

IATE NEWSLETTER

Monthly Newsletter of the Illinois Association of Teachers of English

NEWS & FEATURES

A Message from the President

PAGE 1

An Advent Calendar We
Would All Love

PAGE 2

Poetry and Prose Contest

PAGE 3

Celebrating Previous Winners

PAGE 5

A Tribute to Meaningful
Educators

PAGE 19

Small Business Saturday

PAGE 20

Supporting Intellectual
Freedom

PAGE 21

Celebrating Books

PAGE 22

Winter Break Reads

PAGE 25

Teacher Creator

PAGE 26

Save the Date - Fourth
Quarter Matters

PAGE 27

A Message From President Jennifer Gouin

Season's greetings! It's hard to believe that it's already the end of November. As usual, the school year, especially the fall semester, tends to fly by so quickly that it's hard to catch your breath, let alone be introspective. However, as we enter the hustle and bustle of the holiday season, I invite you to do just that, specifically with regard to our organization. What do you enjoy most about IATE? What would you like to see more of? What can we do to better serve your needs and/or draw in more of our colleagues?

During my tenure as president, I hope to encourage and facilitate growth in both membership and leadership participation. In order to do so, I'll need help from those of you who are current members. Be the eyes and ears - and voices - of our organization within your own departments. What do they look for from professional organizations? If they aren't members, why haven't they joined? If they are members, what do they want and need from IATE? In what ways have their needs adapted/changed since the pandemic? Please share our interest surveys with your colleagues: IATE Professional Feedback Survey and IATE Leadership Survey.

(Continued page 2)

A Message From Pres. Jennifer Gouin, cont.

Enjoy the holiday season with your family and friends, and join us in the second half of our school year as we provide more options for professional development, both virtually and in-person, including our “4th Quarter Matters” mini-conference in the spring.

An Advent Calendar We Would All Want!

BY SHANNON RADCLIFFE

If you are a Pinterest fan like me, you have seen all manner of advent calendars. While I love chocolate as much as the next girl, my favorite type of advent calendar and the one I have decided to implement for my daughter is a **literary advent calendar**. For each day of December, I have wrapped a book for my daughter to open every night before bed. For some of the books, there are activities that go along with them that we will do earlier in the day. Some of the books I have chosen are Christmas classics: [How the Grinch Stole Christmas](#), [Twas the Night Before Christmas](#), and [The Polar Express](#). On the night you put up your tree or go to any tree lightings, there is the lovely book [Pick a Pine Tree by Patricia Toht](#). It is the cutest rhyming book about Christmas trees and the different traditions surrounding them. If your child is still in the board book stage, there are lots of great options like [You're My Little Christmas Wish by Nicola Edwards](#) and [Never Touch A Grumpy Elf by Rosie Greening](#). There are also great funny options like [Merry Christmas Stinky Face by Lisa McCourt](#) and [There's an Elf in Your Book by Tom Fletcher and Greg Abbott](#). The options really are endless. Check out Pinterest for activities ideas to incorporate as well. You can make ornaments and other little crafts that go along with the book you've chosen...and when a book has a movie that goes along with the books, that's the perfect time to watch!

If you want some sort of item to go along with the books you have chosen, I recommend checking out Dollar Tree to grab things like stuffed elves, little snowmen, and reindeer antlers. This adds another element to an already fun tradition. If you're not interested in wrapping 25 individual books, I've seen the same idea done with a simple book basket that is left under the tree, and your little one (or even older children) pull a different book every night.

As English teachers, we know how important reading to our children is for their future literacy skills, and this is a great way to get your child excited about reading during the holiday season!



Poetry and Prose Contest

BY DELORES ROBINSON

Give your students a chance to share their writing with others by entering their best work in the IATE's annual student writing contest. Members of IATE may submit up to 10 poems (line limit of 44) and up to 5 prose selections (word limit of 1,000). How a teacher chooses the work to submit may vary by school or classroom. Jared Friebe gets his students involved in the process. Other teachers share that they, alone, make the choice of which pieces to submit while others have used their school's parent-teacher conference and open house as a time to display student poems around the room (anonymously) and to ask visiting parents and others to vote on their favorites. The most important part of the process, however, is that final step: sending students' work to the judges for inclusion in the contest.

Volunteer judges generously give their time and effort to read and rank all submissions.

Poetry Judges Assess Submissions On:

Originality: Work that breaks from convention, blurs the boundaries between genres, and challenges notions of how a particular concept or emotion can be expressed.

Technical Skill: Work that uses technique to advance an original perspective or a personal vision or voice, and shows skills being utilized to create something unique, powerful, and innovative.

Emergence of a Personal Voice or Vision: Work with an authentic and unique point of view and style.

