Kansas English

2020, Volume 101, Number 1

Kansas Association of Teachers of English

Sun Seeker by Jenni Bader

In this issue ...

Kansas English

The peer-reviewed journal of the Kansas Association of Teachers of English
2020, Volume 101, Number 1

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Kansas English is published once a year by the Kansas Association of Teachers of English (KATE), a state affiliate of the National Council of Teachers of English. Annual memberships for KATE are $30 ($10 for students/retirees) and can be purchased at www.kansasenglish.org. Communication regarding *Kansas English* can be directed to the editor at Katie.Cramer@wichita.edu.

Kansas English Author Guide

Kansas English is the peer-reviewed journal of the Kansas Association of Teachers of English (KATE). It publishes articles and materials on subjects of interest to English teachers, including scholarly articles, reflective/practitioner essays, opinion pieces, interviews, book reviews, and creative works. *Kansas English* publishes about 80 percent of the manuscripts it receives each year. Specifically, consider submitting the following types of manuscripts:

1. **Practitioner Pieces** describing how you teach a particular text, skill, or concept in your English language arts classroom.
2. **Scholarly Articles**, including research studies and academic arguments supported by research in English education.
3. **Reflective Essays** about teaching English language arts.
4. **Creative Works** (e.g., poetry, vignettes) related to teaching English.
5. **Interviews** with authors (children's, YA, and adult) and experts in the field of English language arts.
6. **Book Reviews**[1] of recently published young adult literature and English pedagogy texts.
7. **Conversation Pieces** in response to previously published work in *Kansas English*.
8. **Kansas-Specific Articles** that would be of interest to Kansas English teachers.

DEADLINE for submissions for the 2021 issue of *Kansas English*: January 15, 2021

MANUSCRIPT REQUIREMENTS

- **Length:** Manuscripts should typically not exceed 15 pages, excluding references.

- **Format:** Manuscripts should be written in 12 pt. Times New Roman font and double-spaced throughout, including quotations and reference list, and composed using a recent version of Microsoft Word.

- **Style:** Manuscripts must adhere to the latest edition of APA Style. Authors must ensure that all sources in the reference list are formatted according to APA Style and that all in-text citations for quoted material from print text includes page numbers. Please note: a cover page is not necessary or desired.

- **Blinding:** Manuscripts must be blinded. Names of submitting authors should not appear anywhere in the manuscript. If authors cite their own published work, they must delete their names and other identifying information and place substitute words in brackets, for example [name deleted to maintain integrity of review process] or [Author 1], [Author 2]. This should occur both in the manuscript and the references list. Authors will add self-citation information back into manuscript before submitting the final draft.

- **Abstract and Keywords:** All practitioner pieces, scholarly articles, reflective essays, interviews, conversation pieces, and Kansas-specific articles must include an abstract (no more than 200 words) and a list of keywords.

[1] All YA book reviews must be submitted to YA Book Review Editor John Franklin, as described on the next page.

Kansas English Author Guide (cont.)

SUBMITTING THE MANUSCRIPT

All manuscripts—except for reviews of young adult literature—should be submitted electronically as an attachment to the Editor of *Kansas English* at Katie.Cramer@wichita.edu. During the academic year, look for a confirmation email from the Editor within 2-3 business days. If you do not receive an email confirming receipt of your submission, please resubmit.

In **a single email**, authors should complete the following tasks:

1. In the **subject** line, write Kansas English Manuscript Submission.
2. In the **body** of the email, please include all of the following information:
    a. Full names of authors. If there is more than one author, indicate author order (e.g., first author, second author).
    b. Affiliation for all authors (e.g., school, university, organization)
    c. Email addresses for all authors
    d. Type of submission (e.g., practitioner piece, scholarly article, reflective essay); this informs the peer review process.
    e. Statement that the article is original, has not been published previously in other journals and/or books, and is not a simultaneous submission.
3. **Attach** the manuscript as a single attachment, ensuring that all manuscript requirements (see previous page) are met.

REVIEW PROCESS

Each manuscript receives a blind review by at least two members of the review board, unless the content or length makes it inappropriate for the journal. The review board typically makes a final decision regarding publication within three months of the posted submission deadline. Submitted manuscripts may be edited for clarity, accuracy, readability, and publication style.

SUBMITTING YA BOOK REVIEWS

YA Book Review Requirements

YA book reviews should feature books published within the past five years and be 300-500 words in length. Reviews should include (1) a relevant and catchy title, (2) the book's year of publication and author, (3) textual information (e.g., character, conflict, plot, setting, theme), (4) how/why the book will appeal to middle/high school readers, (5) how the book could be included in a course curriculum, (6) possible challenges that might arise from teaching the book, and (7) a description of what you like best about the book.

Submission Process for YA Book Reviews

Email your review as a Microsoft Word document attachment to the *Kansas English* YA Book Review Editor John Franklin at jfranklin@pittstate.edu. In the subject line write: Kansas English Book Review submission. In a separate attachment, include: your name, your affiliation (school), a brief biography (no more than 150 words), and a statement that this review is original, unpublished and is not being submitted elsewhere. During the academic year, look for a confirmation email from the YA Book Review Editor within 2-3 business days. If you do not receive an email confirming receipt of your submission, please resubmit.

Kansas English 2020, Volume 101, Number 1

From the Editor

YA BOOKS THAT EXPLORE THE INTERSECTIONALITY OF RACE AND OTHER IDENTITIES

June 2020

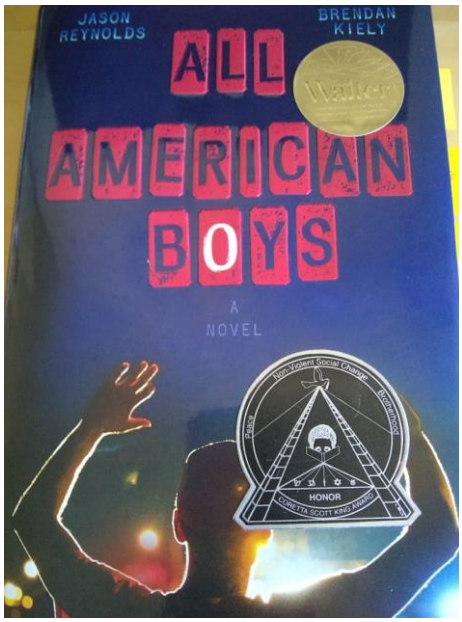
Dear Readers,

I hope you and your loved ones are staying safe and healthy during the COVID-19 pandemic. I hope that you are finding rest and rejuvenation after schools' abrupt but necessary move to online/remote learning in March to mitigate the spread of the virus. And I hope you are aware that the Kansas Association of Teachers of English (KATE) is offering a variety of ways to stay connected, including several virtual events that you can explore on the newly redesigned KATE website (kansasenglish.org), thanks to the leadership of KATE President Nathan Whitman. You should also visit the KATE Blog, which was recently revitalized by Michaela Liebst and is thriving with multiple insightful posts each month (have you considered submitting your own work yet?).

I would be remiss if I did not also acknowledge and voice my support for the important antiracism work happening across the state, nation, and world in response to ongoing violence against people of color, and I encourage you to review NCTE's antiracism statement. All manuscripts for this issue were submitted in mid-January, well before the COVID-19 pandemic and the widespread protests against systemic racism and white supremacy. In this issue of *Kansas English*, you will find scholarly articles and practitioner pieces that will inform your work, as well as reflective and creative pieces that will help you see our profession from new perspectives. I want to highlight Beth Gulley's practitioner piece on blogging and joyful writing, as it may inform your instructional delivery as schools make plans for reopening in the time of COVID-19. I also want to draw your attention to three reviews of YA books that depict the intersectionality of race and other facets of identity: Alexis Bean's review of Tomi Adeyemi's *Children of Blood and Bone*, Spencer Arndt's review of Jason Reynolds's *For Every One*, and Blake Overman's review of Adib Khorram's *Darius the Great Is Not Okay*.

I would also like to make a YA book recommendation of my own that will inform your and your students' understanding of racism and white supremacy: Jason Reynolds and Brendan Kiely's award-winning *All American Boys* (2015). I have been teaching this novel since spring 2017 in my students' first English methods course at WSU in which we learn about effective curriculum design

using Grant Wiggins and Jay McTighe's *Understanding by Design* while also considering the impacts of racism, privilege, and white supremacy.



All American Boys depicts the events and aftermath of police violence against an unarmed Black high school student named Rashad and a White classmate named Quinn who witnesses the attack. Reynolds and Kiely, who are Black and White, respectively, tell the story in chapters that alternate between Rashad's and Quinn's perspectives, giving White readers and readers of color mirrors and windows into their own and others' experiences and perspectives. It also provides the opportunity for my students, the majority of whom are White, to examine their own privilege alongside Quinn, while also raising questions about bias, prejudice, and racism in law enforcement, education, and mainstream media. Our study of *All American Boys* is accompanied by opportunities for discussion, writing, reflection, and inquiry as students design an interdisciplinary unit plan that emphasizes social justice.

I hope you will consider adding these YA books to your summer reading and classroom library; I hope you enjoy this issue of *Kansas English*; and I hope you will consider participating in the professional conversation by submitting your own work for the 2021 issue!

Until next time, happy teaching and learning!

Katherine Mason Cramer

STEPPING INTO THE MARGINS: THE ART OF TEACHER(LESS) COMPOSING

Sarah J. Donovan
Oklahoma State University

Abstract
A junior high teacher designed a writing class around freewriting with a series of routines that emphasize writer agency and a culture of support. This article chronicles how one teacher learned to believe in the value of freewriting as the core curriculum of her writing class. The author presents practices that evolved from Peter Elbow's conception of freewriting, writing-related artifacts that support the development of a writing identity, and what a semester of freewriting suggests about the role of the teacher in a writing class.

Keywords
low stakes writing, writing workshop, writing instruction, reflection, assessment, freewriting

"Good morning, I have some ideas for writing today. First, a word: assiduous. My husband is concerned that I may be too assiduous—but in the wrong areas of my life. I work really hard at reading and writing but not really hard to keep up our apartment. I leave dishes in the sink. Are you assiduous? In what areas of your life?" I say.

It's first period on a Monday morning. One student is looking in his trapper for his journal. Another student is reading a flyer about the upcoming junior high dance. I take a breath to give students time to settle in, but a few are looking at me with a knowing smile while others have already begun to write.

"Next: art," I continue. "Art is another idea for today. I notice some students doodling during class, and sometimes that doodling is pretty amazing. What do you think? Is doodling art?"

I lock eyes with Julia, one of the students I know to be a great artist. I wonder if she will write about this one today.

"Now for a story: you may have a story on your mind already, but if you're in the mood for story-writing, how about this first line to start a story? Or maybe you need some help getting into a writing flow today, so a list might be a good way to get your pencil moving. Make list of five things you'd like to change in the world, and why not try some anaphora, which is the repetition of phrases at the beginning of lines. So, several of options today," I say.

The students know this routine, and they know that the topics I mention are merely suggestions for writing (see Table 1), but tell them that they are always free to reject these ideas and write about whatever is in their hearts or on their minds. The first seven minutes of class is theirs to write with only one rule: no walk, no talk.

"Okay, let's begin in five, four, three, two, write," I say, and by the time I say "write," almost all thirty of the students in first period are writing.

I begin each class this way, whether it is a junior high class or a college course. I project a slide with a few writing ideas, talk through the different modes (informational, argument, narrative, and poetry), and then we write. As the semester continues, student-writers launch the writing by creating writing slides. And as students write, I write. Then about four minutes in, I walk around. If a student hasn't started, I kneel down and talk through some ideas until they find a writing thread. I also watch for students who are finding the flow—getting into their writing—and students who are doing a combination of imagining on the page and in their minds. For those students, I can see in their eyes that they are working through a plot or argument. The process is different for every writer.

We actually call this beginning of class "compose for seven" because the word "compose" implies the creation of a work of art most often associated with music or poetry. In seven minutes, students create something that did not exist seven minutes prior. This is artistic labor that defies a singular process or result. (To see more writing ideas, access the QR code.) However, I do not see this as our "bellringer" or warm-up but rather the heart of our writing class and the most important work we do to nurture our writer identities. It is the deliberate emphasis on creating a community of writers by allocating substantial class time to *almost* freewriting. The practice demonstrates how writerly identity can only be developed by the actual practice of writing in a space that is at once autonomous and interdependent. Autonomous in the sense that writers must develop their own processes, but interdependent in that the writers need the shared time, space, audience, and inspiration that only a writing community—in this case a class—can offer.

In this article I share selected routines I have developed in the traditions of writing education leaders—Peter Elbow, Linda Rief, Nancie Atwell, Penny Kittle—to imagine a teacher(less) classroom: a place where lessons come from every writer and the act of writing. I share the story of when I finally committed to an all-freewrite semester and what I learned about writing and the role of the teacher.

Table 1. Today's Invitation to Write

Informational/Narrative: ***Assiduous*** means hardworking. Are you hardworking? Do you know people, characters on Netflix, or YouTubers who are hardworking? Describe the person/character and give examples of their assiduity. Try beginning with a story of the example.	**Argument:** Art is something created with imagination and skill; it expresses important ideas or feelings. **Can doodling be considered art?** ● First, define doodling. ● Then, discuss who would say it is art and why. ● Then, discuss who would say it is not and why. ● Finally, state your position as it relates to both sides.
Narrative: *Everything stopped. People were like statues all around me. People in cars, men on bicycles,*	**Poem/List:** Make a list of five to ten things you wish you could change in the world, things

babies in strollers -- frozen in time, lifeless. Continue this story. Add sensory details to the setting. Try some dialogue. Invent names of the characters with a trait or phrase that is unique to them.	you wish you could do, places you wish to see, people who you care about -- you get the idea. To make it more poetic, use **anaphora** -- the repetition of a phrase at the beginning of each line: *I wish, I wish, I wis*h.

Low Stakes Writing: Quickwrites and Freewriting

Peter Elbow (1997) argues that teachers will have an easier and more productive time with student writing if we make a distinction between high stakes and low stakes writing and also between high stakes and low stakes ways of responding to student writing. Like the quickwrite, the purpose of low stakes assignments is to move students to think, learn, and understand more of the content. Low stakes writing is informal and thus tends to be graded (or not graded) as such. The benefits of daily practice in low stakes writing endure because it nurtures a habit of mind and way of being. High stakes writing also produces learning but the writer has a responsibility to the content and clarity for the reader (see Table 1).

Table 2. Low Stakes Verses High Stakes Writing

Low Stakes Writing	High Stakes Writing
• Not graded • No specific conditions to meet • No assigned topic • Purpose to explore, express, try new approaches to writing or craft moves • Assumes it is personal and that no one will read it although an implied audience may exist • Varies based on the writer's interests and writerly identity	• Graded for content and mechanics • Must conform to a guideline usually set by the teacher • Purpose to implement a lesson, think about a topic, and potentially to evaluate performance • Requires us to consider a formal audience but the teacher may be the only one who reads it • Varies in complexity based on age and stage of development

Quickwrites are a brief response to prompts to start a lesson, activate prior knowledge, and provide a low-stakes writing opportunity (Fisher & Frey, 2012; Green, Smith, & Brown, 2007). Asking students to respond through written tasks is well established as a method for examining students' prior knowledge before learning and for assessing learning during and after secondary classroom activities (Mason, Benedek-Wood, & Valasa, 2009). Quickwrites support content learning by presenting a nonthreatening, informal, and brief writing activity for students and can be used for assessing what students have learned in class activities and text reading (Fisher & Frey, 2004). Constructed paragraph responses, similar in format to the quickwrite, are included in standardized tests such as The National Assessment Educational Performance (The Nation's Report Card, 2007) to evaluate student text comprehension.

In *The Quickwrite Handbook: 100 Mentor Texts to Jumpstart Your Students' Thinking and Writing* (2018), Linda Rief advocates beginning class with a short piece of writing; she reads it out loud and invites students to do a quickwrite response. In just a few minutes, students are able to find a focus, bring a confluence of ideas inspired by the prompt together, and use stylistic devices to link everything together. The stakes are low, but this regular exercise builds confidence in writers. Rief

defines quickwrite as "a first draft response to a short piece of writing, usually no more than one page of poetry or prose, a drawing, an excerpt from a novel or a short picture book" (p. 3). Her framing of a quickwrite depends on a mentor text or a found idea so that the writing students see and hear pushes them into their own ideas: "This is writing to find writing, but using someone else's words to stimulate their thinking" (p. 4).

However, quickwrites are not the same as freewriting. Freewriting means to write for ten minutes "without stopping, just write whatever words come out—whether or not you are thinking or in the mood" (Elbow, 1973, p. 3). I had been doing some form of a quickwrite as part of my instruction in English language arts for a long time as a bellringer or content warm-up or, as Rief suggests, "to use someone else's words to stimulate their thinking" (2018, p. 4). However, I never committed to regular, consistent freewriting exercises as central to my curriculum until a few years ago when I began shifting my grading practices altogether (Donovan, 2015). Freewriting pedagogy requires that the teacher and writer "step outside of grading" (Elbow, 1996, p. 3). Elbow writes, "[E]very time teachers get students to do genuinely nongraded writing, they are inviting students to notice that the link between writing and grading can be broken—that it is possible to write and not worry about how the teacher will evaluate it—that it is possible to write in pursuit of one's own goals and standards and not just someone else's" (1996, p. 3). To help students write in support of *their* own goals, I had to commit to nongraded, freewriting consistently and value that work as such—not as peripheral to the class but *as* our class.

Our seventh grade English language arts class wrote on day one and wrote nearly every day after for the entire school year (except on days with typical schooling intrusions like fire and lockdown drills or testing). We did a combination of Linda Rief's quickwrite and Peter Elbow's freewrite in that we offered prompts and images to inspire writing, but we did not use mentor texts as Rief suggests. We began every class the way I began this article except my body and voice moved gradually into the margins.

Toward Teacher*less* Writing

To be successful in this plan, I had to shift my position in the classroom to a co-writer rather than teacher. The more I think about the role and classroom positioning of "teacher" and "student," the closer I came to admitting that these labels/positions create repression—the action or process of suppressing a thought or desire in oneself so that it remains unconscious—in the classroom. As long as students saw me as "the teacher," they would ask my permission to write. Peter Elbow, in *Writing Without Teachers,* defines teacherless writing as such:

> The teacherless writing class is a place where there is learning but no teaching. It is possible to learn something and not be taught. It is possible to be a student and not have a teacher. If the student's function is to learn and the teacher's to teach, then the student can function without the teacher, but the teacher cannot function without the student ... I think teachers learn to be more *useful* when it is clearer that they are not *necessary*. The teacherless class has helped me as a teacher because it is an ideal laboratory for learning along with the students and being useful to them in that way. (1998, viii)

By starting class with the "compose for seven" every day for an entire semester, I tried to undo the culture of repression in student writing by trying to make conscious in students their thoughts and desires. In the forty minutes we had together each day, I tried to repress the teacher in me and make alive the writer in me—to be *useful* to the students and not *necessary.* And the truth is that once students learned to listen to their own interests and desires, they learned that they didn't really need me to be a teacher; they just needed me to be a writer talking about how I came up with ideas, took risks, solved problems, and wrote to both express and learn.

Over time, the students then took on a supportive role for one another in leading the "compose for seven" and modeling their writerly ways. In this way, I saw our class as an *almost* totally freewriting class because, like Rief's work with quickwrites, the daily slides used someone else's words. I saw this as more of a scaffold and something many writers do—we look for inspiration. Students are truly free to write about whatever is in their hearts or on their minds.

The beginning-of-class routine shifted from my voice and body to theirs:

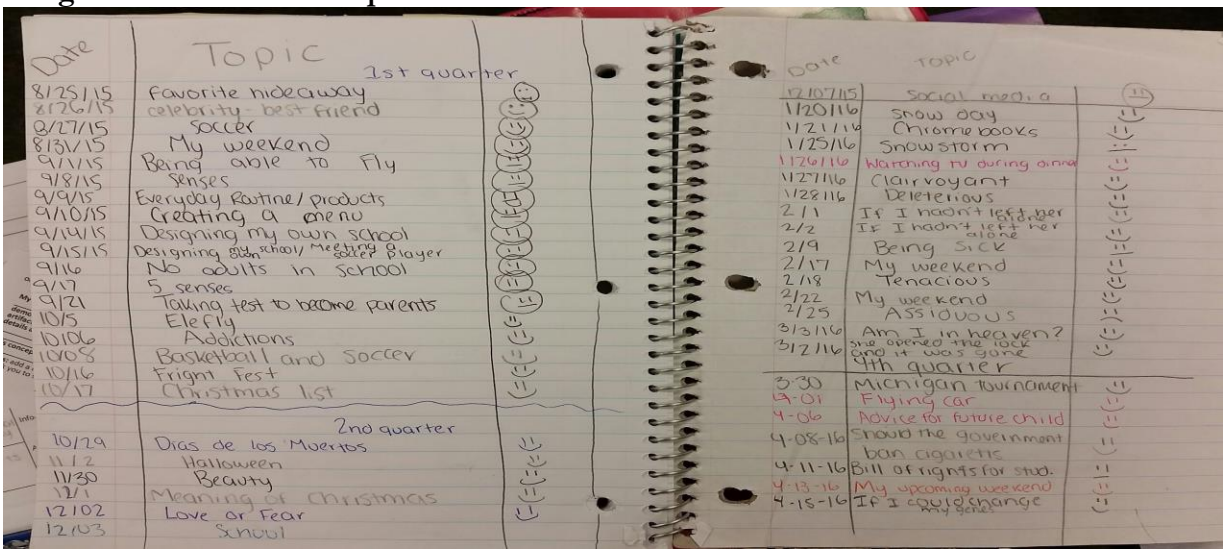
Good morning, class. I hope you like the ideas I have created for you. The first is a picture of my Golden Retriever, Cookie. You can write about your own pet or create a story with Cookie as the hero. Another option is to make an argument. Here is a claim: Should junior high students be able to organize a walk-out during school hours? [This was right after the Stoneman Douglas school shooting.] *Be sure you write about all the different sides. And if your writing today doesn't come, maybe try a list. Let your parents know now what you'd like for Christmas.*

Illuminating Your Writer Identity: The Flow Chart

The flow chart is the second routine of the freewrite classroom. When the freewrite exercise ends, I asked students to make a note in their "flow chart," a page in the back of the notebook where they document the date, topic, and writing experience. Most students used smiley faces to indicate they found the flow or got into their writing, a straight mouth to indicate it was an "okay" writing experience, and a frown to indicate that writing was tough going that day. (See Image 1. Flow Chart Example.)

In creating and reflecting on the flowchart, a writer can, over time, begin to see trends in their choices and preferences along with patterns of engagement. While I did not read or collect students' notebooks, I did look at their table of contents and shared my own to model what I was noticing in my writing preferences and style. In Table 2, for example, this writer found some inspiration in words from the slides; on January 27, they wrote about being "clairvoyant," and on Jan. 28, they found the flow with "deleterious." However, they did not have a joyful writing experience on February 25 with "assiduous." (Notice the sad face?) The flow chart reveals that they have made choices to write about their life on some days and to try out new topics and modes on other days. In observing our writing habits, we can also acknowledge and accept that some days bring more words than others, and some topics comfort while others agitate.

