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SCET
Call for Articles

The South Carolina Council of Teachers of English welcomes contributions to **South Carolina English Teacher (SCET)**, a journal that represents varied perspectives, formats, and voices focusing on the teaching of English in our state. SCET publishes teacher research, critical essays, teaching strategies, bibliographies, interviews, personal essays, short stories, poetry, and other creative works including black and white photography and drawings. We invite original artwork for our cover design. Each manuscript should be no more than 12 double spaced, typed pages in current APA style. Place the author's personal and institutional identification including an e-mail address on the cover page only. Please attach a copy of your manuscript in Word, subject heading, **SCET**, to **mstyslin@mailbox.sc.edu**. Deadline for submission for the next issue of **SCET** is July 30, 2014. All submissions postmarked by this date will be considered.

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From the Editors

We're pleased to present this latest issue of *South Carolina English Teacher*, which, as it has for many years, provides a forum for teachers in our state and beyond to share their classroom practices and research and contribute to important professional conversations. Many of the texts in this journal focus on classroom practices that are informed by an attentiveness to social justice; the authors encourage us to consider ways of making our classroom spaces where teachers and *all* students are encouraged to think about and enact practices that promote democracy and encourage social change.

In particular, Lamar L. Johnson and Jennifer L. Doyle describe the approach they take in encouraging their students to read and create texts that look at key historical events from alternative perspectives as a tool for promoting social change in their piece, "Creating a World that is Not Yet: Promoting Democracy through a Social Justice Approach."

Meanwhile, in "Forget-Him-Not: The Creation of an Interdisciplinary Unit Based on Marilyn Nelson's *A Wreath for Emmett Till,*"Patricia Vicino details the development of an interdisciplinary classroom unit based on Nelson's book of sonnets that allows students to explore both the poetic form as well as the history and legacy of racism in the southern U.S.

And in "Designed to Exclude," Charles M. Bell argues for a re-evaluation of the ways in which the structure of after-school programs can exclude some student populations in ways that have significant implications for their futures.

The *Reaching All Learners* section contains selections that describe instructional approaches that may have particular benefits for some frequently marginalized student populations. Laura S. Saunders' "Reading Interventions: Are We Teaching Programs or Children" contains a thoughtful discussion of the implications of intervention programs for struggling readers and a description of the power of authentic reading experiences rather than scripted reading programs to make a difference in these students' reading lives.

Rebecca G. Harper and Gordon Eisenman, in "Bibliotherapy for Inclusion Classrooms," discuss the concept of bibliotherapy and provide a list of novels that teachers can use to "foster compassion and understanding" among the students in their classrooms. And in "Using New Media Narrative (Digital Storytelling) to Teach Writing," Michelle Fowler discusses the digital storytelling projects her students created as they made movies that demonstrated principles of argument derived from the Toulmin model.

The final section of this issue, *Writing To Express*, contains several poems that explore the experiences of being teachers and readers: Charles Bell's "Zombies Have Feelings, Too," Angela Byrd's "Mockingjay Response," Robin L. Howell's "Her Hands," and "Now, That's a Real Job" by Cayley Garner.

As we work to remember that our task as teachers is to teach students rather than to teach standards, the pieces contained in this journal provide pictures of what our classrooms can look like as we strive to help our students develop into thoughtful, engaged citizens.

Matthew C. Nelson and Mary E. Styslinger

Creating a World that is Not Yet: Promoting Democracy through a Social Justice Approach

By Lamar L. Johnson & Jennifer L. Doyle

Like most American citizens, we enjoy living in a democratic society that encourages the opportunity to have choices in our lives and voices in our government. As advocates for social justice both inside and outside the classroom, we both feel a strong need to create democratic classroom environments which not only provide agency within, but also empower students to change the world outside our four walls. We often ask ourselves, what is the purpose of schooling in a democratic society? This simple yet intricate question guides our ideologies, beliefs, and values—not only as educators, but also as citizens. In this article, we discuss how we implement social justice and democratic frameworks in two secondary English language arts classrooms. We first document the inextricable link between social justice, culturally relevant, and democratic teaching. We then highlight the correlation between education and democracy. We draw upon social justice, culturally relevant, and democratic frameworks to offer a conceptual lens for how we use American literature and non-fiction articles to build academic achievement and student agency. We conclude with challenges and suggestions when teaching from these types of frameworks.

Before we go any further, we want to explain our approach about how we teach from a social justice framework. In our classrooms, we teach from a critical race pedagogy—where we situate race as the nexus of events that unfold in society. Classroom conversations about race, racism, and power can be quite frightening. Teachers, students, scholars, and parents dysconsciously, consciously, or angrily avoid these topics (Bolgatz, 2005). However, if we wish to address the issues that derive as a result of what Anna Deavere Smith (1993) calls, "our struggle to be together in our differences" (p. xli) we need to be able to engage in critical dialogue about race, racism, and power.

Teaching from a social justice and democratic framework, we educate our students on how to become agents of change and global citizens. Implementing a democratic approach impels us to move towards action and away from contentment—reminding us of the laborious work shown by our justice-forbearers. These men and women worked diligently for the men and women today. Civil rights activists, suffragettes, labor organizers, and abolitionists: "Without them, liberty would today be slighter, poorer, weaker—the American flag wrapped around an empty shell—a democracy of form and symbol over substance" (Michie, 2009, p.13). We want our students to witness the real America. We want them to hear and to read the untold stories from oppressed people who had a tremendous impact on the development of this country, while viewing the texts through a critical lens that enables students to gain sociopolitical consciousness about the world around them.

Democratic teaching is in tandem with social justice and culturally responsive teaching. When implementing social justice and democracy in curriculum and instruction, students foster and construct knowledge about their multiple identities, their community, their culture, and their world. A social justice approach enables and empowers students to inquire, interrogate, challenge, and investigate the inequities and injustices certain races, ethnicities, and genders encounter today in society. Culturally relevant and social justice pedagogies can mold our students to become democratic citizens and agents of change. Teachers who implement culturally relevant pedagogy empower their students politically, socially, intellectually, and emotionally (Esposito & Swain, 2009). The theoretical strand of these concepts empowers students to recognize and interrogate the social inequities and injustices that are prevalent in schools and in society. Recognizing the social inequities and injustices opens the window for the employment of social justice and critical citizenry.

How Do We Promote Democracy in the English Classroom?

The foundations for a successful democracy—reading, writing, thinking, speaking—are the same foundations for the English classroom. In order to have a successful democratic society, all participants must be educated and think critically about issues. The English curriculum can be specifically crafted to encourage students to think critically about real-world issues; if the curriculum is revamped from the traditional model and traditional literature into one that promotes social justice, it includes every voice and gives students agency by allowing them choice in their education. In the paragraphs that follow, we provide insight into how we promote democracy within our classrooms.

Using Non-Fiction Texts to Tell Untold Stories

Much like multicultural literature, non-fiction texts provide students with the unique opportunity to hear the untold stories of America from the people who are often silenced. Within the classroom, non-fiction texts allow students to gain first-hand knowledge about a topic. For instance, one of us uses literature circles to introduce non-fiction texts (see Fig. 1) about struggles for freedom throughout the world. Students choose which

Figure 1.

Non-fiction texts about struggles for freedom:

A Long Way Gone by Ishmael Beah

An Ordinary Man by Paul Rusesabagina

Factory Girls by Leslie T. Chang

Free the Children by Craig Kielburger

Journey from the Land of No by Roya Hakakian

Princess: A True Story of Life Behind the Veil in Saudi Arabia by Jean Sasson

The Poured Fire on Us From the Sky by Benson Deng, Alephonsion Deng, and Benjamin Ajak

Three Cups of Tea by Greg Mortenson and David Oliver Relin

book they want to read, then they take the topic of their text and create a children's book about the topic. Their task is to tell the untold stories from their nonfiction texts to elementary students. All students must then find a way to fundraise the money to get each group's book published, and finally, they read their original stories to local elementary school students. Providing students with a choice of which book they read empowers them. Affording students the opportunity to read their children's book to elementary students provides them with the voice they need to promote social justice and democracy. Through this project, students find they actually can make a difference in the world and their community, making them agents of change and global citizens. The non-fiction texts themselves grant students the opportunity to understand the real-life struggles people across the world experienced in the fight for freedom and equality. Through these texts, as well as other non-fiction texts, students learn one person with a strong voice can make a difference in our world, proving that democracy can work for them.

Teaching American Literature through a Critical Lens

Most American literature promotes and instills Eurocentric ideologies, values, and beliefs. The students only hear and receive the voice of the dominant culture. The voices of the oppressed and marginalized are silenced. The voices of African Americans, Latinos/as, American Indians, and women are underrepresented throughout the traditional stories of American Literature. With the proper tools, we disentangle the vocal cords of the oppressed groups by eradicating the silence, which, in return, enables students to interrogate the inequities and the injustices that human beings encounter in society. The untold stories of American history are overpowered and stifled by the narratives of the majority. The majoritarian narratives are the traditional stories shared with students. These narratives illuminate how the dominant group maintains power and privilege through presenting people of color and other oppressed groups in a negative light: "Masked in White privilege, the majoritarian story claims to be neutral and objective, yet it is grounded in negative

assumptions and stereotypes of people of color" (Cook & Dixson, 2012, p.13). We present students with counter-narratives (see Fig. 2 & Fig. 3) of the voices that are marginalized as the vehicle for breaking the silence of the oppressed.

Figure 2.

Informational text resources for teaching counter-narratives:

A People's History of the United States by Howard Zinn

A Young People's History of the United States by Howard Zinn

A Different Mirror: A History of Multicultural America by Ronald Takaki

A Different Mirror for Young People: A History of Multicultural America by Ronald Takaki

A Place at the Table: Struggles for Equality in America by Teaching Tolerance

Figure 3.

Multicultural literature for teaching counter-narratives:

American Born Chinese by Gene Luen Yang

Black Boy by Richard Wright

Copper Sun by Sharon Draper

Fire from the Rock by Sharon Draper

The Absolutely True Diary of a Part-Time Indian by Sherman Alexie

The House on Mango Street by Sandra Cisneros

Counter-narratives or counterstories, oppose the negative stereotypes and the negative stories told by the majoritarian narratives: "In this sense, narrative can provide the perspective of those at the bottom, and thus potentially challenge normative assumptions about power relationships" (Cook, 2013, p.10). Most of American literature and history are full of majoritarian narratives.