(Criteria adapted from the National Endowment for the Humanities, the National Council for Teaching English, and Scholastic)

"I have often chosen which five essays to submit by selecting my favorite 10-12 from the fall semester. Then, students individually rank their favorite three out of that group. From these rankings, I then select the top 5. Students really have to think about the audience and the rhetorical skills we've covered, which reinforces all I've taught, when ranking. So, the contest serves as a good instructional tool, as well. Too, when students are chosen, the class can take collective pride in the essays we've sent."

Jared Friebe,
Hinsdale High School

Prose Judges Assess Submissions On:

Prose submissions are most often creative narrative fiction, but submissions also include creative non-fiction; personal essay; and argument, definition, or literary analysis essays.

Purpose and Theme: A controlling central idea that remains consistent and meaningful throughout the piece

Audience: An awareness of the reader and subsequent choice of appropriate tone and language to best communicate to that reader. Students may approach a subject from whatever mood makes the most sense (serious, reflective, humorous, touching, and so on)

Organization: Logical and balanced development, a selection of abundant supporting details that propel the purpose and theme (no matter the genre), strong supporting structure

Level of Thought: Insightful understanding of the human condition, meaningful exploration of ideas and emotions

Expression: Original and compelling description that provides the piece emotional resonance

Style & clarity: Along with sentence-level accuracy and few (if any) spelling and grammar errors, the submissions should document any sources using the most recent MLA criteria

(Adapted from the IVCC Criteria for Clear Writing)

Recognition of Student Work

After the judges finish their work, they send the results to the editors of the Illinois English Bulletin who make plans to publish the results in a future edition of the journal devoted to the student participants, their teachers, and the students' writing. The selections awarded first-place recognition will be published in the journal while the names of the runners-up and those receiving honorable mention will be published, as well.

There are exciting plans underway this year to further acknowledge the students and their hard work by publishing press releases in schools' local newspapers and sending congratulatory letters to school administrators. We hope IATE District Leaders, working with the contest organizers, can schedule visits to schools to hand the certificate packets to teachers. That visit would be a great time for a publicity photo, and schools may arrange further recognition at their annual spring awards events. We'd love to hear from you: how do you recognize your students' writing and share it with a larger audience than just within the classroom? Send your suggestions for further contest enhancements to Delores_Robinson@ivcc.edu, and together we can continue to build participation and find even more ways to celebrate our students' writing.

For now, be sure to collect and submit your students' poems and prose pieces no later than the end of January 2023. Further details are on the IATE website at iateonline.org.



Illinois Association of Teachers of English

Annual Poetry & Prose Contest—Student Writing 6-12 Grades

A sculpture made of books by Matej Krén in the Municipal Library of Prague (Image courtesy [hellabella](#) on Flickr.)

Celebrating Some Previous Winners of the Poetry and Prose Contest

The Forgotten Ones

I walk up to the brick wall and run my fingers absently over the rough surface as if I am waiting for something to happen, but nothing does. Peering over the low wall, I see what I came for. There are uneven rows of gray and brown stones, poking out of the ground at odd angles, surrounded by dying grass and brown leaves. A few people may wander aimlessly, pausing to peer at the old stones, but not with the passion that I feel coursing through my veins at the sight of this abandoned, overgrown patch of weeds and death. The iron door moves at my command, giving only a slight screech of protest, rending the quietness of the day. A collective groan emanates from the people following me, my family, as I pause to stand in the entrance, looking upon the silent beauty therein.

I wander among the gravestones for several minutes, taking in the pathetic sight of the unmown lawn surrounding the decaying markers, the leaves from last winter still decorating the ground. The rows may have been straight once, but now they are as crooked as the markers themselves. I stop by one grave; this one is somewhat isolated, alone in the center, and still fairly upright. The letters are legible, but just barely, fading in and out of the rock as if they don't quite belong there.

Excitedly, I drop to my knees, the rough, unkempt grass scratching at my bare legs. As my hands brush the greenish grass and last year's dead leaves out of the way, I peer at the alien stone, attempting to make out the faded and unfamiliar letters. While I can read some of what has been inscribed on the gray rock, much of it has been lost through the passage of time. What I cannot make out, I trace lightly with my fingers, the cool, hard stone, worn smooth in some places, but still rough in others, moving gently beneath my hand. The words are often unintelligible, worn away, or dipping beneath the earth like that which they once identified.

Around me, dozens of other stones with similar markings are implanted in the ground. (Continued page 6)

Celebrating Some Previous Winners of the Poetry and Prose Contest, Cont.

The Forgotten Ones, Cont.

Some have fallen down, others have broken, some have sunk into the ground, and a very few stand proud and tall as monuments to eternity. At one point they had all been like that, but time takes its toll on anything, and these monuments to the dead did not last. Much as the bodies of the dead decay, so do the memories and the signs of them.