Image 1. Flow Chart Example

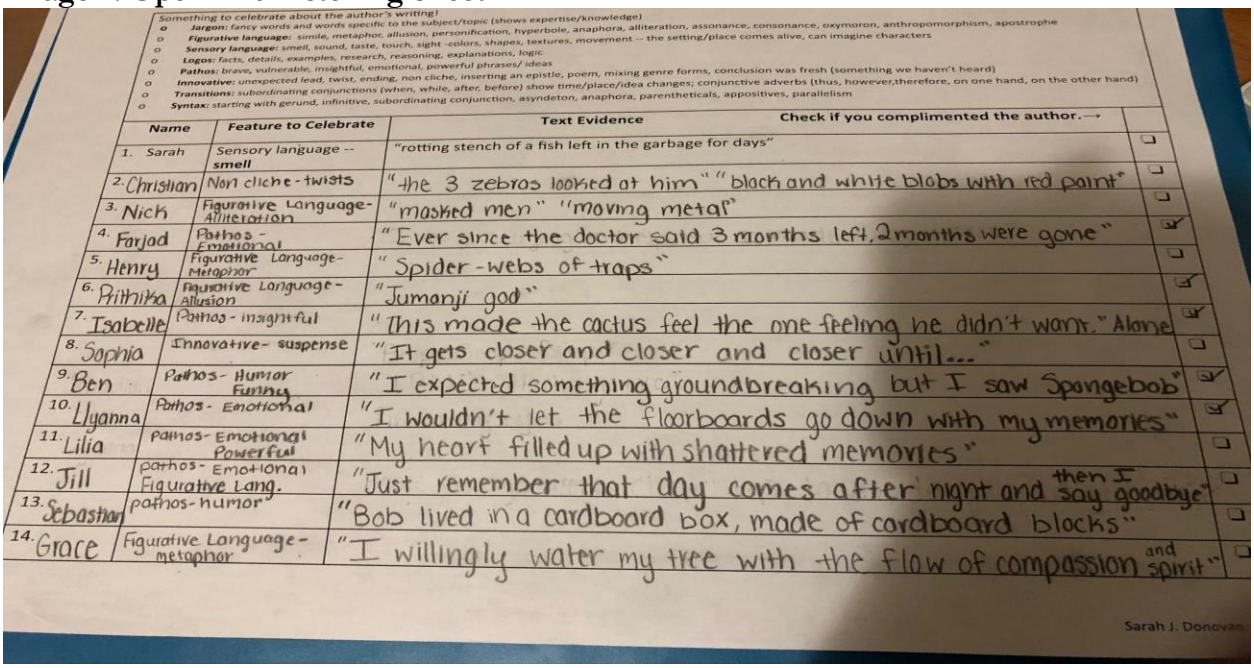


Nurturing a Community of Co-Teachers: Open Mic

One more freewrite routine is open mic. On Fridays, we don't write at all, so I guess we don't freewrite every day after all. Friday is for revisiting pieces, listening to what we created, and bearing witness to the voices of other writers. We listen. Students choose what they'd like to share—something from their notebook, something they are working on (that they'd like to try out on an audience), or something new. One writer wrote a rather formal argument piece on GMO's and was anxious for her next sharing day because she wanted to inform others. Another writer shared a stand-up comedy piece early in the semester; it bombed, but they reworked it and tried again later in the semester with more success.

During the open mic presentations, the audience listens for techniques to celebrate and keep notes so that they can compliment their fellow writers: modes, leads, sensory and figurative language, clever lines, and powerful phrases. Image 2. Open Mic Listening Sheet offers one the techniques and phrases that one writer heard from peers during open mic.

Image 2. Open Mic Listening Sheet



Something to celebrate about the author's writing!

- **Jargon:** fancy words and words specific to the subject/topic (shows expertise/knowledge)
- **Figurative language:** simile, metaphor, allusion, personification, hyperbole, anaphora, alliteration, assonance, consonance, oxymoron, anthropomorphism, apostrophe
- **Sensory language:** smell, sound, taste, touch, sight -colors, shapes, textures, movement -- the setting/place comes alive, can imagine characters
- **Logos:** facts, details, examples, research, reasoning, explanations, logic
- **Pathos:** brave, vulnerable, insightful, emotional, powerful phrases/ ideas
- **Innovative:** unexpected lead, twist, ending, non cliche, inserting an epistle, poem, mixing genre forms, conclusion was fresh (something we haven't heard)
- **Transitions:** subordinating conjunctions (when, while, after, before) show time/place/idea changes; conjunctive adverbs (thus, however,therefore, on one hand, on the other hand)
- **Syntax:** starting with gerund, infinitive, subordinating conjunction, asyndeton, anaphora, parentheticals, appositives, parallelism

Name	Feature to Celebrate	Text Evidence	Check if you complimented the author.→
1. Sarah	Sensory language -- smell	"rotting stench of a fish left in the garbage for days"	☐
2. Christian	Non cliche - twists	"the 3 zebras looked at him" "black and white blobs with red paint"	☐
3. Nick	Figurative Language- Alliteration	"masked men" "moving metal"	☐
4. Farjad	Pathos - Emotional	"Ever since the doctor said 3 months left, 2 months were gone"	☑
5. Henry	Figurative Language- Metaphor	"Spider-webs of traps"	☐
6. Prithika	Figurative Language - Allusion	"Jumanji god"	☑
7. Isabelle	Pathos - insightful	"This made the cactus feel the one feeling he didn't want." Alone	☑
8. Sophia	Innovative- suspense	"It gets closer and closer and closer until..."	☐
9. Ben	Pathos- Humor Funny	"I expected something groundbreaking but I saw Spongebob"	☑
10. Lyanna	Pathos- Emotional	"I wouldn't let the floorboards go down with my memories"	☑
11. Lilia	Pathos- Emotional Powerful	"My heart filled up with shattered memories"	☐
12. Jill	pathos- Emotional Figurative Lang.	"Just remember that day comes after night and then I say goodbye"	☐
13. Sebastian	pathos- humor	"Bob lived in a cardboard box, made of cardboard blocks"	☐
14. Grace	Figurative Language- metaphor	"I willingly water my tree with the flow of compassion and spirit"	☐

Sarah J. Donovan

After students shared, we held a celebration forum where students complimented each other's work, also practicing how to accept praise. This is an example of how a compliment might sound:

Listener (looking at the writer): I would like to celebrate Jennifer's evidence when she said Americans eat a bathtub full of sugar each year. This is a powerful image, too.

Writer (looking at the listener): Thank you.

The tone of this exchange is observational which develops a positive, supportive writing community that is not concerned with evaluating but in nurturing healthy writing identities.

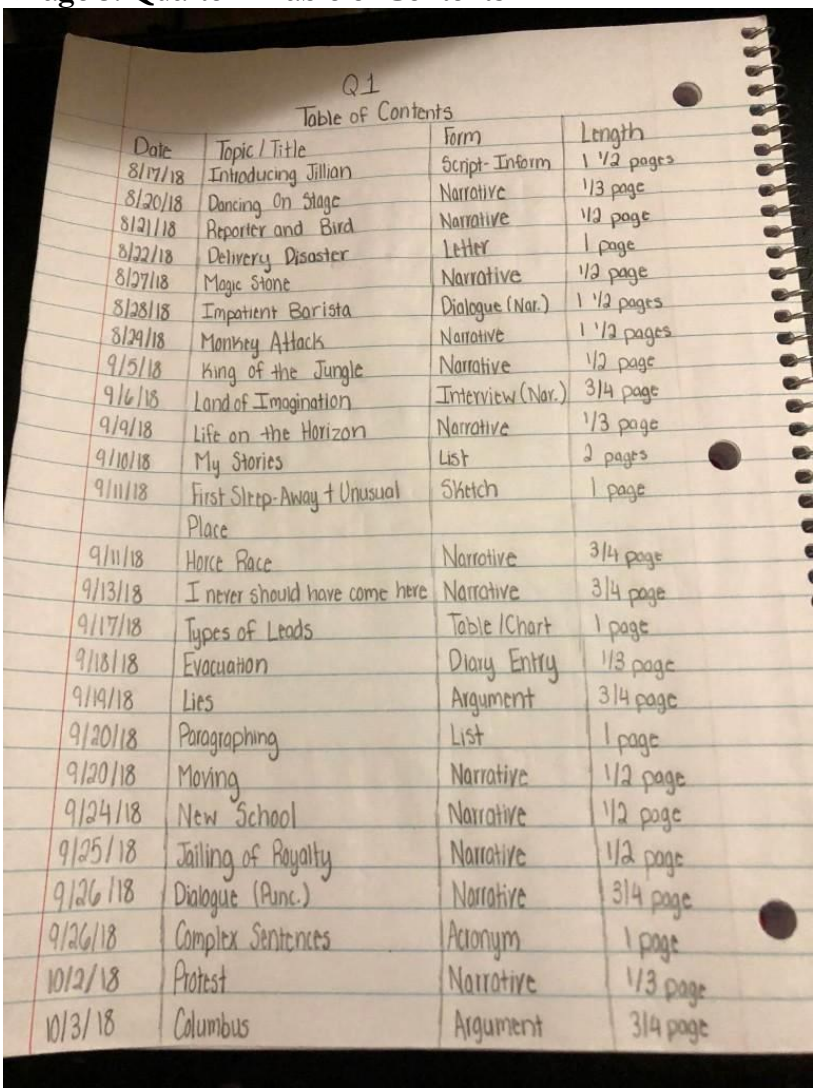
Navigating Grades

My teacher*less* role was undermined twice that semester: midterm and final grade reporting. I have only ever worked at institutions that require me to conflate weeks of writing—artifacts and

experiences that defy measurement—into one letter grade. The best I have learned to do is to invite writers to self-evaluate and assign themselves a grade for their freewriting. When students look at their writing over time, make observations, reflect on their contributions to other writers, honor writers who have inspired them, and set goals for themselves, there is no denying that freewriting routines permit genuine writerly work. Most students give themselves an "A" or "B" because they have, indeed, demonstrated growth and a deeper understanding of composition. They have done the work because they found their reason to write.

To document this growth for stakeholders—administrators, parents, and colleagues—I asked students to craft an evaluation that addressed the following questions: 1) What do you notice about your freewriting over time? 2) Which pieces are your favorite and why? 3) What have you noticed about your classmates' writing and our writing community this semester? (See Image 3. Quarter 1 Table of Contents and Table 2. Quarter 1 Reflections.) In these self-evaluations, I heard the voices of sophisticated writers who could point to what they liked and why, what and who taught them and how. In the open mic, students felt how a beautiful sentence could move their hearts or trigger laughter. They learned from and about one another. And they became more conscious of *their* writing process.

Image 3. Quarter 1 Table of Contents



Q1
Table of Contents

Date	Topic / Title	Form	Length
8/17/18	Introducing Jillian	Script- Inform	1 1/2 pages
8/20/18	Dancing On Stage	Narrative	1/3 page
8/21/18	Reporter and Bird	Narrative	1/2 page
8/22/18	Delivery Disaster	Letter	1 page
8/27/18	Magic Stone	Narrative	1/2 page
8/28/18	Impatient Barista	Dialogue (Nar.)	1 1/2 pages
8/29/18	Monkey Attack	Narrative	1 1/2 pages
9/5/18	King of the Jungle	Narrative	1/2 page
9/6/18	Land of Imagination	Interview (Nar.)	3/4 page
9/9/18	Life on the Horizon	Narrative	1/3 page
9/10/18	My Stories	List	2 pages
9/11/18	First Sleep-Away + Unusual Place	Sketch	1 page
9/11/18	Horse Race	Narrative	3/4 page
9/13/18	I never should have come here	Narrative	3/4 page
9/17/18	Types of Leads	Table /Chart	1 page
9/18/18	Evacuation	Diary Entry	1/3 page
9/19/18	Lies	Argument	3/4 page
9/20/18	Paragraphing	List	1 page
9/20/18	Moving	Narrative	1/2 page
9/24/18	New School	Narrative	1/2 page
9/25/18	Jailing of Royalty	Narrative	1/2 page
9/26/18	Dialogue (Punc.)	Narrative	3/4 page
9/26/18	Complex Sentences	Acronym	1 page
10/2/18	Protest	Narrative	1/3 page
10/3/18	Columbus	Argument	3/4 page

Table 3. Quarter 1 Reflections

What I notice about my freewrites over time:	A favorite piece:	What I notice about our writing community:
I have written about a variety of topics that range from *Dancing to Disaster* to *Protests* to *Worlds of Fiction*! I have written about many different topics, in various forms! I have written narratives, letters, diary entries, and arguments. I have certainly demonstrated a variety in my topics and formats. I notice the pieces "Protest," "Evacuation," and "Life on the Horizon" are much shorter than pieces such as "Monkey Attack," and "The impatient Barista" because of my unfamiliarity with the topics. Immigration is a topic that is very unfamiliar and mundane to me, which is what those pieces were about.	I am proud of "King of the Jungle" because I found it to be very descriptive and insightful, because I wrote from an animal's point of view. What inspired this piece was the courtyard outside of school. When I had looked outside it reminded me of a jungle, and then I began to daydream about the animals in a jungle, so there a lightbulb went off in my head. I thought about a proper king and then realized that there was a lot of rivalry for the best animal, which then influenced my writing. What I was trying to do in this piece was to show the rivalry and almost compare the differences of a lion and tiger, without revealing to the reader who exactly I was talking about. I used description to describe the creatures' feelings for clues without revealing any obvious clues, which was a new style of writing for me.	I am growing as a writer by listening to my peers and trying to incorporate more pathos and description like they do. I usually write with just narrating scenes, but as I listened to more and more of my peers, I tried to incorporate more descriptions and specific types of pathos, like humor. I saw many different topics that inspired some of my own writing, some that made me laugh, and others that made me cry.

Concluding Thoughts

The routines used in this writing class are based on my previous experiences learning how to teach writing in graduate school (where we studied Peter Elbow's work alongside George Hillocks, Nancie Atwell, Dan Kirby, and Tom Liner) and, more recently, in writing with other teachers in a monthly five-day writing challenge. Still, when it comes to teaching writing within a school, with the schedules and bells and testing and grading requirements, I found that the practices I knew were most important were often pushed to the margins for more teacher-directed writing units and common assessments. What writers need is time to write so that they can navigate all the decisions that writers make—mode, form, genre, sequence, tone, mood, technique, purpose, and process. And only in looking at a body of work, the cumulative effect of daily writing, can a writer (or the teacher required to submit a grade) begin know a student's writerly ways.

Looking back at the students' work shared in this article, I am humbled *not* to see my influence in their artifacts and reflections. Students came into class hoping to learn how to write or hoping *not* to have to do much writing. They looked to me, the teacher, for what to do, how to do it, and how well it was done. Together, we learned that there is no one writing process and that there is no such thing as the "best" writer or "best" way of writing. After our first eight weeks of only freewriting, students looked inward and to one another for what to do, how to do it, and how well it was done. They learned to recognize the value of other writers in a writing life. And I learned that a writing teacher perhaps serves students best by being useful as just another writer in the room.

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Author Biography

Sarah J. Donovan, Ph.D., is a former junior high language arts teacher of fifteen years and an Assistant Professor of Secondary English Education at Oklahoma State University. She wrote Genocide Literature in Middle and Secondary Classrooms (2016) and the young adult novel, Alone Together (2018). She hosts a monthly 5-day writing challenge for teachers, by teachers on her blog, Ethical ELA, that also includes resources for secondary teachers. Her research focuses on inclusive curriculum and ethical methods of instruction. She can be reached at sarah.j.donovan@okstate.edu.

SHAPING RAINBOWS

Blake Overman
Wichita State University

A queer educator's reflection of their personal journey. How their past has informed their perspective, and how they can use this perspective to support and guide their students.

I have been
defined by a single word
which carries multiple meanings:
stupid, wrong
lighthearted, carefree,
Gay
was an insult,
is a compliment,
was a curse,
is a blessing.

I was a glimmer
that twinkled
in the vast sky.
I used to be a speck of white
light that faded
and brightened
with each passing day.
I felt alone
like nothing was above me
but bleak gray clouds.
Drops shaped me. Falling
like a downpour
on an opaque night.

I am a rainbow
for innocent, glistening eyes.
I have weathered storms.
My radiance shines
through the darkness
that surrounds my little lights
I show them
streams of color.
shades and hues
rather than white, black,
or gray.

Author Biography

Blake Overman is committed to collaborating to find ways to reach a wide breadth of students and create impactful instruction and lasting literacies. Placing great emphasis on relevance, he hopes to engage his students to apply themselves in his classroom. He appreciates mutual initiatives amongst unique identities. An avid lover of visual media, particularly film, he is excited to incorporate it into his curriculum. In May 2020, he completed his BA in English Education 6-12 with a minor in Theater at Wichita State University. Blake hopes to pursue his best self, through continued education and his students. He will begin a graduate teaching assistantship in Wichita State's English Department in fall 2020 where he is pursuing his master's degree. Blake can be reached at baoverman@shockers.wichita.edu.

YA Book Review

I WILL RISE: A REVIEW OF TOMI ADEYEMI'S *CHILDREN OF BLOOD AND BONE*

Alexis Bean
L.M. Smith Middle School, Birmingham, AL

Children of Blood and Bone, published in 2018 and a finalist of 2019 John C. Morris Debut YA Award, envelops the reader in fantasy and power, pulling them into the hate-filled life of seventeen-year-old Zelie, relishing her sorrow and pain, while enduring the oppression and persecution of her people. Readers vicariously experience the dreaded "Raid" in ways that link chains, holding them prisoner to Adeyemi's prose.

Zelie (along with a few other girls like her) is being secretly taught to fight back against the guards of the Kingdom. In the fantasy world Adeyemi created, there are two "races" of people. There are the Kosidan and the Diviners, who (when they come of age) turn into the Maji, people who can wield one of the ten types of magic. That is before King Saran massacred all living Maji and destroyed magic before the young children could have a taste of what it is like to experience power. By a twist of fate, Zelie meets Princess Amari, who is running for her life, and Prince Inan, who is pursuing her; these siblings were raised in King Saran's palace to hate all magic. With her brother, Tzain, and her newly found friend/enemies, Zelie embarks on a quest to restore magic to the Land of Orisha.

As an answer to so many tragedies in our society, *Children of Blood and Bone* was written in remembrance of unarmed black men, women, and children who were shot down by police. After a string of violent incidents demonstrating police brutality, Adeyemi felt that she needed to do something meaningful to fight this injustice. She accomplished that by allowing us to view oppression and racial violence not only through multiple perspectives but also in a context that transcends genres and cultures. The two levels of this book, the fantasy and the social response, are perfectly in tune with curriculum that addresses discrimination and oppression. With its

As an answer to so many tragedies in our society, *Children of Blood and Bone* was written in remembrance of unarmed black men, women, and children who were shot down by police. After a string of violent incidents demonstrating police brutality, Adeyemi felt that she needed to do something meaningful to fight this injustice. She accomplished that by allowing us to view oppression and racial violence not only through multiple perspectives but also in a context that transcends genres and cultures.

beautifully crafted plot, this work of fiction can allow our students to experience trauma and racism while safely hiding behind a wall of magic and fairy-tale lands. Because of slight sexual depictions, I would suggest an audience of grades 9-12 for this book. I do not anticipate that anyone would challenge this book being used in a high school curriculum.

I could easily imagine teaching this novel in collaboration with Civil Rights Movement studies in History common core, comparing the fantastical world that Adeyemi created and the trials her characters go through with the 1960s Civil Rights Movement, racial and social oppression and segregation, Jim Crow and anti-racism protests as an in-depth look at how literature mirrors social conflict. I would also want to include a lesson on how the author addresses police brutality and racial violence in her book as a direct commentary on violent incidents depicted on our nightly news. Speaking as a teacher who preaches emotional literacy, I believe that this is a fantastic book to reach across racial backgrounds as it unites characters and readers against evils in the world. I would hope that my students would be able to see the parallel between the literature and their own reality.

Tomi Adeyemi's mythical writing style captures you with her independent, sassy characters and fills you with the passion to fight alongside them. The dynamic characters grow before your eyes through independence, tough (sometimes brutally unnatural) love, friendship, and heart wrenching trauma. The pain, sorrow, rage, forgiveness, powerlessness, and rebellion are felt in such a force you will find yourself crying, screaming, and gearing up for battle. As Adeyemi says, "we have been knocked down for far too long. Now, let's rise" (p. 527).

Author Biography

Born in Valley Center, Kansas, Alexis Bean graduated from Wichita State University in spring 2020 with a Bachelor of Arts in Education, Secondary English Language Arts 6-12. She completed her teaching internship in spring 2020 at Wichita Heights High School in USD 259. Alexis is a proud Air Force wife and a mother to a beautiful two-year-old boy. She has two rescue dogs and lives in Birmingham, AL, with her husband. She presented at the 2019 Kansas Association of Teachers of English (KATE) Conference on young adult literature and lesson implementation in the classroom. In fall 2020, Alexis will assume the head teaching position for eighth grade English language arts at L.M. Smith Middle School in Birmingham, AL. She can be reached at atbean@shockers.wichita.edu.

DEALING WITH DEATH IN LIFE AND LITERATURE

Deborah Eades McNemee
Andover Central High School

Abstract
As teachers of English, we cannot escape exposing our students to emotional triggers in the classroom. When my student's father (a former classmate of mine) died by suicide, I found myself struggling with the ever-present emotional trigger of death and/or suicide in every major literary work scheduled for study that year. Death is unavoidable. Reading about death is also, apparently, unavoidable, but I was not convinced that violent death deserved so much of our literary attention, especially for this young man whose pain was raw and new.

Keywords
suicide in literature, death in literature, death scenes, emotional triggers, suicide as plot

I saw it on the news first. Between commentary on road construction and community happenings, the news anchor read a thirty-second blip of a story about a missing man. He was last seen on the afternoon of the previous day. He had been on a walk, but not really dressed for it. He had left the house in his sandals. The photo showed a familiar face. I knew him. I had attended high school with him. He was a great guy. Everyone liked him. I'd seen him just a few weeks before at our open house because his son was in my class.

About a week later, I attended his funeral. My old acquaintance, my student's father, had taken his own life.

The son missed a few days, naturally, and the administration requested schoolwork be sent home, including tests. Obliging, I sent home an exam over the novel we had just finished reading in class. The mom and the school would work together to ensure academic integrity. Testing fidelity, however, was not the thing that woke me up in the middle of the next night. Instead, the realization of what the son had finished reading and then analyzed on the essay portion of the test shot through my subconscious and shook me awake with such urgency my dog barked as if an intruder had burst through the door.

The week my student's father disappeared, we had closed in on the last ten pages of Steinbeck's *Of Mice and Men*.

