instructionally supportive and valid assessments" (Wiggins 131) and away from mere evaluation. I want my students to use my rubrics to supplement classroom discussions, lectures, and readings. I hope my rubrics will offer meaningful feedback that students can use to improve future writing pieces. In other words, I have shifted the purpose of my rubrics from working for *me* to working for *my students*. As I teach my gateway course next semester, I intend to begin by giving my students rubrics that I have developed for their writing assignments, but as the semester progresses, I intend to invite my students into the process of developing the rubrics. Through this collaborative effort, I hope to accomplish a number of things: I want to help my students better identify what they value in a writing piece, I want my students to understand how and why rubrics function, and I want my students to self-assess and thus become self-regulators of their own writing process (Saddler and Andrade 49).

My major work, however, has been the development of my gateway syllabus and corresponding rubrics (seen on pages 83–120). I have previously developed four syllabi for other courses, but my process for this syllabus was different. I developed this syllabus to specifically reflect my writing values. But first I had to intentionally identify those values. The work of Bob Broad was invaluable in this process. Using his research as a foundation, I created a continuum rubric which accounted for not only the actual writing piece produced by the student but also the dispositions and actions of the author himself. While I will continue to tweak and refine this continuum rubric, I am gratified by what I've done so far. Furthermore, most of my gateway syllabus is organized around five of my core writing beliefs based in part on the continuum rubric. More than any other syllabus, I find my gateway syllabus to be the most accurate and honest. I have clearly communicated what I value thus letting my students in on my assessment secrets. Until this semester, I did not realize that I had assessment secrets—values that were unarticulated but bubbling beneath the surface nonetheless. Now, I both recognize these values and attempt to articulate them to my students.

This work has been a painful process in some ways. I have struggled; I have thought and pondered; I have hypothesized and refuted. And still, I am not there. I rejoice in the progress I have made, but I know there is a long road ahead. In fact, I know that one day I'll most likely look back on my rubrics and syllabus from this gateway course and be aghast. "What was I thinking?" I may ask. But at least I was thinking and intentionally considering my assessment practices, and that will have to be good enough for now.

Works Consulted

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Weinstein, Larry. *Writing at the Threshold.* Urbana: National Council of Teachers of English, 2001.

Wiggins, Grant. "The Constant Danger of Sacrificing Validity to Reliability: Making Writing Assessment Serve Writers." *Assessing Writing* 1.1 (1994): 129–39.

Understanding the Role of Audience in Writing

Key Terms:

Author / Audience relationships:

- Monadic: The author is the audience
- Dyadic: The author is addressing a particular person; there is a relationship between the author and the audience
- Triadic: The author is one of two opponents before an audience

Moves for Invoking Audience:

- Naming Moves: Cue audience about stance to take by naming self and group affiliation (As members of the ASPCA, we believe…)
- Context Moves: Cue audience by either providing detailed information or leaving out information that the author assumes the audience knows; author makes assumptions of audience's knowledge
- Strategy Moves: Author draws on audiences' attributes, i.e., self-interest, sense of responsibility, emotions, call to action
- Response Moves: Author responds to or acknowledges audience needs or concerns

Cooper, Charles R., and Lee Odell, eds. *Evaluating Writing: The Role of Teachers' Knowledge about Text, Learning, and Culture*. Urbana: NCTE, 1999.

Free Writing: A Three-Part Exercise

1. Reflect on your conceptions of home. What comes to mind when you think of home? Perhaps this is your current home, a home of your childhood, or a more broad understanding of the concept of home.

2. Now, look at what you wrote and circle the most relevant or significant words. Discuss with a partner those words that came to mind when you wrote about this idea of home.
3. Finally, discuss this question: Is the absence of the concepts these words convey equivalent to homelessness? In other words, if you wrote the word *warmth*, is the absence of warmth the same as homelessness? (We're working toward a definition of what homelessness is and what it is not. Eventually, as the gateway course continues, students will be encouraged to refute many preconceived ideas of what homelessness is, consider the gradations of homelessness, and understand the historical context of homelessness.) Each group may share any reactions or findings.

Continuum:

Imagine that you are standing on an imaginary continuum, with the right side of the continuum representing *Strongly Agree* and the left side representing *Strongly Disagree*. React to these statements by placing yourself along the continuum based upon how strongly you agree or disagree with them.

- People who are homeless are to blame for their situation.
- Religious organizations should be allowed to represent their religious views in exchange for assistance offered to the homeless.
- There should be a limit to the amount of assistance any one homeless person receives from any one agency.
- Events in which participants pretend to be homeless for a night help raise awareness about homelessness and thus generate more resources for the homeless.
- The government should be more active in its attempt to eradicate homelessness.

- The homeless deserve our compassion, but it's up to them to remedy their own situation.
- Building more low-income housing is one effective method toward ending homelessness.
- Teaching the homeless job or literacy skills is the best way to address homelessness.
- Homelessness is a serious problem in central Illinois.

Audience Awareness:

- As you place yourselves along the continuum, notice those who are nearest you and therefore presumably share your opinion or stance. Talk briefly together about why you agree with one another.
- Now, identify those who are at the opposite end of the continuum. Try to open up a dialogue with them and attempt to both understand their position and persuade them to move toward your end of the continuum.
- Next, consider how you might address those individuals in writing: through dyadic structure (a persuasive letter, perhaps) or triadic (a speech to the chamber of commerce or an election speech for mayor). How might you write about this statement in a journal (monadic)?
- Think about those who placed themselves near you on the continuum. What moves might you use to write if they represent your audience? What moves might be more effective for those farther away from you on the continuum?
- Consider the cookie exercise we did in class last time. Think about how you discussed cookies in your groups and how some people in your group may have preferred a softer cookie while you preferred your cookies crunchy. Consider these questions:
    - How did the cookie experience relate to writing a position paper?

- Audience awareness is crucial to crafting a solid position paper. What "warning labels" might appear on the packaging of your position? In other words, what does your audience need to know about you before reading your paper?
- What do you need to explore in yourself before crafting this paper? To whom might this position most appeal?
- Certain people love oatmeal raisin cookies while others hate them. How can you engage an audience that is resistant to your ideas?

Writing Prompts

In my effort to help students stretch their thinking about topics related to homelessness, I will invite them to write in a journal in response to the readings for the class. Additionally, I will ask students to free write for the first five minutes of each class. Below, I've listed the possible topics I will use for this free write activity. I've chosen to use one word prompts in lieu of more extensive prompts so that students are able to explore ideas more freely and allow their thoughts to move in the direction that makes sense to them in light of our readings and class discussions.