As the hot breeze blows over me, it moves the leaves slightly and whips my hair around to attack my face. I brush the invading tentacles away from my sweaty forehead, turning my attention to another stone. This one is more legible. The ancient letters spell out names, places, years from past centuries, the lives of people long gone. A picture carved into the rock by the curved top depicts a skull and crossbones, surrounded by an angel's wings. It seems odd to me, at first, but then the meaning of the skull, not pirates but death, reminds me how appropriate the symbol is. I trace the carving lightly, wondering about the person for whom this stood, feeling the smooth, simple, lines that have been imprinted on the rock.

In a disconcerting way, this relic of the past is surrounded by the present, and is an isolated patch of history. Ugly new apartment buildings and offices surround the messy, forgotten plot of land, shadowing it from the world, hiding it as if it is some great secret. It is as if the world does not want the past to be known, to be let free, to be remembered. Here I sit in blissful solitude, relishing the peace of the quiet graves, feeling the dying grass beneath my bare legs, and tasting the soft breezes that brush across me, cooling my perspiring face.

Across the barrier of time in which I have enveloped myself, a voice calls to me, shouting my name. This voice is distant, muddled, as if I am hearing it through water. It is the voice of a boy, bored, pacing the ground, trampling on the unkempt grass, waiting for his chance to escape this wilderness he sees as torture. The woman had been a willing victim at first, but now she just wants to leave, and she glances at her watch. I turn away from them. They do not belong here. They do not understand the beauty in the loneliness of the graves. But I do not belong here either. I am from a different world than the silent graves and death. I stand up on shaky legs, tired from sitting for so long among the dead, and walk towards the people. I leave the world of the graves and join the living, breathing world of which this place is not a part. As I prepare to leave, I take one more glance around.

(Continued page 7)

Celebrating Some Previous Winners of the Poetry and Prose Contest, Cont.

The Forgotten Ones, Cont.

A lone tree, virtually unnoticed, stands in the corner of the plot of land, gnarled and old; it is the same as the stones. Forgotten and alone, surrounded by browning green grass and dead leaves, grave markers, and, under the ground, the bodies of the dead, this tree stands as a testament that, even here, life exists.

Rachel Fry, Grade 11
Warren Township High School, Gurnee
Paul Kemp, teacher
Illinois English Bulletin, 1999

Purgatory

A short list of things I hate:

1. emotion
2. intimacy
3. relationships

A short list of things I like:

1. The Dark Knight trilogy
2. X-Men
3. The Avengers
4. Star Trek, the Original Series
5. the reboot of Star Trek
6. BBC's Sherlock
7. Supernatural
8. Scandal
9. V for Vendetta
10. Fight Club
11. ---

Shit. Sorry. That was supposed to be a short list.

(Continued page 8)

Celebrating Some Previous Winners of the Poetry and Prose Contest, Cont.

Purgatory, cont.

At first glance, these seem okay; the number of things I like overpower the number I hate. But, by any reasonable and human standard, these lists are pretty screwed up. And at the prime age of seventeen, when I should be making memories with old friends before high school runs its course, I have come to understand that I am, as these lists are, similarly screwed.

Ask me about “The City on the Edge of Forever” and I will laugh whilst recalling the beanie Leonard Nimoy’s Spock wore in Depression Era America. Ask me who Harley Quinn is and I will rant about her origins as the Joker’s psychiatrist and how this image has been corrupted and her personality defaced in The New 52. But ask me about my friends and I will resort to quoting BBC’s Sherlock: “Friends? I don’t have friennndsss!”

And why don’t I? Well, it’s a vicious cycle. I’m not very interesting and my sarcasm is too much to bear, and that, paired with the tendency to switch schools every few years, has led me to find solace in the magic box of moving pictures that stands across from our couch. Some people choose books, some booze, but I, with my preference for physically manifested imagination and no one to get drunk with, choose television and film.

As the years have numbered, my preference has only been strengthened. Who needs the real world when you can watch Olivia Pope be a complete badass? Who needs romance when you can watch V and Evey fall in love over and over again?

And so it has become that I do not cry or feel empathy for real people, only for fictional ones. I don’t remember the last time I shed a tear for a real person, but just last week I cried twice during Sherlock’s “His Last Vow,” because I couldn’t stand seeing John be hurt again.

But seldom do I care, seldom do I show anything more than apathy for the people I am forced to interact with. There are a few people, of course, for whom I retain some sympathy, but overall, I do not feel.

I have conditioned myself to live in a world that doesn’t exist. A world with aliens and vigilantes with whom I share my secrets. The real world does not have the same glamour as Xavier’s School for Gifted Youngers, nor does it have the characters I worship. The Tyler Durdens I want in my life are already there. Who else could I need?

But I understand this isn’t a way to live.

(Continued page 9)

Celebrating Some Previous Winners of the Poetry and Prose Contest, Cont.

Purgatory, cont.