I love my job, but I despise teaching this novel. While I find beauty and power in Steinbeck's emotional use of description, I dread experiencing the tragedy of The Great Depression with these hopeless characters. Every year, I press our department to remove this novel from our curriculum or at least make it optional. As you can probably guess, I'm voted down every time.

My concern with this novel, especially as an addition to a long list of death-focused stories touting the hopelessness of humanity, had unfortunately and sickeningly come to fruition with the death of this boy's father. While my student was reading about Lenny getting his brains blown out

by a friend he trusted and loved, he was also struggling with the very real and quite similar death of his own father—not by the hand of a trusted friend, but by his own. His father—the man my student and the community knew to be loving and kind, generous and funny—had violently removed himself from the world, too.

As much as we English teachers like to believe that reading about tough issues opens a door to healthy conversation for our students, what if that isn't always the case? What if reading about tough issues creates emotional triggers that inhibit learning? What if the school-wide knowledge of a father's suicide coupled with the uncomfortable analysis of an empathetic character's shocking death spawns crushing grief, anger, and confusion that the son is ill prepared to deal with in a classroom setting? Further, what if the next piece scheduled for study includes more suicide as Haemon grieves the loss of Antigone, and Haemon's mother grieves her son?

What if every single major work for the year included death, suicide, or murder? That's what we were up against. *Of Mice and Men*, *Antigone*, *Julius Caesar*, *Unbroken*, *Lord of the Flies*, and *To Kill a Mockingbird* rounded out the reading list. The topic, conversation, and analysis of death was unavoidable. Of course, in life it is also unavoidable. I couldn't remove the topic from my classroom, but for crying out loud, could the kid get a break? Could the teacher?

Until that year, I hadn't realized the extent to which we study death and suicide in the ELA classroom. Most ELA teachers understand the glorious blessing and burden unique to our subject area. We get to guide our students in discussion of truly important topics. We have this amazing opportunity to form places of inclusion in our classrooms. We can present novels, letters, speeches and essays to help students figure out where they belong. As societal norms change, we are able to speak more freely about Poe's drug addition, Fitzgerald's alcoholism, Dickinson's social anxiety, and Woolf's mental health. We can openly discuss the use of *they* not only as a singular pronoun but also as an appropriate pronoun. In fact, we worry about the anxiety triggered when we misuse it.

> I strive to tip the scale in hope's favor because if I must analyze death and suicide as part of the literature curriculum, the very, very least I can do is offer hope in the face of it.

Do we worry as much about anxiety caused by education's obsession with suicide and death-involved plots? Do we worry over the triggers aggravated by the continual analysis of death, death, death?

Dealing with death in real life is unavoidable. Reading about death is also, apparently, unavoidable, but I was not convinced that violent death deserved so much of our literary attention, especially for this young man whose pain was raw and new. Therefore, some weeks later, I changed my semester plans. *Julius Caesar* out, *A Midsummer Night's Dream* in. A little humor and romance never hurt anyone, right?

Then along came Act II, Scene 2 and Act III, Scene 2 where Hermia threatens suicide as a way to cope with heartbreak. We were right back to the original conundrum, this time as a comedic use of hyperbolic emotional drama. I'm not sure that approach was any better than Steinbeck's supposedly justifiable and humane execution of a mentally impaired man.

Is it possible to dive into literature without the ubiquitous death scene? I must believe it is—I haven't figured out how to go about it yet—but I still believe. I'm not looking to avoid the subject altogether, but surely we can study storytelling and figurative language with a less death and suicide-obsessed literature curriculum.

This revelation has sent me on a quest for memorable, life-affirming, and well-written stories of joy and hope. My search illuminates the reality that every story poses some manner of trigger. Perhaps some educators see that as a good thing, as a path to empathy, understanding, and healing. Maybe it is. The whole truth is more than that, though. Sometimes, the grieving or scarred student is

not ready for the path. Sometimes, the teacher isn't ready for it. Yet, we pull out the go-to Greek drama because it is already on the schedule. We read Steinbeck because we always have, and we can't imagine a sophomore English classroom without it. We analyze death and suicide as climactic plot points because death is unavoidable and so are standardized tests.

I don't know the answer, but I do know this: to study literature without triggers is an impossible task, but I believe we can do better. I believe I can do better. So, I strive for balance. Actually, that's not true. I strive to tip the scale in hope's favor because if I must analyze death and suicide as part of the literature curriculum, the very, very least I can do is offer hope in the face of it.

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Deborah Eades McNemee graduated from Friends University with a degree in Secondary English Education and from Wichita State University with a Master's in English. She currently teaches both on-level and Advanced Placement language arts courses at Andover Central High School. She has piloted creative writing programs in two different districts, encouraging her students to reach novel writing goals in cooperation with NaNoWriMo Young Writers Program. In partnership with The Big Read Wichita, her classes have hosted student-led events for seven of the last eight years. Her favorite part of teaching is seeing students who profess to hate English class learn to love reading and writing. She can be reached at eadesd@usd385.org.

SHOWDOWN ON THE KANSAS PLAINS: THE READING WARS CONTINUE

Sarah Broman Miller
Fort Hays State University

Abstract
The question of how children learn to read and how they can best be taught, has gained a significant amount of interest over the years. Cognitive research confirms there is a science-based approach to reading instruction. It provides answers to the decades-old question about how children learn to read and what is the best approach to teach them. Educational policy and practice has been slow to reflect the latest research regarding the science of reading. Instead, the field has been plagued by polarizing "reading wars" that have continued to widen the gap between research and beliefs regarding how children learn to read. As Kansas adopts the science of reading for the public school curriculum and begins the process of educating teachers, administrators, teacher educators, and other stakeholders, there will undoubtedly be misconceptions, and even cognitive dissonance, as personal beliefs about reading are challenged. The purpose of this article is twofold: 1) to inform the reader of the "great debate" or "reading wars" that have raged for several decades, and 2) to provide a better understanding of the conceptual shift needed to move us from a balanced literacy approach, as the best way to teach reading, to structured literacy. After decades of cognitive science research, structured literacy is now emerging as the most effective way to teach children with diverse reading abilities.

Keywords
science of reading, reading wars, teacher education, balanced literacy, structured literacy

According to the famous education reformer Horace Mann (1848), education is the great equalizer. Additionally, it has been said that learning to read is the new civil right (Hunter, 2012). Fulfilling the promise of an equitable and quality education to all students regardless of demographics or individual abilities has been a challenge not only in Kansas, but all over the United States. Currently in the state of Kansas, only 34% of fourth-grade students are able to read proficiently at their grade level with accuracy, fluency, and understanding (NAEP, 2019). Unfortunately, this percentage does not improve as students progress through their education. By the time students enter high school, approximately 32% read at grade-level proficiency.

As educators, it is often easy to identify many of the unfortunate realities our students face that devastatingly prevent them from obtaining an education that not only equalizes them, but allows opportunities for sustainable employment. Some educators may even feel powerless when considering the giant obstacles many of their students face. However, if the purpose of education is,

in fact, to be "the great equalizer of the conditions of men, the balance wheel of the social machinery" (Mann, 1848), and reading really is the new civil right (Hunter, 2012), then we as educators need to consider our personal beliefs about literacy acquisition and compare these beliefs and teaching practices to the decades of cognitive research in the field of literacy, collectively known as the science of reading.

For over a century, there has been an ongoing argument over what exactly are the best methods and approaches to teach reading. In what has been described as the "reading wars" and "the great debate" (Chall, 1967), politicians, policy makers, and other stakeholders continue to engage in the battle between phonics and whole language instruction. Understanding the basic tenets of both perspectives is essential in not only understanding the debate, but also in identifying personal beliefs that influence instructional practices in the classroom. As Kansas begins to implement changes developed around the science of reading, which consist primarily of scientific evidence around how reading develops and why some students struggle to read, it is necessary to understand the depth and breadth of the issues surrounding these reading wars that have been waged for generations.

In 1997, the United States Congress charged the National Institute of Child Health and Human Development (NICHD), along with the Secretary of Education, with the task of appointing a panel of experts to evaluate the various approaches to reading (National Institute of Child Health and Development, 2000). The result of the panel's findings was "Teaching Children to Read: An Evidence-Based Assessment of Scientific Research Literature on Reading and its Implications for Reading Instruction" (National Reading Panel [NRP], 2000). Building on the recommendations from the National Reading Panel (NRP), the 2001 No Child Left Behind Act (NCLB) included two literacy initiatives: Early Reading First and Reading First, whose missions were to enable all students to become successful readers.

Following its investigation, the NRP found that "phonics instruction produces the biggest impact on growth in reading when it begins in kindergarten or first grade, before children have learned to read independently" (NRP, 2000, pp. 2-93-94). The panel went on to report that systematic phonics instruction should be integrated within the curriculum in order to create a more balanced approach to reading instruction. However, interpreting what a balanced approach to reading actually looks like in the classroom is the nexus of the current iteration of the reading wars.

> The brain is not wired to read in the same way that it is when learning to speak. It requires readers to crack the code through systematic teaching of phonics.

The prominent orientations, phonics and whole language, dominate the argument about the best way to teach reading. Advocates of the phonics approach focus their efforts on the primary grades. Phonics can be described as a "bottom up" approach where students learn to decode the meaning of the text. Emphasis is placed on the ability to sound out words based on spelling and the orthographic mapping process. Reyher (2020) argued that once students get the basic skills down, they are able to read a wide variety of literature. This is especially true for those who come to school with large vocabularies. Reyhner (2020) added that while having knowledge of basic phonetic rules helps students sound out words, many words must be memorized as sight words because they don't adhere to the most complicated rules.

The whole language approach supports that learning to read is a natural process. Proponents argue that it is similar to learning to speak in one's native language. Based on constructivist learning theory, whole language is considered a "top down" approach where the reader uses background knowledge to interpret the text and determine meaning. Proponents advocate for literacy-rich environments and place emphasis on the meaning of texts over letter-sound correspondences.

Combining speaking, listening, reading, and writing along with using cues from the text to find meaning, phonics instruction becomes only one part of the whole language classroom, not an emphasis. According to Reyhner (2020), whole language places a heavy burden on the teachers to develop their own curriculum as it lacks the structure traditionally supplied by the scope and sequence, lessons, and graded literature found in basal readers.

However, decades of cognitive science indicates that learning to read is not a natural process. The brain is not wired to read in the same way that it is when learning to speak. It requires readers to crack the code through systematic teaching of phonics. While there are certainly more components to learning to read such as understanding the alphabetic principle, increasing vocabulary, deeper background knowledge, and reading fluently, just to name a few, knowing how to decode unknown words and crack the code with phonemic awareness and phonics knowledge is the essential first step towards becoming a proficient reader.

Offering middle ground to the battle between perspectives, balanced literacy entered the fray. According to Fountas and Pinnell (1996), balanced literacy is a philosophical belief that supports the assumption that reading and writing achievement develop through multiple environments such as teacher-directed instruction, modeling, and scaffolded opportunities. By its name, balanced literacy appears to represent the research provided by the NRP in 2000 calling for systematic phonics instruction integrated into the curriculum to create a more balanced approach to reading instruction. However, this is not the case. The balanced literacy practiced in many classrooms around the country is more representative of a whole language approach with a mere scattering of phonics instruction (Hanford, 2019). Although phonics and phonemic awareness is included in daily instruction, it is often not taught explicitly and systematically.

In opposition to this theoretical orientation to reading is an approach referred to as structured literacy, which has recently been adopted by the Kansas State Board of Education. This approach to reading, and learning to read, is the umbrella term used by the International Dyslexia Association (IDA) to unify and encompass evidenced-based programs and approaches that are aligned to the Knowledge and Practice Standards (KPS). IDA defines KPS as "the knowledge and practice skills that all teachers of reading should possess to teach all students to read proficiently" (KPS; Cowen, 2016). According to IDA, structured literacy is explicit, systematic teaching that focuses on phonological awareness, word recognition, phonics, decoding, spelling, and syntax at the sentence and paragraph levels.

Lorimor-Easley and Reed (2019) argued that those who oppose the structured literacy approach to reading believe that restricting students to phonemes initially, and then to decodable texts, suppresses the development of fluent reading. Whereas, those opposed to balanced literacy believe that if children cannot encode and decode naturally, then exposure to unfamiliar text will only lead to practicing compensatory strategies, such as relying on picture cues, while valuable instructional time passes. The bottom line is, a faulty foundation of decoding strategies compromises reading comprehension (Gough & Tunmer, 1986).

As researchers, educators, and stakeholders continue to argue over the best approach to teach reading in Kansas and in the United States, the argument continues to leave us in a deadlock. Which instructional approach is the best? McCardle, Scarborough, and Catts (2001) suggested that although there are many young learners who would become proficient readers from repeated exposure alone, as suggested by balanced literacy, there is a population of students for whom this simply is not enough. Therefore, Lorimor-Easley and Reed (2019) argue that a structured literacy approach is most effective because it avoids making potentially erroneous assumptions about what students are naturally capable of learning implicitly. Through the use of explicit and systematic instruction, students who readily internalize the patterns of language will learn quickly and easily, and

those who otherwise may experience difficulties will get the instruction they need to be successful (Lorimor-Easley & Reed, 2019).

In conclusion, it has been more than fifteen years since the creation of NCLB, and yet we still find ourselves at an impasse between closing the achievement gap and the great debate over the best way to teach reading. The pendulum has swung dramatically back and forth to both sides of the argument over proper literacy instruction. While some argue for a whole language approach to reading, others argue for a decoding approach. The overall concept of reading has been historically viewed as points on a continuum, essentially polarizing reading instruction, with educators committing themselves exclusively to their particular theoretical perspective and personal beliefs about reading (Woolacott, 2002).

However, most researchers and educators can agree on at least one thing: There is not a "right" or "wrong" approach to teaching reading. The most current research regarding how children learn to read suggests structured literacy, which focuses on explicit and systematic skills instruction, including phonics, and prevents students from struggling unnecessarily. Certainly whole language proponents are correct in providing students a literature-rich environment in which to learn; exposing them to a variety of vocabulary, ideas, and language is beneficial to developing life-long readers. Instead of throwing the proverbial baby out with the bathwater by choosing one side over the other, maybe we should recognize the benefits of both approaches while adhering to what cognitive science says regarding how children learn to read. Perhaps it is time to reframe the ongoing dialogue, reclaim the concept of balanced literacy, and recast it in a new light so we can continue to support all readers as their skills and love for reading develop.

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Author Biography

Dr. Sarah Broman Miller has over twenty years of experience in the field of education. Prior to her work in higher education, she taught third grade in north central Kansas, owned and operated a childcare center, and taught conversational English in Japan. She received a Doctorate of Philosophy from Kansas State University in Curriculum and Instruction with a Reading emphasis. Dr. Broman Miller's areas of expertise include language and literacy acquisition, theoretical models of reading, teacher belief systems, and multicultural education practices. Dr. Broman Miller teaches both undergraduate and graduate level courses and is an assistant professor at Fort Hays State University. She enjoys reading non-fiction books, walking, and spending time with her family and dogs.

YA Book Review

THE NON-LINEAR NARRATIVE AND DEPICTIONS OF TRAUMA IN *A HEART IN A BODY IN THE WORLD*

Caroline Erickson
Wichita State University

Putting together a pithy summary of Deb Caletti's 2018 YA novel *A Heart in a Body in the World* is difficult, because the premise—a high school senior running cross country from Seattle to D.C. after a tragedy—completely fails to capture the reason you should read this novel. Yes, the physical feats are interesting, and our protagonist's youth plays an important role in her journey, but the reason you *have* to read *A Heart in a Body in the World*? No other book, for me, has so viscerally captured the experience of recovering from trauma.

The book runs in two alternating narratives: in the present day, Annabelle Angelli runs 16 miles a day, almost every day, filled with almost unspeakable pain. In flashbacks, Annabelle is a mostly happy high schooler, going to class and getting over a break-up. As Annabelle gets closer to her geographical goal in the present, she and the reader slowly progress, in flashbacks, towards the tragedy that drives her run. This approach to telling Annabelle's story doesn't merely serve as an interesting feature of the novel's craft; rather, it locks the reader into Annabelle's perspective. For Annabelle, time is not linear. The past is omnipresent, ready to emerge at a thought.

The non-linear storytelling that Caletti employs makes Annabelle's physical and emotional work feel all the more difficult, and her victories all the sweeter. When we do finally reach the tragedy, we reach it because Annabelle is ready to get there, ready to remember it carefully but purposefully, because she has done the brutally hard work of healing during her journey. Her work was not done alone, either: along the way, a community of family and friends support her in a myriad of ways. Dealing with trauma is intensely personal, but Caletti also shows how recovery needs community. People are reaching out to Annabelle, and Annabelle is having to relearn how to reach back.

In the classroom, this book presents some great opportunities to start (or to continue) drawing students' attention to craft in writing, as the novel's structure is highly deliberate. One possible activity to facilitate this could be to have students (alone or in groups) mark a physical map with the locations Annabelle is running through and note the events that occur in that location and what flashbacks happen in that location. This enables students to visualize Annabelle's journey more concretely and to keep track of the two parallel narratives more clearly and begin to make connections between the two. Caletti's technical skill in this novel is very apparent in its structure and also used to great emotional effect (not always a guaranteed combination!), making this a good text for starting to ask students *how* the novel is eliciting their emotional response.

A Heart in a Body in the World utilizes craft to produce an incredible experience—visceral and painful, but ultimately beautiful and joyful, too. The book asks, "how do we go on living in the face of immense grief?" and then ultimately answers its own question: "with immense love."

As much as I recommend reading and teaching this novel, the subject matter is remarkably intense, and it certainly isn't best practice to retraumatize our students or confront them with a text they are unprepared for. I'm an advocate for content warnings for any book in the classroom, but with *A Heart* especially I think students should know what they're getting into. In that vein, teaching this as a whole-class text might not be the best approach to this novel: offering it as a small group or independent text would likely be more appropriate for your students.

A Heart in a Body in the World utilizes craft to produce an incredible experience—visceral and painful, but ultimately beautiful and joyful, too. The book asks, "how do we go on living in the face of immense grief?" and then ultimately answers its own question: "with immense love."

Author Biography

Caroline Erickson is a Kansas poet studying Creative Writing and Secondary English Education at Wichita State University. She serves as Undergraduate Assistant Editor for the journals *Mikrokosmos* and *mojo* and works as a 9th grade classroom tutor for GEAR UP. Her work can be found in the Spring 2020 issue of *After the Pause* and in the anthology *Nuances*. She can be reached at emerickson@shockers.wichita.edu.

SCENES FROM MY PLAYBOOK: SNAPSHOTS OF THE LITERATURE THAT CAPTURES MY SOUL

Alexis Bean
L.M. Smith Middle School, Birmingham, AL

I always hated the heat from my breath as I hid under the covers. The way the humidity held the air made me feel like I was suffocating. But it was the only way I could hide the beam of the flashlight. I had to keep going. I had to read every word. Every page. Every chapter. I was involved. I was so enraptured by the text that I didn't want to put it down. Sometimes she caught me.

Grandma would check on me before she and Papa sauntered up the stairs in the early hours of the morning. Most times I could hear her coming and quickly pretend I was asleep before she pushed my door open, looking through the darkness at my huddled figure hiding the novel under my pillow. After she had gone and I heard her footsteps retreating up the stairs, I pulled the book out, reopened its pages, and dived back in.

Most books held me this way. Addicted to every scene and dialogue. Captured in the castle walls and entranced in the sweet smell of the well-worn pages. This was when I found my love of reading. I got in trouble at school for reading when I shouldn't have been. I sneaked my book out of my wooden desk and read when we were supposed to be doing vocabulary. I read in music class. I read at lunch period. My teachers would snatch my new world away and glare at me, all the while never taking a breath away from their lessons. I spent all my extra time in the library, sprawled out on the musty Persian rug under the window, devouring any book that Mrs. Penner could give me. Soon I read all the interesting books in the small elementary school library. Mrs. Penner, the beautifully plump librarian at Earhart Environmental Magnet, would request other books from middle schools and high schools to help me keep reading. By Christmas of my 5th grade year I had read the entire series of the Harry Potter books that were available. I read *Black Beauty*. I read about a scrawny little red-headed girl who wanted to do chores. I read about princesses, kings, mistresses, monsters, dogs, fear, marriage, dragons. I read so many books, so many titles, got to know so many characters. They were a part of me.

* * * * * * * * * * *

"Always with that damn book," Grandma chuckled when I asked her to tell me again. "It was always that one book."

When I was newly introduced to literature, just barely toddling around with wide eyes and nothing but gibberish for words, I loved Dr. Seuss. My favorite book was *One Fish, Two Fish, Red Fish, Blue Fish*. My grandmother tells me that I would bring it to her, every night, sometimes two or three times, and crawl up in her lap, snuggle in, and listen. I would reach my little hand up and lay it in the crook of her neck. I would close my eyes and lay my head against her chest. I remember listening to her heartbeat on my ear and feeling her voice as it vibrated against my fingertips.

> One fish, two fish, red fish, blue fish.
> Black fish, blue fish, old fish, new fish.
> This one has a little star,
> This one has a little car.
> Say what a lot of fish there are.

I remembered every word. Grandma says by the summer after I turned two, I could read it.

"Not really read it," she clarified, scrubbing at the dishes after dinner. "But you would tell me what it was supposed to say. You were repeating what you knew the pages were going to say."

And so, I read to her, to my grandpa, to my mom (if she got home in time), to my cousins, to the wall, to myself. I got up on the small stool in my room and reach to the third shelf on the wobbly cupboard and grab the yellow bound book.

I still have it, you know. Most of the pages are wrinkled and creased in weird, strange folds. Some are ripped, with one page holding on by the tips of its fingers. The spine is tattered and shows the waterlogged brown cardboard underneath. I can barely make out the handwritten note from my grandma on the front page.

May you always wonder, she wrote. *Love grandma.*

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It laughed at me. I swear it laughed at me. I look over the table and see the daunting textbook laughing at me. All its annotations, research, and footnotes. Mocking me with every academic dripped page. I used to love to do this. Coming into the library. Curling up in a chair, quietly pulling out a hardback book and smelling the sweet smell of musty pages. The room would be quiet. And I could feel the literature unfold as I opened the book and turned to begin my journey. But that didn't happen with textbooks. I grabbed at the cold binding and slid it across the table. It seemed to slither into my hands. Knowing I would have to sit there for 20, 30, 45 pages of research and statistics and blah, blah, blah.

Why was it so daunting? The thought of sitting down and reading what is assigned? Why do I hate it so much? Is it because I do not get to choose what content I digest? Or is it because they have made my hobby a chore?

They tell me how to read. They tell me how to write. They tell me how to teach. They tell me how to do statistics. They tell me how to eat. They tell me how to breathe. They tell me how to be a good student.

But it makes it unfun. That's the word I am going to use. Unfun, because that is how over it I am. How tired I am of picking up a bound piece of my wallet. Looking at a white canvas littered with words from old white men. Looking at this book that cost me $250 just to hold in my hands. A book I will never look at again. A book I do not even *want* to read.