- Home
- Truth
- Trust
- Scars
- Connections
- Community
- Warmth
- Fairness
- Fear
- Margins
- Health
- Decisions
- Comfort
- Pain
- Struggle
- Survival
- Addiction
- Vacuum
- Autonomy
- Sacrifice
- Independence
- Valued
- Unknown

For the Author

As the author, what do you hope to accomplish with this piece? When your audience is finished reading it, what should they remember about it?

Who is your intended audience? Be specific. Talk about whether you wrote this as a monadic, dyadic, or triadic piece.

What dispositions, beliefs, or attitudes might your intended audience possess? How did you address these beliefs or attitudes?

What questions do you have about this piece that you would like the reader to address?

For the Reader

As the reader, did the author accomplish what he or she set out to do? If the author accomplished the intended purpose, how did he/she do it? If not, what might strengthen the piece to accomplish that purpose?

At what point did you lose interest, become confused, or disengage in some way?

How well did the author address the dispositions, beliefs, or attitudes the audience might possess?

How do you respond to the questions or concerns about this piece posed by the author?

Gateway Course
Beyond the Statistics: The Face of Homelessness

Statistics 101

^600,000 families and 1.35 million children experience
homelessness in the United States.

We're not a statistic;

^Over 5 million low-income families pay half of their
income for housing.

We're human beings.

^In 2001, there were 4.7 million too *few* low-income
housing units.

I'm not homeless but I don't have much.
By the time I pay
for rent, medicine, utilities, stuff like that,
I don't usually
have enough to buy my food.

^Every day, worldwide, more than 16,000 children die
from hunger-related causes—one child every five seconds.

I don't have transportation
to get to the food pantries.

^In 2004, 11.9 percent of all U.S. households were
"food insecure" due to a lack of resources.

It was a rough winter; I didn't have any heat or hot water.
I was just lucky I didn't get sick.

Homelessness, hunger, poverty.

We fall through the cracks.
We're stuck and we have no choice but to be stuck.

I've always been a statistic, ever since I was in school,
something they put on a piece of paper and threw in a file.

We're not a number; we're human beings.
Don't look at us as statistics; look at us as human beings.
Open your hearts—a little bit.

Gateway
Beyond the Statistics: The Face of Homelessness

Catalog Description

"We fall through the cracks. We're stuck, and we have no choice but to be stuck. I've always been a statistic ever since I was in school—something they put on a piece of paper and threw in a file," ("Darby," living on the cusp of homelessness, personal interview, 2006).

What words come to mind when you consider the word homelessness? Sympathy? Anger? Frustration? Perhaps something else entirely. Join us in this gateway session as we engage in an honest exploration of biases, preconceptions, judgments, and subjectivities associated with the concept of homelessness. We will delve into homelessness within the context of communities, religious organizations, political structures, and educational systems. Using a variety of rhetorical frameworks, we will attempt to put a face to the statistics on homelessness.

Introduction

Statistics can tell us much about homelessness. For instance, according to the National Coalition for the Homeless, approximately 3.5 million people in the United States were homeless in 2007, 1.35 million of whom were children. Moreover, in 2005, the U.S. Conference of Mayors found that about 17 percent of the homeless population was comprised of single women. Another survey by the same organization found that families with children made up 33 percent of the homeless population in 2005. There is no shortage of statistics regarding the homeless or unhoused in this country. However, statistics alone cannot tell the story. In this gateway course,

we will endeavor to put a human face to the statistics. We will attempt to understand through ethnographic literature the lived experiences of those reckoning with homelessness on a daily basis. If you are looking for easy answers to end homelessness, you will not find them in this course. In fact, you very well may leave this semester with more questions than you had when you began. However, it is my hope that you leave this course better for the journey and with a deeper understanding of the complexities of homelessness. Let us begin.

Gateway Goals

- Introduce students to the process of intellectual inquiry and develop students' critical thinking skills;
- Develop students' ability to evaluate competing ideas and experiences;
- Develop students' skills in the conventions and structures of presenting knowledge in written academic and public discourse, and on strategies for effective revision;
- Engage students in learning activities that prepare them for academic life in the university.

Required Texts

Duneier, Mitchell. *Sidewalk*. New York: Farrar, 1999.*

Liebow, Elliot. *Tell Them Who I Am: The Lives of Homeless Women*. New York: Penguin, 1993.*

Anson, Chris M., Robert A. Schwegler, and Martha F. Muth. *The Longman Pocket Writer's Companion* (3rd ed.). New York: Pearson, 2009.

Your Choice: One book of your choice from the list of recommended texts about homelessness below. If you wish to use a different text, you must gain prior approval from the instructor.

**Note: The authors of these texts, in their effort to preserve the exact language of their subjects, use profanity. However, I ask that we refrain from using this profanity in our class discussions. Thank you.*

Recommended Texts: Homelessness

Gray-Garcia, Lisa. *Criminal of Poverty: Growing up in Homeless America*. San Francisco: City Lights Foundation, 2006.

Kozol, Jonathan. *Rachel and Her Children: Homeless Families in America.* New York: Random, 2006.

Liebow, Elliot. *Tally's Corner: A Study of Negro Streetcorner Men* (Rev. ed.). Lanham: Roman and Littlefield, 2003.

Seager, Stephen B. *Street Crazy: America's Mental Health Tragedy*. Redondo Beach: Westcom, 2000.

Toth, Jennifer. *The Mole People: Life in the Tunnels beneath New York City*. Chicago: Chicago Review.

Williams, Jean Calterone. *A Roof Over My Head: Homeless Women and the Shelter Industry.* Boulder: UP of Colorado, 2003.

Yankoski, Mike. *Under the Overpass: A Journey of Faith on the Streets of America*. Colorado Springs: Multnomah, 2005.

Recommended Texts: Writing

Fletcher, Ralph. *What a Writer Needs*. Portsmouth: Heinemann, 1993.

King, Stephen. *On Writing: A Memoir of the Craft.* New York: Simon, 2000.

Lamott, Anne. *Bird by Bird: Some Instructions on Writing and Life*. New York: Anchor, 1995.

O'Conner, Patricia T. *Woe Is I: The Grammarphobe's Guide to Better English in Plain English*. New York: Riverhead, 2003.

—. *Words Fail Me: What Everyone Who Writes Should Know about Writing*. New York: Harcourt, 1999.

Zinsser, William Knowlton. *On Writing Well, 30th Anniversary Edition: The Classic Guide to Writing Nonfiction*. New York: Harper, 2006.