If I had a best friend, it would be Nikki, a pretty girl who seems to think I'm funny and not completely unlikeable. She complains to me constantly about her friends and hook-ups and the foreseeable repercussions that arise when she hooks up with the brothers of said friends. But, for the first time the other day, she decided to help me.

Cue the romcom music.

So, there's this guy.

How cliché, right? Yes, I am aware. Even the people as emotionally conditioned as me seem to leave behind a sliver of sympathy for some silly, romantic interest that could never work out. But I understood that. I realized that this boy was just a joke, unlike any character that existed in my ideal world, marching in the footsteps of Bruce Wayne and Castiel.

But Nikki seemed to think there was hope.

She gave me one option: to just go ahead and sleep with him. I'm sure Nikki could feel my nervous chuckling through text as I told her, "no. I ain't bout that lyfe."

After I told her what I'd talked about with him, she recommended that she take my phone for a night and promised that, by morning, he'd be in love with me. "Hahah," I said, but she continued: "He won't know the difference. We have very similar personalities."

No, we don't.

"We're very similar."

No, we're not.

Yes, we laugh at the same jokes and our sarcasm precedes us, but Nikki thinks Logan Lerman is hot but has never heard of Percy Jackson. She has friends to complain about and boys to choose from; I have a Star Trek calendar and a giant poster of Loki across from my bed.

"If I can do it, so can you"

No, I can't. She is normal, and she understands human connectivity. I do not. I have bound myself to this world where a connection is nothing more than an image on a screen pulling on my heartstrings, and I don't know how to escape. I am not comfortable with anything outside the boundaries of my mind, and the prospect of being there for someone terrifies me more than anything else. (Continued page 10)

Celebrating Some Previous Winners of the Poetry and Prose Contest, Cont.

Purgatory, cont.

You'd think I would have learned by now what it means to love. The fictional characters I idolize have friends and lovers—every Sherlock has his John. But I have grown incapable. I shudder at the prospect of reality, and now I have jailed myself in a whole other way: screenwriting. I write my own stories, my own characters, the people who live solely in the crevices of my mind, people who are my own. Why do I write? Because I don't want to leave. I don't want to venture beyond the barriers I have set, to explore, to experience, to exist. I know I cannot stay in my head forever, but why is it that I find Gotham, Asgard, and Purgatory so much more peaceful than the real world?

Alexandra Solovyev, Grade 12
Hinsdale Central High School, Hinsdale
Heather Fehrman, teacher
Illinois English Bulletin, 2013

Ascension

Climb upon the tree
Little ant, and escape the
Dangers of the ground.

Derek Dalton, Grade 9
Naperville Central High School, Naperville
Aprilyn Stary, teacher
Illinois English Bulletin, 1999

Celebrating Some Previous Winners of the Poetry and Prose Contest, Cont.

What Is It About Broccoli?

What is it about broccoli
that makes me want to hide
whenever it's for dinner;
Would it taste better fried?

What is it about broccoli—
that little green tree—
when it's on your dinner plate
makes you want to run free?

What is it about broccoli
when it's sitting there useless?
Those leafy greens staring up at you
make me wish I were toothless.

What is it about broccoli
that makes me want to gag,
no matter how it's cooked;
Wouldn't it be better off in a bag?

What is it about broccoli
that makes me dread
the upcoming meal?
Can I have carrots, instead?!

Maya Machen, Grade 6
Lycée Français de Chicago, Chicago
Cyn Koukos, teacher
Illinois English Bulletin, 2017

Celebrating Some Previous Winners of the Poetry and Prose Contest, Cont.

Second Shadow

Little boy with his paper swords,
Given a promise he could not keep,
Stay young forever.

Boy tried to keep his promise,
Dragged along the River Styx,
Made it back but was never quite the same.

Tired bags under brown eyes,
So pale he's almost yellow,
Chocolate hair in a curly crest.

Picked himself back up,
New shade to his eyes,
Set out with a second shadow.

After seventy years,
Tempered and hardened,
Half-bald and silver-haired,

Stood in front of a grave with his son,
Said his final request,
Stay young forever.

The son disbelieved.
Tears in contrast to his father's stern eyes.
The old boy just flicked him on the nose and chuckled,
Before saying goodbye.

Theodore Martello, Grade 9
Morris Community High School, Morris
Jennifer Bamonte, teacher
Illinois English Bulletin, 2017

Celebrating Some Previous Winners of the Poetry and Prose Contest, Cont.