But I will. I must. If I want to pass this class, if I want to graduate. I must open this book; whose laughter fills my ears and reminds me I have so many other things I could be doing.

Like washing my hair.

Or poking my eye with a sharp stick.

When's the last time I cleaned out my car?

Can I look this up on SparkNotes?

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Your favorite children's book. That's what I requested for my baby shower. Instead of greeting cards and folded pieces of cardstock I will probably never look at again, bring my son a book.

From the moment I heard his heartbeat I knew I wanted to instill in him the beauty that reading has shown me. The beauty that learning has shown me. I wanted him to have it all, and in order to do that he would have to read. His father and I started early. Reading to him as his father rubbed my belly. Feeling his little kicks and knowing that he was listening to every word we read.

When he came out, he was perfect. Anything a mother could dream of. Ten fingers. Ten toes. Eyes as bright and blue as the first time I saw the Jamaican sea, sparkling with the morning sunrise and clear so I can see all the way into his soul. And when we brought him home, the first thing, we did was read him a book in his nursery. His grandfather held him, cuddled him in the glider and rocked back and forth reading the book that he had bought earlier that day. *God Gave Me a Grandpa*. The tears slowly fell down his cheeks as he read to his newborn grandson and you could see how happy and proud, he was.

He had seen four months when his father had to leave on a long deployment. In a week he would board a plane and fly across the sea to a desert wasteland that he would call home for months. Taylor sat in the nursery. In the same glider. Rocking back and forth. He read to him. Book after book, after book. Bonding in the only way he knew how. The only way you could with a child who didn't talk or walk or understood that you would be gone. Bedtime was one of the only times we shared as a family. With the phone propped up on the little stuffed dragon he was given in the hospital. Facetime can only bring you so close but being able to read your son a story before bed is priceless.

Now he searches for it. A young child so full of wonder and craving the words in his books. He has his favorites: *There's a Monster in Your Book, Mommy's Little Monster, Riley Wins The Race*. He will grab one and toddle over to you, putting it on your lap and hoisting one leg up, looking at you with excitement. You can pull him into your lap, snuggling him in and wrapping your arms around him to open the book on his knees. He does a little dance, wiggling his hips and clapping his hands knowing what's going to happen next. Sometimes he likes to watch me as I read. Watch my mouth as it moves over each word and sound out each character. Sometimes he reaches up and softly places his fingertips on my lips, wanting me to sound out every word against his little hand. Sometimes he decides it's his turn and he babbles repeatedly, turning pages in a book he doesn't understand until he reaches the hardback cover and he closes it, satisfied with himself. looking up at you for confirmation that what he accomplished was important.

I hope this never leaves him. This joy he finds from pieces of cardboard stapled together with pieces of paper. Illustrations of silly creatures doing silly things and animals who love their children, giving

them hugs and cuddles and teaching them lessons. I hope I find him years from now sitting in front of his bookshelf, pages strewn around him and him reading. Reading to me. Reading to his father. Reading to the wall. Reading to himself.

Author Biography

Born in Valley Center, Kansas, Alexis Bean graduated from Wichita State University in spring 2020 with a Bachelor of Arts in Education, Secondary English Language Arts 6-12. She completed her teaching internship in spring 2020 at Wichita Heights High School in USD 259. Alexis is a proud Air Force wife and a mother to a beautiful two-year-old boy. She has two rescue dogs and lives in Birmingham, AL, with her husband. She presented at the 2019 Kansas Association of Teachers of English (KATE) Conference on young adult literature and lesson implementation in the classroom. In fall 2020, Alexis will assume the head teaching position for eighth grade English language arts at L.M. Smith Middle School in Birmingham, AL. She can be reached at atbean@shockers.wichita.edu.

TWO YA TITANS TRAVEL TO TOPEKA TO CELEBRATE READERS, WRITERS, AND GREAT BOOKS: AN INTERVIEW WITH STEVEN B. FRANK AND GARY SCHMIDT

Danny Wade
Washburn University

Kevin Kienholz
Emporia State University

Abstract
This article comprises two face-to-face interviews conducted with prominent young adult authors at the 2019 Literature Festival held on the campus of Washburn University. Writers Steven B. Frank and Gary Schmidt both discuss their approaches to writing, the unique challenges related to writing for young readers, and the important role that truth telling plays in their own writing—among numerous other topics related to young adult literature. Both Frank and Schmidt provide insight into their most recent novels, *Class Action* and *Pay Attention, Carter Jones*, respectively. The article concludes with an appreciation for the literacy outreach done by Professor Jack Bushman as the driving force behind the Literature Festival for the past 26 years.

Keywords
young adult literature, Steven B. Frank, Gary Schmidt

The Literature Festival

For the past quarter century, young adult (YA) writers and young adult readers have gathered at the Literature Festival to celebrate three things that make young adult literature (YAL) great: the books, the authors, and the young people who are passionate about reading. Scores of outstanding writers have appeared at the Kansas-based festival over the years, including greats such as Sharon Draper, Chris Crutcher, Robert Cormier, Jennifer Brown, and Kansas' own Claire Vanderpool. This year proved no different, as approximately 250 students from Kansas and Missouri met on the

campus of Washburn University on October 10, 2019, to meet with Steven B. Frank and Gary D. Schmidt, two remarkable figures in the field of YAL. The students in attendance enjoyed the opportunity to meet with the writers, have their books autographed, engage in conversations with Frank and Schmidt during two lively Q&A sessions, discuss their books in small-group discussions facilitated by leaders in the field of YA literacy, and preview the list of books that comprise this year's Heartland Recommendations list. Most importantly, the students in attendance had the opportunity to share their passion for YAL with other dedicated young readers who are excited to talk about the books they love.

The YA Authors

The Literature Festival organizers were particularly pleased to welcome both Frank and Schmidt to Topeka, as they represent both ends of the spectrum in terms of their years of experience writing for young readers. A relative newcomer to the world of YAL, California middle school teacher Steven B. Frank recently published two excellent books for young readers, *Class Action* and *Armstrong & Charlie*, with the former being a finalist for the 2019 Harper Lee Prize for Legal Fiction. Gary D. Schmidt, a true living legend in the field of YAL, is the author of numerous award-winning YA novels, including his most recent work, *Pay Attention, Carter Jones*. Over the course of an activity-filled day, both authors shared stories about their own lives as writers, encouraged those in attendance to continue developing their own reading and writing lives, and served as outstanding ambassadors for the field of YAL. It's not often that young readers get to devote an entire day to connecting with the writers and the books that they love, and year after year the Literature Festival provides the venue for this to take place right here in Kansas.

While the authors had extremely busy itineraries during their time in Topeka, both Frank and Schmidt graciously agreed to sit for interviews during their visit to the Literature Festival. Interestingly, even though we asked both writers an entirely different set of questions, both Frank and Schmidt ended up addressing similar themes related to young adults and YAL. Among other issues, they shared their concerns about different aspects of contemporary culture threatening young readers. They focused on the absolutely crucial role of truth-telling when writing for young readers. And they both discussed the vital role that reading can play in connecting the lives of readers with those who have come before them. Perhaps most importantly, both writers took time to remind us of the power that good books possess to remind us of the importance of hope.

The Interview: Steven B. Frank

Steven B. Frank's novel *Class Action* focuses on a small group of middle school students working together on a court case aimed at eliminating homework. With a little help from a retired lawyer interested in their complaint as well as their plight, the case makes it all the way to the United States Supreme Court, allowing Frank to explore one of the real dangers threatening young people today: excessive homework and the resulting loss of unstructured time. Early in our conversation, I took the opportunity to invite Frank to talk about what he sees as the biggest challenge to developing independent young people in a world always ready to structure their lives both in and out of school:

> **Kienholz**: The fundraising organization in *Class Action* is housed in a website the book called "saveourchildhood.org," and I'm just asking, aside from excessive homework, what do you see as some of the main dangers facing young readers today—your young readers today?

Frank: I'm really glad you asked that question, because when I first talked about this book to people and said it's about kids suing to declare homework unconstitutional, there were two groups of people. One group would sort of laugh and say, "Oh, ha ha, that's very funny" and the other group would say, "Oh yeah, we totally get it." Because it's not just about homework is the big bad evil thing in the room. It's the anxiety that we are giving young people today about their futures, about their test scores, about their self-worth. Homework is just one piece of that puzzle, but I think we're going through an era of adults exerting too much control over the developing child but more importantly teenage mind. And by giving so much homework or over-planning the lives of young people, I think we're depriving them of that independence and space to decide who they are, what they think, what they're good at, what they want to do. And so, those are the threats to childhood today. It's not the internet so much as it is the fear of parents who are not giving their kids real independence.

YA author Steven B. Frank speaks to the audience at the Literature Festival on October 10, 2019, at Washburn University in Topeka, KS.

While it's clear that Steven B. Frank sees a real danger in raising young people without the experience of free-time to play and exercise their independence, he went on to explore what might be viewed as the other side of the coin—the benefits of affording young people some agency and autonomy in their lives:

Kienholz: In *Class Action* the main character, Sam, recalls an elderly neighbor telling him that a kid can learn to do anything—I love that line by the way. That's a lesson in agency, a theme that runs throughout both of your novels for young adults. What do you see as the importance of young people understanding early on that they can learn to do just about anything that they want?

Frank: Well, for me, it's a . . . it's almost cliché to say that kids are our future, but really, it's the truth. We're in an era now where kids are emerging as a major force of political and social activism. From Greta Thunberg to the organizers of the gun control rallies. Regardless of where you stand on politics, it is so inspiring to see young people, first of all, be aware but more importantly care deeply enough to organize themselves to say, "Grown-ups, you're failing us on different fronts and we're going to take charge and exercise some political action." Those kids are going to be voting in…seven years or eleven. So, when I see kids aware and engaged, I feel so much safer for the planet's future, the country's future, so I think it's very important.

Frank's novel *Class Action* will almost certainly serve as his readers' initiation into the functioning of the U.S. Supreme Court. This novel trades out the everyday familiarity of middle school hallways, a common setting for many YA novels, for the infinitely more formal and less-familiar hallways of the highest court in the land. Our conversation turned next to Frank's interest in

providing a behind-the-scenes glimpse into the mechanics of a Supreme Court case—as well as his sharp focus on the larger issue of social justice, which forms a thematic foundation for both *Class Action* as well as *Armstrong & Charlie*:

> **Kienholz**: You have an abiding interest in the United States Supreme Court—I'm assuming that from the book—and it seems that you are interested in the impact that the court has as an institution on the daily lives of everyone, young and old. What's the most important thing that you want your readers to understand about the Supreme Court?
>
> **Frank**: I want people to know that the Supreme Court is there and has your back. When you look at the history of our country, there have been times when, democracy by itself pulls us one way, and sometimes doesn't pull us in the best way. And by that I mean, in some states, laws were passed and practices were accepted that I think ran contrary to the spirit of what America is supposed to be. At least, embodied by that Statue of Liberty with her upheld torch. And when we've strayed from the real ideals of this country, it's the Supreme Court that has brought us back in line with those ideals. Besides which, it's an effective check on the power of the other branches of government. The Supreme Court is the quiet force that is there bringing balance to the direction this country heads. They make bad decisions sometimes, they are just human beings, and the majority shifts to one side or the other of the political spectrum. But they are, at least, a group of nine men and women who are carefully weighing issues of laws being passed and whether they fit the constitution. I think they're there to protect the spirit, the best spirit of this country. It's an important institution, and boy, they are hitting some very important issues as we speak.
>
> **Kienholz**: Both *Class Action* and *Armstrong & Charlie* highlight the importance of social justice in concrete ways. In fact, Charlie makes a direct statement on this issue when he says, "When you see an injustice, you don't look the other way." So my question is, what advice do you have for young readers who want to get involved in social justice issues?
>
> **Frank**: He's thinking about something his dad had told him in the book. This business of looking away is, I think, the easy path. Take bullying: You could be a bystander and look the other way because it's safer. But my advice, as it is, would be to find somebody who is an ally in standing up for something you believe in and join forces with them. At this age it can be really hard. I mean, it's nice in fiction to see a kid stand up for what's right on his own. But I think it takes a team at this age in particular. Someone has to start the conversation. Someone has to say, "Hey, that's wrong that you're not sitting with that kid because he's from another country," or whatever the issue is, "Let's go together and sit with that person." I think this idea that one person alone, it's kind of rare. Greta Thunberg she's almost a lone ranger in the battle against climate change or climate destruction. But, a lot of kids band together when one person starts the conversation, others come around. You just find your tribe of people and you take action.

But my advice, as it is, would be to find somebody who is an ally in standing up for something you believe in and join forces with them. – YA author Steven B. Frank

Finally, my conversation with Steven B. Frank ended with two questions that might seem to be a bit juxtaposed—that is, we wrapped up the interview by discussing his tendency to include a focus on *elderly* characters in his novels while writing specifically for an audience of *younger* readers:

Kienholz: In today's young adult literature, older characters are often nearly invisible if not entirely absent. In both of your novels, however, you feature elders who play crucial roles in the lives of your young character. In *Class Action* you include Mr. Kalman, a cantankerous retired attorney and in *Armstrong & Charlie* you incorporate the philosophical neighbor Mr. Khalil. Can you tell us a little about why you think it's important for young readers to meet such influential older characters throughout your books?

Frank: In literature there's a long history of the mentor figure. From "Chiron's Cave" to Yoda. You just see the older character is important.

Kienholz: The wise old man or woman.

Frank: The wise old figure. It's like an archetype. But I have to say that, for me, it's much more personal than that. I love old people. It may be the absence of them in my early childhood because all four grandparents died before I was ten. I think emotionally I'm drawn to companionship of older people. But I also think that they have something to share. It's not just that they're wise so much. You get a perspective having lived through a lot. I notice this in my dad. He's 90 years old. My dad won't flinch at any conversation. So there's a truth-telling. I had another friend, a dear woman who lived downstairs when I lived in Los Angeles. She had survived World War II; she was Swiss-born and lived in Germany and had saved some Jews from the Holocaust. She was the most brutally honest person I had ever met, down to the point where, if I cooked her dinner one night and I overcooked the salmon...and she would say, "It's overcooked...you overcooked it." And I loved that about her, and it made me a better cook. But it also gave me an appreciation for truth tellers.

Kienholz: Last question. Can you talk a little bit about your interest in writing for young adults? What are some of the challenges and some of the rewards that you've noticed for writing for young readers?

Frank: I can tell you, the absolute greatest reward is the fact that they still read. They can be really devoted readers if you give them the time and space to read. They're very passionate about the characters that they connect with. The challenges for writing for that audience is something that Isaac Bashevis Singer said about children; he said that they are the toughest critics and you know right away if you lose them. What I think that says is that the child reader is very demanding of authenticity, emotion, and, well, those two in a clear-flowing story. We get away with adult writing with taking a more meandering path sometimes and I just think they're brutally honest like the old people in life, but they're emotionally very accessible.

The Interview: Gary Schmidt

During my interview with Gary Schmidt, I shared with him my nighttime routine of reading and telling stories to my seven-year old son before he goes to sleep. Oftentimes, I summarize to him stories of young adult novels I have previously read. On one evening, I summarized Schmidt's *Pay Attention, Carter Jones*. What was significant about this particular retelling was that it was the first time my son requested a copy of the novel so he could read it on his own. Like my son, I, too, was deeply moved by *Pay Attention, Carter Jones* and after reading it, I was excited to read more of Gary Schmidt's critically acclaimed novels like *Lizzie Bright and the Buckminster Boy* that was awarded both a Newbery Honor and a Printz Honor in 2005. In 2008, Schmidt earned his second Newbery Honor for *The Wednesday Wars*, and its sequel *Okay for Now* was a National Book Award finalist. Schmidt's award-winning realistic, historical, and fantasy fiction has earned tremendous respect and admiration for its superb use of humor and wit while simultaneously telling stories of the tragedies and tough issues kids face. Schmidt currently lives on a farm in Alto, Michigan, and is a professor of English at Calvin College.

On learning that he earned a Ph.D. in medieval literature, I became curious about how one with expertise in medieval literature wound up becoming a prolific writer for children and young adults. Therefore, our conversation began with Schmidt describing his journey into writing for children and young adults.

YA author Gary Schmidt speaks to the audience at the Literature Festival on October 10, 2019, at Washburn University in Topeka, KS.

Wade: Since you earned a Ph.D. in medieval literature, I am curious about how you became a writer of children's and young adult literature. Briefly describe your journey of becoming a writer of children's/young adult literature. When did you realize you wanted to write for children and young adults?

Schmidt: I wrote my dissertation during the early days of word processing technology and was typing a series of about 100 Latin prayers. My Latin was not as great as it should have been, so my typing was laborious and slow. Once I finished typing the prayers, I hit "some" button and everything was deleted. I should have immediately started typing the prayers again, but instead, I decided to take a break from it for a few days. During that break, I began writing a horrible, horrible children's fantasy novel. I liked writing it and liked the process. I finished the book and sent it off to a prominent editor working for a reputable publisher. The editor said it was horrible but liked it enough to want to see something else from me. In the meantime, I met Katherine Patterson's editor and we really hit it off. I did write the second book but sent it to Patterson's editor instead of the other editor. She took it and it was the beginning of the whole thing. After finishing my dissertation and my degree, I applied to a college needing someone to teach children's and young adult literature. I accepted the position and loved it. At first, I felt I should do more in the field to give myself authority, so that when I am talking to my students about writing children's books, I can say

I have done this and they know I have done this. So, that was a series of odd, practical moments that led to something I really have come to love.

Schmidt's continued passion for children's and young adult literature has once again led to his writing another critically acclaimed novel, *Pay Attention, Carter Jones*. In the novel, the middle school protagonist, Carter Jones, answers the door one early morning to find a British butler now at his service. Carter learns that the butler was an employee of his late grandfather who bequeathed the butler's services to the Carter family. From this opening in the story, Schmidt mixes humor with tragedy in telling the story of the butler and Carter as they interact at home and on the cricket playing field. As his mentor and coach, the butler supports, challenges, and encourages Carter while Carter confronts the tragedies of his life head on.

Throughout much of the novel, Schmidt is not forthcoming about the tragedies Carter has suffered. Schmidt, however, skillfully uses recurring objects and flashbacks to create the tension necessary to engage and lead readers to a compassionate and heartfelt discovery of the root of Carter's pain. For example, in several places, Schmidt focuses in on a green marble Carter keeps with him at all times as a means of delivering clues about Carter's little brother who is missing. Secondly, Schmidt inserts flashbacks of a camping trip to the Blue Hills of Australia Carter takes with his father. Once again, during these flashbacks, Schmidt provides clues about Carter's relationship with his father, and like the green marble, the flashbacks increase curiosity as to why Carter's father is also not at home. During the last flashback, Carter pieces it altogether and uncovers his father's secret, delivering a blow to Carter he will truly never get over.

The green marble and flashbacks are artfully integrated and are effective in creating the engagement and motivation readers, especially young readers, need to keep reading. Our conversation turned to these techniques motivating readers to "pay attention."

Wade: How did you decide on the green marble and the flashbacks of the Blue Hills of Australia? What advice would you suggest to writers determining and developing recurring words, images, and events when writing a novel?

Schmidt: Writer Eliza Ketchum, a good friend, came up with this notion of working with an "endowed" object. You introduce an object that may have the same significance throughout or it may grow. The green marble has the same significance throughout. It is Carter's connection to his late brother, so he carries it almost as a totem, a way of remembering him. The object itself becomes something connecting to someone from the past in ways that others do not get. I personally have a lot of objects that connect me to my past. I lost my wife six years ago, and her glasses are right by my bed. I will always have them right by my bed. Her glasses are not an altar or anything, but a totem or way of continuing to connect to her. The green marble does not change throughout the book. The Blue Mountains of Australia do change, becoming more and more significant throughout the story. Carter begins to discern that his time in the Blue Mountains with his father is not just a memory, but a memory he must work through because there is so much pain and frustration there. I was in the Blue Mountains years ago with my son. I am color blind. I don't see any colors. Climbing down this valley, you notice it is very tropical. It is Australia, so all the flora is completely different from what you associate in the northern hemisphere. You come to these sandstone cliffs, and in the late afternoon, the sun breaks down onto these Eucalyptus trees. All the oils evaporate from those trees into a blue mist. So, it is not the mountains that are blue, but it is the air that is blue. Even I could see it. It must be extraordinarily bright, because I could see that blue. The blue mist is something I have never

> forgotten. My son and I looked at the blue mist in awe over these sandstone cliffs with these tropical trees surrounded by this blue haze. You could feel it. It was such a vivid moment for me, so I thought I could use the setting of the Blue Mountains and have them become more and more significant as the story moves along. Finally, you see why it does. At the end of the story, the Blue Mountains represent connection, grace, and joy for Carter. He is ready to go find all of the blue spaces in the world. For me, that means he is recovering from the grief and losses he has had to bear.

Because Carter "pays attention" to and confronts his past, he is able to effectively move forward in finding the "blue spaces" of his future. This step of Carter's development mostly happens while learning to play cricket. Cricket requires keen observation and attention to detail to be successful playing. As Carter's cricket coach, the butler emphasizes that "paying attention" to the rules and plays is critical to winning a game. Cricket becomes the butler's vehicle for encouraging Carter to confront and channel his pain in the present moment. Indeed, through cricket, Carter learns to trust and confide in the butler, and consequently, the butler helps Carter transfer the skills of "paying attention" he acquires from playing cricket to his personal dilemmas. The inclusion of sports to help characters process problems, channel pain, and mature emotionally like Carter is not unique to children's and young adult literature. Young adult authors such as Chris Crutcher have used well known sports like swimming, football, wrestling, and basketball to develop characters in their stories. However, what makes *Pay Attention, Carter Jones* a unique sport story is that Schmidt uses cricket as Carter's growth vehicle. I did not know much about cricket until reading *Pay Attention, Carter Jones*, and I enjoyed learning the rules of and "paying attention" to a sport unpopular in the United States. In fact, I viewed a few cricket games to better visualize the games Carter played. My eyes were opened to the fact that there is another sport in the world that is extremely popular. Therefore, during our interview, I asked Schmidt what inspired him to choose the sport of cricket in telling his story.

> **Wade:** How did you decide on cricket for *Pay Attention, Carter Jones*? Did you have any previous experience with cricket prior to writing the novel?