My Beliefs about Writing

I think it only fair to inform you upfront of my own personal beliefs about writing. In fact, so central to this course are my beliefs about writing that I have chosen to organize the remainder of this syllabus around to those beliefs. While I have many beliefs about writing, I have condensed them into five core beliefs. I believe that:

- In order to become adept at the art of writing, we must write much and often, for a host of reasons and in a variety of rhetorical forms;
- Writing is a recursive, evolving, and ever-changing process;
- The most worthwhile writing moves us, as writers and readers. It moves us emotionally, physically, intellectually, or spiritually;
- There is no one right way to write.
- Good writing reflects careful thought, analysis, and awareness.

My Beliefs about Writing and How They Impact Your Work in This Course:

1. In order to become adept at the art of writing, we must write much and often, for a host of reasons and in a variety of rhetorical forms. This is a writing intensive course. Therefore, you will write and rewrite for many purposes among them: for personal reflection, to explore new concepts, to learn new information, to persuade others, to compare and contrast information. Below I've listed the anticipated writing assignments you will complete this semester and the rationale for each assignment.

Journal (50 points): After each assigned reading, you will write a one to three paragraph response in which you react

to the content of the reading. These responses are personal and may be shared or kept private but must be collected in a notebook of some sort. Besides responses to the readings, you may wish to use this journal as a way of documenting questions you want to bring up in class. *You must bring this journal with you to class each day*. We will use your journal responses as points of departure for our class discussions. You may find this journal useful as you compose your more formal pieces of writing and work to articulate your ideas. Additionally, we will write at the beginning of each class period for five to ten minutes, and you will collect these class writings in this journal as well.

Rationale: It is my belief that by writing in an informal manner, you will begin to engage in the act of discovering your thoughts and beliefs on the topic of homelessness. In fact, many writers look back on what they have written and say to themselves, "I didn't know I thought that." It is my sincerest hope that you use the journal writing this semester to clarify your own thoughts and explore complex issues as they relate to homelessness. By writing informally on a regular basis, you will begin to realize that the act of writing is *the act of discovery and that writing work is identity work.*

Interview (50 points): Develop a five to seven question survey regarding homelessness, poverty, and/or addiction. Choose your questions wisely: ask questions that will elicit responses about which you are truly interested. Then, interview two of your contemporaries and two people who are at least one generation older than you (30–35 years older). Use the same questions for both sets of interviews. Following the interviews, write a three to five page summary of the responses and your reaction to your findings. As you frame your reaction, consider these questions: What surprised you?

What confirmed what you already suspected? Did you agree or disagree with your interviewee's responses? How might you use this information in future writing projects? What role, if any, did age play in the responses?

Rationale: True scholarly inquiry requires us to take the perspective of others and to consider the validity of others' arguments from their unique point of view. We must examine the context in which a viewpoint was formulated, the personal experiences which inform that viewpoint, and the subsequent personal logic of the point of view. By examining others' perspectives, we become better equipped to refute flawed arguments or more clearly define and articulate our own perspective.

Critical Response to Scholarly Literature (50 points): You will choose a peer-reviewed research article from a reputable journal that focuses on issues of interest to you regarding homelessness, poverty, addiction, or another related topic. After studying the article, you will write a brief, one page Critical Response to the article in which you react to the content. Your Critical Response is *not* a summary of the article; it is a reaction to the validity of the content and the stance of the author. You will hand in the journal article with the Critical Response.

Rationale: The faculty of IWU expects students to grapple with wide-ranging intellectual topics in a sophisticated manner. In order to do this, students must first be able to critically read scholarly literature, and then formulate and articulate a response to that literature. Thus, the Critical Response assignment requires you to critically read and respond to scholarly literature. The one-page limit requires you to prioritize your comments and write succinctly. Refer to the rubric for further assessment details.

Formal Papers (475 points total): You will write three formal papers and one paper written in any rhetorical form you chose. At least three of these papers will go through the revision process at least once and most likely many more times:

> ***Position Paper (100 points):*** Using homelessness as the broad topic, take a position on some aspect of this issue and defend it. Here, do not simply state that you think homelessness is bad, or wrong, or an outrage. We all agree that homelessness is typically considered a bad thing. And certainly do not say that you do not believe in homelessness. Saying you do not believe in homelessness is the equivalent of saying that it does not exist, just as the tooth fairy does not exist. Instead, take a position on some aspect of the homelessness issue and justify that position. Some possible topics might be: whether it is wise to involve the government in providing assistance or intervention to remedy the issue; whether religious organizations should be allowed to represent their religious views in exchange for assistance offered; whether there is a need for skill or literacy instruction to address the unemployment of the homeless; whether there is a need for national health reform and better access to medical services for the homeless. (Note: I have intentionally included sample topics that are inherently flawed or which encompass more complex issues than are immediately apparent. You must do the thinking and research which allows you to explore those aspects before you take your position. There are no easy answers when it comes to the issue of homelessness.) You must explicitly determine your audience and use two to three reputable sources as you develop your argument. More instruction and modeling will be provided in class.

> ***Comparison/Contrast Paper (100 points):*** Using either two sides of an issue or two specific texts, you will write a comparison/contrast paper. If you choose a specific topic, you may want to consider this topic from two opposing political perspectives. Or perhaps you might explore the lived experiences of two subjects from the books we read. You may even compare and contrast the treatment of the homeless by the authors of various texts. Three to five sources are required for this paper, and you must explicitly determine your audience for this paper.
>
> ***Formal Research Paper (200 points):*** For this paper, you will propose the topic and then write a research paper in which you address that topic. You will consult and use six to ten sources for this paper. You must explicitly determine your audience for this paper.
>
> ***Your Choice (75 points):*** For this paper, you may write any kind of piece you choose; a poem, a letter, a diary entry, a recipe, an advertisement, an ethnopoetic piece—you decide the audience, tone, number of sources.

Rationale: Throughout the remainder of your career at IWU you will be asked to write a host of papers for a variety of rhetorical purposes. My goal is to equip you with the skills you will need to write successfully for each of those purposes and to challenge you to think critically about topics presented to you. Because our time is relatively short, you will only write four formal papers, but each of these papers serves a different purpose and is intended to address a different audience.

Portfolio (100 points): Writing is a process. As the final project (and final exam) for this course, you will submit a portfolio of all your work along with a reflection in which you explore

this work. Finished pieces, along with *all* prior drafts, will be included in the portfolio. *All writing* will be submitted so that your growth as a writer is evidenced. You will additionally write a two to three page reflection in which you consider the following questions:

- Of which piece are you most proud?
- Which piece was most difficult? Why?
- How have you evolved as a writer? Think about global issues (self as a writer; the role of writing) as well as more local issues (grammar epiphanies, structural growth).
- What role did the response group play in your growth?
- What walls did you hit as you wrote? How did you get past these roadblocks?
- What have you learned about being a writer?