Rather than Hands

I would often find my mom
in the dark kitchen busily stirring and
cutting next to the stove as I approached
eagerly, used to this game of trying to
find the best time to interrupt,
not because she didn't care, but because
she is a busy woman and I grew up being
sent off to the bus stop by buzzers
rather than hands, and doing my
laundry instead of dropping it in a
hamper, but I do not resent this because
everything she's done has been for me and I
would stare at her standing on weary feet
that had worked an eight hour day,
stirring with hands once decorated by a
wedding ring and it would occur to me that she was
much better than a two-parent household and
Daddy-daughter dances and I would want to
tell her about the horrible test I had done
well on, the latest fight with a friend, the
guy with the pretty blue eyes who sat
behind me in math, because she was really a great
friend too, and she would love to hear this gossip, so
I would begin but the phone would ring and
she would sigh as she reached for it
because it might be the hospital and she
might have to go in, and her body would sag as an
unknown voice would spring from the
receiver while the dogs hungrily danced
around her feet and after a moment she would
turn to me with an inquiring look so
while it was not intended I would
ask what was for dinner and she would
mumble a response as she returned to the
conversation while I sat silently by the
table cluttered with bills and figured
there was really nothing I could do,
Except let her know I called.

Tevynn Anderson, Grade 12
Lake Forest High School, Lake Forest
Brenda T. Perkins, teacher
Illinois English Bulletin, 1999

Celebrating Some Previous Winners of the Poetry and Prose Contest, Cont.

Spider Dreams

Shades of green collide with a grain of fresh soil
spoiling it with a bland lime flavor.

A treetop stretches,
grasping on to the inflated, weightless cloud.
The branches weave through the cloud's fibers,
shaking it until the cloud forfeits,
sending a defined dribble of water down to earth,
A warning of the untamed storm on its way.

Trapped by the twisting roots of the tree,
a spider revolts, and a tobacco colored hair
crinkles up on his peanut shelled back.

It warps around the grain of soil
nourishing it with the fuzzy warmth.
A little girl dangles beneath the tree on a rusted-out swing set.
Her slender legs extend as she pumps back and forth.

Her eyes clash,
one being the last jelly bean.

Black.
It infects the other eye of ocean blue,
Forming a hollowed out piece of driftwood.

The spider disappears
into a crevice resting against the base of the tree
(shelter from the rain,)
but the girl swings beyond her own sense of imagination.
The copper links of the chains holding her up
multiply,
and that swing climbs up the knotted branches of the tree
to meet the storm half-way.

Colin Richard Hogan, Grade 11
Buffalo Grove High School, Buffalo Grove
Joyce Elizabeth Norman, teacher
Illinois English Bulletin, 1999

Celebrating Some Previous Winners of the Poetry and Prose Contest, Cont.

Skipped Day

I skip school
to go fishing with my father
down at the lake's edge,
the sweet watermelon breeze
heavy with wetness
as the heavy canoe slides
through mossy waves, greasy and warm,
like old bath water.
Am I justified in missing class for
bluegill, longear, crappie, bass,
and sanity?
Yes because I can vomit information
as well as anyone.
We slip in and out of coves with
'plink' of sinker and line
combined with strangled squawk
of angry heron.
Spot a young fawn standing red-brown
next to milkweed and Johnson grass,
face deformed by hundreds of ticks
bulging grey with tender blood drained
from cheeks and swollen-shut eyelids.
Swarms of shit-covered flies,
metallic green in smiling sunlight,
tear and chew twitching ears and flaring nostrils
into crimson pulp. . .

It will die
gripped by sickness or coyote jaws—
All because of bad luck at birth,
but isn't that life?
Newborn corpses
rotting next to lapping shorelines strewn with
beer cans and fluorescent lures,
just nature's way—

It makes more sense than school.

Kristi Jacobson, Grade 12
Carbondale Community High School, Carbondale
Sue Howell, teacher
Illinois English Bulletin, 1999

Celebrating Some Previous Winners of the Poetry and Prose Contest, Cont.

What About It?

It hits you with a Bling Bling
And makes you get a tingling, like a sparkling star.
Love is whatever, but don't act like you won't ever.
Love may be the motion in the ocean,
Or maybe a sip of the player's love potion.
Love may cure you of smallpox.
Love may make you buy new sox.
Love is what makes the Irish call themselves Shamrocks.
Love is what makes your mother cook hamhocks.
There are a lot of knocks on love.
Some of the knocks are of the heart.
Is all of this smart?
Is it smart to eat a hot poptart?
I think it is not.
My dreams fly as if they were a jet,
And make me happy that we met.
Maybe my heart is so full of love it is about to bust,
Or this could just be lust.
For sure I must know, what is it?
But, until then What About It?

Clifton Marvel, Grade 11
Providence-St. Mel School, Chicago
Marvin I. Medintz, teacher
Illinois English Bulletin, 1999

Celebrating Some Previous Winners of the Poetry and Prose Contest, Cont.

Sky Paintings

As the playful spirits of the dark fade and dance away as the majestic Sun rises with a loving glow,

The children of the rain come out to add their artistic talents to the great sky.

They add wisps of clouds and streaks of rainbows throughout the canvas.

Then, the Sun adds the melting and intertwining colors of life into this brilliant world,

The magical creatures of the Earth each add its own flare to the superb creation that envelops them in its warmth.