> **Schmidt**: When you're writing, you don't want a kiddo to say "Oh, I've read this before" or "I know this story it's all ho hum," or "here's the motif." And so, the obvious thing, if you're going to write a sports book about an American kid, it's going to be baseball or football. Well, I love baseball, but I didn't want to write a book about a sport that's just oh so familiar. So the opening image of the book is this butler who is standing on a stoop and it's raining, and this kid likes to play little league and he would be a baseball player, but the butler isn't interested in that. And so he comes to this and introduces cricket to them which he is already a strangeness. On that level, he wants to introduce a sport that he loves and that he's also good at. So that's just the beginning narrative level. But just like the Blue Mountains, I wanted cricket to get more and more significant. In cricket, what's really important, as opposed to like an American baseball player, is that you have to depend upon the other guy who is on your team running back and forth. If I hit the ball out there, the batter has to know from what I say that he can get to this wicket. I love that metaphor. That you depend—you are forced to depend on someone else. You cannot be isolated. You have to be dependent. So that, I hope, comes through at least some and gets more and more important as he begins to recognize that he's not going to be able make it alone. That felt to me exactly right. It works with the story, and it's exactly what the butler would be interested in. I mean it could have been soccer too, I suppose, but I felt that would not be right…So it

works narratively but it also works in terms of his growing understanding of where he is and what he needs. The rules drove me nuts. I mean it just drove me completely crazy because I don't have experience with cricket other than watching some games in graduate school. But I had the extraordinarily good fortune of having a great British editor whose fifteen-year-old son plays cricket. It was just perfect. She worked with me because I got a lot wrong. There was a lot wrong when I first sent the manuscript to her. And then she had another expert in cricket review it and that helped tremendously.

Wade: I can see the metaphor. I also thought the cricket terms and rules that are used to introduce each chapter was really creative.

Schmidt: And I wanted that…I wanted the rules of Cricket to connect a little bit to what's going on in his life.

Schmidt's multigenre children's and young adult fiction instructs about various topics while also tackling tough issues young people face in truthful, non-condescending ways. As previously noted in *Pay Attention, Carter Jones,* readers learn about cricket while observing Carter navigate the effects of death and divorce. Our conversation turned next to Schmidt's writing interests and how he determines the genres and stories he wishes to tell from the adolescent perspective.

Wade: Can you talk a bit about your writing interests and how you determine the topics/stories you wish to tell from the adolescent perspective? What is it that you hope young readers take away from your works?

Schmidt: I keep learning by writing new genres. I want to keep trying new things. So right now, I'm trying to write a graphic novel. I recently wrote a Star Wars story because I wanted to force myself to try different things. There's a great fantasy writer, Anne Ursu, who I really like … I gave her a hard time about how all fantasies always have the Gandalf character, a quest, the wise cosmic advice, and curious creatures. No matter how advanced a society is they always fight with swords. It's always swords. As I was going on and on, she said, "Well why don't you write one?" So, the fantasy was an attempt to write one that didn't have any of that stuff in it. And it was fun. It was really, really fun. But the other thing though is, I think, I mean—middle school is serious business. High school is serious business. There is so much that is happening to contemporary kids. They're exposed to so many different things because the internet has changed the game. They are so incredibly exposed in a very dangerous and strange time we live in. I don't ever want to give a kiddo the sense that I'm talking down to them or the sense that I'm holding something necessarily back from them. If I had one line on my gravestone I think it would be "He told the truth." I hope that my books are telling the truth. It is the case that parents abandon their children. It is the case that kids struggle with abuse. It is the case that there are thirteen-year-old parents. It is the case that kids are taken from their parents. I don't write them to find only a plot motif. I'm trying to say to those kids I know this world. *Orbiting Jupiter* is about a thirteen-year-old who has a kid. It is told from the point of view of his

I don't ever want to give a kiddo the sense that I'm talking down to them or the sense that I'm holding something necessarily back from them. If I had one line on my gravestone I think it would be "He told the truth." I hope that my books are telling the truth. – YA author Gary Schmidt

> twelve-year-old foster brother, but I met those kids. I met them in a juvenile detention center in Northern Michigan. They were in eighth grade. They had been there for a year. A year. And in that year, neither of them had seen any biological relative—no parents, not anyone. They're kids that were thrown away. And there are thousands of them. When I left, I just knew I would write about those kids. So, I changed Jake's name to Jack and Joseph I just left. That became the book. It seems to me as a culture we need to start to tell the truth in very vivid ways, and storytellers can do that.

With our interview coming to a close on the eve of the Literature Festival, I saved what I felt was the most important question for last. Though Gary Schmidt's main audience would be children and young adult readers the next day, they would be accompanied by teachers dedicating their lives to motivating and encouraging their students to develop a love of reading. As a teacher educator, I value their profession immensely and believe they do save lives through the literature they lead students to discover. Gary Schmidt is a powerful example of how one's life trajectory was positively and dramatically altered by the care and concern of a teacher. Indeed, Gary Schmidt would not be the writer he is today had his fourth-grade teacher not intervened. In preparation for my interview, I read a snippet about Schmidt's teacher, but I wanted the full story so I could share it with my preservice English language arts teachers to encourage them and give them hope that their future profession is a life-saving endeavor where they will transform the lives of their students in positive and unimaginable ways.

> **Wade:** From what I've read, you had a teacher who intervened and helped you discover a love for reading. How did this teacher help your passion for reading evolve?

> **Schmidt:** In first grade, and I think this is a result of my color blindness but I don't know, we were tracked and that meant that you were divided into groups according to how smart you were judged to be. So then we were given vegetables. I'm not kidding. If you were the corn group, you were smart and you would go on to college. If you were the green bean group, you were not so smart, but you could still get to college. You were average. If you were the pumpkin group then you were stupid. We had construction paper cutouts on our desk indicating our groups. I was a pumpkin. I don't know how they did it, but what that meant is that the corn kids got the books, workbooks, and everything. When they were done filling them out and working with them, they were sort of erased and given to the green beans. They were rotated around the groups like this. So, by the time they got to the pumpkin group, the books had already been read twice and filled in twice, but we were stupid, so it really didn't matter. We didn't need to read. I didn't learn how to read in first grade or second grade or third grade and now we're in fourth grade, and then they took all the stupid kids and put them all together. We worked together and all that. All the really smart kids were in their own class and there were a bunch of average kids' classes too. So it was, you know, we'd learn how to be stupid. And we were good at it. But now, in fourth grade, I met this teacher, Ms. Kavikov, on the playground. She was smart and wonderful and taught the track one kids, the smart kids. But she liked me, and I liked her. And one day she walks into my stupid classroom and she goes, no kidding, she goes, "Gary, get your stuff." I thought, "I'm being expelled." Because once you're a pumpkin, there's no place to go. But she took me by the hand. I remember walking down the hall hand-in-hand with her and thinking how embarrassing it was as a fourth-grader to have your teacher hold your hand. We walked down to her room and every kid in the classroom looks at me because they all know I'm stupid. She had taken a desk and shoved it up against her desk. She had filled it

with all these books. They were way young, way too young for me, like Dr. Seuss. But I couldn't read them. And she spent hours and hours bringing me up to speed. Two years later I'm in sixth grade and reading Shakespeare plays because of her. I would not be here talking right now if it were not for Ms. Kavikov and Lee Avenue Elementary school.

The next day at the 26th Annual Literature Festival, both Gary Schmidt and Steven B. Frank mesmerized the audience with their inspiring stories, sage advice, and personal interactions. During Steven B. Frank's presentation, I gazed out over the sea of adolescent heads, spotting several teachers dispersed at various places in the crowd. I smiled knowing that many of the students in attendance that day would positively remember these teachers for investing in their lives much like Gary Schmidt's teacher.

Authors Steven Frank and Gary Schmidt sign books at the Literature Festival at Washburn University in Topeka, KS, on October 10, 2019.

In fact, we were there that day celebrating young adult books, young readers, and young adult authors because of the efforts and legacy of a very special teacher. Professor John "Jack" Bushman established the Literature Festival 26 years ago. He was an influential middle school and high school English teacher in Ottawa, Kansas, as well as a distinguished Professor of Secondary English Education at the University of Kansas. He was and still is a fierce advocate for the literacy of young people and for all teachers who spend their lives dedicated to supporting students in their reading and writing development. We have the Literature Festival and many other venues for promoting literacy because of Dr. Jack Bushman. Though this was the first Literature Festival without his leadership, his presence was still there and very much felt. Those of us who have had the great honor of working with him in various capacities will continue to honor him and carry his legacy forward in our own work promoting literacy and in future Literature Festivals to come.

Author Biographies

Danny Wade is an associate professor of English Education at Washburn University. He earned his B.S., M.Ed., and Ph.D.in English Education from the University of Oklahoma. He also taught middle school and high school English for six years (Oklahoma and Colorado) and served four years as the K-12 English language arts director for the Moore (Oklahoma) Public Schools. He currently teaches Secondary English Methods, Teaching Young Adult Literature, and Advanced College Writing for Teachers. He can be reached at danny.wade@washburn.edu.

Kevin Kienholz is a professor in the Department of English, Modern Languages, and Journalism at Emporia State University, where he works primarily with undergraduates preparing to teach middle and high school English. He joined the faculty at ESU in the fall of 2000 after having taught high school English for seven years in his home state of Oklahoma. He can be reached at kkienhol@emporia.edu.

STUDENT UPSET THAT WORD SHE STUDIED FOR WASN'T ON THE FINAL

LuAnn Fox
Olathe Public Schools

Abstract
This is a satirical news article about a student upset that she worked harder than she felt necessary to achieve a goal. Instead of just completing her culminating task and moving on, she wants to hold her teacher accountable.

Keywords
satire, anxiety, students, teacher, final

Anytown, KS – A student at Anxiety High School is upset that a word she studied in her English class did not appear on the final. The word, *supercilious*, comes from the novel *The Great Gatsby*.

Gabby Ledbetter, a junior, says she just can't fathom why her teacher would have her learn the vocabulary word and not put it on her English final at the end of the first semester. "Tom Buchanan is a character from the novel whom the author describes as being supercilious on at least two occasions," Ledbetter said. "Our teacher wanted us to know the word because she thought it was a good word for us to know. We slowed our reading down, looked for context clues, and did critical thinking exercises. Toward the end, we looked it up on our phones to really nail down the word. Since we did all that, why wasn't it on the final? It just doesn't make sense."

When asked if her teacher actually said *supercilious* would be on her final, Ledbetter replied, "She did mention it when we were having little quizzes over the vocabulary. She did say it would probably be on the final." When it was pointed out that "probably on the final" does not guarantee "being on the final," Ledbetter's friend, Grady Grubber, pointed out, "Well, we know that when a teacher, especially this one, says something's probably going to be on a test, then it is on the test. It's just part of the code."

The teacher in question, Nita Brake, doesn't know why that word was not included on the final. "I think it was just an accident that I forgot to include it," she said. "There were other vocabulary words and other skills to be demonstrated in the final I developed to assess these students." Taking her glasses off and rubbing her temples, she added, "I simply don't know."

> Where was that word? The word I studied and studied. I mean, I spent time on that, specifically so that I would know it for the test. – Gabby Ledbetter

Ledbetter launched a formal complaint against Ms. Brake after going home from school the day of that fateful test. "I finished her final, and I was

fuming. Where was that word? The word I studied and studied. I mean, I spent time on that, specifically so that I would know it for the test. Think of what I could have been doing if I didn't study for something I wasn't going to be tested over—I could have been working my Tic Tok game, Snapchatting, texting, playing video games—the list is virtually endless. I want our school board to know about this. I wish I could sue for that loss of time and for the mental stress of studying for a final that didn't include all I studied for."

When asked if the final reflected everything other little thing she learned from Ms. Brake in the semester, Ledbetter reflected, "Well, yes. But that's not the point. I expended more energy than I needed in studying for this particular word. Damn that *supercilious*, anyway. I cannot get that time back."

Grubber, Ledbetter's study partner, made it known that she sent an email to Ms. Brake after she went home and told her parents. "I find it supercilious of you not to test us over "supercilious" for the final, since we had to learn the word," the email read. "P.S. Can I get more points added to my score since I used "*supercilious*, and used it correctly, in this email? #notfair."

Ms. Brake has not answered that email as of yet, as she is busily grading finals before the marking period.

Author Biography

I am a secondary public school English teacher who has been in the classroom for twenty-two years. I have been published in *Kansas English* and *The Kansas City Star* and have been a frequent panelist on the N*o Wrong Answers* educational podcast. I am the 2018 KATE High School Teacher of Excellence and the 2019 NCTE High School Teacher of Excellence. I am passionate about an authentic scope and sequence that promotes student understanding of how grammar, language, and writing works and empowers them with rhetorical choice. Contact me at lfoxonw@olatheschools.org.

CLASS ON A TUESDAY IN NOVEMBER

April Pameticky
Wichita East High School

Taken with his music, earbuds swallowed all the way in
so that we hear nothing, only watch the jerky gyrations
that make my neck pang in sympathy.

His eyes squeezed shut like curtains tightly closed
--you know the expensive ones they hang in hotels
to block out extraneous light.

I try to name that tune to the bobbing and pencil tapping,
to the exaggerated lip snarl reminiscent of the king
or some other stage-owning legends with big lips and big mouths.

We are, none of us, working anymore,
silent audience to his thrash-metal rock show,
each of us remembering some long-lost

stadium concert experience that would account for his enthusiasm,
until I think the weight of our stares must've penetrated
his thrall because he seems to freeze,

one shoulder cocked higher than the other, pencil mid drum-riff.
We look at him and he looks at us and he finally pulls out an ear bud.
What are you listening to? Asks the girl next to him, a smile in her voice.

He ducks his head, embarrassed,
and we lean forward for his whisper:
Handel's Messiah.

Author Biography
Mother, wife, teacher, poet. April Pameticky shares time between her high school English classroom and the creative community of artists and writers in Kansas. She launched the *Wichita Broadside Project* and currently serves as editor of *River City Poetry*, an online poetry journal. Her own work can be seen in journals like *Malpais Review*, *KONZA,* and *Chiron Review*. She is also the author of several chapbooks, and her debut full-length collection *Waterbound* (2019) is available from Spartan Press. Follow April @aprilinwichita. Learn more about her at http://aprilpameticky.com. Email her at aprilpameticky@hotmail.com.

YA Book Review

MOBY-DICK MEETS *THE DAY AFTER TOMORROW*: ECO-DISASTER AND SALVATION IN CRAIG RUSSELL'S *FRAGMENT*

John Franklin
Pittsburg State University

Craig Russell's 2016 eco-thriller *Fragment* is a cautionary tale with nautical overtones.

Like Herman Melville's classic 19th-century American allegory *Moby-Dick*, the 214-page novel is encyclopedic in its presentation of scientific knowledge; unlike *Moby-Dick*, it is Wikipedic in its exposition of the potential effects of the ignorance of this knowledge. Though alarmist in its message, and matter-of-factly Naturalistic in its depiction of the deaths of tens of thousands of creatures both human and other, the book is ultimately Romantic as it presents Nature in simple language composed to improve society.

Set in contemporary times, its human heroes are polar climatologist Kate Sexsmith, astronomer Eric Lawson, and marine biologist Graham Palmer who survive an Antarctic catastrophe: glaciers create an iceberg the size of Texas that promptly erases New Zealander and American research stations from our planet's face. Disaffectionately dubbed the Fragment by the trio, it barges its way into the sea thus initiating a chain of events that ultimately involve: the *Lincoln*, a US Navy ballistic nuclear missile submarine; a pod of blue whales; a cruise ship line that guarantees adventure; a chartered sailboat; television news crews; the Pentagon; the White House; the Caribbean; and, orcas. Ring, an unconventional blue whale, is the novel's cetacean hero.

While *Fragment*'s overall conflict is character versus environment, there are also fundamental clashes that reveal character versus society and characters versus other characters (the fight to the death between blue whale Ring and killer whale Bull is quite exciting!).

After Graham Palmer cracks the whale-song code, the conflicts lead to an overall theme: if humans can learn to listen, then whales (symbolizing Nature) can save humanity.

The novel would appeal strongly to adolescents who enjoy reading the science of how humankind is on the brink of destroying our planet.

Fragment would easily slip into a unit of study that involves Earth Science, geography, history (especially that of Antarctic exploration), marine biology and meteorology. I envision a class project that edits images and data (here students could quote from the book) in a PowerPoint exposition designed to persuade an audience to follow the direction of a particular decision. I could also see students role-playing one of the news team announcers or one of the scientists in visual presentations.

> Though alarmist in its message, and matter-of-factly Naturalistic in its depiction of the deaths of tens of thousands of creatures both human and other, [*Fragment*] is ultimately Romantic as it presents Nature in simple language composed to improve society.

I imagine that those who challenge the book are those who deny global warming. For their children, *Moby-Dick* could serve as an alternative selection. Other choices might include Richard Henry Dana, Jr's *Two Years before the Mast*, any of C. S. Forester's Horatio Hornblower books or Jules Verne's classic *20,000 Leagues under the Sea*.

Of particular interest to me is the affection that the submariners hold for the blue whale Ring. Akin in their mammalian underwater existence, the depth of understanding and respect these creatures have for one another is simply beautiful. In this relationship, Nature, technology and humanity intersect in ways wonderful to read.

Author Biography

John Franklin (BA Rice, MA Miami of Ohio, PhD Florida; certified to teach English and economics) began his career at Jones High School in Houston. During that time, he combined his love for literature with a love of travel, spending 12-week summers biking or backpacking to visit the settings of the drama, fiction and poetry he loved to teach: Scotland for *Macbeth*; London for Dickens; Canterbury for Chaucer; and the Lake District for Wordsworth. One Fourth of July he ventured further abroad, discovering himself atop the Acropolis in Athens, thinking, "Here I am at the birthplace of democracy on the birthday of the greatest democracy that has ever existed." He has spent his life since then appreciating and sharing his good fortune. John Franklin is a Professor of English and Director of English Education at Pittsburg State University in Southeast Kansas where he teaches Literature for Middle and Secondary Schools.

THE IMPORTANCE OF READING ACROSS GENRES

Jennifer Gingerich
El Dorado Public Schools

Michelle Adler
Wichita State University

Abstract
Research continues to demonstrate that motivated readers read more, yet too often students are not exposed to genres that might motivate them to continue reading. Further, students might not be encouraged to read outside their preferred reading genre. When students are unmotivated to read, they often do not read or do not finish the books they start. What would happen if students were encouraged to read from more genres and given the freedom to check out various genres of books from their school libraries? This study examines what happens to achievement and motivation when fourth-graders participate in a Genre Challenge that utilizes the Whooo's Reading app. Results indicate that comprehension scores in certain genres were impacted more than others, and while reading outside of the students' preferred genres did not significantly change, students did enjoy finishing books and were extrinsically motivated to finish the book so they could take the quiz on the app.

Keywords
intrinsic motivation, extrinsic motivation, genre, reading comprehension

Introduction

Like many teachers, the lead researcher (Jennifer) wrestled with getting her kids to finish books. Her students would go to the library, check out the books, and then never finish them, taking them back to the library the next week—and the cycle continued. She also noticed they picked books from the same section of the library every week. Were they bored? Did they need different things to read or some additional incentive to finish a book? Further, while her students' comprehension scores were adequate, she had to believe they would improve if they got into the habit of starting and finishing various books. This study is a result of her queries.

Literature Review

Reading motivation for elementary school students is thought to be the reason students choose the books they read and the reason they read at both home and school. Roe (2012) states that one of the goals in the teaching of reading is to motivate and engage students in reading so they approach the text with expectations and interests. No educator wants to *force* a student to read. Educators want their students to *choose* to read.

How a student feels about reading, their motivation to start reading and keep reading, has to do with how comfortable they are as a reader. Wigfield (2008) writes that highly engaged readers use strategies and are internally motivated, leading them to higher reading achievement. Students who struggle with comprehension, however, show lower motivation and strategy use. Gilliam (2011) identifies these strategies as word recognition, reading comprehension, and reading fluency. Students who struggle with reading tend to read the same books repeatedly or will look through pictures and not read the book at all. Schiefele (2012) explains that unmotivated children may cause behavior problems by attempting to find others in class to play with instead of reading.

Saaris (2016) states the holy grail of reading motivation is intrinsic motivation: we want students to read because they see the value in it and enjoy it. Students tend to be motivated to read in two ways; they are either intrinsically motivated or extrinsically motivated. The willingness to read because the activity is satisfying or rewarding on its own is what Schiefele (2012) calls intrinsic reading motivation. Intrinsic motivation correlates with and is predictive of reading achievement (Cambria & Guthrie, 2010). To increase reading achievement educators must focus on what motivates the child—what the student needs—instead of using rewards and bribing students for improvements (Williams, Hedrick, and Tuschinski, 2008).

Reading comprehension scores can significantly increase if intrinsic motivation is present (Morgan and Fuchs, 2007). Educators ultimately want students to be engaged and love to read. The comprehension will come to them naturally when they are engaged in what they are doing. However, if there's no engagement, learning can be difficult. Engaged and active readers seek to understand what they read, interacting with the text (Kelly & Grace, 2009).

Going beyond rewards is difficult because teaching students to be intrinsically motivated to read has to do with how they feel. Teachers cannot make students feel a certain way while reading. Saaris (2016) has several ideas on how this can be approached in the classroom. One is having students practice cognitive involvement. Saaris (2016) explains that when students are deeply engaged with texts, it leads to the experience of flow and better comprehension. Sarris (2016) stresses assigning texts at the appropriate comprehension level of difficulty and monitoring focus to promote cognitive involvement. When students are able to read the text fluently, they are more likely to relax and focus on understanding the text. To help guide this comprehension, students can be held responsible for responding to the text. One way is to have the students log what page they start and stop reading during their independent reading time. Having students read consistently can help with student accountability and possibly improve reading abilities (Sanden, 2014). If students are only reading five pages in twenty minutes, they can ask themselves why. Maybe they are sitting in the wrong spot in the classroom. Maybe they are reading a book that is not on their reading level. Monitoring their progress can help students see patterns for success and failure.

If students are only reading five pages in twenty minutes, they can ask themselves why. Maybe they are sitting in the wrong spot in the classroom. Maybe they are reading a book that is not on their reading level. Monitoring their progress can help students see patterns for success and failure.

Another idea on promoting intrinsic motivation is choice. Saaris (2016) argues that allowing students to choose what they read through an independent reading program communicates the value of reading for its own sake. Students prefer to read what they have selected themselves and will push to read more challenging content if it interests them (Saaris, 2016). This will lead students to read more. In time, a student might become intrinsically motivated to read, likely improving comprehension along the way.

In opposition to intrinsic reading motivation is extrinsic reading motivation. Extrinsic reading motivation is when a student reads for a specific reward and not because they want to read. The best way to motivate students who are not intrinsically motivated to read seems to be to start with an extrinsic system, or a reward system, of which there are many. When these reward systems work and students are motivated to read, it is called extrinsic motivation. Lazowski and Hulleman, (2016) state that extrinsic incentives can promote an interest in reading by motivating a student who lacks interest. Many believe using extrinsic rewards will help students reach their reading potential (Fawson & Moore, 1999). Educators and schools offer these extrinsic behavior rewards hoping that the students who struggle will see the good in positive behavior and then choose the positive behavior. Guthrie et al., (2007) explain that this can be done with reading as well, with the initial use of extrinsic incentives to motivate students with hopes of developing into an intrinsic desire. Extrinsic motivations like grades and recognition may initially be necessary for a reluctant reader. As the reader becomes more adept, motivation improves and the student reads for curiosity, the challenge, social outcomes, or self-efficacy (Guthrie, Schafer, Wang, & Afflerbach, 1993).