You may determine the format and organization for your portfolio. However, all portfolios must include one of each of the assigned pieces along with their drafts.

Rationale: It is my goal to create a classroom environment in which you can stretch as an author. Whether you begin this semester as an outstanding author or a mediocre author, my goal is to help you become a better author. To gauge whether I am accomplishing that goal, I must see evidence that you have not only revised your writing but also that you have improved in your writing abilities. Furthermore, I believe it is beneficial for you to see evidence of your own growth. Thus, you will compile a portfolio in which you collect, organize, and reflect upon your work this semester.

2. *Writing is a recursive, evolving, and ever-changing process.* Writing pieces are rarely finished. In fact, true writing involves revisiting a piece numerous times and seeing it anew, each time endeavoring to make it a better reflection of your thoughts or ideas. Ultimately, it is your responsibility as an

author to ensure that the audience actually "gets" what you are trying to say. One way to ensure that your message is being perceived the way you intended is to preview a piece with outside readers. To this end, we will preview our writing in four contexts:

Individual Conferences (25 points): I will meet individually with each of you at least twice during the semester so that we can discuss your writing. These scheduled, formal conferences are intended to give us an opportunity to address the specific, individual needs you have for particular pieces of writing. Of course, many of you will also set up times to meet with me during my office hours. I will endeavor to remain available to you to offer encouragement, feedback, guidance, and correction. Take advantage of my intentional availability. I want to see your commitment to writing and your growth as a writer. The better I know you as a writer, the better equipped I will be to help you and the more accurate my assessment of your writing will be.

Peer Response Groups (50 points): I will establish peer response groups within our class. In these small groups, you will preview your preliminary writing and invite candid feedback and questions. Specific guidance will be offered in class. You will be assessed on the quality of your feedback as well as your willingness to share your writing within this group.

Whole Class Response (15 points): Occasionally, you will share a nearly finished piece with the entire class to gauge the effectiveness of the piece and to invite feedback from a wider audience.

Outsider Response (10 points): With at least one formal paper, you will ask an outside reader to offer feedback. You may use any outside audience: a friend, a family member, a stranger on the street. The intention here is to evaluate whether you have clearly communicated your ideas to someone who is not privy to our classroom discourse.

Note: Because writing is ever-changing, you will draft and revise every piece at least once if not much more frequently. You must provide evidence of this revision process by handing in all prior drafts with your finished pieces. Therefore, be sure to print all drafts during the writing process and note the changes you have made to each piece.

Error Checklist (25 points): Throughout the semester, you will maintain a checklist in which you document common errors in your own writing and the corrections that you have learned to make in response to these errors. Your writing handbook, *The Longman Pocket Writer's Companion*, will be useful for this task. In essence, this Error Checklist will become your own writing handbook which is personalized for you. You will hand in this Error Checklist with each final paper as one piece of evidence of your growth as a writer.

3. The best writing moves us as readers and authors. It moves us emotionally, physically, intellectually, or spiritually. I do not like to be bored; nor do you. When I read what you write, I want to be moved. I want to step away from your writing changed, engaged, or challenged. While there is a time and place for the formulaic five paragraph essay, this is neither the time nor the place. It is difficult to move a reader with a five paragraph essay, so now is the time to stretch beyond the constraints of rigid structures in writing and experiment with other forms

of rhetoric. Take some chances. Explore new approaches to writing. In an attempt to better clarify what I value in a writing piece, I have included within this syllabus a continuum rubric based upon the work of Bob Broad (*What We Really Value: Beyond Rubrics in Teaching and Assessing Writing*) which illustrates what I value in a writing piece. Carefully review that continuum rubric and expect to see portions of it referenced in my assessment rubrics throughout the semester.

4. There is no one right way to write. The writing process is unique to each individual. Some writers prefer to develop detailed outlines before they begin to write. Others delve right in and worry about organization much later in the writing process. I will not attempt to tell you how to write. Instead, I will suggest ideas and strategies that others have found helpful. You will then pick and choose those that work for you. However, I will insist that you explicitly identify the audience for all your writing and then use an appropriate tone for that audience. (Please do not write for me. While I will be reading your work, I prefer to read it as an eavesdropper on a meaningful dialogue rather than as a participant.)

A word about mechanics: I will not grade you on grammar, punctuation, spelling or other mechanics. Why? Simply because I *expect* that you will employ appropriate grammar in all submitted writing pieces. To clarify, I offer a paraphrased analogy shared with me by Dr. Janice Neuleib from Illinois State University:

> Aligning the surface features of a text with the intended audience and purpose of the text is like taking a shower. No one rewards you for it, but it is still expected. If you fail to take a shower, you risk losing the respect and admiration of those around you. In the same way, if you

> do not attend to the surface features of your writing, you will lose the respect and appreciation of your audience. You will lose credibility and as a result others may not listen to what you have to say.

Therefore, I expect you to attend to the surface features of your work and will only negatively assess your use of mechanics. In other words, you will not earn points for appropriate mechanics, but you just may lose points. I highly recommend that you take a "grammar shower" prior to submitting your work so that you can determine whether your surface features are in line with the intended audience and purpose of the piece.

5. Good writing reflects careful thought, analysis, and awareness. Effective authors engage in constant thought and reflection on their subject. They seek out numerous sources that represent different viewpoints on the same topic and analyze these sources, carefully considering divergent ideas and perspectives. Authors challenge assumptions, both their own and those of others. They practice heightened awareness of their environment and others' perspectives and biases. To enable you to consider yet another perspective on homelessness, you will choose one text from the list of recommended texts about homelessness and read that text. If others in class choose the same text, you may wish to discuss that text with your co-readers. Toward the end of the semester, you along with anyone else from class who has chosen the same book will present a brief, ten to fifteen minute **Book Talk** about your chosen book. Specific guidance will be offered in class. **(50 points)**

Professionalism

I assume that each of you intends to pursue some type of vocation upon leaving IWU. I further assume that your future

employers will expect a certain degree of professionalism from you in the workplace. As a precursor to this expectation, I intend to hold you to high standards of professionalism during our time together. More specifically, I expect you to:

- Arrive to class on time every class period with all needed materials;
- Give your full attention to the topics at hand during class;
- Actively and fully engage in all class activities;
- Demonstrate a collaborative disposition;
- Be prepared to submit all work on the predetermined due date;
- Rise to professional standards in your verbal and written communications.