Then, a horrible evil steals across the world.

Fateful smog smothers all that is pure in its grasp.

Acid contaminated rain falls,
Each drop filled with destruction, which pounds the ground.

Pollution and other hated creatures ruin the marvelous painting that nature paints with love and care.

The creators of all of these evils are so ignorant and callous,
But, after all it is we humans that do these things.

We ruin the magical sky paintings, which are filled with more wonder than we can ever imagine.

Umi Miyahara, Grade 8

Thomas Middle School, Arlington Heights

Donna Blackall, teacher

Illinois English Bulletin, 1999

Celebrating Some Previous Winners of the Poetry and Prose Contest, Cont.

Scarlet Fever

Herd, Herd
Heard moving
Leather whip crack
Moving
Head through ears ringing
Bells, cows
Moving Moving
Cinnamon skinned
Cimmeron
Oh, beautiful beautiful
Vellum roof.

Cimmeron feet
Kick, leave
Frog print
Kick, leave
Dust on scarlet head.

Bass beat feet
Red Skin Cimmeron
Moves for
Cimmeron Cimmeron

Herd Herd
Moving moving

Red Red ground Beneath the gravel
is
Red Red ground
Past the gravel
is
Red Red ground
Beneath White hot sun.

Leah Kaplan, Grade 12
Adlai E. Stevenson High School, Lincolnshire
Christine Heckle-Olive, teacher
Illinois English Bulletin, 1999

A Tribute to Meaningful Educators

Karen Gore, Morris Community High School, class of 1957

I was fortunate enough to have experienced many fine teachers in elementary and high school, but the most memorable teacher I ever encountered is doubtless Irene Freeman (M.A. University of Michigan, A.B. Iowa Teachers' College), an English, speech, and drama teacher at Morris Community High School in the 1950s. She was a petite, but feisty, veteran teacher who could intimidate even the biggest football-player-sized boys in her class with a mere stare, never saying a word but simply waiting to gain their attention (which always happened in a millisecond).

Ms. Freeman demonstrated the importance of drama while also pointing out how vital grammar is

when conveying the message of a text. Each Friday, students were required to submit a one-page piece on a subject of their choosing. The following Monday, the papers were returned to every student with two grades: one for content and one for grammar, along with detailed notes and suggestions for improvement. I can only wonder how many hours she must have spent during the weekend grading those papers.

I will never forget her portrayal of a scene from Thornton Wilder's play, *Our Town*. She transitioned from being a teacher standing in front of her class into the character so quickly and completely, that for those few minutes, we could believe we were sitting in a theater somewhere instead of our classroom!

Irene Freeman's impact on me when I was a student in her English class during 1956 was memorable at the time, but my appreciation for her and her teaching has only grown over the intervening decades.



Small Business Saturday

By Delores Robinson

Continuing the intent of Small-Business Saturday, a time to support our locally owned small businesses, I want to give a big thanks to one of the gems of the Illinois Valley IATE District, PRAIRIE FOX BOOKS, 719 LaSalle Street in Ottawa and online at prairiefoxbooks.com. This charming space, run by Gabriella Crivilare since 2016, caters to bibliophiles and does a remarkable job providing fun and entertaining events such as literary-themed parties, author readings, and visits from Santa and other characters bound to impress the younger readers. The brick walls, fireplace, and warm wood floors offer several cozy spots to sit and read while browsing the store shelves, and shoppers will also notice many beautiful fox figures and statues scattered about the store. Crivilare recently added a café and used-book exchange program, and Prairie Fox Books Special Events Manager Dylan Conmy along with other store employees and village leaders worked hard to bring the first Pride Fest to downtown Ottawa last summer.



Interior of Prairie Fox Books, Photo by Ryan Searls from a March 15, 2021, article published at the website of Starved Rock Country

Supporting Intellectual Freedom

1

Create a robust policy that is not under Title IX ([Policy Examples](#))

2

Write Rationales for Materials

3

Update school mission statement to include Intellectual Freedom and Culturally Sustaining Teaching.

4

Ensure the library and classrooms are following diversity and equity State Standards

5

Do not allow people who live outside of the district to raise a challenge

6

Promote diverse texts to ALL students and show them the value of different ways of knowing

7

RESOURCES:

[National Coalition Against Censorship](#)

[National Council of Teachers of English](#)

[American Library Association](#)

[Illinois Association of Teachers of English](#)

[Association of Illinois School Library](#)

[Educators](#)

Celebrating Books

Delores Robinson took a quick survey of some of the English and literacy professionals in the IATE Illinois Valley District regarding the books they are most grateful for:

Jean Forst, English and Reading

Illinois Valley Community College

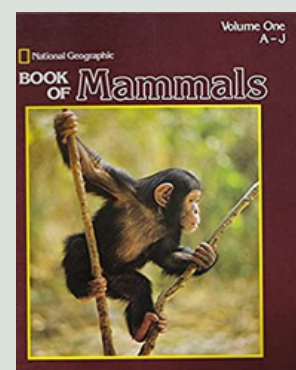
Because they're fun and I like to challenge myself to solve them, I'm grateful for mysteries. I like literary ones written by authors like Louise Penny, but also cozy mysteries by authors like Leslie Meier, and funny ones by Laura Levine. And because I, like so many others, love dogs, *The Call of the Wild* and *White Fang* are favorites. Even though they contain some brutal scenes, Buck and White Fang prevail!