In a unit entitled T*his Isn't Where the Story Ends: The Untold Stories of American History through Counter-Narratives*, one of us

empowers students who are oppressed while presenting another narrative to those students who are a part of the majoritarian narrative. In this unit, all students have to create counterstories regardless of their racial and ethnic background. Many White students struggled with creating counter-narratives. They explained and recognized how rarely they see or hear stories about their culture in a negative light, which required them to interrogate their own practiced ideologies and beliefs. Here is an example from a young, White male countering his own narrative about Hispanics:

My single story is about me stereotyping Hispanics. All my elementary school years I believed that all Hispanics lived in a trailer park and all they ate were tacos and burritos every night. The media made my perception of Hispanics like this. I talked to my parents about this but it just ran through one ear and came out the other. My belief in this changed when I went to middle school, I met a good friend named Carlos. We were in class one day and we were asked what social class is your family in. I said middle upper class, and I was thinking Carlos was going to say middle to lower class. I was wrong, he said upper class. I was thinking he was doing this because he didn't want to be embarrassed… I popped the question what does your mom and dad do for a living. He said his dad was the manager of a bank and his mom was a lawyer. I was like this can't be true Hispanics cannot become managers of a banks and lawyers. I just let that fly but when career day came around I was shocked. His mom and dad came in to share their careers with us the students!

I was in total awe about this, this changed my point of view on everything. It doesn't matter what racial background you come from you can rise of above the stereotype and conquer anything… This is what I have learned from Carlos and his family, they rose from the stereotype and conquered their goal in society.

While White students were able to critically examine their own misconceptions, students of color had the opportunity to tell powerful narratives about themselves, their culture, and

their history—narratives which are often stifled and suppressed. Here is an example from a student of color:

Single stories are not very uncommon in our world today, though not many people pay too much attention to them… Here's a single story of mine. Okay, so I consider myself a studious, academically gifted person. I am also a Black/African-American. On many occasions when I would first meet someone earlier on in my life they would assume that I am not very bright, that I'm loud, ghetto, and that I get into trouble a lot because they heard that black people are that way. Now you see, the single story they heard about African-Americans completely went against who I am as a person, who I am as a human being, and yet I still was placed under that category just because they heard stories about "people like me." …How did I deal with the fact that they thought I was this completely other person you may ask? Well I just continued on being myself and eventually they came to know another side to that single story they had heard about… Even if I were to tell them how wrong they are it still wouldn't get through to them because they had already had that single story set in mind. Single stories are always going to be present in the world that we live in now, but anyone can add on to those stories. Adichie (2009) says that what makes single stories wrong is that they are "incomplete." So make them complete. Just be you. Add on your own story so that single story people fall victim to everyday, isn't a single story anymore. So that fewer people have to go through the process you had to go through. Make it "a balance of stories."

Challenges and Suggestions

Teaching from a social justice, culturally relevant, and democratic framework comes with many challenges. Teachers may encounter resistance from students, colleagues, administration, and parents. But, we should not let the resistance deter us from ensuring the best education possible for all children. Throughout these units, our students had the opportunity to explore a variety of issues that impact their lives and the lives of other people in this country. They explored texts through a critical consciousness lens as the vehicle for raising awareness and critically analyzing the society in which we live. But after the students have critically explored and critically discussed these issues, where do we go from here? How do we transition from awareness to advocacy? We want our students to take the information they have learned beyond the four walls of our classrooms. As teachers, we, too, must have the will and the drive to be an advocate for change. We also need further action from policymakers, principals, school board members, scholars, politicians, parents, and researchers. Before we can educate our students to become critical citizens and agents of change, we must be critical citizens and agents of change who are critically aware of the injustices and hegemonic forces that are permeated throughout society. As activists and critical citizens, we can strategically counter injustices such as racism, classism, and sexism as an apparatus for creating a more just society. The English curriculum has come far in recent years, but we are not there yet. As long as we have students and as long as we have a democracy, we all must work together to educate and promote democracy and social justice, and ensure that all students have a voice and choice both in our classrooms and in our society. Teaching students to become critical citizens is a tedious journey, but it is worth the love, imagination, tears, commitment, and tenacity it takes to create a world that is not yet.

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Forget-Him-Not: The Creation of an Interdisciplinary Content Unit Based on Marilyn Nelson's *A Wreath for Emmett Till*

By Patricia Vicino

I don't remember the first time I heard the name Emmett Till, or saw Marilyn Nelson's book, *A Wreath for Emmett Till* (2005). I wish I did, because in my English classroom, my Emmett Till unit has enraged, saddened, enlightened, educated, and challenged my high school students for the past year. Together we have learned and seen things about the case that have alternatively sickened and inspired us. We have discussed the state of race relations in South Carolina in particular and the United States in general. We have shared personal beliefs, opinions, and experiences on racial issues. My students have each studied one of the book's fifteen sonnets in depth and shared their findings and observations with the rest of the class in carefully structured presentations lasting throughout the semester. Most importantly, each participant has been enriched on multiple levels by the interdisciplinary content unit created around a horrific and unforgettable piece of American history.

Personally speaking, the Emmett Till unit I created was one of the few things that challenged and sustained me throughout teaching three sections of College Preparatory World Literature during both the fall and spring semesters. I often lost myself within the content, striving to create interdisciplinary connections that would satisfy and interest students better skilled in other subjects. I provided some of my students with an unforgettable experience based upon the unspeakably tragic murder of a boy slightly younger than they are right now. The unit and its related content created an environment in which students could empathize, challenge, and react to a gross social injustice, and this is why I created it in the first place.

The Emmett Till unit grew out of a tremendously moving and evocative book of sonnets (more specifically a heroic crown of sonnets, a sequence of 14 sonnets in which the last line of the first becomes the first line of the second, and so on, which links the sequence, and the fifteenth sonnet is comprised on the first lines of the fourteen before it) about the 14-year-old boy brutally tortured and murdered for supposedly whistling at a white woman while visiting family in Money, Mississippi, in 1954. The two killers, Roy Bryant and J.W. Milam, were later acquitted of the crime in a Mississippi jury trial. The case has been credited with beginning the Civil Rights Movement because Emmett's mother, Mamie Till Mobley, insisted on an open casket at Emmett's funeral so the world could witness what was done to her son. The subsequent shock and rage experienced by the nation helped to dismantle the blatant racism and discrimination that characterized the Jim Crow South.

Many books, articles, and poems have been written about Emmett Till, but Connecticut Poet Laureate Marilyn Nelson was the first to place his legacy in a book of sonnets. Nelson, author of several collections of poetry, has won many awards, including two Pushcart Prizes, two fellowships from the National Endowment for the Arts, a Guggenheim Fellowship, a Fulbright Teaching Fellowship, and was thrice a finalist for the National Book Award (Schmitz, 2009). When asked to comment about her writing process for *A Wreath for Emmett Till*, Nelson related that it was not an easy journey, given the brutal intensity of the subject matter. She toyed with several approaches before settling on a heroic crown of sonnets as her approach. While even the most highly skilled of poets would find this highly elaborate form daunting at best, Nelson related that the controlled format actually aided her efforts, becoming a type of insulation between her and the subject matter. She also relayed her thought that "the stricter the form, the more control one gives to the muse" (Pierpont, 2009, p. 2).

Regarding her tone and focus, Nelson also elaborated that she wanted her book to be an appropriate tribute for Emmett's mother, Mamie Till Mobley, who not only faced the horror and brutality of what happened to her son, but also

spoke out during the ensuing trial and acquittal of her son's killers, for which she received multiple death threats. Mobley did not live to see the publication of the book, passing away in 2003 while Nelson was still in the early stages of writing, but one can easily imagine that she would be honored by her son providing a lasting legacy and learning opportunity to readers around the world (Pierpont, 2009). *A Wreath for Emmett Till*, published in 2005, garnered dozens of positive reviews and was awarded a Horn Book Award and a Michael L. Printz Award. It was also named a Coretta Scott King honor book, and *Publisher's Weekly* and *Kirkus* Reviews both named it as one of the best books of the year.

After reading and being tremendously moved by *A Wreath for Emmett Till*, I wanted to share this experience with my students while teaching them required class content, allowing them to critically consider an issue that is still considered timely, and instructing them to view a subject with a multi-faceted approach. I therefore decided to create questions and related activities based upon references within each of the sonnets. While these "activity sheets" did require my students to carefully reflect and comment upon poem content, structure, and emotion, my primary motivation was to introduce an interdisciplinary approach to our study. Many of my students do not consider English their favorite subject, preferring mathematics, science, history, or art to literature, while firmly separating and isolating each subject into its own individual realm and not recognizing any sort of connection or overlap between them. I therefore wanted to accommodate their interest in other subjects through the medium of poetry while introducing the concept of interdisciplinary education.

In *Interdisciplinarity: History, Theory, and Practice*, author Julie Thompson Klein (1990) notes varying viewpoints on the origin and emergence of the approach. Although the term or concept was not clearly defined until the twentieth century, the idea of interdisciplinarity is actually quite ancient and can be traced back to such famous scholars and philosophers as Plato, Aristotle, Kant, Hegel, and other figures throughout history (p. 19). However, many see interdisciplinarity as "entirely a phenomenon of the twentieth century, rooted in modern educational reforms, applied research, and movement across disciplinary boundaries" (p. 19). Although since ancient times there had been a limited focus on the dangers of "overspecialization" and the practical wisdom of studying the "unified whole," most academic scholars still consider the concept of interdisciplinary education--and the research into its theory, structure, and applications –to be largely a contemporary convention (p. 20).

Whether ancient or modern in development, the benefits of an interdisciplinary approach to content are numerous and well-documented within academic circles. As Hinchman (2008) comments in her book, *Best Practices in Adolescent Literacy Instruction*, students exposed to interdisciplinary units "are more likely to participate in inquiry-based projects that generate greater engagement with the content and with classmates. Integrated lessons are also more reflective of real life tasks and prepare students to handle authentic challenges" (p. 25). Examining the Emmett Till story and Nelson's beautiful sonnets through such diverse yet related lenses as history, science, art, music, physics, and of course literature provided my students with the opportunity to focus on a preferred subject while still learning literary and poetic concepts dictated by state standards. The unifying thread throughout this interdisciplinary approach was the sonnets, and as Hinchman (2008) comments, these "theme-based approaches encourage students to engage with the content and with scientific, technological, and social issues while engaging in critical thinking and problem-solving–all while developing language competencies" (p. 25).

In *Interdisciplinary Curriculum: Design and Implementation*, editor Heidi Jacobs (1989) views interdisciplinary education as "a knowledge view and curriculum approach that consciously applied methodology and language from more than one discipline to examine a central theme, issue, problem, topic, or experience" (p. 8). She elaborates that "Interdisciplinary teaching differs from discipline and field-based teaching in that it does not necessarily carve out spaces for each individual subject area, and instead, connects content and consciously identifies the relationships between these subjects" (p. 4-5). Furthermore, in the article, "Themes or Motifs? Aiming for Coherence Through Interdisciplinary Outlines,"

Keith Barton and Lynn Smith (2000) name among the benefits of interdisciplinary learning more efficiently utilized classroom time, student opportunities to critically view connections between content areas, and the opportunity to engage in authentic tasks.