Please refer to the Professionalism Assessment Rubric for further information. **(100 points)**

Class Attendance

I will take attendance every class period. Should a true emergency arise (verified by a doctor's note or a note from the Dean of Students Office), I expect you to notify me of your absence *prior* to our class meeting time. This is a professional courtesy that I expect you to extend to me. Please note that even if you are absent, the assigned work is still due.

Submission Requirements

All submitted papers must by typed using size twelve Times New Roman font. Papers must be spaced at 1 ½ lines. If any other format is used, you must justify your deviation from this requirement. (For instance, in the opening ethnopoetic piece of this syllabus, *Statistics 101*, I have chosen to use different font styles to signify varied voices of the homeless.) All citations must strictly adhere to APA style requirements including the title page. In some instances, I will ask you to submit your

work to a Google Applications Web site. I will review the procedures for this type of submission during class.

Academic Standards

Exemplary work, considered for assessment between 95–100 percent, is that which contains the following: thoughtfulness; introspection; significant reflection and analysis of the subject matter; thorough application of readings, experience, and prior learning; positions or beliefs supported by extensive examples; strict adherence to the conventions of writing; presentation style befitting the topic; and submission in a timely fashion. Work submitted after the class period but on the day due will be penalized 10 percent; work submitted late but within 24 hours of the time due will be penalized 20 percent. No credit will be given to assignments submitted after 24 hours of the due date.

Grading Scale

%	**Grade**
95–100	A
93–94	A-
90–92	B+
85–89	B
83–84	B-
80–82	C+
75–79	C
73–74	C-
65–72	D
64 & below	F

Point Distribution	
Journal	50 points
Interview	50 points
Critical Response	50 points
Formal Papers:	475 points total
Position Paper (100)	
Comparison Contrast Paper (100)	
Formal Research Paper (200)	
Your Choice (75)	
Portfolio	100 points
Response to Writing: Revision	100 points total
Peer Response Groups (50)	
Individual Conferences (25)	
Class Responses (15)	
Outside Response (10)	
Professionalism	100 points
Error Checklist	25 points
Book Talk	50 points
Total Points Possible	*1000 points*

Plagiarism

IWU defines plagiarism as "the intentional or inadvertent misrepresentation as one's own, the words, ideas, research data, formulae or artistic creations of another individual or collective body, without giving credit to the originator(s) of those words, ideas, data, formulae or artistic creations" (IWU Statement on Plagiarism, 2008).

It is my unwavering expectation that all students will adhere to the plagiarism standards of this university. Under no circumstances will I tolerate any form of plagiarism. I expect all students to use APA (5th edition) citation guidelines for all cited information. The IWU Statement on Plagiarism in its entirety is included within this syllabus. It is your responsibility to read and adhere to the policies outlined in the plagiarism statement.

Communication

Situations may arise when I need to contact individual students or the entire class to adapt an assignment or distribute other pertinent information. I will use the course homepage and IWU email for these contacts. Therefore, please make a habit of checking the course homepage and IWU email every day. In turn, I will also check my IWU email account every day except Sunday should you need to contact me. I prefer that you attempt to contact me through email first; if you are not able to reach me within a reasonable amount of time (typically twenty-four hours), you are welcome to phone me at my home or my office.

We Catch Them

What do you think is the most important aspect of your work?

Developing Family,
a basis of Family,
most people don't have their Family anymore.

We Catch Them

They probably burnt every bridge in town
in their Families.

So they've not lost them *physically*, but…

They've lost total contact
and rightfully so.

We Catch Them

They've used their Families so many times and now

We Catch Them
on that Last End of Hope.
So, we're actually a ray of hope that might, might…

Pause, Sigh,

And we get burned, too,
but it's OK.

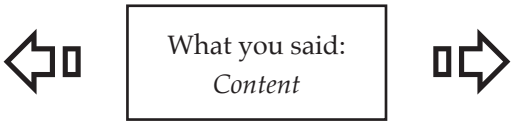
We Catch Them

It just goes with the territory?

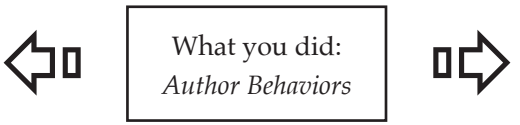
Yeah, it's something you learn to accept
because the ones that don't burn you are
way more than worth it.
More, more than worth it.

We Catch Them.

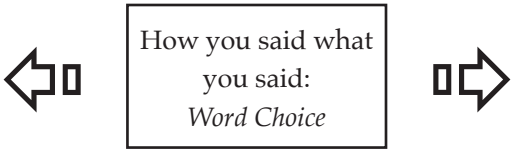
Rubrics



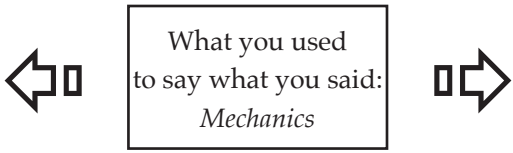
Empty	Significant
Shallow	Meaningful
Hollow	Illuminating
Timid	Courageous
Plagiarized	Original



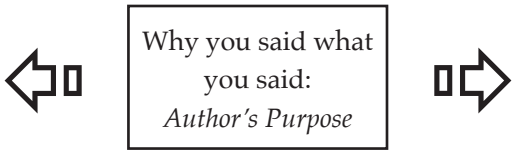
Safe	Risky
Lethargic	Energetic
Unengaged	Engaged
Ignore	Discover



Bland	Rich
Cliqued	Artful
Insignificant	Interesting
Vague	Precise
Offensive	Reasonable
Redundant	Original
Insecure	With authority



Formulaic construction	Appropriate style
Mechanics which interfere with meaning	Mechanics which support meaning
Disjointed	Cohesive
Scant details	Verisimilitude



To complete assignment	Genuine purpose
To please instructor	To grow or explore topic
To pander	To illuminate issue

Adapted from:

Broad, Bob. *What We Really Value: Beyond Rubrics in Teaching and Assessing Writing*. Logan: Utah State UP, 2003.

Critical Response Rubric

Assignment Description: Critical Response to Scholarly Literature (50 points): *You will choose a peer-reviewed research article from a reputable journal that focuses on issues of interest to you regarding homelessness, poverty, addiction, or another related topic. After studying the article, you will write a brief, one page Critical Response to the article in which you react to the content. Your Critical Response is not a summary of the article; it is a reaction to the validity of the content and the stance of the author. You will hand in the journal article with the Critical Response.*

Author engages in critical evaluation of article; Response is not a summary but a thoughtful, insightful response to the content of the article.	Author attempts to engage in critical evaluation of article; Response is not a summary but a response to the content of the article.	Author does not engage in critical evaluation of article; Response is more of a summary than a response to the content of the article.
15–14 points	**13–12–11 points**	**10 or below**
Author considers the stance and beliefs of the article's author; Author evaluates arguments or contentions from the article.	Author attempts to consider the stance and beliefs of the article's author; Author attempts to evaluate the arguments and contentions from the article.	Author does not consider the stance or beliefs of the article's author; Author does not evaluate the arguments or contentions from the article.
15–14 points	**13–12–11 points**	**10 or below**
Author adheres to page limitation; Writing is accurate and concise; Word choice is precise.	Author nearly adheres to page limitation; Writing is somewhat accurate and concise; Word choice is not precise, but acceptable.	Author does not adhere to page limitations; Writing is inaccurate or vague; Word choice is imprecise, rambling, misleading, or inappropriate.