Laura Kilmartin, Tutoring & Writing Center Coordinator

Illinois Valley Community College

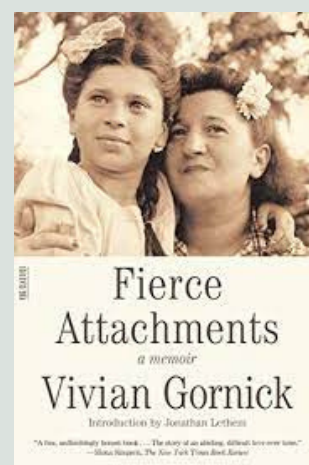
I am grateful for the National Geographic: Book of Mammals. As a child, I used to look at the beautiful pictures and read all about the different animals. I remember sitting on the living room floor and sharing the experience with my mom.



Amie Alvarado, Writing Center Tutor

Illinois Valley Community College

I am grateful for the book *Fierce Attachments* by Vivian Gornick. This memoir helped me to embrace and appreciate the relationship I shared with my mother and late grandmother, at a point in my life where I found myself desperately avoiding becoming just like them. Because of this book, I am not only proud that these women helped me to become the best woman, and mother I can be—but I am also profoundly grateful for our friendship.



Celebrating Books, Continued

Grace Norris, Librarian

Illinois Valley Community College

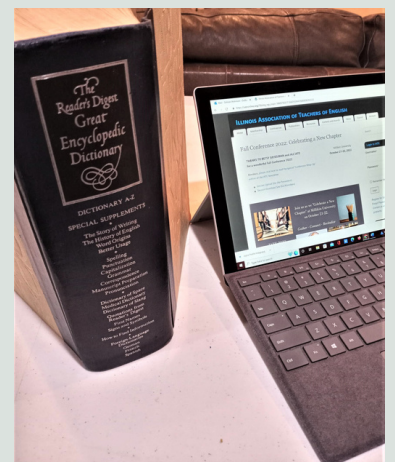
I am thankful for my Bible. Regardless of whether someone shares the same views as me, having access to any religious text in this nation, and the ability to read and discern it myself, is a privilege that not all people in the world have, and I do not take it for granted.



Delores Robinson, English and Speech

Illinois Valley Community College

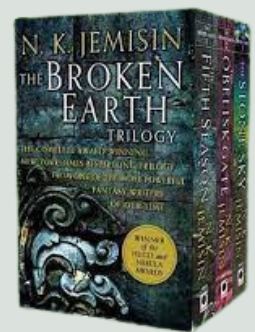
I'm grateful for the massive, 4" thick Reader's Digest Great Encyclopedic Dictionary that sat in my parents' office and that I used almost nightly during junior high and high school because it introduced me to new vocabulary words and helped me understand etymology which, in turn, helped me appreciate the beauty of language more (and, I think, steered me more toward teaching English which I'm grateful to be doing).



Nora Villarreal, English

Illinois Valley Community College

I am thankful to the Broken Earth trilogy by N.K. Jemisin for creating a ground-breaking and inspiring fantasy series that entertained and comforted me during the pandemic.



Bethany Newsome, English

Putnam Co. High School

I am grateful for the Harry Potter book series by J.K. Rowling. During two seasons of my life, the story of Harry Potter finding his identity and navigating relationships and challenges was exactly what I needed to get through my own.



Celebrating Books, Continued

Jayna Leipart Guttilla, Librarian
Illinois Valley Community College

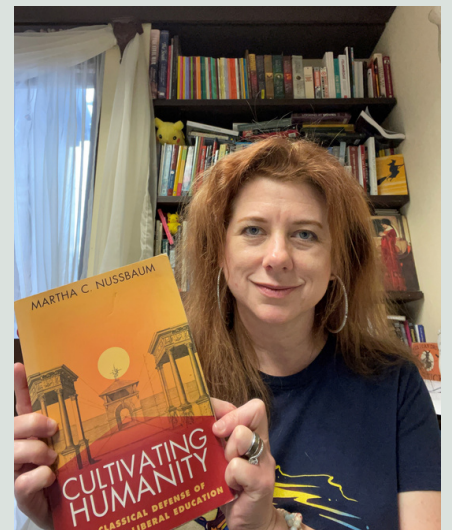
When I was a sophomore in high school I understood that I loved to read but I didn't have the confidence or the grades to be in an advanced English course. So, I set myself the challenge of reading *Pride and Prejudice* by Jane Austen and doing so changed my life! I recognized myself in Austen's characters, not just her heroine Lizzy Bennett, but in characters such as Charlotte Lucas and Anne Elliot, women who were often overlooked in greater society but indeed were complex, nuanced, and proto-feminists in their own right. In reading the works of Austen, I was able to situate myself among female characters who voiced their thoughts, opinions, made mistakes, and lived full lives. Essentially, Austen taught me how to be in this world we live in despite a very distant 200-year age difference and I am ever so grateful!