In addition, The National Council for Teachers of English (NCTE) believes that "educational experiences are more authentic and of greater value to students when the curricula reflect real life, which is multi-faceted — rather than being compartmentalized into neat subject-matter packages" ("Position Statement on Interdisciplinary Learning…", 2010). Finally, in *The Politics of Interdisciplinary Studies*, author Tanya Augsburg (2009) argues that interdisciplinary education results in higher student engagement and that "to master integration, students need hands on experience in trying to synthesize multiple perspectives" (p. 202). She also claims that students who engage in interdisciplinary studies "…learn synthesis, analysis, and evaluation, due to the very nature of what interdisciplinary approaches demand. Critical thinking skills are thus improved" (p. 202). She further elaborates that, moving beyond the academic years, "employers want to hire graduates who can work collaboratively in interdisciplinary teams, and they need graduates who are flexible and can think outside of a narrow academic discipline to solve "real world" problems" (p. 201).

My classes start our in-depth analysis of the sonnets by focusing on the Petrarchan form and its terminology and rhyme pattern. This type of sonnet features the standard fourteen lines divided into an eight-line octave and a six-line sestet. The rhyme pattern is abbaabbacdecde. There is sometimes a turn between the end of the octave and the beginning of the sestet, which can be described as a subtle shift in focus. Sometimes the octave presents a problem or question that is somehow addressed or handled within the sestet. Given the strict form of the sonnet, it is understandable that Petrarchan sonnets in general and Nelson's sonnets in particular feature both direct and off rhyme. Nelson (2005) also sometimes strays from the 10-syllable iambic pentameter format, as some of her sonnet lines contain as many as twelve syllables, yet again understandable given the highly rigorous structure of the Petrarchan sonnet.

My students were given their "sonnet sheets," which included the text of the poem and the related questions and activities, on each Tuesday of class. They then had until Thursday to complete them. During "Till Thursdays," I would check their work for completion and accuracy, and then a pair of students, or a single student (depending on the class size) would act as "experts" for that sonnet by guiding the class through the related content that the presenters had researched in greater depth for weeks before. Students chose and received their sonnet content well in advance of their presentation date, and were encouraged to choose a sonnet that appeals to a definite area of interest, such as sports, physics, or history. Once the selection was made, they all had weeks to conduct research and many opportunities to meet with me in and out of class if they needed extra guidance or assistance.

Each presentation began with the class listening to an audio clip of author Marilyn Nelson reading that particular sonnet. Then one of the presenters read it aloud again to make the poem more familiar and accessible to the class. Then the student experts marked up the sonnet text on the SmartBoard, identifying the octave and sestet along with the rhyme pattern, examples of direct and off rhyme, and adherence to iambic pentameter. They then focused on definitions of words in the sonnet, reader-response questions, and an in-depth analysis of the related content of the sonnet's allusions through a variety of web resources. Depending on the sonnet content, some students brought pieces of music, song lyrics, or poems either directly or indirectly alluded to in the sonnet. They were also required to create an additional class handout that further addressed an aspect or element of the sonnet's content. Some chose to create a reflective question sheet, while others created word searches or crossword puzzles. One student even made a pamphlet focusing on an admired White Sox baseball player who was alluded to within his sonnet.

As a general example, I will focus on the related content, questions, and activities I created based on Nelson's second sonnet in *A Wreath for Emmett Till.* Here is the text of the poem, used with permission of the author:

Forget him not. Though if I could, I would.
forget much of that racial memory.
No: I remember, like a *haunted tree
set off from other trees in the wildwood
by one bare bough. If trees could speak,
it could describe, in words beyond words,
make us see the *strange fruit that still
ghosts its reverie, misty companion of
its solitude.*Dendrochronology could
give its agein centuries, by counting
annual rings: seasons of drought and rain.
But one night, blood, spilled at its roots,
blighted its foliage. Pith outward, it has been
slowly dying, pierced by the screams of a
shortened childhood.

The first thing on which to focus is the form of the poem itself. It is a Petrarchan sonnet that follows the abbaabbacdecde pattern, just like all of the other sonnets in the crown. Students are first asked to mark the octave and the sestet, then number the lines in the left margin, and finally to place the correct letter of the rhyme sequence on the right. The type of rhyme—direct rhyme or off rhyme—is then addressed. Each sonnet usually has multiple examples of each, which are listed and discussed. Finally, the octave and sestet are examined to see if a question is presented within the first part of the poem that is then answered in the sestet, or if there is a difference in tone or subject matter between the sonnet's two parts.

Once the sonnet structure and format are addressed, students then move on to the related activities. Each set of activities starts with any unfamiliar vocabulary words found within the poem, which are underlined in the sonnet text. In this particular sonnet, *reverie*, *blight*, and *pith* are defined and discussed within the poem's context. Once these words are reviewed, students move on to allusions within the poem, which are marked by an asterisk. In this particular sonnet, *haunted tree, strange fruit*, and *dendrochronology* are all denoted as literary or musical allusions.

Haunted tree refers back to Paul Lawrence Dunbar's famous poem "The Haunted Oak," which describes in great detail the capture and lynching of a man from the perspective of the live oak from which he is hung. Students are asked to visit a link to this poem and read it over, or listen to it, and then answer questions about the sensory images of the poem and what effect it has on the reader. *Strange fruit* alludes to Billie Holiday's famous song with the same title, which is a haunting ballad that juxtaposes the lushness of the Southern landscape with the decaying corpse of a lynched man hanging from an oak tree and finally falling as a piece of fruit would fall from a tree branch. Students listen to the song and then use an accompanying link to read about the history of the lyrics and how it was recorded and made famous by one of the most popular African American singers of all time.

Finally, stepping away from literary allusions, and getting more exposure to the interdisciplinary focus of the unit, students are then asked to look up *dendrochronology*, or the study of growth and age within trees. The link brings them to a science page with pictures and diagrams discussing how the age of a tree is measured. This is important background information that is built upon in the third sonnet of the crown, which introduces other tree-related terms such as *heartwood* and *pith*. In closing, students are asked to focus on the content or lines of the sonnet to lend closure and establish a sense of continuity between the sonnets previously covered and the one currently focused upon. Therefore, within just one particular sonnet, students are exposed to poetic form, rhyme, vocabulary, literary analysis, literature, and science.

Throughout Nelson's book, references to outside sources are interesting, varied, and plentiful, which are extremely helpful since many students have difficulty grasping the concept of allusion. The literary allusions from other sonnets within *A Wreath for Emmett Till* (2005) include *Hamlet's* Ophelia (Sonnet 1), Paul Celan's poem "Death Fugue" (Sonnet 9), Walt Whitman's poem, "When Lilacs Last in the Dooryard Bloomed" (Sonnet 10), Robert Frost's poem, "Birches" (Sonnet 10), and Shakespeare's "Sonnet 73" (Sonnet 10). Musical references include the aforementioned Billy Holiday song "Strange Fruit" (Sonnet 2), "My Country 'Tis of Thee" (Sonnet 11), and "America the Beautiful" (Sonnet 11). *A Wreath for Emmett Till* (2005) also offers different historical allusions such as the World Trade Towers in Sonnet 9, President Roosevelt's 1933

inauguration speech in Sonnet 13, and references to famous abolitionists in Sonnet 14. The many branches of science are also present throughout the book; biological allusions include multiple references to the different flowers that comprise the author's wreath for Emmett Till (Sonnets 1, 10, 11, and 12) and dendrochronology (Sonnet 2). Sonnet 6 offers students the chance to explore a variety of physics concepts such as parallel universe, string theory, and wormhole. References to astronomy are also present within Sonnets 7 and 12. Finally, Sonnet 4 offers students the chance to explore Emmett Till's favorite baseball team, the Chicago White Sox. With all of these varied references, students are likely to find an area of interest that they are willing to focus upon, and they therefore also can make critical connections between their selected content, the overall focus of the sonnet, and its place within the greater framework of the crown of sonnets within the book. The class also inevitably focuses on issues of race, prejudice, and equality, and the many provocative questions that arise from discussion.

In closing, the instructional activities I had such a positive experience creating for Marilyn Nelson's *A Wreath for Emmett Till* (2005) offer a model of the interdisciplinary approach to education. As espoused by numerous academic authors, The National Council of Teachers of English (2000), and countless other teaching professionals, an interdisciplinary approach to content is increasingly necessary as technology continues to evolve and revolutionize the world. As the number of threads in the web around us grows, teachers must encourage students to focus on a big-picture approach before each in-depth examination of the individual strands that comprise the idea, concept, or framework in question. This will help students, both academically and practically, to address questions and problems with the benefit of a multi-faceted perspective, a skill that is not only critical toward success on primary, secondary, collegiate, and graduate levels, but also necessary and highly desired within professional fields. Helping our students to think this way through the evocative and lasting power of literature yields both higher academic performance and other innumerable benefits now and in the future.

A Wreath for Emmett Till, Sonnet #2 Questions & Activities

1. Go to www.dictionary.com or use a dictionary to record the definitions of the following words:

reverie: _____

blight: _____

pith: _____

2. The first part of Sonnet #1 described the tradition of using flowers to express different messages, and the second part named flowers the author would use in her wreath to Emmett Till. What do you think is the main idea or focus of Sonnet #2? How is it similar to Sonnet #1, and how is it different?

_____
_____
_____
_____
_____
_____
_____
_____

3. What is the significance of the "haunted tree" in line 2 – why is it haunted? Go to http://www.dunbarsite.org/gallery/TheHauntedOak.asp and carefully read over Dunbar's poem. What lines in the poem make it apparent that the tree is describing a lynching? Quote 3-4 specific lines from Dunbar's poem in your response. Does the poem succeed in expressing the horror of what is happening – why or why not?

_____
_____
_____
_____
_____
_____
_____
_____

a. What is the rhyme pattern in Dunbar's poem, and what lines specifically show that he is anthropomorphizing the tree – giving it human-like characteristics and emotions? Quote at least three specific lines/examples from the poem.

_____
_____
_____
_____

b. Find examples of the following sensory images in the poem and fill the lines into the chart below:

Sense	Quote from Poem That Expresses It
Sight	*"I saw in the moonlight dim and weird / A guiltless victim's pains"*
Sight	
Sound	
Sound	
Touch	
Touch	

4. Go to http://www.pbs.org/independentlens/strangefruit/film.html to view the webpage on Billie Holiday's "Strange Fruit." Read over the lyrics and listen to part of the song. How are the song lyrics similar to the first two sonnets in *A Wreath for Emmett Till*? How are they different?

