FIELD NOTES

VOLUME VII, ISSUE 2, FALL 2011







BARD MASTER OF ARTS IN TEACHING PROGRAM

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This publication is intended as a window into the workings of teacher education, emphasizing the best practices in teaching and learning while supporting initiatives for change in public school classrooms.

COVER (front and back): *The El Sistema Mariachi Band performs at the graduation of the first MAT cohort in Delano, California, on June 11,2011.*

Julie Mancini (*center*), Bard MAT '11, works with students from the International Community High School in the Bronx, New York.

Features

Juanessa Allen (*left*), Bard MAT '11, apprenticed at International Community High School in the Bronx, New York.

Departments

From the Dean of Teacher Education

Boarding the Second Train

By Ric Campbell

The train of education ideas in the media seems endless.

Kenneth Koch's poem "One Train May Hide Another" is a wonderful meditation, prompted by a "sign at a railroad crossing in Kenya," on the wisdom of making sure that a second train isn't hurtling along, invisible, behind the first, on a parallel track. For Koch, the poem becomes a list of ways in which this advice makes sense of experiences of various kinds, from the reading of poems to the drinking of coffee to the discovery of true love. His message is about the value of waiting, which prompts close observation and valuable reflection.

The train of education ideas in the popular media and in peer-reviewed journals seems endless. I restlessly watch as railroad cars of ideas and opinions stream by in various shapes, colors, and sizes. Behind this chain of rattling cars is another train. It is a simpler conveyance—streamlined and compact—filled with rich and provocative ideas that have little to do with all the manufactured, obvious, and misdirected ideas that make up the noisy freight that blocks this other train from view.

What I call *manufactured* are the innovations that have emerged and disappeared over many decades of educational reform with little impact on public schools. Look carefully at the disappointing results of standardized tests or high school graduation and college/career program completion rates that have dogged us for 50 years. From the introduction and succession of substantive curriculum programs in the decades following the launch of Sputnik to current professional development topics such as *best practices*, *differentiated instruction*, and *curriculum mapping,* the train keeps rolling forward but never arrives at its intended destination.

What I call *obvious* are the multitude of ideas that sell books and articles that share something in common with my grandmother's ready advice to me, as an adolescent, that I'd be warmer on my January walk to school if I wore a coat. Who wouldn't agree that homework as it is commonly assigned is mostly effective at disrupting family life and persuading us that school is more about the completion of limited rote tasks than the dynamic challenges of developing understanding. All of us recognize that the things we understand and know well have been learned because they have value derived from learning in a meaningful context that gave life and purpose to otherwise inert facts and ideas. I shunned that winter coat for reasons that may be "understandable" in the context of adolescent identity, but the reasons why we continue to ignore the obvious as professional educators are less easy to explain and accept.

Both the manufactured and the obvious have value that is lost due to misdirected ideas. A good example of this is the analysis offered in "The Character Test," a recent article in the *New York Times Magazine*. The article makes the (obvious) case that challenge is implicit in learning and that qualities such as persistence and self-control support the necessary struggle that leads to greater competency. In one school, this matter of personal qualities, or character, has resulted in a (manufactured) program of character education with inspirational T-shirts and a character report card. The school has had relatively strong achievement results, but is still short of reaching goals we all believe are possible. The problem may be one of emphasis. We need to be looking at that second train.

We want students to be able to think like scientists or historians, for example. We want students to play music like musicians and play basketball like basketball players and we do this by asking them to pick up an instrument or a basketball and play. When learning is connected to serious play, meeting such authentic challenges "manufactures" the curriculum and the "obvious" is implicit in the activities that constitute it. The character traits necessary to successful learning emerge organically, and with some guidance, as a matter of course. It seems so simple. But it requires a different idea of schools and a different expectation of teachers, for which many are not adequately prepared. That second train is running on a parallel track. We must let this first train pass and board the second.

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The Longy School of Music, founded in 1915 by Georges Longy, principal oboist of the Boston Symphony Orchestra, has merged with Bard College. One of the partnership's first projects is developing an MAT Program in music. Longy-Bard has also forged a partnership with the Los Angeles Philharmonic to advance music education and increase access to music instruction and performance for all children. As a result, an El Sistema music program has been established at Paramount Bard Academy (PBA) in Delano, California. El Sistema, which began in Venezuela more than three decades ago, will be directed by the Longy School of Music beginning this year, as part of PBA's core curriculum. Working together, Bard and Longy look to create an environment for intellectual and musical exchange that will boldly change the direction of music education in the United States.