Kimberly Radek-Hall, English, Film, Women & Gender Studies

Illinois Valley Community College

Cultivating Humanity by Martha C. Nussbaum is a book I'm very grateful for, because it makes the case, persuasively and eloquently, that liberal humanities-based education is the basis of democracy and that democratic values are humanity-centric values. This book is one I've been able to recommend to family and friends who haven't seen the value of studying the humanities over business or science and get them to see that those passions are even more useful when they are grounded upon an appreciation for and understanding of humanities.



Winter Break Reads

BY DELORES ROBINSON

I only discovered the amazing Octavia Butler during covid lock-down when I was scrolling endlessly through GoodReads.com to avoid doom scrolling through the frightening pandemic and political news. I came across the first two books in Butler's unfinished trilogy: *Parable of the Sower* and *Parable of the Talents*. You wouldn't think that a post-apocalyptic science fiction novel set in a world beset by climate change, the rise of an authoritarian ruler, and the constant threat of violence would take me out of my worries, but Butler's transcendent writing was just what I needed. I haven't had time to explore her other work, but that's what the upcoming holidays are for! Next on my list is *Kindred*, described as a science fiction story modeled after slave narratives. *Kindred* tells what happens when Dana, a young black woman in 1970s California time travels to the pre-Civil War South. It's also been adapted into an 8-part season which will drop on Hulu December 13. I need to read it before I can binge it, so I'll have to gift myself a copy of *Kindred* asap!



IMAGE - DIGITAL DRAFT OF COVER OF ARTS AND LEISURE, NEW YORK TIMES, 11/27/22

Teacher Creator

By Randy Rambo, Illinois Valley Community College (ret.)

With the help of students, my discovery of the pleasures of photography opened up a wonderful world for me about ten years ago. As an English instructor at Illinois Valley Community College in Oglesby, Illinois, I regularly had students write an essay about a photograph or painting of their choice. It was not a research paper or an essay requiring special knowledge of art. Instead, I asked students to draw conclusions about possible meanings suggested by their photograph or painting and to support those conclusions with descriptions of the artwork. I enjoyed the impressive insights and descriptions that students presented as they developed their interpretations. My enjoyment of the students' essays helped lead to my passion for photography.

I am drawn mainly to nature and wildlife photography. Even without photography, I have a love for nature, but helping others appreciate nature and wildlife through my photographs is especially rewarding. The pictures of the Monarch butterfly and the Swallowtail butterfly are from my own garden, so capturing the beauty of nature was just a matter of heading to my small backyard garden. I hope that seeing the butterflies up close helps viewers make meaningful connections as they notice the beauty and intricacies of the creatures that might otherwise be overlooked.

Birds are another favorite subject of mine. As with the pictures of the butterflies, the pictures of the Chickadee and the Bald Eagle can take viewers close enough to feel a connection to the creatures. Each is a picture of a particular bird at a particular moment, and the photographs allow us to be a part of that moment. In this way, wildlife photography helps viewers better appreciate the amazing natural world around us that we sometimes, or maybe even often, do not notice.

I recently retired after thirty years of teaching English at the college level, and while I will always love reading and writing, photography gives me an artistic outlet that provides great satisfaction. Taking pictures is an enjoyable activity in itself and is my easiest entrance into that "flow" state in which everything but the task at hand seems to melt away, but helping others enjoy the wonders and beauty of nature is even more satisfying.



Close-up of a swallowtail butterfly on the bloom of a cone flower in Princeton, Illinois



Close-up of a monarch butterfly in Princeton, Illinois



**SAVE
THE DATE**

MARCH FORTH
into
**4TH QUARTER
MATTERS**



**03
04
23**

Millikin University, Deatur Illinois

March forth into the end of the school year with a day of professional development geared toward helping teachers remain focused and positive throughout the fourth quarter of the school year. You'll receive new ideas and inspiration to be sure that Fourth Quarter Matters for you and your students.

If you are interested in sharing a fabulous and inspirational idea at Fourth Quarter Matters, reach out to Jennifer Gouin (jgouin@lchsailers.org) or Michelle Ryan (mryan@lchsailers.org).