Critical Response Rubric continued from previous page

10–9 points	**8 points**	**7 or below**
Author's voice is evident; Content of the article is applied to personal emerging beliefs regarding homelessness or a related topic.	Author's voice is somewhat evident; Content of the article is not necessarily applied to personal emerging beliefs regarding homelessness or a related topic.	Author's voice is not heard or is disgenuine; No attempt is made to connect the content to emerging personal beliefs about homelessness or a related topic.
10–9 points	**8 points**	**7 or below**
Author adheres strictly to the conventions of writing.	Author does not adhere strictly to conventions of writing.	
0	-1 to -5	
Total: _____/50 points		

Interview Rubric

Assignment Description: Develop a five to seven question survey regarding homelessness, poverty, and/or addiction. Choose your questions wisely: ask questions that will elicit responses about which you are truly interested. Then, interview two of your contemporaries and two people who are at least one generation older than you (30–35 years older). Use the same questions for both sets of interviews. Following the interviews, write a three to five page summary of the responses and your reaction to your findings. As you frame your reaction, consider these questions: What surprised you? What confirmed what you already suspected? Did you agree or disagree with your interviewee's responses? How might you use this information in future writing projects? What role, if any, did age play in the responses?

Interview write-up adhered to page limitation.

0 1 2

Meaningful, thoughtful questions were posed.

0 1 2 3 4 5

Four interviewees were consulted (2 contemporaries; 2 older generation participants).

0 1 2 3

Write-up is concise and insightful and includes discerning reflections on responses.

1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10 11 12
13 14 15 16 17 18 19 20

Author skillfully incorporates interviewee responses, personal reactions, and preliminary conclusions.

1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10 11 12
13 14 15 16 17 18 19 20

Response Group Rubric	**Exceeds Expectations**	*Score*	**Meets Expectations**	*Score*	**Below Expectations**	*Score*	**No Credit; Not Addressed**	*Score*
	10–9 points		**8–7 points**		**6–1 point(s)**		**0 points**	
Collaboration	Consistently demonstrates strong collaboration through active listening, appropriate suggestions, problem solving, and a positive attitude		Regularly demonstrates collaboration through active listening, appropriate suggestions, problem solving, and a positive attitude		Rarely demonstrates collaboration; does not always listen well; suggestions are not always helpful; often has a negative attitude		Does not demonstrate collaboration	
Preparedness	Always comes to class fully prepared with writing pieces and ideas for future work; makes timely revisions		Regularly comes to class prepared with writing pieces and ideas for future work; makes timely revisions		Is not always prepared with writing pieces; does not share ideas about future work; does not make revisions in a timely manner		Is not prepared for class and does not make revisions	
Willingness to Share	Always demonstrates a strong willingness to share work with group; listens openly to feedback		Demonstrates a willingness to share work with group; listens openly to feedback		Is not usually willing to share work with group; does not listen openly		Does not share work or listen to feedback	

Response Group Rubric continued from previous page

Prompt, appropriate feedback	Consistently provides timely feedback to group members on their work; makes productive comments; is usually willing to address flaws and strengths in other's works	*Score*	Provides timely feedback to group members; makes mostly productive comments; is usually willing to address flaws and strengths of other's work	*Score*	Rarely provides timely feedback to group members; comments are irrelevant or not helpful; does not consistently address others' work	*Score*	Does not provide feedback	*Score*
Engagement	Always demonstrates a high level of engagement through body language, verbal involvement, and and attention to the group		Usually demonstrates engagement through body language, verbal involvement, and attention to the group		Rarely demonstrates engagement; is not consistently attentive to the group		Is unengaged with the group; is inattentive to the group	

Total: _____/50 points

Professionalism Assessment Rubric

Name: _____

Student arrives to class on time every day.* (Absences or tardiness: _____)
1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10 11 12 13 14 15

Student brings all needed materials every day.
1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10 11 12 13 14 15

Student gives full attention to the topics discussed during class.
1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10 11 12 13 14 15

Student fully engages with all class activities.
1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10 11 12 13 14 15

Student demonstrates a respectful and collaborative disposition.
1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10 11 12 13 14 15

Student submits all work on the date due.
1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10 11 12 13 14 15

Student rises to professional standards in verbal and written communications.
1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10 11 12 13 14 15

Total: _____/100*

**It is possible to earn more than 100 points for exceptional professionalism.*

(*If absent due to an emergency, student notified instructor prior to class time and made arrangements to make up missed work. Only negative assessment if not met.)

Position Paper Rubric

What you said: (Content)	Paper had clearly articulated position; Audience dispositions considered; Claim substantially supported; Intended purpose achieved (If not, rewrite.)			Total Points Earned
		Something of significance was communicated; Original or illuminating arguments were offered +1, 2, 3, 4, 5, 6, 7, 8, 9, 10	Above and Beyond	
	Up to 40 points: ____			___/50
What you did: (Author Behaviors)	Author engaged with content and attempted to explore content from a personal perspective (If not, rewrite.)			
		You took some risks; Your tone was energetic and engaged; Your	Above and Beyond	

Position Paper Rubric continued from previous page

		discoveries were evident and/or unique		
	Up to 27 points: ___	+1, 2, 3		___/30
How you said what you said: (Word Choice)	Words were appropriate for specific rhetorical task; Words were used correctly (If not, rewrite.)			
		Rich or interesting words used; You spoke with reason and authority; You used precise or interesting language	Above and Beyond	
	Up to 8 points: ___	+1, 2		___/10
Why you said what you said: (Author's Purpose)	Author's purpose was communicated throughout piece (If not, rewrite.)			
		Topic was illuminated through		

Position Paper Rubric continued from previous page

		piece; Author used piece to explore or grow in knowledge of topic	Above and Beyond	
	Up to 8 points: ____	+1, 2		___/10
			Subtotal	___/100
What you used to say what you said: (Mechanics)	Mechanics supported the piece through appropriate style and cohesiveness			
				___/0 (Negative # only)
			Total Score	___/100

Pennie Gray is a visiting instructor at Illinois Wesleyan University where she teaches courses in education and composition. Prior to teaching at IWU, Pennie taught middle school language arts for twelve years. She is currently collaborating on a teacher inquiry book and is forever seeking effective ways to teach and assess writing.