Both intrinsic and extrinsic reading motivation are beneficial in the classroom. Since intrinsic reading motivation is more difficult to instill in a student, the educator will often start with extrinsic reading motivation incentives, with the hope that an intrinsic motivation will eventually be found. Teachers push for this motivation because motivated readers read more, and comprehension tends to improve when reading time increases. Reading comprehension is essential in every content area and the true mark of a reader, but it is different from reading alone. When reading occurs, words are being translated into sounds and spoken words. Kowald (2016) explains that reading comprehension involves taking what was just read and making meaning from it; it is the ability to understand and recall what was just read. This means that reading comprehension will occur while the student is reading and continue on after the student has read.

Educators have a variety of strategies to increase student motivation and engagement in reading, and one that seems especially interesting is making sure students have access to and are encouraged to read from a variety of genres.

If students comprehend what they read, they can explore new worlds because they are able to read a variety of genres. But many students do not want to read out of their preferred genres. To be well-read and to meet reading standards, students need to read fiction and non-fiction. In fiction students can explore realistic fiction, fantasy, mystery, science fiction, historical fiction, and some traditional literature. In non-fiction students can read biography, autobiography, and informational text.

Durgin (2016) notes the benefits of teaching students, particularly reluctant readers, to read many different genres. For example, Durgin (2016) suggests poetry or biographies if readers struggle with novels. Each genre also comes with an opportunity to learn new vocabulary, which can increase student comprehension (Durgin, 2016). Additionally, each genre has a set of skills tied to it for comprehension. For example, Durgin (2016) explains that students who having trouble grasping inferences for a particular genre may grasp sequence of events for another genre.

Classroom environments that promote a broad spectrum of genres are beneficial for students, but they might need encouragement. Durgin (2016) suggests providing students with lessons and activities to encourage comprehension of different genres. A way to do this is teaching the differences among genres of both fiction and non-fiction. Students need to know that fiction is more than just make-believe and non-fiction is more than just facts. For example, students can use text features to help them comprehend non-fiction text. Teachers can also help students realize that a fictional story has characters and events. They can use multiple story maps to help comprehend

the many types of fiction genres. Understanding these unique differences help students approach the texts with more confidence and a willingness to explore other texts (Sanchez, 2017).

The review of literature suggests that exposing students to a variety of genres is a key to unlocking comprehension and motivating learners. When students are able to find a genre they enjoy, their confidence will grow. With that confidence comes motivation to read and a deeper engagement, and that motivation and engagement could lead to comprehension success. Educators have a variety of strategies to increase student motivation and engagement in reading, and one that seems especially interesting is making sure students have access to and are encouraged to read from a variety of genres. Students need help, however, learning to appreciate the different genres before they take off on their own and improve their comprehension skills.

Research Methodology

The participants in this study were 17 fourth-graders in a small Midwestern rural town. Of those 17 fourth-graders, nine were boys and eight were girls, ranging in age from nine to 11. Seven read below a fourth-grade reading level and ten read on or above a fourth-grade reading level. A common comprehension test was given every week over a different genre based on the weekly story given in the Journeys curriculum, the required reading curriculum of the district.

The students started the Genre Challenge in February. They were given four different genres to read during a six-week period. The genres included realistic fiction, informational text, historical fiction, and biography. Students were also able to check out and read two books per genre. The students read these books from start to finish. Once the students completed a genre, they checked it off their list and received a bookmark. Then they answered questions about the book in an app called Whooo's Reading. This free app provides open-ended questions to assess students' comprehension of the texts and is geared for upper elementary and middle school students. This also provided students with some extrinsic motivation; they needed to read carefully and finish the book if they wanted to use the Whooos's Reading app. During the six-week period, as a class they read the Journey's weekly story. Each story was a different genre and it was read and reread as a class. Students also had leveled readers that were tied to the genre of the main story. Students were then encouraged to read books on their own from that same genre. As a result, students were exposed to multiple texts of the same genre during the course of one week, and comprehension of the texts was monitored along the way through the curriculum and assessed at the end through the app and weekly comprehension assessments provided by Journey's reading curriculum.

Results

As results were gathered, they were organized into four categories. Each category had three sections. The four categories were informational text, historical fiction, realistic fiction, and biography. The three sections in each of those categories were improved, did not improve, and stayed the same. Posttest comprehension scores taken prior to the introduction of the Whooo's Reading app were compared to posttest comprehension scores after the introduction of the app, when more reading in each genre was monitored and encouraged.

As noted in the table below, 14 of 17 students (82%) improved their comprehension scores when reading realistic fiction; 12 of 17 students (70%) improved their comprehension scores when reading informational text and historical fiction; and 11 of 17 students (64%) improved their comprehension scores when reading biographies.

Table 1: Results

	Informational Text	Historical Fiction	Realistic Fiction	Biography
Improved	12 (70%)	12 (70%)	14 (82%)	11 (64%)
Did not improve or stayed the same	5 (30%)	5 (30%)	3 (18%)	6 (36%)

Discussion

Students improved the most in comprehension when reading realistic fiction, with 82% of students improving their comprehension test scores in this area. This finding makes sense because the majority of books read during free time are in the realistic fiction genre; when students choose their own books to read, they choose realistic fiction or another kind of fiction. This also explains why the historical fiction comprehension weekly assessments were high, with 73% of the students improving. The genre that the students improved in the least was biography. The students did not seem to enjoy this genre as much by teacher observation, and while their scores did improve, their individual scores did not improve by much.

The Genre Challenge motivated students to read different genres, but the majority of students did not open their interests to other genres after the study even though they enjoyed the Whooo's Reading app. For example, they had to read a biography for the challenge, but they did not choose to read additional biographies when the challenge was over. The majority of the students enjoyed the historical fiction genre. Several students found a series to read within that genre, and other students continued to use the app, extrinsically motivated by it.

Some ideas for future research include having the students start the Genre Challenge at the beginning of the school year. Another idea for future research would include taking two weeks to cover the weekly Journeys curriculum. This would allow more time to focus on the comprehension strategy associated with the genre they are studying and allow for more wide reading of the genre. The app motivated some kids and should be used for those who were motivated by it, but it was not needed or beneficial for all students. Those with an intrinsic desire to read were not eager to continue using it.

Summary

The purpose of this study was to provide students with the opportunity to read a variety of genres, to finish the books they started, and to increase motivation by using the Whooo's Reading app as an extrinsic reward. Success was measured through their comprehension test scores on their weekly reading, and teacher observation. This was accomplished through the Genre Challenge. Students were able to check out and read two books per genre. The students read these books from start to finish. These genres were tied to what they were reading in their reading curriculum. Overall, all of the students made improvements from their pretests to posttests. The students became more aware of the variety of genres available to them in the school library, and they grew to understand where to locate specific genres in the library. The students learned about the characteristics of different genres, and they developed interest in new, previously unfamiliar genres. Finally, and they could check their reading comprehension by taking fun quizzes on the app. With the Genre Challenge over, many students are still logging books in the Whooo's Reading app, and still reading, and that is a great start. The teacher's hope is that the continued use of the extrinsic motivation (the app) eventually leads to an intrinsic motivation to read widely and thoroughly.

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BURDEN OF ELA

Vaughn Zecha
Winfield High School

As I look upon their hopeful faces
Do I tell them how life truly works?
And is school not "real life"?

How do I teach students how to run,
when they can't walk?
How can I help them to grow,
if they were never planted or fed?
How do I show, without my burden,
That life can have perks?

I give my soul and hardback tears
To teach empathy and logic, resounding.
But we feel alone, the world consumes
And I surround those minds with love.

Yet, a constant voice of doubt -
mistakes, love, and death
Piles on years of regret.
Drowning in burning sweat,
It will never go away.
Until the lights disappear
And walls flake off, turn gray.

We English teachers seem
To hope the most,
To give the most,
To live the most,
To love the most,
To grade the most,
But most of all
To feel the most.

You are not alone.
I promise you:
You are not alone.
We connect through writing

and a common theme.
You are not alone.

We preach that authors
tell a message across time.
You are not alone.
The written word,
the human experience.
You are not alone.
Repeat after me.
You are not alone.

Author Biography

Vaughn Zecha is an English, Debate, and Forensics teacher at Winfield High School. She received her Bachelor's Degree in English Education from Wichita State University and her Master's degree in Education Curriculum and Instruction with an emphasis in ESOL. She is also the head debate and forensics coach for WHS. In December 2018, she adopted a newborn and she enjoys spending her time with her son, Zander, and two dogs, Lupin and Sega. Along with reading and writing, Vaughn enjoys meteorology, painting, games, and running. She wrote this poem after a long day of reflection and social-emotional discussion, which is a main focus in her building right now. She can be reached at vaughn_zecha@usd465.com.

YA Book Review

A NEW QUIRKY KID ANTHEM: *THE STRANGE FASCINATIONS OF NOAH HYPNOTIK* BY DAVID ARNOLD

Rhiley Wall
Andover High School

My newest love is the novel *The Strange Fascinations of Noah Hypnotik* by David Arnold. This book, published in 2018 by Viking Children's, first appealed to me from its colorful exterior and obvious nods to my truest love, David Bowie. Once I opened the book, I was not disappointed.

Noah Oakman is the narrator of this coming-of-age story about realizing just how important the people in our lives are to us. Noah is a sixteen-year-old swimmer who has been exaggerating a back injury in the hopes that people will eventually stop expecting him to return to the sport. He is also extremely tidy, only wears ten different outfits, and has strange fascinations—but more on those later.

Noah's best friends are brother and sister Alan and Val. Alan is a Marvel fan and a part of the LGBTQ community (which he tells Noah at a very young age, bonding them from that moment on). Val is a talented photographer obsessed with photographing music-themed Instagram pictures that Noah admires. The three of them form what they call a delicate triangle and are inseparable, but lately Noah has been feeling like he is beginning to separate from his friends.

The story kicks off when Noah and the delicate triangle are invited to a party to kick off their senior year. At the party, Noah wanders to the library to discover a boy named Circuit who claims he can help Noah feel less disenchanted with the world. Noah readily accepts his offer, and when he awakes from the hypnotism, he finds that there are many small but important details about his life that have changed: his senile dog suddenly becomes lively and peppy all over again, his best friends' interests change, and his mother develops a scar on her face.

The only constants in this new world are his Strange Fascinations, the only things that haven't changed. It is then that he decides to get to the bottom of this new reality by seeking them out—a photograph, a man with a massive goiter on his neck, a slight discrepancy in his favorite book, and a YouTube video of a woman's face aging over the years that have kept his interest for a long time. The journey that follows ensures lots of laughter and tears (and a bit of confusion at points, if I'm being honest). Through lots of persistence, he eventually weaves a thread through all of his fascinations that causes him to grow and change throughout the novel as he figures out that each of these strange allures leads to loneliness. He begins to realize that even though it can be uncomfortable, it might be time to *turn and face the strange* (and do the right thing). The ending was absolutely perfect. I was sad to have to put it down.

This book was amazingly relevant. It perfectly captures the feeling of an end of an era that comes along with graduating high school.

This book was amazingly relevant. It perfectly captures the feeling of an end of an era that comes along with graduating high school. Every feeling a senior feels as they step out into the unknown is perfectly captured by Noah, Val, and Alan. It included many references to current pop culture and technology that may not stand the test of time, but I hardly think that is any reason to discredit this book. If anything, the technological references will make future generations smile as they remember "the good old days" when we watched Netflix. There was also a lot of scientific talk that confused me a bit at first, but it all wrapped up nicely at the end of the book. All of the references aside, the way that the main character thought and spoke was a nice change of pace. Speaking on pointless internet content, Noah muses, "Look: I am not immune to the allure of the sea otter, but at a certain point a guy has to wonder about all the life decisions he's made that have landed him on a couch, watching a glorified weasel press H9 for a bag of SunChips" (Arnold, 2018, p. 2). Oftentimes when I read young adult literature, I find that the narrator sounds jaded, but Noah was perfectly quirky with a sweet family and great friends who are positive influences in his delicate triangle.

I would absolutely recommend this book for someone looking to get out of the typical "going away to college" narrative, but still wanting to read relatable texts about the weird in-between stage that is the transition from senior year to college. It would be perfect for a senior in an English class to take on as individual reading and I plan on recommending it to many seniors. The only challenges I foresee with this book are the references to both science and "the oldies." If a student is not particularly scholarly in scientific matters like me, they may have a hard time understanding some of the theories presented in the book. But, to the students I can already hear complaining that this book is tough I say: hold on and keep reading. It is absolutely worth the time.

Author Biography

Rhiley Wall earned her bachelor's in secondary English education from Wichita State University in spring 2020, and she is excited to share her love of literature with the world. While earning her degree, she worked as a Resident Assistant in WSU's residence halls. When she is not teaching, Rhiley can be found reading or challenging others to a game of Bananagrams. Rhiley's love of young adult literature was rekindled this year in a college course, and she is excited to further explore this niche of literature and share its value with her future students. She will begin her teaching career at Andover High School in fall 2020. Contact her at rmmwall@gmail.com.

BLOGGING, OR HOW MY STUDENTS AND I RETURNED THE JOY TO OUR WRITING

Beth Gulley
Johnson County Community College

Abstract
In this practitioner piece, the author addresses the negative student attitudes towards writing. She offers blogging assignments as a solution for addressing student perceptions of writing as a burden. In addition to the Prompts Blog and the 20%-Time Blog, the author shares a video blog trailer assignment and a student self-reflection letter. Example assignments are included in the appendix.

Keywords
blogging, student attitudes towards writing, composition, video trailers

As I prepare for a new semester, I reflect on comments from previous students about their attitudes towards writing. Several students expressed sentiments like one particular developmental writing student's comment: "I've never been a fan [of] writing." Another developmental writing student shared, "I've always had a complicated relationship with writing; on one hand it is a great way for me to express myself, however on the other hand it can be extremely hard to do sometimes." To be fair, several students wrote they loved writing and had developed a positive attitude towards writing in high school or on their own. Unfortunately, many students, especially those who are under-prepared, arrive at the community college disliking writing.

First-year college writers and developmental writers alike frequently bring this distaste for writing with them when they enter our classrooms. Often first-year courses only reinforce negative beliefs about writing that students have developed. To be fair, high school and college teachers must require students to write in genres that prepare students for the academy and the workplace. As one of my students put it, "Writing classes when I was younger was a painful and unpleasant experience for me. They wanted you to follow a lot of guidelines to do so and I enjoy more of creative writing. I do not do well with a huge set of guidelines because it usually causes me to have a bad case of writers block." So, for this student the guidelines are the problem, but as teachers we know that the guidelines for academic and workplace writing are required.

Much has been written about the genres taught in first-year college classes, and many scholars stress teaching authentic genres. In her essay about "Mutt Genres," Elizabeth Wardle (2009) reminds us "teachers are charged with preparing students to write for and in the activity systems of other disciplines. In essence, they are asked to teach students about and prepare them for the genres of other disciplines" (p. 767). This sentiment is echoed in NCTE's position statement on "Professional Knowledge for the Teaching of Writing" (2016): "Since writers outside school have many different purposes beyond demonstrating accountability and they use more diverse genres of writing, it is important that students have experiences within school that teach them how writing differs with purpose, audience, and other elements of the situation." However, even authentic genres come with the "guidelines" that created writer's block for my student. In this article, I do not advocate changing the primary ways writing is taught in high school and college. Instead, I'd like to share the success I've had using various types of blog assignments as additional writing activities to flip the conversation about student writing as "something that must be fixed" into writing as a joyful practice.

I'd like to share the success I've had using various types of blog assignments as additional writing activities to flip the conversation about student writing as "something that must be fixed" into writing as a joyful practice.

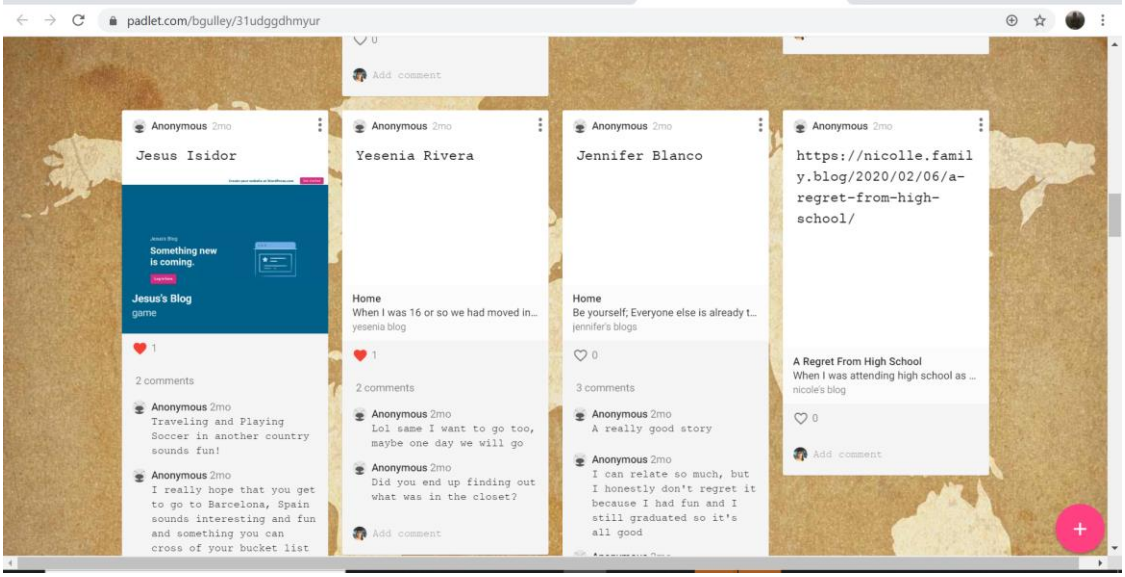
The Writing Prompt Blog

So often in developmental writing class, I find myself adding in commas or harping on missing topic sentences. Students frequently focus on mundane concerns rather than the message, too. However, when we start writing and reading Prompt Blogs, we laugh and cry together. We begin to understand each other as people. One semester, the entire class rallied around a student with autism who shared his blog post about the trouble he has communicating. Another student had us in stitches with a story about losing his pants while fishing. Sometimes I offer students time to blog during class, and I join in. I remember I am a writer, too. I share a bit of my authentic self with my students when they read about the time I jumped out of a moving bus or about the longest I went without sleeping.

The Prompts Blog assignment works well with any level writer. I use it with my developmental writing classes, and I enjoy writing to the prompts too. At the beginning of the semester, I give my students a list of 76 blog prompts that range from imaginative (describe the secret life of a school bus driver) to the reflective (what is the best writing advice you have ever received). The prompts were compiled by Elizabeth Baldridge (2014) and shared through the Conference of Basic Writing listserv (E. Baldridge, personal communication, July 22, 2014). Appendix A contains an abbreviated list of the prompts.

During the semester, students write on eight topics of their choice. Each blog entry is supposed to be 500 words. They write on a WordPress blog, and they share their blog URLs on a Padlet linked in our Canvas course shell (Canvas is the learning management system at my college). This could also be done with a shared Google document, too. WordPress is a free blogging platform that is easily available on the web (www.wordpress.com). I chose it because it was easy to use when I started this project. In recent years, the website has changed and now asks students to purchase a subscription. In the future, I plan to use Blogger (www.blogger.com) in my quest for user-friendly platforms. For my purposes, I want students to write on a public site that they can continue to use when our class is over. Padlet is another digital platform that is user-friendly, but it too wants students to buy a subscription (www.padlet.com). After creating their blogs, students access them through Canvas. Figure 1 is an example of students' blogs posted on a Padlet.

Figure 1: Student Blogs on a Padlet



Note. Each box represents the student's blog URL. Beneath each blog, we see other students' comments.

About three times during the semester, I ask students to read through their classmates' blogs and comment on several that they enjoyed reading. Later, I turn this into a group assignment where the groups come to a consensus on their three favorite blog posts. Then we have a class discussion about what makes those specific blogs good writing and we invite our favorite bloggers to read their posts to the whole class.

Finally, at the end of the semester, students choose their three best blog posts to revise. We examine various definitions of good writing like excerpts from George Orwell's "Politics and the English Language" and Andrew Stanton's 2014 TED talk "The Clues to a Great Story." Then students write a cover letter for their blogs in which they define good writing using sources and illustrate how their blog posts are good writing using the same criteria. The assignment sheet for the final exam appears in Appendix B.

At their final exam, students turn in their blogs and cover letter. Then they read one blog post to the class. I encourage them to consider what they know about the class as an audience and try to connect with them. The audience members laugh or cry where it is appropriate, and they clap enthusiastically. The students get to experience their writing as a finished product that is meant for an audience's enjoyment. Isn't that why most professional writers write—to say something meaningful to a receptive audience? The Prompts Blog allows students to feel heard.

The 20%-Time Blog

Increasingly, as students leave our classrooms, they may be called upon to show future employers or educational programs evidence of their ability to write for the Web. In response to this, I ask my Composition I students to keep a WordPress blog on a single topic and post to it fifteen times during the semester. The topic should be one they have genuine interest in, and it must either have an informative or persuasive aim. I call it the 20%-Time Blog because it is modeled after the 20% of work time many companies give their employees to pursue their own interests. This has been well documented, notably by Dan Pink (2011) in his book *Drive*. Basically, some companies allow their workers one day per week to work on passion projects. Several inventions that have developed from 20% time policies include 3M's Post-it note and Google Translate.

While the topic of the blog is up to the students, I show them examples of successful blogs from past students when I introduce the topic. In addition, I provide brainstorming time and feedback on their potential topics before they start. For example, past students have written blogs reviewing donut shops, highlighting local graffiti artists, sharing information about the saint of the week, highlighting the problems of sexual abuse, sharing tips for making the planet greener, and informing us of uncommon sports. Appendix C shows the assignment sheet for this project.