_____
_____
_____
_____

a. What are some of the more direct and shocking images in the song lyrics? Quote three lines from the song as examples below:

Quote #1: _____

Quote #2: _____

Quote #3: _____

b. Read over the history of the song, including the story of its writer (Lewis Allen, an alias of Jewish schoolteacher Abel Meeropol). Sum up the page you read by drafting a paragraph below *in your own words*:

_____
_____
_____
_____

5. Go to http://www.ltrr.arizona.edu/dendrochronology.html to learn more about **dendrochronology**. Record its definition and two additional interesting facts about it below:

Definition: _____

Fact #1: _____

Fact #2: _____

6. What is Marilyn Nelson describing in the end of Sonnet #2 when she writes, *"But one night, blood, / spilled at its roots, blighted its foliage. / Pith outward, it has been slowly dying, / pierced by the screams of a shortened childhood."* Is it effective to let the tree speak about what happened – why or why not?

_____
_____
_____
_____

Emmett Till Sonnet 2
Allusion Excerpts

Excerpt #1: Paul Lawrence Dunbar's poem "The Haunted Oak":

*Here are parts of the poem in which the oak tree is **anthropomorphized**, or given human-like qualities and/or characteristics:*

Pray why are you so bare, so bare,
   Oh, bough of the old oak-tree;
And why, when I go through the shade you throw,
   Runs a shudder over me?

My leaves were green as the best, I trow,
   And sap ran free in my veins,
But I saw in the moonlight dim and weird
   A guiltless victim's pains.

I bent me down to hear his sigh;
   I shook with his gurgling moan,
And I trembled sore when they rode away,
   And left him here alone.

\- - - - - - - - -

I feel the rope against my bark,
    And the weight of him in my grain,
I feel in the throe of his final woe
    The touch of my own last pain.

And never more shall leaves come forth
    On the bough that bears the ban;
I am burned with dread, I am dried and dead,
    From the curse of a guiltless man.

And ever the man he rides me hard,
    And never a night stays he;
For I feel his curse as a haunted bough,
    On the trunk of a haunted tree.

Excerpt 2: Billy Holiday's song "Strange Fruit":

Southern trees bear a strange fruit
Blood on the leaves and blood at the root
Black body swinging in the Southern breeze
Strange fruit hanging from the poplar trees
Pastoral scene of the gallant South
The bulging eyes and the twisted mouth
Scent of Magnolia sweet and fresh
and the sudden smell of burning flesh!
Here is a fruit for the crows to pluck
For the rain to gather, forthe wind to suck
For the sun to rot, for a tree to drop
Here is a strange and bitter crop.

- music and lyrics by Lewis Allan, ©1940

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Designed to Exclude

By Charles Bell

I teach at a high school in which African American students comprise roughly 35% of the total student population, yet a quick trip through the club pictures in the yearbook will reveal a disheartening lack of representation in many extracurricular activities. While I agree with Hardaway and McLoyd's (2009) call for more research into the benefits of participation, I am also interested in the particular mechanisms in place that impede this representation. To be blunt, what are common school constructions that assist in excluding students of color from participation in extracurricular activities? Upon scrutiny, I believe we will see that the system, even at the micro level, is designed to exclude.

Many clubs and organizations hold meetings immediately after school, a time frame that is not overwhelmingly conducive for involving the breadth of the school population. For example, if the Spanish Club meets from 3:30-4:30 and Bus 18 leaves the lot at 3:45, then many students must choose between attendance in a voluntary organization and securing a ride home. This means that bus riders (80% of whom are students of color at my high school) will find it difficult to attend the minimum number of required meetings in order to maintain membership in these clubs. Not only are minority students losing the chance to learn and grow in a social setting beyond the hours of school, but this lack of involvement will be noted on future paperwork: National Honor Society forms, college applications, scholarship material, yearbook paragraphs, Hall of Fame credentials, etc. Those lacking a critical lens are likely to look at the gaps in participation and wonder if the student is lazy, lacking in school spirit, or simply one dimensional. What is classified as a cultural deficit to the unseeing eye is actually yet another example of systemic racism.

Interestingly, to solve the problem of low turnout in after-school detention programs, some schools have shifted to a lunch detention format in which students are fed but must remain silent and separated from the rest of the population. It is sad to note how easily accommodations and solutions can form when trying to ensure punishment.

Even if students can find a way to make it to the after-school meetings for extracurricular activities, there is still the issue of financial requirements. Many clubs and organizations require students to pay membership dues, and some sports need students to have their own athletic equipment. These conditions seem reasonable on the surface, for activities, projects, and field trips need to be funded, and a tennis racket is indeed necessary to play tennis. However, does this extra cost serve as one more barrier? Hardaway and McLoyd (2009) note the striking disparity in income between African Americans and Whites, especially when it comes to periods of long-term poverty. Thus, it is logical to assume that one more bill to pay could have a more significant impact on certain families and possibly preclude their participation.

One of the questions that I am left with is this, "How many of us are knowingly contributing to the system of racism?" My gut tells me that many of us do not even see the racism right in front of our eyes, possibly because it has been there for so long. Maybe it becomes a matter of getting us to open our eyes—to view the world through a critical lens and challenge the status quo. Naïve as it sounds, I want to have enough faith in humanity to believe if people were made aware, then we would respond to these everyday acts that perpetuate racism, but history does not seem to support me.

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Reading Interventions:
Are We Teaching Programs or Children?

By Laura S. Saunders

"What programs have you taught?" a seventh grade ELA teacher asked at the beginning of the school year. Momentarily, I was caught off-guard; however, I rebounded quickly and responded that I did not "teach" programs. I teach readers and writers, based upon best theory and practice and years of experience. For almost 25 years, I have learned that "programs" do not teach children nor do they provide for all the needs and interests of a diverse population of readers. Yet, here I was in a new position as supervisor of reading interventions in a low-performing middle school. AND I was required to use a program ostensibly publicized to elevate the reading scores of our struggling readers. In my professional naiveté, I assumed that interventions would provide children with time and support to read quality pieces of fiction and nonfiction and write meaningful responses. But much to my horror, I learned the realities of reading intervention "programs" first-hand.

My inquiry into this dilemma originated from my deeply held theoretical beliefs in Frank Smith's concept of the "literacy club," a club to which all children should belong. The literacy club functions in similar ways as any special interest group: members are concerned with each other's interests and welfare; members engage in meaningful activities to promote the value of the group; members help newcomers to become experts; and members do not discriminate against others for lack of understanding or expertise (Smith, 2006). I could not fathom inviting students to join the literacy club via a fractured set of "watered down" stories and subsequent skill and drill activities. Therefore, I will share the origination and current descriptions of Response to Intervention (RTI), the rationale for programmatic intervention instruction, and the research which supports engaging, authentic interventions and professional development to support these student engagements.

What is Response to Intervention (RTI)?

With the reauthorization of Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA) in 2004, Response to Intervention (RTI) became an integral component of middle school curricula. IDEA allows school districts to allocate up to 15% of their pupils-with-disabilities funding for general education interventions that may serve at-risk children. The law requires that these children are monitored over time and that the intervention is "scientific and research-based." RTI was conceived as the effective alternative to intelligence testing and the discrepancy formulas for classifying students as learning disabled (Brozo, 2011). IDEA's decision to focus on at-risk populations and to develop RTI emerged because research shows that only 1.5-3% of struggling readers have a disability; therefore, they should not be tested for special education services. Alarmingly but not surprisingly, I discovered that the National Reading Panel's educational policies compelled reading programs to adopt intensive skills-based programs for RTI even though the research upon which the methods were derived came from studies with SPECIAL EDUCATION or DYSLEXIC READERS. In other words, the underlying research for reading interventions was with seriously disabled readers; yet the methods and skilled-based programs were mandated in order for students to receive federal funding to support RTI literacy (Allington, 2008).

According to the 2003 National Assessment of Educational Progress (NAEP), 37 percent of fourth graders and 58 percent of eighth graders tested will fail to reach reading proficiency before graduation. That is, when reading grade-level texts, students reading below basic levels cannot understand the text at the literal level, cannot make obvious connections between the text and their own experiences, and cannot make simple inferences from the text (Learning Points, 2005). These struggling readers who have no disability were determined to have

"inadequate pre-literacy experience, inadequate instruction, or some combination of both'" (Vellutino, Scanlon, & Tanzman, 1998). If this scenario is the case, why are we placing children in programs designed for special education as opposed to placing them with reading specialists who can give them quality and intensive literacy experience and instruction? Ironically, in my experience with middle school readers, I initially encountered similar deficits BECAUSE the majority of my students spent year after year after year in "skill and drill" curricula where they were rarely given opportunities to actively engage with literature or invited to join the literacy club.

The basic RTI concept is idealistic at best, and extremely problematic in terms of universal implementation, especially in middle schools. As with many new ventures in education, RTI definitions are far from common with agreed-upon features, and the programs lack research-validated studies, particularly in secondary literacy (contrary to the marketing propaganda of programmed instruction). Valid and reliable intervention is intended as a comprehensive early detection and prevention approach that identifies struggling readers. The International Reading Association's guiding principles define RTI as "a comprehensive, systematic approach to teaching and learning designed to address language and literacy problems for all students through increasingly differentiated and intensified language and literacy assessment and instruction…that qualified personnel with appropriate expertise should provide" (Lipson and Wixson, 2010). In other words, teachers are the on the frontline to identify those children who are struggling and provide additional instruction within the classroom (Tier I). If a child continues to struggle, then a pull-out intervention with small group, intensified instruction would benefit the child (Tier II).

Educators who have surveyed, NOT researched, adolescent RTI programs agree that "they are programs that specifically target teachers of and/or students in middle and high school grades (4-12) who are reading significantly below grade level and provide literacy instruction that is intended to increase achievement at a faster rate than average, allowing students to increase or close the achievement gap between themselves and their normally achieving peers" (Learning Point Associates, 2005). On the other hand, far too little research has been devoted to RTI in middle schools to ascertain the significance of literacy growth that the programs claim to provide.

All too often, districts "buy into" commercial, scripted programs that do not serve RTI Tier II and III children well. Many districts hire paraprofessionals to implement these programs, assuming that following the script insures "fidelity to treatment." More disturbing is the fact that many of these paraprofessionals have no pedagogical foundation or knowledge of reading instruction. However, the commercial programs' systematic and scientific claims could equally be characterized as "a systematic deprivation of experience" (Smith, 1983). In other words, programs systematically strip educators and children of control and authenticity, leaving critical, literacy decisions in the hands of outsiders. Since some programs advertise significant results for all tiers, instructional groups of 8-10 children of various needs are formed. RTI programs that claim to reduce the numbers of Tier III children actually increase the numbers because these children are not getting the high-quality support they need and are still being referred to special education. Tier III children are being relegated to large groups instructed by paraprofessionals when optimally they should be instructed one-on-one with a reading specialist. One example is Voyager Learning: Your Comprehensive Intervention Partner. The company claims, "Proven Literacy with Embedded Intervention: No matter what your students need—an early start with literacy development, a mild to moderate boost for grade-level reading, or a core replacement for intensive support—Voyager Learning's literacy solutions are proven to help students become skillful, independent readers and achieve academic success" (Voyager Expanded Learning, 2008). When I attended the Voyager training at the beginning of the school year, I questioned the presenter about their "scientific and research-based" programs. Where are the empirical studies that support these claims? The sales representative was vague, at best, stating that the studies are posted on the website. Actually, there is no evidence that children learn to read better because of a program.