LOCALIZING THE PLAGIARISM POLICY

JASON DOCKTER
LINCOLN LAND COMMUNITY COLLEGE

An integral part of developing an environment that is conducive to student learning is to establish clear policies for the students, course, and classroom. One policy included in every student handbook, and in most course syllabi, is a statement on academic dishonesty; in writing courses, this policy focuses on plagiarism. We all want our students to produce their own writing, for we recognize that learning will only take place if they create their own work. Accordingly, we develop policies, or our institutions develop policies, that explain what plagiarism is and how a student will be penalized if caught plagiarizing. Unfortunately, many of these policies are problematic and often leave students in a predicament because, too often, plagiarism cases are not clear-cut. Thus, we should examine plagiarism policies and faculty applications of these policies. Teachers should involve their students when devising plagiarism policies for their courses so that students will understand what

plagiarism is, why it matters, and how to avoid it by using sources appropriately.

Most universities view plagiarism as a serious academic offense. Alice Drum explains how most view plagiarism by offering what she terms "the classic argument":"plagiarism is both legally and morally wrong because it involves the appropriation of words or ideas that belong to someone else and the misrepresentation of them as one's own" (241). Plagiarism is not so easy to define. In the late 1990s, *The Council Chronicle* asked its readers to help define plagiarism. Despite a host of contributions, "[n]o consensus was reached" (qtd. in Howard "Sexuality, Textuality" 473). Regardless, students continue to suffer punishment "for doing this plagiarism thing, this indefinable thing" (473). If we teachers have such difficulty agreeing on exactly what plagiarism is, how can we continue to punish students for doing it? This is especially troublesome when the punishment often results in a student failing an assignment, a course, or possibly facing expulsion.

Most definitions of plagiarism assume that writing is done by one person who writes in isolation. These definitions also assume that a piece of writing is a unique, original work based upon original thought by this one writer. If writing actually happened this way, plagiarism might be easily defined. Actually, the profession of rhetoric and composition argues that writing is a social act, one that utilizes other people as readers, editors, and collaborators, all with the aim of helping the writer develop the best piece of writing possible. With inexperienced writers, who often are unaware or unable to use the work of others gracefully, collaboration can become appropriation. The borders blur. Howard explains that it is "the cumulative, interactive nature of writing that makes impossible the representation of a stable category of…plagiarism" ("Academic Death Penalty" 791).

Unfortunately, most plagiarism policies are created assuming that plagiarism is definable and that all acts of it should be punished. Most academic institutions have academic honesty policies that include a position on plagiarism. Such plagiarism policies are often developed in conjunction with faculty and administrators from across the disciplines and often must be reviewed by members of the institutional community before being formally accepted by the institution. Once these policies are in place faculty are expected to support and uphold the letter of the law. These policies are placed in student handbooks, college catalogues, and course syllabi. When faculty distribute syllabi, they discuss plagiarism and the policy that is in place for the class.

Oddly, these policies vary little across institutions. A reading of the policies of the University of North Texas, Willamette University, Bridgewater College, the University of Idaho, and Newton North High School shows similarities among the policies. One example, from the University of Idaho, defines plagiarism as: "1. Using someone else's work as your own, without citing the source. This includes direct copying, rephrasing, and summarizing, as well as taking someone else's idea and putting it in different words. 2. Not indicating directly quoted passages or ideas even while citing the work as a general source."

Each statement also outlines the punishment for plagiarism. Willamette College's stance seemed to be the most extreme: "Plagiarism and cheating may be grounds for dismissal from the college." Although not all policies stipulate that a student may be dismissed from the college, all suggest that the student fail the assignment, fail the course, or be turned over to the administration for further punishment. These policies all assume that all who plagiarize do so for the same reason: to cheat and take the easy way out of an assignment.

Plagiarism policies themselves can pose problems for both students and teachers. These policies do not consider why students plagiarize, but instead list a few severe punishments for any instance of plagiarism. A faculty member's task, however, is to teach students how to write and how to work with the ideas of others, so we should be concerned with why students plagiarize and consider how we can better teach them to avoid plagiarism. To assume that all plagiarism is committed purposefully is a grave mistake, for integrating information from sources and the ideas of others into one's own writing is a complex task. Most plagiarism instances involve unintentionally misusing a source, so it is safe to assume that some students lack the ability to use sources effectively. Many students, especially those in freshman writing courses, do not fully understand the conventions of working with sources, nor do they fully comprehend how to integrate the ideas in these sources into their own writing. If a student makes such a mistake, then the resulting plagiarism should be viewed as unintentional: "Unintentional plagiarism is not cheating at all, but a simple lack of understanding about the conventions of documentation" (McLeod qtd. in Howard, "Ethics of Plagiarism" 81). Plagiarism policies, however, clearly state that this student should fail the assignment and possibly the course. Such policies encourage faculty to bypass what could be significant teaching opportunities.

To assume that students will understand how to work with the ideas of others effectively is to ignore a course's purpose from the beginning: to teach students to read critically and to use that reading to think for themselves. Students may have had written "research" papers in high school, but no experienced college writing instructor assumes that most students enter college knowing how to incorporate the ideas of others into a college paper. Drum explains that "A random

survey of thirty popular texts reveals that many provide no reference to plagiarism in the index, and that most contain at best a paragraph of explanation and definition. Most textbooks say, in effect, 'do not plagiarize,' but they refuse to do much more than remonstrate against the practice…the standard handbook emphasizes the mechanics of documentation" (242). Yet, the penalties for plagiarizing, whether accidentally or purposefully (again, policies do not discriminate between the two), are close to cruel and unusual punishment. Drum also notes that "we must admit that many students do not know how to avoid plagiarism, that most rhetoric textbooks are of little help in this respect, and that many college composition classes deal inadequately with the problem" (242). Such an approach emphasizes correctness over intelligent thinking in the textbook. The concept of what to cite and why gets lost in translation when the student concentrates only on how to create in-text citations and a proper works cited page.

Stern policies might even lead teachers to encourage students to plagiarize. If the penalty for any and all plagiarism is determined by the institution or department, often as a failing grade, teachers may be overly cautious when teaching students to work with outside sources. Since using sources critically and intelligently is so complex, it is dangerous to assume that students will understand how to incorporate other's ideas into their writing, how to cite these ideas, and how to do so with uniqueness and originality. Students begin to write with and integrate others' ideas into writing by using a method described as "patchwriting" by Howard: "copying from a source text and then deleting some words, altering grammatical structures, or plugging in one-for-one synonym-substitutes" ("Plagiarisms" 788). Glynda Hull and Mike Rose "celebrate…patchwriting as a valuable stage toward becoming an authoritative academic writer" (788).