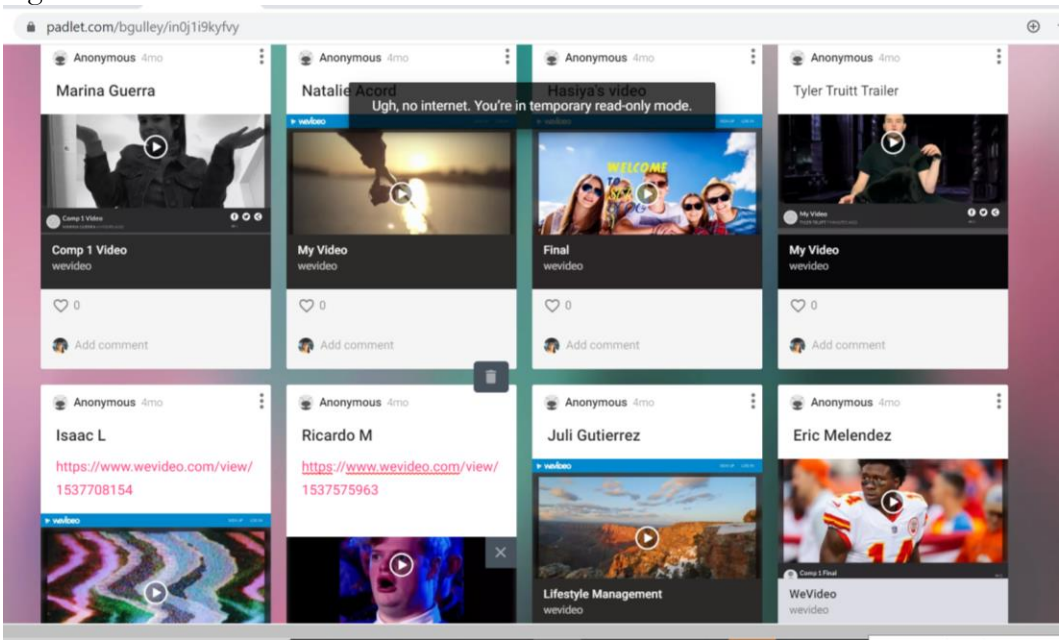
Most of the time, I allow students to work on their blogs at home, but from time to time we check in on them during class. Like my developmental writing students, my composition students enjoy reading and commenting on each other's blogs. Last fall, one student mentioned that her classmate's blog on weird sports "was a fun blog to read. I didn't know that so many crazy sports existed like the wife racing one." Sometimes reading classmates' blogs can be practical, too. Another student commented, "I've just got a car so it was very good to learn one more thing about cars."

Student Created Video Trailers

For the final Composition I assignment students conduct an audience analysis for their blog, select three posts to revise, write a script, and then create a video trailer about their blog. At our college, we use WeVideo software to make the trailers (www.wevideo.com). Other video editing software would work just as well. However, WeVideo is designed for educational purposes and is available for free on the internet. WeVideo also provides classroom-ready instructional materials for novice video editors.

The trailer project encourages students to think about who might have an interest in their writing and how best to catch their attention. Since the video script is brief, students have a chance to demonstrate their concise writing skills. On the last day of the semester, we screen the videos (which are 1-2 minutes long). Many students also add the trailer as the final blog post of the semester. Appendix D contains more information about the video trailers.

Figure 2: Student Video Trailers



Student Responses to the Blog Assignments

In his 1993 article "Ranking, Evaluating, and Liking: Sorting out Three Forms of Judgement," Peter Elbow suggests that "people who get better and get published really tend to be driven by how much they care about their writing" (p. 200). He goes on to say that finding other people who like what you write also leads to improved writing. Comments from developmental writing students and Composition I students suggest that the blog assignment has the potential for students to find a "liking" for writing and an audience.

A developmental writing student shared, "I never had fun writing until the first blog post we were assigned… the fact that I can create this world where anything happens is really appealing." His sentiment is echoed by a classmate who wrote, "Now since I am in college, I am used to writing, I still keep a journal, and I actually enjoy doing my blog posts."

In a survey of 32 Composition I students, seven mentioned the blog assignment specifically when answering the question "What part of this class helped you to learn?" This was the third highest of all responses. By contrast, no one mentioned the blogs at all when answering the question "Which parts of this class were least helpful for your learning?"

A nontraditional student wrote that "doing the blogs and journals were useful to me because it got me writing more. Although it seemed at the time like too much, it actually wasn't and helped out with my paper." Several of his classmates mentioned that the blogs were "neat" and "I enjoyed it." This sentiment was echoed by another student who shared "I also enjoyed the blogs and being able to write our own ideas." Finally, this student's positive attitude towards writing the blog is clear: "The blog assignment is awesome because it lets you explore your personal interests in different forms of media."

I offer these student reflections as evidence that the blog assignments have potential to change the classroom conversation from deficit or dislike to personal interests and joy. Other reasons exist to teach blogging and video editing. For example, NCTE's 2019 position statement "Definition of Literacy in a Digital Age" highlights nine reasons students should be digitally literate. Among NCTE's reasons students should learn digital literacy, "Consume, curate, and create actively across contexts" and "Recognize and honor the multilingual literacy identities and culture experiences individuals bring to learning environments" can be met through the blogging assignments, too. While these may be true, the joy factor is why I assign them.

Conclusion

If, like me, you are looking for new ways to encourage your students to fall in love with writing, please feel free to borrow from these assignments. I have included The Prompts Blog Final Exam, The 20% Time Blog Assignment, The Video Trailer Assignment, and The Top Fifteen Prompts in the appendix. As I start the new semester, I expect to meet new people whose relationship status with writing is "complicated" or "hate/hate." I hope to help them find they like what they have to say and to care about it enough to make others care too.

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Appendix A

Most Popular Blog Prompts

1. Describe your first brush with danger.

2. Write about the first time you defied your parents.

3. Write the story of a time you've been lost. Were you in a car? On foot? In a foreign country? Alone?

4. Chronicle the longest amount of time you've ever gone without sleeping.

5. Describe the worst date of your life. Where do you think your date is now? Do you think he or she ever thinks of you?

6. Write about the physical trait you would have killed to change in junior high school.

7. Write a description of your dream automobile.

8. Take time to write your five-year plan. Write down how you want your life to be in every aspect that's important to you. When you finish, read what you've written and think about why you want to achieve these goals. What do the goals imply about your life as it is now? What do they suggest about you as a person?

9. According to a poll conducted by the Gallup Organization, 10% of Americans say they have communicated with the devil. Write a story about one of these encounters.

10. Describe the secret life of a school bus driver.

11. According to the Florida Department of Corrections, more than one hundred people have registered on a waiting list to see an execution. Write about one of them.

12. You're very old. You're on your deathbed. (Sorry.) Family and friends gather around you. What do you tell them about life? What advice about living do you offer them? Spill a few pearls of wisdom from your experience.

13. Trace the journey of a five-dollar bill through the lives of five different owners. What was exchanged during the transactions? How much (or how little) did the transaction mean to each of the people involved?

14. Write a story that begins, "The last time I saw my mother was fifteen years ago."

Spark Words

15. Below are lists of words. Choose a word that grabs you—something that sparks a memory, an opinion, a sense of wonder, etc., and write about that. Each word in this section counts as

a separate topic, so you may write about several of these words. Just stick to one word per journal entry.

family	adventure	surprises
faith	place	roadkill
transition	leaving	insanity
health	oddballs	home
greed	player	accident-prone
superstitious	prom	hitchhiker
oops	vanity	protest
debt	bird	ouch
panic	conformity	wish
deadline	discipline	loser
music	temper	infectious
prodigy	embarrassment	clueless
strike	gossip	fear
outcast	addiction	adoption
electricity	border	extinction

All topics come directly from, or are inspired by, one of the following books:

Heffron, Jack. *The Writer's Idea Book*. Cincinnati: Writer's Digest Books, 2000. Print.
Heffron, Jack. *The Writer's Idea Workshop*. Cincinnati: Writer's Digest Books, 2003. Print.
Rekulak, Jason. *The Writer's Block*. Philadelphia: Running Press, 2001. Print.

Appendix B

The Prompts Blog Final Exam

For your final exam, instead of taking a test, choose your three best blog posts to revise. Then write a cover letter to go along with the revised blogs. At the final exam date, you will share your best blog post aloud to the class in our own version of a story slam. Below I will explain what I am looking for in each of these components.

Cover Letter

Your cover letter should use at least two sources to define what good writing is, and then it should explain in detail how your blogs are examples of good writing using the criteria from the definition. You should address the cover letter to me. I expect your letter to take at one-two paragraphs to define good writing. Please do use quotes from your two sources and cite them in MLA format. The TED Talk we watched in class can count as one of your sources. Next, write approximately one paragraph per blog post explaining how it is an example of good writing. Follow this up with a concluding paragraph. (This part should be between five and six paragraphs long.)

Blog Posts

You should choose three blog posts from the blog you have been writing all semester, copy them into a word document, and revise them for grammar, style, and content.

Final Exam Presentation

During your final exam, you will present your best blog post to the class as a finished work. The class will not give you feedback; they will only clap for you. I will bring snacks, and you are welcome to bring snacks as well. Once everyone has read their best blog post to the class and turned in the final copy of the paper, then will be done for the semester. I would like us to enjoy listening to all the blog posts but do notice that presenting your blog to the class is part of your grade, too.

This final exam is worth 100 points. It is due at your final exam time.

Appendix C

The 20% Time Blog

Companies like Google and 3M are known for giving their employees 20% of their time to pursue their own interests. The blog assignment is our class' equivalent of 20% time. You need to set up a new blog and post on it every week. The topic of the blog is up to you, though. I suggest finding a topic or framework that is broad enough that you can add to it weekly. For example, you might experiment with different recipes, give a local sports update, explore different historic sites, offer advice, evaluate music, explain how to do something etc.

The most important thing is that you pick a topic that you are genuinely interested in. In addition, your blog must have a public audience (so you should not set the privacy setting to secret or private). Finally, the blog must have an informative or persuasive aim (no creative writing this time).

The due dates for each blog post are on the syllabus. I would prefer that you use https://wordpress.com/, although other blog providers would work. After you have created your blog, post a link to it on this padlet. You only need to post the link one time, and then I should be able to go back to your blog at any time to check your writing. Each blog is worth 10 points and should be 300-500 words long. You should have 15 by the time the semester is over.

Feel free to add images, links, audio, and video to your blog. Write it in such a way that other people who share your interest would want to read it. And most of all, have fun with it.

Appendix D

The Video Trailer Assignment

For your final exam, choose your three best blog posts of the semester. Copy and paste them into a word document. Then revise them so that they reflect your best writing. You should include any images or links that were included in the original blog posts, too.

Next, read The Norton Field Guide chapter 6 on Audience. At the end of the chapter, there are ten questions you should ask when you are thinking about your audience. Think about the audience you were trying to reach with your blog post. Answer all ten questions in another word document. Please write an MLA heading on the document, but you may list the questions instead of writing in essay form. Answer the questions as completely as possible and write in complete sentences.

Then, write a 150-200-word script for a video "blog trailer." The purpose of the blog trailer is to provide a commercial for your blog to increase the traffic there. You will also select images and possibly music to go with the script, and build the video using WeVideo software.

At your final exam time, you will screen your blog trailer for the class. You will also turn in your script, revised blogs, and audience analysis as part of your final portfolio. This project is worth 100 points of your grade.

YA Book Review

FOR EVERY ONE BY JASON REYNOLDS

Spencer G. Arndt
Wichita West High School

Brought into the light during the grand opening of the Dr. Martin Luther King Jr. Memorial in 2011, Jason Reynolds's short speech *For Every One,* addresses the youth of this nation—emphasizing the importance of pursuing one's dreams. A speech, later transformed into a book in verse in 2018, serves as "A poem, A nod. A Nothing to Lose." In a comforting yet inspirational tone, this heavy-hitting book looks to invigorate youth and provide the necessary fuel to pursue their wildest dreams. The back of the cover reads, "This is for the *courageous,* and everyone who *wants to be."* This book is brilliantly simple yet immediately empowering. F*or Every One*. For every dream; for every person; for every child who wants to make their dreams come true.

For Every One is exactly what every young adult needs in their life. Not only do the verses serve as a pep-talk to the dreamers out there, but the intricate lines reassure the reader that even the most successful people, at one point or another, faced obstacles and had to overcome adversity. Overcoming adversity—as Jason Reynolds explains using his own experiences as an example—was something he too had to face as a young, up-and-coming writer.

For Every One is exactly what every young adult needs in their life. Not only do the verses serve as a pep-talk to the dreamers out there, but the intricate lines reassure the reader that even the most successful people, at one point or another, faced obstacles and had to overcome adversity.

Wonderfully executed, *For Every One* would appeal to young adults not only because of the pace of the book (30 minutes cover to cover) but because of the relatability and connections that young adults could make between their own lives and the experiences Jason Reynolds shares in this book. For instance, the language and tone Reynolds displays are not only inspirational but accessible for all readers.

Finding young adult literature that can be incorporated into the current day English language arts curriculum poses challenges in and of itself for educators. Some of the challenges educators face include the administration or parents not agreeing with the choice novel. That is where the argument regarding tweaks to the literary canon and what texts the students should have exposure to comes into play. *For Every One* deserves a spot in the literary canon.

For Every One could be included in a variety of English language arts units, including speech or poetry. Through this book, the language could be closely analyzed and used as a way to teach students how to speak motivationally and how diction can be used to make a point. In a poetry unit, students could close-read and analyze the beautiful metaphors, imagery, and tone, and engage in

writing (e.g., black-out poetry, found poems, acrostic poetry) that involve Jason Reynolds's words. "A poem. A nod. A nothing to Lose."

For Every One earns the right to be a part of any classroom library, available to readers who dream and dreamers who read.

Author Biography

Spencer G. Arndt will begin his first year of teaching at Wichita West High School in fall 2020. He enjoys writing poems, hanging out at local coffee shops, and playing with his one-eyed cat. He can be reached at sxarndt@shockers.wichita.edu.

BLANK PAGES

Alexis Bean
L.M. Smith Middle School, Birmingham, AL

But which one is the best one?

A simple question I guess

We stared.

Wooden towers of realms

and troubles

and battles

and passion

and spirit

staring at us from a multitude of dead saplings.

She is begging for a swift reply or an effortless suggestion.

How do I answer her question?

How do I tell her the pleasure of finding a character

and falling in love with them?

The suspense from turning each page

and diving deeper into a world paradoxical to your own?

Every proposal, every story I gingerly pull off this rack of universes is too much for her.

That one is so big, Miss. It would take me forever.

How do I help her understand that if you welcome the problems and the beauty in the words within those decorative covers, then it doesn't matter how many pages?

How many chapters

How many creatures

or tensions

or villains

or heroes

or monarchs

or long monologues that you don't quite understand, but you want to.

You drink in every metaphor.

Every simile.

Every description.

Every personification.

Every run-on sentence.

Every cut off sentence.

Trying to teach someone to appreciate beauty is a task no one, in my hundreds of hours of education, ever told me I would have to do.

No one told me when I decided from that long list of futures that those in which I was supposed to enrich their minds wouldn't be like my own.

That they wouldn't beg for extra time to sit in a chair by the window, curled up and leaping again into a world unknown.

They wouldn't stay up into the early hours of the morning lost in an endless jungle of another person's imagination.

I wasn't told how to inspire them to have that gut-wrenching motivation to seek a journey through the pages of a book.

But Miss,

Her eyes are blank pages.

I just want to complete the project.

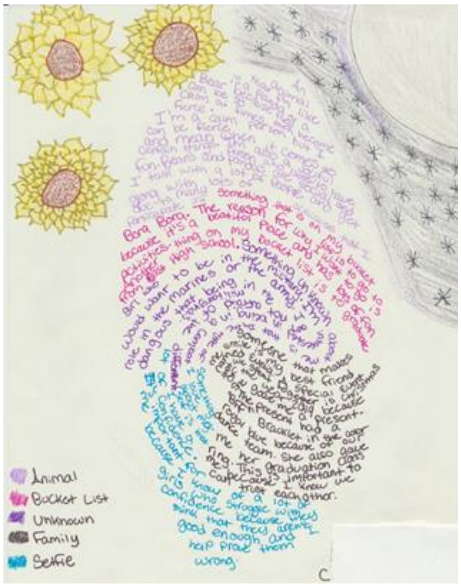
Author Biography

Born in Valley Center, Kansas, Alexis Bean graduated from Wichita State University in spring 2020 with a Bachelor of Arts in Education, Secondary English Language Arts 6-12. She completed her teaching internship in spring 2020 at Wichita Heights High School in USD 259. Alexis is a proud Air Force wife and a mother to a beautiful two-year-old boy. She has two rescue dogs and lives in Birmingham, AL, with her husband. She presented at the 2019 Kansas Association of Teachers of English (KATE) Conference on young adult literature and lesson implementation in the classroom. In fall 2020, Alexis will assume the head teaching position for eighth grade English language arts at L.M. Smith Middle School in Birmingham, AL. She can be reached at atbean@shockers.wichita.edu.

FINGERPRINT ESSAY: CREATIVE EXPLORATION AND PERSONAL NARRATIVE

April Pameticky
Wichita East High School

Like many educators, I probably spend far too much time on Pinterest. I came across visual displays of fingerprint essays, and while intrigued by the final products, I couldn't find consistent instructions on how to get students to that final product. After two years of doing this project with high school students (grades 9 and 11), I feel like I can share the process with other teachers because the benefits have been wonderful.



Fingerprint Essays allows students to reflect on their own goals and dreams, and then display them in a way that is graphically creative and interesting. These are questions I have asked students in the past through QuickWrites or reflective journals. For some reason, the ability to see their thoughts in this way creates a higher level of engagement—and frankly, a strong sense of community and curiosity with their peers as they see the variety that develops in the products.

Objective

Students will use a line template from their own fingerprint to explore personal identity and future goals through narrative writing.

Identified Outcomes

1. Reluctant writers embrace the creative format.
2. Reluctant artists (those who balk at one-pagers because *I can't draw!*) embrace the structure provided by the "lines."
3. Students experience the rough draft/revision process in a fresh manner.
4. Students develop an awareness of themselves as both unique and as a member of our class.

Materials

1. Ink pad
2. Draft paper (I used inexpensive "Marker Paper" found in the children's art supplies at Target, Dillons, & Walmart)
3. Writing prompts listed at the end of this article
4. Digital camera (I have used my iPad and personal camera phone)

Time Frame

One week, depending on actual time in the classroom. I base this on a 55-minute daily class meeting schedule.

Introduction

I use a Google Slide presentation to share with students examples of fingerprint essays. I then introduce basic information about fingerprints: *Fingerprints are the tiny ridges, whorls, and valley patterns on the tip of each finger. They form from pressure on a baby's tiny, developing fingers in the womb. The skin on the palmar surface of the hands and feet forms ridges, so-called papillary ridges, in patterns that are unique to each individual and which do not change over time. Even identical twins (who share their DNA) do not have identical fingerprints.* My students often become fascinated by their own prints and we discuss how the prints they are born with are the ones they will die with. We watch a short video entitled "Why are Your Fingerprints Unique?" available at https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=iCRy8voU5dE.

Fingerprints

This is a multistep project where it makes sense that some students are writing while others are taking their own fingerprints. But for ease in understanding, I'll start with prints.

1. Using an inexpensive black stamp ink pad, I demonstrate for students. First, ink the thumb. Then press the inked thumb onto paper three times without re-inking. I find this 3-sample method gives me options as some prints will be more clear and distinct than others, and I don't want to re-take fingerprints. I provide Clorox wipes to help students clean their fingers. (I also offer a generic template to students who may be uncomfortable with taking a fingerprint, but it is rare that a student opts out. I had one opt out in the 43 we did this year—and I have students from diverse backgrounds and experiences.)

2. Digitize the fingerprint. To be a useful template, the fingerprint needs to be enlarged to better fill a standard 8.5x11 sheet of paper. I've used both my camera phone and an iPad to take pictures with equal results. Once I have the photo, I select the best print and crop accordingly. I also typically adjust contrast to better enhance the lines. I'll do a batch of 5-10 students at a time, carefully labelling each print with the student's name because despite their unique differences, students can't identify their own prints, especially once they're enlarged.

3. Share Templates with students. The essay portion is actually done on a second sheet of paper placed on top of the fingerprint. Some students will not need to do anything special to see the guidelines of their own fingerprints, but some need to take additional steps. I recommend using a black marker to thicken and darken lines. Some of my students held their templates and essay sheets up to a window, using the light to trace guidelines onto their "art sheet."

What do they write about? The Prompts

I give students five prompts, which are available at the end of this article. I share those prompts as QuickWrites, encouraging students to just go with their first impulses and write. I set a 5-minute timer and encourage them to write for the entire time. I also impress upon them that these prompts are just guides; they are free to change the prompt parameters to fit. I also emphasize they get to go back and change things and fix it for the fingerprint essay. Sometimes I have students turn and share what they've written with a friend, but I stress this isn't peer review. While some students are writing, I may be working with a small group to take fingerprints.

Work Time

Eventually, students should have five working responses and a large version of their fingerprint. I encourage a minimum of 5-6 sentences per response because once students begin creating their final work, it's always easier to decide to leave something out than to write more fresh material to fill gaps. In some ways, this is the most organic revision of any project I use. Students have to consider both how their words will *look* and what their words are *saying*.

I think it's important that students get regular feedback as they're creating because students can arrive at the same product in different ways. Some students would simply string their prompt responses together from their QuickWrites. Others were more mindful about *where* things appeared based on the other graphics or pictures that they were incorporating into the results. Most didn't create a rough draft per se, but wherever possible, I did provide feedback on the QuickWrites, especially if I felt the response was too short to be adequate to fill the space of the fingerprint.

How is this project graded/assessed?

To evaluate the demonstrable writing skills, I use the rough drafts. Because students get to exercise so much creativity in the appearance of the final work, following sentences can be a challenge. I do a skills-based assessment on what they're revising and consider both conventions and sentence structure more loosely than in a formal essay. As beautiful as the sample on the next page is (yes, she's an artist), I couldn't read her writing on the art piece. But her rough draft was legible.

Intangible Teacher Gains

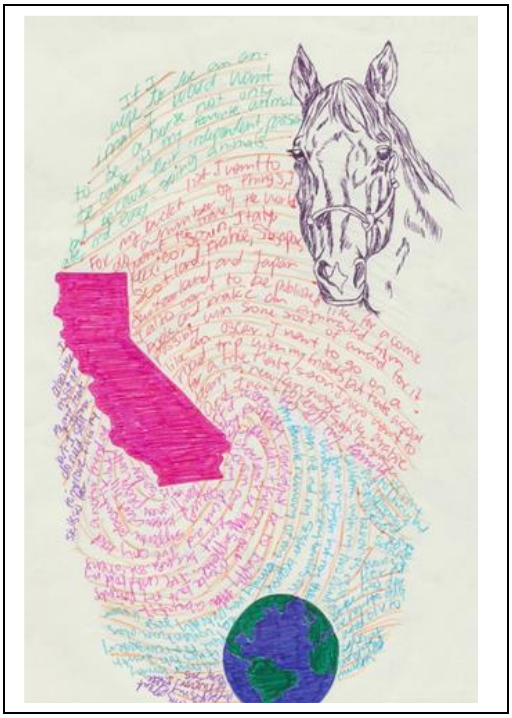
The inherent benefits begin with low-stakes writing for students. Most don't even realize they've generated enough material for a standard 5-paragraph essay. The prompts provide

organizational structure, and the format encourages creative expression. Some students have written poems, while others have done bullet-style lists for their goals. Several of the samples provided here are from my Tier 2 ninth-grade literacy students—typically reluctant readers and writers. The other samples are from my 11th grade college-prep students.

It's important to note that I didn't start the year with this project. I had established trust and norms with students that made them more likely to trust me and the process. I also informed them that their work would only be on display with their permission. Every single student ultimately shared their final project in a Gallery Walk, but just knowing that they didn't have to share empowered them to write. And all of the prompts are adaptable. Most students responded to the prompts as they appeared, but the truly powerful writing came from a need to share something of themselves.