We're moving! The central offices of the Bard MAT Program are moving from Shafer House on the Bard campus to 7401 South Broadway in Red Hook, New York. The new building offers additional faculty and classroom spaces as well as much-needed video conferencing capability to conduct classes and meetings across the MAT's several campuses.

The Teacher Education Accreditation Council (TEAC), a nonprofit organization founded in 1997 and dedicated to improving academic degree programs for professional educators, **has awarded accreditation to the MAT Program at Bard College.** The accreditation committee stated that the Bard MAT Program is above standards in the three principles used as the basis for evaluation and recommendation. TEAC's goal is to support the preparation of competent, caring, and qualified professional educators; one committee member made a point of stating that Bard's is the rare MAT program that not only claims to educate reflective practitioners, but also dedicates efforts and resources to serving that claim.

A warm welcome to two new staff members. **Carla Finkelstein**, formerly the founder, staff developer, and teacher at the Green School of Baltimore, is now director of the Delano, California, campus of the Bard College MAT Program. **Roberta Adams**, the newest member of the MAT recruitment team, recruits nationally for all Bard MAT campuses.

As part of the partnership between Bard College and Al-Quds University, the Bard MAT Program offers graduate study to teachers from Palestinian schools in East Jerusalem and the West Bank. The two-year Bard Al-Quds MAT Program helps teachers develop into educational leaders who then mentor future MAT classes of student teachers. In December, 50 teachers, representing the first graduating class, will be awarded dual MAT degrees from Bard College and Al-Quds University.

The Summer Program in Mathematical Problem Solving (SPMPS), a three-week math residential program for New York City middle school students, took place on the Bard campus this past July. Many of the students who participated attend middle schools partnered with the Bard MAT program in the city. The July program employed four math instructors, including Bard math major Erin Toliver (Boyer) '00. Among the residential counselors were Bard math major Jackie Stone '11, who served as the undergraduate director of the Bard Math Circle, and Bard undergraduate math major Jeff Pereira '13. To learn more about the SPMPS program, visit http://artofproblemsolving.org/spmps or e-mail MAT math professor Japheth Wood at jwood@bard.edu.

The Women's Housing and Economic Development Corporation (WHEDco) and Bard College have formed a partnership to establish a charter school as part of a WHEDco building project in the Melrose neighborhood of the Bronx, New York City. The proposed charter school, which is planned to open in September 2013, will be operated by the Bard College MAT Program, Bard MAT's second such charter school. Like Paramount Bard Academy in Delano, California, the WHEDco Bard Academy will benefit from the recent merger of the Longy School of Music with Bard College; it will offer a music program for all students, framed by El Sistema principles and based on the musical heritage integral to Bronx history.

The Bard College MAT program is now one of a select group of graduate programs for students nominated for **Woodrow Wilson-Rockefeller Brother Fund Fellowships for Aspiring Teachers of Color.** The Fellowship's primary purpose is to expand the pool of future teachers by attracting outstanding arts and sciences seniors of color to the profession; the Fellowship seeks to encourage these students to consider how they can make a significant difference in the education and lives of young people in the nation's most challenging urban and rural schools and communities. The Fellowship award supports students' enrollment in a program that leads to a master's degree in the subject they seek to teach, as well as teacher certification.

Bard Mentor Teacher is New York State's 2011 Outstanding Biology Teacher

By Donna Elberg

Red Hook High School science teacher Deborah Beam has been a mentor for the Bard MAT Program's biology cohort for eight years. This year the National Association of Biology Teachers designated her New York's Outstanding Biology Teacher, an honor given annually to only one teacher in each state. Award recipients must have demonstrated outstanding teaching ability and experience, inventiveness, initiative, leadership in the school and community, and excellent student-teacher relationships.

Why did you choose to become a science teacher?
Both my parents taught—physical education—and I always enjoyed science.

I grew up in Stanfordville, which was a rural town at the time. Your friends weren't a block away, they were a mile away. You were expected to be outdoors, playing, and I was very intrigued with nature, animals, and all living things. In sixth grade I had a great teacher, John Keminitzer, who was also a herpetologist. I loved his class and decided right then that I wanted to do something with biology.