In fact, Hull and Rose "recommend that teachers treat it as an important transitional strategy in the student's progress toward membership in a discourse community" (788). Since this activity is seen as a step toward understanding the art of working with sources and encouraging students to take chances and attempt to utilize the source material in a more sophisticated way than they may be used to, it would be ridiculous to punish the student for a purposeful activity—especially one that the teacher encourages.

Unfortunately, the typical plagiarism policy does not leave room for an instructor to utilize activities such as patchwriting. Should teachers flout policy by encouraging students to engage in activities such as patchwriting, if the result would be a student who better understood how to incorporate research into writing? Howard explains that "categorizing it as plagiarism likens patchwriting to the purchase of term papers. Furthermore, plagiarism's place in the larger category of academic dishonesty means that patchwriting is also likened to cheating on examinations" ("The Ethics" 81).

Is it fair that an activity such as this might be construed as cheating and could result in the student earning a failing grade for the course? A one-size-fits-all plagiarism policy often fits no one. Not all plagiarism cases are the same, but many institutional policies make it seem as though they are. Accordingly, no distinctions are made between levels of plagiarism, reasons for plagiarizing, and punishments. Thus students are punished, unfairly, for not understanding how to work with sources, and many teachers are discouraged from teaching in the most effective manner.

We need to bring plagiarism policies to the local, in-class level and distance ourselves from or eliminate institutional policies that make poor assumptions about plagiarism and students' reasons for plagiarizing. We need to recognize that

by punishing students who unintentionally plagiarize, we create a poor learning environment. The rigidness of many plagiarism policies immediately establishes a split in the class: on one side are the students who are learning to work with research and sources, and on the other side is the instructor who will hunt down and punish a student who plagiarizes. Policies such as those I examined establish a divide between the teacher and the students that can discourage learning from taking place. When a student unintentionally plagiarizes a text, teachers should see possibilities for teaching that student how to properly work with sources. The student has made mistakes, but a mistake is an opportunity for growth. The instruction becomes localized, immediate, and more effective than the generalized discussion on MLA format that may have taken place in class. Drum explains:

> The penalty for plagiarism, at least for initial cases in introductory courses such as composition, should be meted out by the instructor…we can reasonably assume that either the students do not know how to avoid plagiarism…we can provide instructions on how to avoid plagiarism in the future…. We should, also, admit that students may learn more from a second chance to complete an assignment than from an automatic failure in a course. (243)

An accidental case of plagiarism serves to create a unique teaching opportunity to help a student see and understand what plagiarism can look like, why it is important to not plagiarize, and how to properly work with a source. Sadly, some teachers respond to a case of plagiarism as Hildegarde Bender does: "If you give me plagiarism, I will give you an 'F.' I am not concerned with the idea of 'intent to deceive'…since I give very thorough instruction regarding plagiarism prior to

expository writing, if it occurs, there *is* intent to deceive" (qtd. in Howard, "The Ethics" 81). For such a teacher it is easier to fail a student than to offer instruction on correcting the mistake. Sadly, everyone loses. The student fails an assignment or a course, and the teacher is left feeling slighted because he or she believes the student should have known better. The teacher could have felt good about truly helping that student understand what plagiarism is and how to avoid it.

In order to create a classroom atmosphere in which students learn about plagiarism, instead of learning only MLA style and being warned against committing plagiarism, teachers should collaborate with students in developing plagiarism policies for each individual course. This certainly would be no easy task, and it would involve much work on the part of the teacher (and students). By collaborating with students to define what plagiarism is and isn't and why it should be avoided, the teacher would take a theoretical concept and make it real. The issue would become part of the class. All participants would help define what plagiarism is, which would ensure all involved understand the concept. Andrea Lunsford explains that working with students to share authority in a classroom can lead to an effective classroom environment:

> If all members of a class agree or contract to take responsibility for their words, actions, and positions—to and with others in the class—then such responsibilities can become the basis for or sites of ongoing negotiation and for the construction of an ethical classroom community. (Pemberton 75)

By discussing what plagiarism is, students begin to understand why it is frowned upon in the academic community. In our electronically situated world, students see documents every day that are plagiarized. Web sites frequently cut and

paste information from other Web sites, often without giving credit to the source. When students encounter such practices daily, it might be difficult for them to understand why the academy considers such practice wrong. Getting students involved in determining what a fair punishment is for those who plagiarize intentionally allows them to see how plagiarism may occur in a variety of ways: from the purposeful to the accidental. Discussing possible, commonly accepted, punishments for plagiarism should allow students to gain some ownership in the class policies, and if a student plagiarizes, whether purposefully or inadvertently, there will be an agreed-upon consequence for that action. What matters most is that all students help determine policy and punishment; therefore, all should better understand that they are responsible for their own work and they know the penalty associated with each action.

This policy discussion should take place when research papers become an important part of the course. A policy that can be crafted as the class progresses, or as the class begins to work with outside sources, allows the concept to remain fresh in a student's mind. By being involved in the creation of this policy, a student will likely retain this information. The concepts that this policy will be based upon can be visited repeatedly over the course of the semester as well. Perhaps the policy itself and repercussions of the policy are developed at different stages of the semester in an attempt to help the material stay close to the forefront of the students' minds.

Regardless of when the development of a class policy occurs, the concept of plagiarism will be better understood by the students when they are instrumental in devising an explanation of what plagiarism is and what the punishment(s) should be for a student who plagiarizes. By bringing the concept of plagiarism and the development of a plagiarism policy,

to the local, in-class level, the teacher collaborates with the students to develop a class policy, which ensures that students have a solid grasp on what plagiarism is. In order to develop a class policy, to discuss the concept of plagiarism, to play with the uncertainty of this term, the students have to become fairly knowledgeable about it. In a sense, students are gaining hands-on experience with plagiarism, and they are applying their knowledge to help devise this policy. When students are able to take ownership of a portion of this policy, they will be more likely to uphold the policy as responsible class participants and work to avoid the penalties that the members of the class devised. For the teacher, this activity will require a willingness to work with students to create a policy. This activity will take up class time, and it should be the focus of at least a few class sessions, but the reward will be a plagiarism policy that reflects teaching practices and one that is fair and appropriate to the students in class. For plagiarism policies, certainly, it is clear that one size does not fit all.

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