Prompts

1. Choose which animal you are MOST like. Consider WHY you are most like that creature--what are characteristics that you share. Here are some things to think about: group or solitary, terrain, predator/prey, intelligent/sly, fierce/shy.
2. What do you dream about? What is something that you want for yourself (not material. things)? When you are 40, what is something you hope you have done? Do you have a bucket list?
3. What's something that NOBODY knows about you? Would people be surprised to know this about you? Is it something you need to keep secret or is it just something that's unusual? Is it hard to keep it secret? For this Prompt--you do NOT have to actually write the secret itself. You can write about how people might respond if they knew this about you.
4. What's your very favorite memory of your family? You can write about one person or about a special time (like a birthday or holiday), but it should be something that makes you SMILE when you think about it!
5. What is something that you LOVE about yourself?



Kansas State Standards for Writing (Grades 9-10)

W.9-10.3 Write narratives to develop real or imagined experiences or events using effective technique, well-chosen details, and well-structured event sequences.
W.9-10.4 Produce clear and coherent writing in which the development, organization, and style are appropriate to task, purpose, and audience.
W.9-10.5 Develop and strengthen writing as needed by planning, revising, editing, rewriting, or trying a new approach, focusing on addressing what is most significant for a specific purpose and audience.
W.9-10.12 Write routinely over extended time frames (time for research, reflection, and revision) and shorter time frames (a single sitting or a day or two) for a range of tasks, purposes, and audiences.

Author Biography

Mother, wife, teacher, poet. April Pameticky shares time between her high school English classroom and the creative community of artists and writers in Kansas. She launched the *Wichita Broadside Project* and currently serves as editor of *River City Poetry*, an online poetry journal. Her own work can be seen in journals like *Malpais Review*, *KONZA,* and *Chiron Review*. She is also the author of several chapbooks, and her debut full-length collection *Waterbound* (2019) is available from Spartan Press. Follow April @aprilinwichita. Learn more about her at http://aprilpameticky.com. Email her at aprilpameticky@hotmail.com.

YA Book Review

SELF-DEFINITION THROUGH UNCERTAINTY: A REVIEW OF *DARIUS THE GREAT IS NOT OKAY* BY ADIB KHORRAM

Blake Overman
Wichita State University

Darius the Great is Not Okay (2018) is an evocative tale of a young man and his journey for self-actualization. Darius Kellner is unique. He has a love for *The Lord of the Rings* and *Star Trek* and a steeping love for tea. Rather than sports and girls, Darius often pursues profound thoughts and enlightening reflections, revealing some advanced understandings of his own feelings. Life is stagnating for Darius. He battles bullies—the "Soulless Minions of Orthodoxy," as Darius terms them—expectations of his father, and depression.

Darius copes by embracing significant changes thrown upon him. Taking place initially in suburban America, the setting shifts with his journey to Iran. After discovering that his ailing grandfather in Iran may soon pass, his family travels to Iran to visit his grandparents whom he has only seen on Skype calls—a trip to meet, *and* say goodbye for Darius and his younger sister Laleh. Soon after Darius arrives in Iran he is introduced to new family members and Sohrab, another young man who refers to Darius by his name in Farsi, (the primary language in Iran) "Darioush." Darius's trip evolves into a journey of revelation, both for himself and the people around him. New relationships are formed and existing relationships (including his own relationship with himself) are tested and strengthened. The novel includes discussions of mental health, multiracial identity, family, and friendship.

The most enjoyable aspect of Darius is his voice. Much of his growth is internal and his perspective is as colorful as his personality. Darius connects his experiences to his favorite media, such as referring to the prime bully, Trent Bolger, as "Fatty Bolger," a reference to an apathetic halfling in JRR Tolkien's *The Hobbit*. His hobbies also play an integral part of his familial relationships; his main form of bonding with his father is re-watching episodes of *Star Trek: The Next Generation.* Young adult readers will find a character who is relatable in having distinctive interests that are reflective of their own individuality. Darius also encounters significant discomfort throughout the novel, often thrown into completely foreign environments and situations. Part of growing up is discovering yourself through constant exposure to the unfamiliar, something Darius excels at, and something to which young adult readers can relate.

Darius the Great is Not Okay provides an intersectional experience for young adult readers. The themes presented in the novel are both distinct and universal, providing a unique experience with aspects to which all readers can relate. The depiction of depression, paired with the discussion of mental health found within the novel, creates opportunities for students to both relate and empathize. Darius's own thoughts portray emotional intelligence that sharpens as the narrative progresses. Teachers will also find that having this novel available can lead to discussions of what emotional literacy/intelligence is—and of how understanding emotions is a valuable asset. Emotions are, after all, an essential part of being human. A residual benefit is having a text that depicts a Middle Eastern country in a gorgeous—at certain moments, awe-inspiring—way. Post 9/11 attitudes towards people of Middle Eastern descent are still present and are proliferated through negative depictions of Middle Eastern settings. Teachers might ask students how the depictions of Iran in *Darius the Great is Not Okay* alter preconceived notions of the Middle East.

Darius's own thoughts portray emotional intelligence that sharpens as the narrative progresses. Teachers will also find that having this novel available can lead to discussions of what emotional literacy/intelligence is—and of how understanding emotions is a valuable asset. Emotions are, after all, an essential part of being human.

To promote broader discussion while providing alternative reading material, educators may offer two texts. The first is the turn-of-the-century's *Persepolis*, an award-winning canonical version of alienated Middle Eastern adolescence presented as graphic literature. This should appeal to reluctant readers who benefit from visual text. A second possibility is for students who would like to read about a different character similar to themselves. In this case, consider Aisha Saeed's 2018 novel *Amal Unbound*, another contemporary look at many of the same themes, this time from a girl's point of view.

Classroom discussions of personal subjects such as defining one's self, mental health, and mental illness can present difficulties. These topics require an open-mind, a capacity for empathy, and a capability of understanding diverse perspectives and situations for all participants. For readers who select this book, it is important to be understanding. Teachers can pursue these difficult subjects if the reader initiates them. For educators who confer with students reading this book, I recommend prompts that are targeted to the external story rather than Darius's specific internal conflicts. For example: Is Darius treated fairly by his father? Why do you think Darius's mother chooses not to teach him Farsi? Despite the difficulty, I feel these challenging topics can be rewarding if executed correctly. However, there is always the option to recommend the student to revisit and reread if they express they are not comfortable discussing difficult topics at the time of their first read.

Like Darius, we must strive as educators to foray into the unknown in order to reach valuable understandings of the world around us. We must provide students with a novel that discusses crucial topics in a way that is unique, and utterly relatable. These discussions can be difficult. But by making room for this powerful text in your classroom library, you are inviting your students to an experience that can prompt positive changes in self-awareness and perspective. I eagerly await the next chapter of Darius' journey in the upcoming sequel, *Darius the Great Deserves Better*, set for publication in August 2020.

Author Biography

Blake Overman is committed to collaborating to find ways to reach a wide breadth of students and create impactful instruction and lasting literacies. Placing great emphasis on relevance, he hopes to engage his students to apply themselves in his classroom. He appreciates mutual initiatives amongst unique identities. An avid lover of visual media, particularly film, he is excited to incorporate it into his curriculum. He completed his BA in English Education 6-12 with a minor in Theater at Wichita State University in May 2020 and will pursue his master's in English and teach first-year composition at WSU beginning in fall 2020. Blake hopes to pursue his best self, through continued education and his students. He can be reached at baoverman@shockers.wichita.edu.

WHAT THEY DON'T TELL YOU ABOUT BEING A TEACHER (BY A FIRST-YEAR TEACHER)

Savannah Snow
Maize High School

Everyone will tell you about the mediocre pay you will receive as a teacher and you will always hear people joke, "You're definitely not in it for the money!" *Everyone* will tell you that you are "brave" because you are a teacher and say that they could never handle "those kids" or "that age" (no matter what age it is). They will suggest that you definitely go for your master's as soon as possible (in order to climb the pay scale). Colleagues will suggest that you demand respect from your students, but find a healthy balance between *teacher* and *friend*. College professors will teach you how to involve movement in your lessons so the students do not get bored, and how to teach poetry so that it connects to students' lives. They will *attempt* to prepare you for long days in the classroom and unpaid overtime spent grading essays and racking your brain for new and fresh ideas for lessons over the next novel.

However, they do not tell you about Gage, the boy who will come to you, on the brink of tears, asking you to help him write a note to the counselor. He's asking for help because he's being bullied and he's afraid to come to school every day. He reads to escape the world and gets made fun of for it. They don't tell you that he'll beg you to not call his parents because he's afraid his dad will be mad. He says he is depressed and struggling with social anxiety.

They don't tell you about the tears that well up in your eyes as he writes his note and, at the end, is too scared to turn it in. They cannot prepare you for the pit in your stomach when someone tells you that he needs to "stop being sensitive" or "man up." They don't tell you about the ache in your heart when school is over, books are closed, doors are locked, and you have to send your student home to a cold, empty house.

Things will catch you off guard and shake you to your core, but I *can* tell you this: it is worth every second.

They don't tell you about Riley, the girl that reveals to you that her step-father molests her and her drug-addicted mother does not believe her. They will tell you that you must report these things, but

they cannot prepare you for the feelings that come with them. They don't tell you about the tear-filled car rides home after you've held it together in front of students all day.

They do tell you that you'll enjoy your classes and your students, but you already knew that. That's why you are a teacher. What they don't tell you is that you will fall in love every day. In love with your profession and in love with your students. You'll cry streams of happy tears when John, a struggling student with poor grades, pulls through and succeeds. You'll tear up at the thought of your students and their individual quirks, talents, and personalities. You'll laugh harder than ever before. You'll find some of your very best friends in your colleagues. They can't prepare you for the profession and all that comes with it. Things will catch you off guard and shake you to your core, but I *can* tell you this: it is worth every second. Gage, Riley, and John are worth every second.

Author Biography

Savannah Snow, a recent graduate of Kansas State University's education program, currently teaches English 9 and 10 at Maize High School. As a Wichita local, Snow feels most at home in ICT at one of many cozy coffee shops. She is passionate about inclusive, engaging, and supportive classrooms. Snow enjoys YA literature and creating meaningful relationships with students, especially when the bond revolves around a good book. ELA has always been near and dear to her heart. Snow knew that she was born to be a teacher since a very young age. She appreciates reading, writing, and daydreams about writing a YA novel one day. She can be reached at ssnow@usd266.com.

LANGUAGE AWARENESS: THE LINGUISTIC LINK NEEDED IN ENGLISH EDUCATION

Shana Schmidt
Rock Creek High School

Abstract
Language awareness has been largely overlooked by the American education system. This paper provides background knowledge needed to justify language awareness in classroom teaching. As educators we need to be more informed and think more systematically about teaching linguistic diversity in our classrooms.

Keywords
language awareness, linguistic diversity, Students' Right to Their Own Language

Introduction

Language, culture, and histories are inextricably linked to our identity. Students and educators bring their identities and communities with them into our classrooms every day through the use of their language and dialect. In other words, our language tells others who we are and to which communities we belong. It is our "social and political capital" (Young, 2007; Lippi-Green, 1997). Therefore, a linguistic focus in education linked through the *Students' Right to Their Own Language* resolution and tied to Common Core State Standards (CCSS)[2] will work to close the gap of unequal access to language and literacy. This approach will ultimately improve students' chances to participate in school and society.

Educators devote themselves to the well-being of all children and do their part every day to provide students with access to a free education. However, the realization of the equal right to education has been hindered by lack of resources, adoption of adequate measures, and suitable policies, and the increasing linguistic diversification of American classrooms. If educators root our teaching in the *Students Right to Their Own Language* (SRTOL) resolution and merge that with students' learning outcomes found in the CCSS through teaching linguistic awareness (LA), educators will

[2] Education is guided by standards that outline what students should know and be able to do. To reach a wider audience I reference the Common Core State Standards, which serve as the source for state standards, like the Kansas College and Career Ready Standards.

affirm students' language rights while achieving students' learning outcomes. Teachers can achieve these goals by teaching and applying language awareness application and practices in the classroom.

Although educators support the idea of equal access to education for all students, teachers rarely address the relationship of the power that is reflected in their students' language and dialect (Smitherman & Villanueva, 2003). Educators may fear exploring the topic of how some dialects hold more privilege than others, because educators understand how any prejudice can be harmful and deeply affect students. Linguistic prejudice towards students in their classroom who speak non-standardized varieties of English is especially harmful. In other words, educators may fear that students will internalize messages that society views their language as incorrect or wrong.

In addition, some educators may feel unprepared to address the multiple language identities found in their classroom or in society. Ball and Muhammad (2003) examined if and how education programs prepare educators for linguistically diverse classrooms. Their 2003 survey revealed that few colleges or universities required courses in language diversity for teacher candidates at the start of the new millennium (Ball & Muhammad, 2003). According to this research, preservice teachers entered early 21st century classrooms unaware of society's and even their own linguistic views and prejudices. At that time, most educators were trained to teach their content and pass their knowledge of the mainstream dominant language on to the students, without ever stopping to question, reflect on, or examine their own or their students' socially embedded linguist beliefs (Ball & Muhammad, 2003).

Educators review the standards when developing curriculum, and those standards point to incorporating language awareness and SRTOL. For example, a 10th grade English Language Arts standard requires students to "analyze a particular point of view or cultural experience reflected in a work of literature from outside the United States, drawing on a wide reading of world literature" (Common Core). In order to achieve this goal, educators should utilize SRTOL and language awareness, starting with the history of the English language to show the connection between language and culture. Psychologist and historian Asa G. Hillard III argues that "few Americans have been taught such simple things as how English really came to be" (2002, p. 93) and affirms that if language evolution was more "widely known, chauvinistic attitudes towards language might be dismantled" (2002, p. 93). In other words, if educators teach their students to follow the evolution of a language, then they are doing work to systematically change language attitudes and ideology by teaching language through a historical, political, and cultural lens. The tenets of SRTOL complement the CCSS outcomes and give students a stronger understanding of language.

Scholarly Positions and Controversies Surrounding SRTOL

SRTOL has been embroiled in controversy and faced questions from educators and scholars since its inception. Upon SRTOL's adoption many educators and scholars felt that the document failed to clearly address how educators were to engage with language instruction and diversity in the classroom (Smith 1976; Zorn 2010). For many educators and scholars SRTOL was a social justice or historical response to the sociocultural and political climate at the time (Parks 2000). Other scholars argue that the resolution contradicts itself by stating we should be affirming students' right to their own language while not acknowledging that educational institutions value and respect academic writing and teachers have a responsibility to their institutions to successfully teach students Standard American English (Smith 1976; Zorn 2010). Scholars view the SRTOL resolution as a clear call to action to all educators on behalf of NCTE in order to support language rights for all students in the classroom, including all growing populations within our schools (Smitherman, 1995). Educators have the responsibility to foster students' linguistic agency

There are several competing theories about the role that educators and English education should assume in implementing SRTOL. The CCCC Language Policy Committee Survey

respondents agreed that language diversity training was necessary for educators, but 28% of the respondents admitted they had not received any language courses in their own college training (CCCC Language Policy Committee, 2018). As educators, we can research SRTOL and search for theoretical and pedagogical practices to use in the classroom. We can examine the decades-long debates, statements, surveys, arguments, commentaries, perspectives, and implications from legal, economic, cultural, and historical perspectives.

The SRTOL resolution was drafted as a guide to foster and enhance educators' instruction and classroom practices. The statement should be viewed as the foundational framework that cultivates respect and value in our students' linguistic background that in turn directly influences, enhances, and enriches all educators' instruction in the classroom. Using SRTOL as a foundation aids educators in having the necessary conversations in the classroom that confront the misconceptions and prejudice found in society about language. These conversations create a metalinguistic knowledge for educators and students, which increases overall sensitivity and enriches experiences for everyone. Creating this sensitivity to language awareness allows other nonstandard dialects to carve out an identity and a space in mainstream classrooms (Freeman, 1975). The SRTOL approach allows mindful consideration of minority students (Canagarajah, 2006) while providing more students with points of access. This allows educators to move forward, so all students can focus on the similarities found in language rather than the differences. SRTOL allows students to approach SAE with a growth mindset rather than a fixed mindset in our classroom. Educators create an environment where students examine and legitimize structures in language in our composition classroom, which help students develop written competence (Canagarajah, 2006). Educators have the ability to create a "crucial experience of safety for writing inside our classroom unless we show [students] how to be safe outside" (Elbow, 1999, p. 359) and that safety can be found through the lens of SRTOL.

SRTOL: Missed Opportunities for Educators

Since 1974, educators have been charged with exhibiting linguistic sensitivity in their teaching. This call to action was raised by the nation's two largest organizations for English teachers: The National Council of Teachers (NCTE) and Conference on College Composition and Communication (CCCC), which passes language policies for the profession. CCCC passed the "Students' Right to Their Own Language" (SRTOL) that ends with a directive for all educators to have the experiences and training that will enable them to respect diversity and uphold the right of students to their own language (Perryman-Clark, Kirkland, & Jackson, 2015).

These organizational language policies from CCCC and NCTE characterize their positions toward policy and pedagogical development in support of language diversity in the classroom. However, many educators are not aware of the decades-old SRTOL resolution or are uninformed about how to fulfill its charge. In fact, at the start of the millennium, most licensed teachers had never heard of this resolution. In 2000, "The Language Knowledge and Awareness Survey" asked NCTE and CCCC members if they knew about the SRTOL or any of the positions that the two organizations had taken on language discrimination. This survey "showed that fully one-third of the membership had no knowledge of the positions the organizations had taken" (Delpit, 2002, p. xxi), proving that educators must be more informed and think more systematically about teaching linguistic diversity in our classrooms.

Teaching linguistic diversity allows educators to nurture students' language backgrounds. As educators, we cannot ignore the identities, social and cultural forces that influence our students. By supporting linguistic diversity, we are properly preparing our students for societal change instead of limiting a students' language to the playground and their home (Smitherman & Villanueva, 2003; Young, 2007). With SRTOL, educators are able to value all academic engagement with a wide range

of discourse in their classroom. SRTOL helps educators and students become agents of change within the educational system in which, if not navigated properly, students can become a "casualty of literacy" (Young, 2007, p. 122). With language and communication surrounding so many facets of life, educators who embrace the tenants of SRTOL are in a unique position to help students confront language ideologies in the safe environment of the classroom, enabling students to be successful in school and life. Rosina Lippi-Green also cautions that "language is deeply emblematic of our identities and backgrounds, and as a result the ways that educators interpret and respond to students' language use may directly and deeply affect that young person (2011, p. 104). By teaching linguistic diversity, educators are in the position to support and contribute to students' education and future through pedagogical content and language knowledge, giving students a meta-perspective on language.

Many scholars and educators have discussed the importance of acknowledging language, dialect, culture, identity and power. Judith Baker, a high school English teacher, suggests guiding students to "find patterns of speech, rules of grammar, vocabulary, tonal features, and emotional characteristics of language" (2002, p. 52). As students note, label, and discuss these characteristics alongside SAE they can make informed choices. Many other scholars like Geneva Smitherman, who helped author SRTOL, encourage educators to be culturally responsive in their teaching. This way of teaching demonstrates daily to students "that perceived errors appear to fit a linguistic pattern" (Hudley & Mallinson, 2011, p. 33). While the idea of protecting and respecting students' rights has been apparent for years, the question remains for many educators how best to fulfill students' rights to education, while also affirming their own language. Educators should link these two rights together by using a linguistic awareness approach in their classrooms.

An educators' function is to have the ability to link as many sources of professional knowledge, skills, and experiences together as needed to effectively engage our students' hearts and minds in our classrooms. When educators start to examine the hierarchal link beginning with their students' fundamental rights, then linguistic awareness, and CCSS they will be able to inspire authentic learning—a learning that is more self-aware, ethical, and empathetic and inclusive. These links enable students to gain a sense of hope and genuine understanding of one another as human beings.

SRTOL and CCSS

SRTOL was written for educators to build a community of culturally and linguistically diverse learners within their classrooms. Hence educators broaden their students' views towards language identity and style. By using a meta-linguistic approach, educators examine their own experiences and views to gain the "experience and training" that provides them with the insight to "respect diversity and uphold the right of students to their own language" (Perryman-Clark, et al., 2015, p. 236). The language in SRTOL is teacher-focused and the NCTE position statement on SRTOL encourages its "members, educators, and all people interested in education to become familiar with the document and be guided by its principals in developing and adopting educational policies and practices" (Resolution on Affirming). The CCSS language concentrates on student outcomes. However, combining both these guiding principles ensures a better understanding of language for everyone. First, SRTOL is needed to give both educators and teachers a metalinguistic knowledge of different varieties of language. The CCSS aligns with SRTOL by asking educators to ensure that their students can "apply knowledge of English language to understand how language functions in different context, to make effective choices for meaning and style, and to comprehend more fully when reading and listening" (Common Core). It is not enough for an educator to just design curriculum that aligns with the CCSS. Educators must link their instructional design back to SRTOL and incorporate language awareness in the classroom. Without the introduction of

awareness, the educator is effectively perpetuating the misconception that all students bring the same prior knowledge and skills to the classroom.

SRTOL and the CCSS both emphasize educators having a functionally oriented theory of language. By adopting and respecting the idea that language plays a complex role in student learning and in society, educators can provide more meaningful access points and opportunities for students to participate in their own education in the classroom and society. To achieve these goals educators should design curriculum that recognizes that language diversity and awareness is key in fulfilling all students' educational rights. In fact, to teach language awareness is fundamentally essential for educators and students if we aspire for students to have a full understanding of the English language. By affirming their rights to their own language we are giving the students so much more than just language and grammar lessons. We are giving students a comprehensive awareness that is far more valuable. We are teaching students to look for patterns, make discoveries, and advance their own ideas and perceptions about the world around them.

Conclusion

Linking language awareness curriculum through the lenses of SRTOL and CCSS gives educators and students a full fund of knowledge about language. Educators should give students more than just practical application of language. As teachers, we must offer students the background and fundamental linguistic knowledge to view language as systems and patterns. Without SRTOL or at least an awareness of linguistic diversity and the grammaticality of English variants at the heart of curriculum, educators and students may end up unknowingly perpetuating myths and stereotypes that surround language. When the history of language and culture is not taught, students do not see the connections between their own language and the language taught in the classroom. In using SRTOL to inform curriculum design, educators and students can have a deeper understanding of language, enabling them to make choices about language and understand its implications.

The hallmark of an educator is one who creates a learning environment that combines theoretical knowledge and practical experiences, while considering how they can best nurture their students' capabilities. When educators link standards, SRTOL, and language awareness, they are not only making an invaluable contribution to their students but to society itself. An educator who helps students capitalize on their varied backgrounds makes a difference not only in the classroom but also in the increasingly diverse world that we are preparing all of our students to enter.

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