However, there is abundant empirical evidence that children learn to read without the benefit of formal, programmatic instruction.

Another culprit in this state of affairs is No Child Left Behind which was introduced and implemented during the Bush administration in 2001. Kelly Gallagher (2007) finds it to be a contributing factor to the current "readicide" movement among secondary students. The legislation supports state and national tests that value narrow thinking, a shallow curriculum that attempts to raise reading scores, workbooks that replace novels, and reading as another worksheet activity. Therefore, poor readers drown in test preparation and test taking, and consequently, grow to hate reading. "Low-performing schools are threatened to increase the focus on the tests, thus forcing reluctant students into an even shallower, mind-numbing curriculum" (Gallagher, 2007). Why are struggling readers not making significant gains using scripted programs? The "skill and kill" nature of the programs seems to perpetuate problems rather than alleviate them.

At-risk initiatives sometimes inadvertently support children's weaknesses by lowering expectations when working with struggling readers. Regie Routman (2008) refers to this phenomenon as the "poverty of low expectations." With low expectations, these children have less access to high-interest, recreational reading material and less time to read these materials extensively. Labeling children as "at-risk" or "challenged" immediately demonstrates that educators have lower expectations, and of course, children will "rise" to these expectations. They may become anxious and expect not to perform as well as other children. Their perceptions of their abilities suffer, and they feel excluded from the "literacy club." And the cycle of over-reliance on phonics perpetuates their disillusions and frustrations. They strive to read each word correctly to avoid mistakes. Using only one cue system of language places an overload on short-term memory. They learn that reading will be difficult and punishing, and the long term consequences are devastating. This view of learning relates to a transmission or positivist model that values one correct answer and meaning that is found within the text rather than within the reader (Rosenblatt, 1978). A deficit approach to reading looks for what is wrong with a reader, rather than a more positive or strength perspective that considers every child capable of learning (Dudley-Marling, 2007). Children who are having difficulties do not need MORE of the same treatments; they need invitations to join the club (Smith, 2006).

Expansion of professional development

In the RTI model, it is the responsibility of the classroom teacher to recommend students for appropriate interventions and to provide classroom-based interventions themselves based upon informal and quantitative assessments (Shanklin, 2008). The best interventions, then, are not scripted programs, but are lessons which target the specific individual needs and require the use of organizational structures such as workshop time, small groups, and centers. The best interventions are not scripted, "one-size-fits-all" programs, but are lessons designed to meet the precise needs of individuals and small groups. Curricular decisions need to be in the hands of those who know the students best—the teachers. Commercial programs tend to deprive teachers of most curricular decisions, and some are even advertised as "teacher-proof." They assume to be more sensitive and intelligent to the needs of students than the teachers who are in contact with children daily. Reading is a *human* activity, not a decontextualized set of sub-skills to be learned in isolated fragments that will miraculously become the "whole" of the reading act. Reading embraces the power of the imagination—the sounds of the heart. In accord with Katherine Paterson (1989), we need to share with children the works of the imagination—"those sounds deepest in the human heart, often couched in symbol and metaphor. These don't give children packaged answers. They invite children to go within themselves to listen to the sounds of their own hearts" (p. 34-35).

Many school districts have made theoretically sound decisions that best serve children identified for interventions. They provide professional development for classroom teachers of all content areas so they can meet the needs of struggling readers. They offer extensive and ongoing professional development for reading coaches and specialists to broaden their knowledge of

reading theory and practice. The interventions are designed for small groups of children who have similar instructional needs. Therefore, funding is better served for developing the expertise of classroom teachers. Too often, teaching is directed to the "middle ground" where the issues of struggling readers are ignored and the strengths of the higher ability students are not addressed. Therefore, teachers need professional development to learn ways to differentiate instruction to meet the needs of all students. When the focus of RTI is instruction as opposed to measurement, then teacher expertise becomes paramount. Districts then ask: What constitutes appropriate intervention instruction and who are the most qualified personnel to deliver it? Sadly, many districts focus on measurement and the focus becomes asking questions about effectiveness of screening and progress monitoring measures. The latter do not generate data that informs best curricular decisions. It is crucial that everyone working with intervention students agree on their instructional plans. These readers need coherence across the day and should not be expected to read different books or pulled in various directions with scripted programs. Teachers can teach that literacy is purposeful and meaningful if they are free to teach in an unprogrammed manner, based on grounded theory and best practice.

Authentic engagements with literacy

We all have readers who struggle with texts, and many hate and avoid reading at all costs. Experts have found that most of these readers rely upon one component of the reading process—phonics or sounding out words. When the focus is solely on correctly pronouncing words, meaning is lost. "While accuracy and automaticity in word reading are critical, without understanding, such reading is just word calling" (Routman, 2000). These readers often fail to listen to determine if a text sounds right. Thus, teaching children to become strategic readers is critical. When successful readers come upon an unknown word, they may try "tapping out," "blanking out the word," "splitting the word apart," or "inserting a word that makes sense." Children who struggle with an overreliance on phonics

tend to generate a nonsense word, an incorrect word, or a word that is the wrong part of speech, and continue as if nothing is wrong. In other words, we need to help these students expect that words convey meaning. Few of these "self-correcting" and "self-monitoring" strategies are integral components of "scripted programs."

The brain is instinctively and actively learning all the time. Too often we assume that there is a one-to-one correlation between teaching and learning; what we teach is what students learn. If so, in a scripted program, the children are ostensibly learning reading "parts" that do NOT make a meaningful "whole." As a result, they may be learning that reading is nonsense. Most children cannot tolerate situations where it is not possible for learning to take place. "Boredom and confusion are as aversive to brains whose natural and constant functions are to learn as suffocation is to lungs deprived of the opportunity to breathe" (Smith, 1983). When meaning is subtracted from the process of reading, children become hopelessly mired in a pit of nonsense.

Struggling readers need an additional 30 minutes a day to read texts with the support of a reading specialist where student gains are tied to teacher expertise and meaning-focused instruction results in greater gains that a skills-based approach (Allington, 2008). They need to work on all components of literacy: hearing, talking, writing, and playing around with language. In addition, growth is maximized when children read books they want to read and can read them easily. All too often, our struggling readers roam from book to book during silent/independent reading time because there are few books available to them that are interesting and enjoyable. They also tend to read books as if collecting "trophies but don't seem to find any meaning as they read" (Calkins, 2001). They do not seem to accumulate a coherent sense of the overall story. Book talks can help children gain better comprehension, where coherent story grammar connects in a meaningful way. Talking with a partner greatly benefits their growth in retellings and developing story schema. Vocabulary growth is greater and faster when readers are given time to read independently and with small groups.

If a student has been struggling for an excessive period of time, he is reading books that are too difficult. It is no disservice to place a child in a leveled book where he can be successful. Reading independently provides children the opportunity to build fluency. There are several reasons why poor readers read with less fluency: they may not have been read to at home; they have fewer opportunities to read in context; they find the text too difficult; they have fewer opportunities to read silently; they focus too much on accuracy; and they have received instruction over-focused on words and sounds (Routman, 2000). Teachers can aid students with fluency through repeated readings, modeled reading, retellings, and guided/scaffolded practice. Most of all, to support fluency and phrasing, educators must give children many opportunities to hear beautiful texts read aloud - and read well.

Lingering thoughts

The evidence is overwhelming that reading difficulties can be prevented and supported through improving the quality, quantity, or intensity of intervention instruction. There are few programs that when delivered with fidelity demonstrate outcomes that are better than the outcomes that occur in the regular education classroom. In fact, some of the programs have been found to have negative impact on student learning and literacy growth (Scanlon & Anderson, 2010). Professional development for classroom teachers is imperative if the achievement gap is to be decreased. Teachers need to learn ways to differentiate whole class instruction so that the needs of poorer readers may be met within Tier I. The research states repeatedly that *what* the teacher *knows* and *does* is more important to student achievement than the *program* the teacher uses (Scanlon & Anderson, 2010). I remain concerned that scripted intervention programs and unexceptional professional development for teachers may increase the number of struggling readers, doing little to close the achievement gap. Once again, I emphasize that reading is an inherently human and social act with infinite possibilities to help children not only become better readers but LIFELONG readers. Katherine Paterson (1989), beloved children's author, noted, "Perhaps this is the way to teach children. First, we must love music or literature or mathematics or history or science so much that we cannot stand to keep that love to ourselves. Then, with energy and enthusiasm and enormous respect for the learner, we share our love." Remember; we are teaching children, not programs.

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Reaching All Learners

Bibliotherapy for Inclusion Classrooms

Introduction

Today's educator is charged with a number of duties, one of which is effectively teaching and integrating special education students into the general education classroom. In many instances, educators may struggle to build and nurture a warm classroom climate that promotes empathy, compassion, and understanding. Bibliotherapy, the practice of helping individuals grow and develop through books, is one tool that teachers can use to foster compassion and understanding for all individuals. This article discusses bibliotherapy as a practice for inclusion classrooms and includes an annotated list of books that educators can interweave into their classrooms in a variety of settings.

As part of the provisions of the Individuals with Disabilities Act of 1997, inclusion, or the practice of integrating special needs students into the general classroom, is a practice that is widespread in education. While definitions of inclusion vary, many educators define inclusion as a movement toward combining special education students in the general education classroom (Fuchs & Fuchs, 1994).   Because today's classrooms are highly inclusive and result in students and teachers consistently encountering a variety of student needs, the integration of literature about disabilities as well as literature that includes characters with a variety of disabilities can yield a number of benefits. In fact, it can help students become more accepting of individual differences (Forgan & Gonzalez-Dehass, 2004). According to Nasatir and Horn (2003), educators have not only become aware of the need to include characters from a variety of ethnic and racial backgrounds, but also are cognizant of the need to include literature that represents students with exceptionalities as well.

Bibliotherapy Overview

Bibliotherapy is one tool teachers can use to foster compassion and understanding for all individuals. Stamps (2003) defined bibliotherapy as, "a strategy that helps students overcome or deal with a current problem or issue in their lives" (p. 26). At its most basic level, bibliotherapy involves selecting reading material that has relevance to a person's life situation. Often the practice will also involve writing, play, or reflective discussion. In fact, many teachers practice bibliotherapy in some manner, often without giving their practice a formal name.

Sridhar and Vaughn (2000) explain, "Bibliotherapy can be used more extensively for students with significant learning and behavior problems to enhance self-understanding" (p.75). In order to create a positive classroom environment, students need opportunities to learn about others who are unique and unlike themselves to gain empathy and understanding for a variety of people. By using quality children's literature that addresses a variety of disabilities and portrays characters with exceptionalities, students are able to challenge stereotypes, develop empathy for others, encourage compassion (Kurtts & Gavigan, 2008; Brenna, 2008; Nasatir & Horn, 2003), develop problem-solving skills (Forgan, 2002), and develop a love of literature and reading (Gladding & Gladding, 1991).

Reading to children is central to their development, and books provide a safe medium for children to explore different concepts, feelings, and attitudes while allowing them to better understand their environment, communities, and societal expectations. Students may be more willing to engage in open discussions about their thoughts and feelings through discussion of carefully selected texts.

Integrating Bibliotherapy into Instruction

Whole Group Settings

Children's books and young adult literature are effective in whole group settings for a number of reasons. Besides the numerous documented literary benefits of read aloud in the areas of fluency, vocabulary, comprehension, and writing (Beck & McKeown, 2001; Fox, 2001; Heisley & Kucan, 2010; & Trelease, 2006), whole group read aloud allows teachers to address topics that affect and/or can benefit the entire class through reading, reflection, and discussion. In addition, in the field of literacy,

researchers have emphasized the need for exposure to a variety of texts, across genres, and discussed the differentiation between window and mirror texts (Glazier & Seo, 2005). This is especially pertinent when dealing with sensitive classroom topics. Using the books listed in this article can allow teachers to foster compassion for all students, including those with special needs, while developing a sense of empathy for people and situations both similar to and different from themselves.

While picture books are often used as mentor texts, there are a number of pieces of young adult literature that can be used as read alouds or can be implemented as class novels read together as a unit. It is imperative that teachers choose literature that accurately depicts those with special needs and does not reinforce pre-conceived stereotypes and generalizations about individuals.

Good books for whole class implementation include: *Rules, A Mango Shaped Space, Something to Hang Onto, Al Capone Does My Shirts, The View From Saturday, Out of My Mind, Firegirl, So B. It,* and *Wonder.*

Differentiated Reading Materials

Effective teaching includes the provision of individualized instruction corresponding to each individual's unique needs and ability. In the literacy classroom, one way teachers address individual ability levels is through the differentiation of reading materials. Because each student has a unique set of needs, academic instruction is often tailored to best fit these needs. It is common to see classroom libraries that include a diverse array of literature spanning a range of reading levels in the upper grades.

Classroom libraries should include a wide range of literature dealing with a plethora of topics and of varying reading levels. Teachers should make a conscious effort to provide a classroom library that includes books with multiple, unique story lines and diverse characters and settings. While some books are excellent choices for whole group implementation, some include complex and mature subject matter that may not be appropriate for implementation as a whole group read aloud or class novel. The classroom library is an excellent home for these books since it involves the student in the selection of

the material and allows him/her to choose books that are of personal interest.

Books that should be part of an inclusive library include all of those outlined in the whole group section as well as the following: *An Abundance of Katherines, The Absolutely True Diary of a Part Time Indian, and The Orange Houses.*

Suggested Books for Implementation

Below is a list of books with special needs characters that could be used in adolescent classrooms. A brief synopsis is included with each book.

A Mango Shaped Space By Wendy Mass

Mia is a young middle school student who is facing typical middle school coming of age dramas. However, Mia is unique because of a rare neurological condition known as synesthesia. This condition results in her seeing letters, numbers, and words in an exceptional manner. As a result, letters and words are presented to her in shades of colors, sometimes resulting in an onslaught of sensory stimulations. For most of her life, she has kept her condition to herself for fear of being ridiculed and misunderstood. However, when she discovers her experiences are actually a medical condition, she begins to read and discover all she can about her condition in an effort to better understand her disorder.

A Mango Shaped Space addresses a highly unique disability, but its likeable characters and typical middle school trials and tribulations make it an easy book for students to relate and identify with. This would be a good choice for a whole class read aloud.

An Abundance of Katherines By John Green

In this story, Colin Singleton, a gifted nineteen year old, has an affection for one type of girl—those named Katherine. Unfortunately, each relationship ends in the same manner—the Katherine of the moment dumps him. After Katherine number 19 breaks up with Collin, his best friend Hassan determines that the only way to get him out of his depressed funk is a road trip. The two friends find themselves in rural Gutshot, TN, where a group of locals encourage them to stay, and the two boys spend the summer befriended by a girl named Lindsay

and her mother. The story is riddled with anagrams, trivia, verbose language, and the mathematical theorem Collin tries to solve throughout the book that will predict the duration of relationships. In fact, the conclusion of the book includes an appendix written by a mathematics professor that explains, in detail, Collin's theorem.

While this is an excellent book because it addresses a special needs category that is often forgotten, giftedness, it does contain mature content and language.

Al Capone Does My Shirts By Gennifer Choldenko

A young boy known as Moose, his sister Natalie, and their parents become voluntary residents of the infamous Alcatraz prison in the 1930s. Natalie, who has what would presently be considered autism, has the opportunity to attend a special school for children with disabilities and Moose's parents are sure this is the answer to a cure for her. As a result, their father takes a job as an electrician on Alcatraz, and the family moves to the island mainly inhabited by notorious criminals. During his stay on Alcatraz, Moose spends most of his time making friends with the other children whose parents work on the island, while attempting to keep Natalie's disability as low key as possible. This proves to be difficult considering the warden's daughter, Piper, is always afoot, causing problems for those around her with her ideas and schemes. For example, she offers shirt laundering for students at the school off the island where for five cents, students can have their shirts cleaned in the Alcatraz laundry by Al Capone.

While Moose's transition to Alcatraz is hard enough, Natalie's is even more difficult. Sadly, she is not immediately accepted into the school for the disabled, and Moose's responsibilities over her increase as the need to keep Natalie's disability as unobtrusive as possible continue to rise. In the end, a covert request to Al Capone himself unexpectedly solves Moose's problems and helps his sister as well.

This highly engaging book with its fast-paced plot would be an excellent choice as a whole class novel or read aloud. (It should be noted that this book is part of a series and also includes *Al Capone Shines My Shoes and Al Capone Does My Homework*.)

Firegirl By Tony Abbott

Firegirl is the story of Tom, a seventh grade student, who is impacted by the short stay of a new student in his class. Jessica, a young girl badly burned and disfigured in a tragic accident, briefly enrolls in Tom's class. During this time, most of the students in the class have difficulty interacting with Jessica and do so only on a limited basis. In fact, most of the students are uncomfortable with her presence and are unsure of how to involve her, though many simply do not want to interact with her at all. Through a series of events, Tom is able to interact with Jessica and briefly gets to know her before she is forced to leave school and head back to Boston for additional medical treatments.

Tom's experience with Jessica changes him as a person and allows him to see the importance of being kind to everyone, even those who are different or who may have a physical or mental disability. It also forces him to reconsider some of the friendships he had previously valued and requires him to make some changes in his choice of friends. *Firegirl* is a relatively short book and would be a good class read aloud as well as a class novel.

Out of My Mind By Sharon Draper

Melody, the main character in this book, is a unique individual, one with incredible intelligence and a photographic memory, but who has Cerebral Palsy and is unable to speak or walk. Her time in an integrated classroom is often filled with frustration as the adults who are charged with her care and instruction often treat her as if she is unintelligent and incapable of sophisticated thought processes. Yet Melody's frustrations don't end at school. She is exasperated at home as her parents aren't always able to decipher her gestures and sounds and often misinterpret what Melody needs or wants.

Perhaps the best part of the book is the fact that Sharon Draper provides readers with a glimpse into the mind of a person with Cerebral Palsy, thus shedding light on what a student with this type of disability may feel at times. In many instances, the reader can't help but feel frustrated and sad for Melody, as the depiction of the characters everyday trials and tribulations are well articulated and explained.

While this would be an excellent book for whole class implementation and read aloud,

due to the rich conversations that are possible as a result of the book's compelling content, it would also be effective in literature circles or other small group venues.

Rules By Cynthia Lord

Catherine is like any typical twelve year old, frustrated with her parents and younger brother, David, and trying to find ways to fill the summer days away from school. Yet Catherine's brother isn't like other seven year-old boys; he's autistic. Catherine spends her time developing rules for David so that he will function better in society and blend in as much as possible. Her rules run the full gamut, ranging from, "Don't put toys in the fish tank," to "It's OK to take off your shirt to go swimming, but not your pants." During the summer, a new girl moves in next door, making Catherine's life somewhat more difficult as she struggles to explain David and his quirks to the new neighbor. But during the summer, Catherine also meets Jason at David's physical therapist's office, who is confined to a wheelchair and cannot speak. Instead, Jason relies on pictures and cards to communicate. While waiting on David as he works with his therapist throughout the summer, Catherine and Jason begin a unique friendship, as Catherine begins adding to Jason's book of words for communication. However, Catherine worries what her new neighbor will think of her when she meets Jason and discovers he is in a wheelchair, which leaves her with a difficult decision to make regarding her friendship with Jason and the new neighbor. *Rules* is a fast-paced read with relatively short chapters, making it a good choice for a class read aloud. It also has great potential as a class novel.

So B. It By Sarah Weeks

Heidi is a young teenage girl who lives alone with her mentally disabled mother and agoraphobic neighbor, Bernadette. Heidi's mother speaks only 23 words and is unable to sufficiently take care of herself or Heidi. In fact, had it not been for Bernadette, Heidi is unsure of where she and her mother would be. So B. It, the name Heidi's mother is called, showed up on Bernadette's doorstep when Heidi was an infant and they've been there since. However, as Heidi grows up, she begins to have increasing questions about who she is, where she and her mother came from, and who her

extended family is. A photo of Heidi's mother from years ago sends her on a journey to find out who she is and just what her mother means by "Soof," a word she often repeats to her daughter and Bernadette. It is on this journey that Heidi learns who her mother is and finally begins to put the puzzle pieces of her life together. *So B. It* would be a good book to integrate as a whole class read aloud or class novel.

Something to Hang Onto By Beverley Brenna

Something to Hang Onto is somewhat unique compared to the other books profiled in this article. Instead of it functioning as a stand-alone novel, it is a collection of short stories that includes a number of characters with varying special needs. From characters with autism, to those dealing with Down Syndrome and death, this novel addresses a number of sensitive issues that affect a wide variety of students. Because this is a collection of stories, they would be good choices for read loud due to their condensed nature.

The Absolutely True Diary of a Part Time Indian By Sherman Alexie

Arnold Spirit, Jr., also known as Junior, is a poor teenage boy living on the Spokane Indian Reservation who has his own set of challenges to face. Born with hydrocephalus and poor vision, he has his physical condition to contend with as well as his economic one. Junior deals with the daily struggles of being poor as well as teasing and ridicule from his schoolmates due to his outward appearance. There comes a point when he realizes that if he stays on the reservation he will become a part of the cyclical nature of poverty. Given the chance to attend an all-white school nearby, Junior seizes the opportunity because he knows this is his ticket off the reservation and to a better life. Yet not everyone embraces his decision. His friends on the reservation refuse to speak with him, physically assault him, and verbally ridicule him for his decision. The adjustment to the new school is not without incident or hardships; Junior becomes even more painfully aware of how poor his family is. Through a series of ups and downs, he learns how to adjust in a new environment and attempts to mend fences with his former reservation friends. This is an excellent book for teaching voice in writing and

should be included in the classroom library. (This book has some content that may not be suitable for all readers, including some adult language and reference to sexual conduct.)

The Orange Houses By Paul Griffin

Tamika is a middle school girl dealing with typical middle school issues: peer pressure, academic demands, and boy problems. Yet Tamika was born with a severe hearing loss and due to her family's economic situation, only has access to outdated hearing aids that are more likely to amplify interference than actual noise. In fact, she would rather turn her hearing aids off and spend her time in silence. A benefactor provides her with money for new hearing aids and an operation to help her hearing, but Tamika is unsure if she wants to give up her refuge of silence. But Tamika's story isn't the only told in *The Orange Houses*. Other important characters in the book, Jimmi, a war veteran turned drug addict, and Fatima, an illegal refuge, add layers to the story by shedding light on community dynamics, as well as the consequences of drug addiction. Because of the mature content of the book, in particular, the discussion of drug use, this text may not be appropriate for all students. Therefore, it is recommended that this book be included in the class library.

The View From Saturday By E. L. Konigsburg

An eclectic academic team led by their paraplegic teacher, take part in the county's annual academic team contest. To everyone's surprise, this motley crew of sixth grade students takes home the coveted championship, beating even the eighth grade teams. Yet along the way, they are met with many challenges including family affairs, racism, and the difficulties their teacher faces as she returns to the classroom in a wheelchair after an accident. *The View From Saturday* is full of humor and wit, which makes it an excellent choice for a whole group read aloud or class novel.

Wonder By R. J. Palacio

August Pullman, or Auggie, is born with a unique facial deformity that, in the past, has prevented him from attending a general education school. When Auggie initially enrolls in his first mainstream school, his classmates have difficultly looking past his facial abnormality. Told from the viewpoints of Auggie and those around him, *Wonder* weaves a story of acceptance and empathy through the eyes of those who get to know the main character and learn to look past his physical deformity.

Wonder is a fast-paced read with short chapters, thus making it an excellent choice for whole class read aloud. It would also work well as a whole class novel or in the small group setting, including use in literature circles and small book clubs.

Conclusion

Bibliotherapy through the use of multiple books for a variety of purposes, including special education topics, can yield a number of benefits. By exposing students to a variety of literature with unique yet relatable characters, students and teachers are able to discuss and address difficult and important topics in the classroom setting through differentiated instructional strategies that benefit every student. Students are able to consider issues that affect learning and behavior through a variety of texts, and teachers can address topics in a preventative manner, in reaction to identified problems, or in order to allow students to develop both intellectually and socially. Bibliotherapy can help individual students and the entire class to grow and develop compassion and understanding for all.

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Using New Media Narrative (Digital Storytelling) to Teach Writing

By Michelle Fowler

Using New Media Narrative (Digital Storytelling) to Teach Writing

It cannot be denied that technology has had, and will continue to have, a profound influence on student learning. According to Yang & Wu (2012), "research has shown that the application of technology improves student learning, motivation, and performance in technology-rich classrooms" (p. 342). While students outside of school are eagerly "consuming and creating multimodal compositions that include images, sounds, and digital video" (Bull & Bell, 2010, p. 5), technology use at school is often merely supplementary—instead of writing notes on a chalkboard, teachers present information with Microsoft PowerPoint while students sit back and passively take notes. Ideally, in order to make the most significant educational impact, technology use—by students, not teachers—should be transformative, in that it transforms student learning into something that would not have been possible without the technology (Ohler, 2007). Of course, not all technological resources are equally beneficial and easy to incorporate, so teachers must make their choices carefully. The past ten years have revealed remarkable advancement in the ubiquity of digital cameras and multimedia editing software (Yang & Wu, 2012; Sadik, 2008). Consequently, so, too, has the popularity of an educational mode that takes advantage of this technology—digital storytelling.

While researchers do not universally agree on a definition of digital storytelling, most acknowledge key features of digital storytelling, which include:

- Using low-cost multimedia technology to create a coherent narrative (Yang & Wu, 2012; Sadik, 2008; Ohler, 2007)
- Planning documents, scripted narratives, treatments, storyboards, and self-assessments, as well as music, art, taped oral presentations, and other prized examples of student work (Ohler, 2007)

Beyond these logistical applications, digital storytelling (DST) possesses a significant number of benefits for student learning. First, it possesses many of the benefits of storytelling since, after all, that is what it is (Ohler, 2007). Second, DST transforms the traditional storytelling process since it emphasizes production, thinking, collaboration, and project management. DST also facilitates "subject matter content acquisition, critical thinking skills, motivation, and information literacy" (Yang & Wu, 2012, p. 340). Rather than encouraging students to be passive consumers of knowledge, "creating digital video typically is a form of knowledge expression—often divergent knowledge expression—which permits students more freedom and creativity as they synthesize and communicate what they have learned" (Bull & Bell, 2010, p. 7). DST enables students to transform their existing knowledge into a shareable product, something in which they are deeply invested. Additionally, DST follows a sociocultural perspective of learning by demonstrating that effective collaborative learning yields far greater success than working alone (Sadik, 2008). This collaborative experience, however, is dependent on students understanding the key roles they play in the story creation; if teachers do not guide and scaffold appropriately, then students will flounder (Sadik, 2008).

Perhaps the greatest benefit of DST is that it "usually provides students with authentic scenarios suited to their personal experiences, making the content seem important and valuable" (Yang & Wu, 2012, p. 342). Both of the mixed-methods studies consulted for this literature review found positive correlation between student achievement and DST projects. While Yang & Wu (2012) identified the students' significant improvement in "English proficiency, critical thinking, and learning motivation, especially for English listening, reading and writing, interpretation and evaluation of arguments, and task value and

self-efficacy" (p. 350), Sadik (2008) found while "students were encouraged to think more deeply about the meaning of the topic or story and personalize their experience and also clarify what they knew about the topic before and during the process of developing and communicating their stories" (p. 502), the positive impact of DST is dependent on teacher familiarity with the technology being utilized as well as students' clear understanding of the expected tasks. Both of these studies were completed within countries other than the United States, and there exists a dearth in experimental research on the subject of DST. While much theoretical support for the practice has been published, little data-based research is available.

While I have used digital storytelling (DST) for a variety of projects based on fictional texts, this past year was the first during which I attempted to marry DST with the teaching of argumentative writing/rhetoric using Stephen Toulmin's model for argumentative writing. Nelson (2011) explains that rhetoric is not limited to writing; rather, it "encompasses the four language arts of speaking, writing, listening, and reading" (p. 290). The connection between text, author, and audience also exists in DST; yet, it evolves even further because "the author-audience relation" is nonlinear in virtual text (Nelson, 2011). Interestingly, the ancient Greeks referred to rhetoric as techne, which translates literally as "art, skill, craft" (Nelson, 2011, p. 295); thus, DST incorporates such skills as well, if not more so, than does traditional writing.

While no language arts teacher would deny the significance of traditional writing assignments, writing on paper and digital media creation share marked similarities. According to Kajder and Young (2010):

> Writing with multimedia tools is a process of linking message and tool purpose and audience—while actively critiquing the very tools used for expressing meaning. Students who write with multimodal tools (such as digital video editors) do so selectively and intentionally, and they leverage the unique capacities of the tools and media in order to accomplish a specific goal. As in print-centric writing tasks, the principles of choice and form matter, as does the larger context in which the writing is situated. To be fully literate, students must know how to use tools, but more importantly, they must know which forms of literacy will best support their purpose for a given audience and a specific context.
> (p. 109)

The ultimate purpose of academic writing is to communicate a message to an audience, and, as Kajder and Young explained, students can use digital multimedia for the same purpose. Additionally, argumentative writing requires planning and strategizing in order to create a coherent, understandable, effective composition, and digital media creation (e.g., DST) possesses the same requirements. Just as haphazardly streaming sentences together does not yield good writing, neither does slapping together a slideshow of pictures create a good movie. Both products may be entertaining, but they will not reach their audience in a meaningful way.

The focus of my students' DST project would be the creation of an argumentative movie based on a written argumentative essay. When we began the project, I had to take into account the individual needs of my students. First, they were not familiar with the Toulmin Model, so we started our argument unit with a Toulmin introduction, including reading argumentative texts as well as viewing Toulmin-based argumentative movies housed on YouTube. While the movies were primarily news broadcasts and critiques of news broadcasts, they helped my students understand the notion of how argument can be "digitized." Once my students were sufficiently familiarized with the Toulmin Model, we began our digital movie project. The students, of course, wanted to jump immediately to the "fun stuff"—forming their groups and filming their scenes—but I scaffolded the process with multiple graphic organizers and prerequisite steps. First, of course, they had to develop a topic. While this sounds easy, some groups struggled to agree on one specific topic, to the point where some students actually changed groups in order to utilize their preferred topic. Next, the students had to develop an argument for this topic, and I repeatedly encouraged them to answer the research question "What is our specific position on this topic?" Their answer to this question

became their argument's *claim*. Next, as they completed the Toulmin Model graphic organizer, they developed the *data*, *warrants*, and *counterargument* to their claim. Upon completion of the argument plan, they were able to write their essay rough draft (with the understanding that the movie itself would be the final draft). Having the students decide, as a group, how the essay would be written was extremely challenging for some of them, so I had to intervene at times to aid in their planning and execution of the writing. Most groups split up the essay so that every group member wrote a portion, and then they edited the final product together.

After finishing the essay and conferring with me to gain feedback on the essay's strengths and areas of improvement, the students were finally allowed to brainstorm their movies. They discussed their ideas as a group and recorded the products of this discussion on a brainstorming graphic organizer. For most groups, this aspect of the project went well because the students were excited about creating their movies. They eagerly concocted scenes involving dancing students, classes full of eating students, people running down the hall, interviewing Wal-Mart shoppers, etc. They loved the idea of using class time to meander around the school on filming missions. Once our project was completely finished, I surveyed the students on their project experience, and 60% of them said the filming was their favorite part of the entire process. As a teacher, the three days of filming were the most pleasant for me as well because the students were so engaged, so enamored with their creations, so eager to do their very best. I also allowed my students to film outside of school if they so desired, but no group was penalized for limiting filming to the school setting. In fact, students did not have to film at all; they simply had to use some sort of visual—whether still pictures, "found" video such as YouTube movies, or created video—for their movie.

After three scheduled days of filming, we moved to the computer lab for four days of video editing that became five days once it became clear that most groups would not finish by the fourth day. Because we had already completed several MovieMaker projects during the course of the school year, my students were

familiar with the program and needed only a refresher course with supplemental instruction about editing videos. Of all the aspects of this project, compiling the videos in the computer lab was the most trying for me because, of course, technology is finicky, and no two groups have the exact same technological challenges. Some groups had problems with the sound on their recorded videos; some groups had difficulty loading videos onto the computer; some groups struggled to edit their movie exactly the way they wanted. Unfortunately, any activity involving technology, particularly something as multi-faceted as making a movie, requires the teacher to possess great patience and preparation skills, which is precisely why teachers so often stick to "easy" technology such as Microsoft PowerPoint. However, the more complex technological activities are (usually) well worth the sacrifice, and our argumentative movie project was no exception.

Once the five days of video editing were complete, we held a Movie Premiere Day in the school media center so that we could view the movies on the "big screen." This day was solely about watching the students' movies; we did not critique or criticize. I allowed the classes to view other classes' movies, though I deliberately chose those movies based on those I wanted to show in my classroom for the three movie critique days. Of course, my students greatly enjoyed viewing others' movies, and this was a most exciting day for them (and for me) as their hard work paid off!

While it was tempting to end the moviemaking experience with the premiere day, I took the project a step further by spending three days viewing and critiquing movies in my classroom, and this aspect of the project ended up being the most surprising because the students were so engaged in analyzing the arguments included in each movie. I provided another graphic organizer, and we watched the movies as a class and discussed the claim, data, warrants, and counterarguments revealed through the pictures, videos, and narration. Because the students were watching movies made by fellow students at their school rather than those made by people they did not know, they enjoyed the experience much more than they did the movie-watching we completed at the unit's beginning. Of course, student

enjoyment engenders student engagement, so even my most apathetic students were engaged during these three days. Analyzing the arguments in the movies, rather than the movies themselves, solidified their understanding of the Toulmin Model and how arguments can be digitized, which were my two primary goals for the project.

Overall, despite some technological and logistical challenges, my students profited greatly from our argumentative movie project, and when I complete this project again next year, I will only change minor details such as limiting groups to three students rather than five. This project vindicated my research regarding digital storytelling (DST) and the teaching of argumentative writing, and I believe the realm of DST can be greatly expanded beyond simply making entertaining movies based on fictional texts. The Common Core State Standards (CCSS) emphasize analyzing and writing informational and argumentative texts as well as technology to expand learning, and creating digital movies based on written arguments marries standards in both realms, disparate though they may seem.

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Reaching All Learners

The Forest of Hands and Teeth Response

By Charles Bell

Cruel treatment of zombies is everywhere you look.
They are slaughtered in games and butchered in books.

Carved up with chainsaws and shoveled in the head,
Dumped in tree chippers and pummeled with lead.

Sure their skin is puddle gray and their eyes milky blind,
But is that any reason to treat them unkind?

PETA protects earthworms, owls, antelopes, and fleas,
But what about those with this undead disease?

What government program exists for those
Who might have only one foot, no brain, and three toes?

It is time for some of our leaders to be selected
To wave the zombie banner and protect the Infected.

Embrace Diversity! Show Tolerance! Accept all Others!
And that includes our feet-dragging, flesh-eating, foul-breathed brothers.

So the next time you meet the undead, here's what you should do.
Show some compassion, for zombies have feelings… just like you.

Charles Bell *is a doctoral student at the University of South Carolina where he is pursuing his degree in Language and Literacy. He has been teaching high school English for fifteen years.*

Writing to Express

Mockingjay Response

By Angela Byrd

$$F_{centripetal} = m\frac{v^2}{r}$$

Things fall apart
As they usually do
What once was made whole
D i s   s o l   v   e   s

Assiduously

Into two,   r
        three,   c
             forces,   pa
                r a   t   e   d   r s
             f   u
Incapable ever of
Not coming unglued   t

Centripetal
forces are not
stopped
once begun
Lest the string bre aks/

They focus and hone in on
C   s
  u   a
    r   c   o
      v e d   h

Not equal to the outcome--
our forceful will and
meager strength alone

The motions of Congress
Far removed from us
Post-revolution

Too massive the times of division
velocity squared

by our radiating pain

The aftermath
A quietness
So still
We hear the silence breathing--
And the weight of it holds us at bay

It's the imbalances that hold us together.
Steadies nerves to rebuild
Holds the brackets in place   .
'Til we forget…………………..   .
There are no brackets……………   .
     .   .   .
     .   .   .
Mo .cki.ngjays
Do .not. build nests
.   .   .   .
Tick. Tock.
        .

Required string tension

$$T = \frac{mv^2}{r} \quad T$$
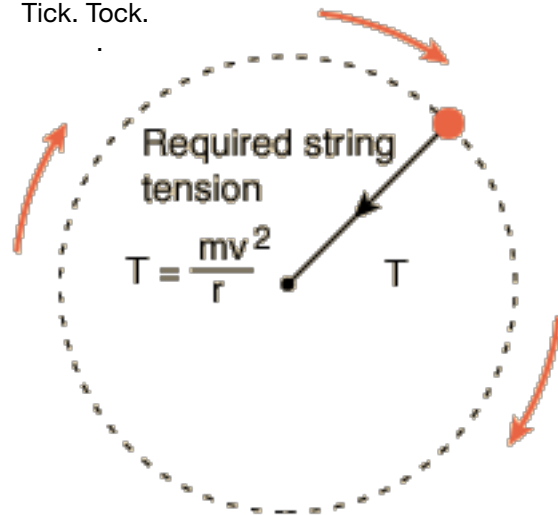
Goes the clock, until...

Angela Byrd *is currently pursuing her Ph.D. at the University of South Carolina in Language and Literacy. She is a member of SCIRA, SCCTE, and NCTE. She enjoys mentoring and instructing pre-service teachers in USC's College of Education.*

Writing to Express

Her Hands

By Robin L. Howell

Her hands held me when I was a child
Soft and gentle as I was rocked to sleep
Stroked my face oh so tender
Held me when I whimpered

Her hands took care of my hurts
Her love covered the pain
Held my hand tightly walking into first grade
Letting go slowly as she left the room

Her hands sewed outfits and clothing
Handmade by love
Careful stitches by needles and thread
Just for me by my mom

Her hands kneaded the dough for the bread
Like my grandmother used to make
Canned the vegetables and frosted the cake
Scrumptious and delicious all would say

Her hands worked the farm as needed
Stacking some hay or feeding a calf
Driving the truck through the barnyard
Hoeing the beans or picking tomatoes
Her hands hugged me off to school
Carried bags to my dorm and decorated it
  just right
Typed a paper or two with late nights for sure
Helped with my laundry when I came for a visit

Her hands turned pages in her Bible
As she studied each day
Lifted hands in prayer
Year after year after year

Her tender hands took mine
As we looked in wonder
At the precious diamond glistening in the light
Her hands are priceless

Robin Howell *is a second grade teacher at Hendrix Elementary in Spartanburg District Two. She enjoys reading and has discovered a new interest in writing. She taught overseas in China for two years, and she hopes to write about these experiences.*

Writing to Express

Now, That's a Real Job

By Cayley Garner

It was a hot summer day in Columbia, SC. As I was relaxing by the pool, an elderly resident who lived in my apartment complex struck up a conversation with my roommate and I.

He questioned, "You are graduating from Carolina in May? What was your major?"

I have sadly learned that this question is more of a dreaded question to answer than one of excitement and joy. I am proud of my profession but others around me, have opposite viewpoints.

I answered, "I was an early childhood education major. I am going to be a kindergarten teacher!"

Of course, as many times before, he responded with, "Now why on earth would you want to do that? You don't make any money and your job is so easy. You just play with kids and babysit them all day."

As I heard these words roll off his tongue, I couldn't help but roll my eyes. Yes, we all know that teachers do not make what we are worth, but we definitely earn every dime of it. Easy and teaching are not synonymous.

He continued his rant; "I, and most other people have no respect for teachers and what they do. I am a lawyer and really work hard. My daughter is a wedding planner, now that's a real job."

Trying to stomach his negativity I wondered when was the last time you spent eight hours in a room full of twenty five-year-old students all needing attention?

Now, that's a real job.

I come from a family of educators. I have been taught the importance of our profession and the reason we do what we do every day. A love for children and teaching has been instilled in me since I was a young child. Even as a child in elementary and middle school, whenever asked what I wanted to be when I grew up, my response was always a teacher. I would always receive puzzled looks with people asking why?

My answer was always that teachers are important role models who make a difference in the lives of children, and I want to be someone who makes a difference.

When my mom was a first grade teacher, she brought four children into our home. The youngest boy was in her classroom that year. The kids were going through a hard time with their parents and were being asked to split up to go into foster homes for a while. My mom, being the compassionate teacher that she is, invited them into our home for a few weeks. She provided them food, shelter, and an endless amount of love. Even to this day, those children who are fully grown still thank my mom for providing them the opportunity for their family to stay together. She was a teacher who made a difference.

In high school, my dad talked me into interning in a pharmacy because he thought I needed to become a pharmacist. Pharmacists make lots of money and get to work behind a counter counting out medicine all day. They do not have to spend all day, everyday in a classroom with children.

Now, that's a real job.

After interning in Cash and Henderson Pharmacy, I realized that I truly was designed to be a teacher. Each day while volunteering, I looked forward to the time a child would come in with their parents or grandparents to get medicine. I would always go on the other side of the counter to interact with the child. Even the pharmacist stated, "You are made to be a teacher. You have a natural connection with children."

Teachers are so much more than people who go to a school everyday to play with and babysit children. We are the professionals who spend over thirty-five hours a week getting to know their strengths and areas of need for each child. It is our job, to find effective ways to teach children to help them become successful in society.

We are the nurses who provide band-aids, cold paper towels, and hugs just because they are not feeling well. Reflecting on a time when I held a cold paper towel on Harrison's head because he had fallen and bumped it on the playground, I remember him saying, "You make everything better, Ms. Garner."

We are the counselor who listens to the concerns of the child and comforts him or her when sad. I had a child, Alex, who could not find his library book anywhere in the classroom. He came up to me crying because he thought he was going to get in trouble for losing his book. He and I took the time to search around the classroom until we found his book. The look on his face after we found it was complete relief.

Teachers are the lawyers who defend children in any situation. We are the adult who lovingly provides discipline and structure when needed.

Teachers are the ones who talk with parents about the needs of their children and how to best work with them at home. During a conference, I remember talking with a little girl's parents who were upset because Emily was having a tough time in first grade. I lovingly explained different strategies that they could use at home to help Emily grow.

We push children as far as they can go, and then continue pushing. Teachers have the best interests of children in mind and do everything to make students want to learn and strive for their own success.

Teachers make a difference every day, what about you?

Now, that's a real job.

Cayley Garner *is a first year kindergarten teacher. From the time she was a little girl, she has always wanted to be a teacher. She was the child who asked for an overhead projector for Christmas! Teaching is her passion, and she hopes that it is portrayed through this piece of writing.*