High school did not foster my love of science—too much chalk and talk. The pedagogy was simply that either you got it or you didn't. Still, I knew that I wanted to do something in the field. I went on to the State University of New York at Cortland and took a lot of biology courses. But one day my mentor there sat me down and said, "Debbie, biology teachers are a dime a dozen. You're going to need something else to set you apart in order to get a job." He suggested that I look in the direction of chemistry. I was a little fearful. I didn't have the high school background—my teachers had not inspired me to learn in that area. But at Cortland, I had some great chemistry professors. I graduated Cortland with a secondary education degree in biology and chemistry. My first job was in Florida, as a chemistry teacher with one section of biology. New York was not really hiring then and for the rare openings they had, the school systems wanted teachers with experience.

I did notice that you are permanently certified to teach biology, chemistry, earth science, physics, and general science for grades 7-12. Isn't that unusually diverse?
If you had said to me in high school that I would be a chemistry teacher, I would have said, "Not for a million dollars. Not going to happen." But you never know how

things will change. In Florida I taught Advanced Placement chemistry, the highest level offered for that science. I took more credits in chemistry while I lived in Florida; I wanted to be able to answer all the good questions my students brought up. Then I realized that behind the principles of chemistry lay the physics of matter. I needed more physics courses to understand chemistry at a deeper level. So I began my study of physics.

In the early '90s, I became homesick for New York and I took a job in Scarsdale teaching biology, mostly. I was the last person hired in a department of 13 during a budget belt-tightening time in New York. They told me that if they had to cut anyone, it would be me. The department chair asked me how far along I was in earth science courses. So I took a course in meteorology (I was always interested in weather) and I received my earth science certification. For my master's degree, I majored in physics and minored in chemistry and also took some good biology courses. Knowing these other areas has only made me a better biology teacher. Science is interdisciplinary, and you're going to have students who want to dig deeper. To say to them, "I don't really know that" is not acceptable to me.

Did you ever think about going into scientific research?

I did. When I went to college, I wasn't firm on becoming a teacher. My teacher parents actually discouraged me from entering the profession. So in my freshman year I walked into the office of the bio department chairperson and said that I was interested in doing some research, to see if this was the field for me. I had this romantic vision of studying snow leopards in the Himalayas or being another Diane Fosse. The professor chuckled a little and said that he didn't normally take freshmen. I insisted that he could depend on me, that I was a hard worker. I think he was more impressed with my chutzpah than anything else. He said, "OK. I have these salamanders and we're trying to find certain scientific data about them." He explained the project, and then I spent most of my freshman weekends in this little cubicle area all by myself cutting up salamanders, photographing what I found, and writing notes to other researchers about what I found—a really nonsocial, quiet life. I rarely saw any living thing other than a salamander and I thought, "This is not for me." At the end of the year, I thanked the chairperson and added secondary education to my degree course work.

Among all the courses you've taught, including forensics and International Baccalaureate–level classes, do you have a favorite?

I would say that anything biological has always been a favorite. I also love teaching chemistry because it empowers students a little more than the biological sciences. Once they get turned on to chemistry, it's amazing to see the change in their reaction to the course. You begin the year with their being intimidated by the curriculum and feeling that they will never be able to do it. When they enter biology, they feel it's a piece of cake until they engage with the mathematics and chemistry embedded in the subject matter. Then they're afraid. But at the end, they can really understand well enough to say "wow!" They feel smart.

What do you think about the Bard MAT Program?

I feel that in this program I grow too, by working with individuals at different levels and with different personalities. I very much agree with the immersion in the school classroom that Bard MAT students receive. They really get a full year's look at teaching and are the best prepared, from what I've seen of other schools' candidates. Bard MAT students have seen the classroom from all points of view. When I did my student teaching, I was out in the field for three months, January to March, and then I was done.

For those who are entering the profession now as science teachers, what major pieces of advice would you give them?

Get dual certification for sure. Something extra that makes you more marketable. Maybe even special education training. It's very hard to find special education teachers that are trained in science.

Don't be locked into New York. Expand your horizons to other states that are still trying to bring in teachers and have some wonderful programs.

Change is good. For example, I was trained that the lesson plan is all-powerful. You followed every line of it for every class. When I began to actually teach, I realized that I had to be able to deviate from my lesson plan because every class is different. It's easier if you stick to the plan, but is this about you? Sometimes you have to kick the plan to the curb, based on what is happening in your room at the moment.

I understand that in New York State there's a possibility of 40 percent of a classroom teacher's evaluation being based on assessment results. How do you feel about that?
I've been reading recently about Finland and its educational system. Finland was not in a good spot educationally, in relation to Sweden or its other counterparts in Europe, but over the last 30 years, the Finns have turned around their entire educational system, and now they're on top. This is a system that we need to look at.

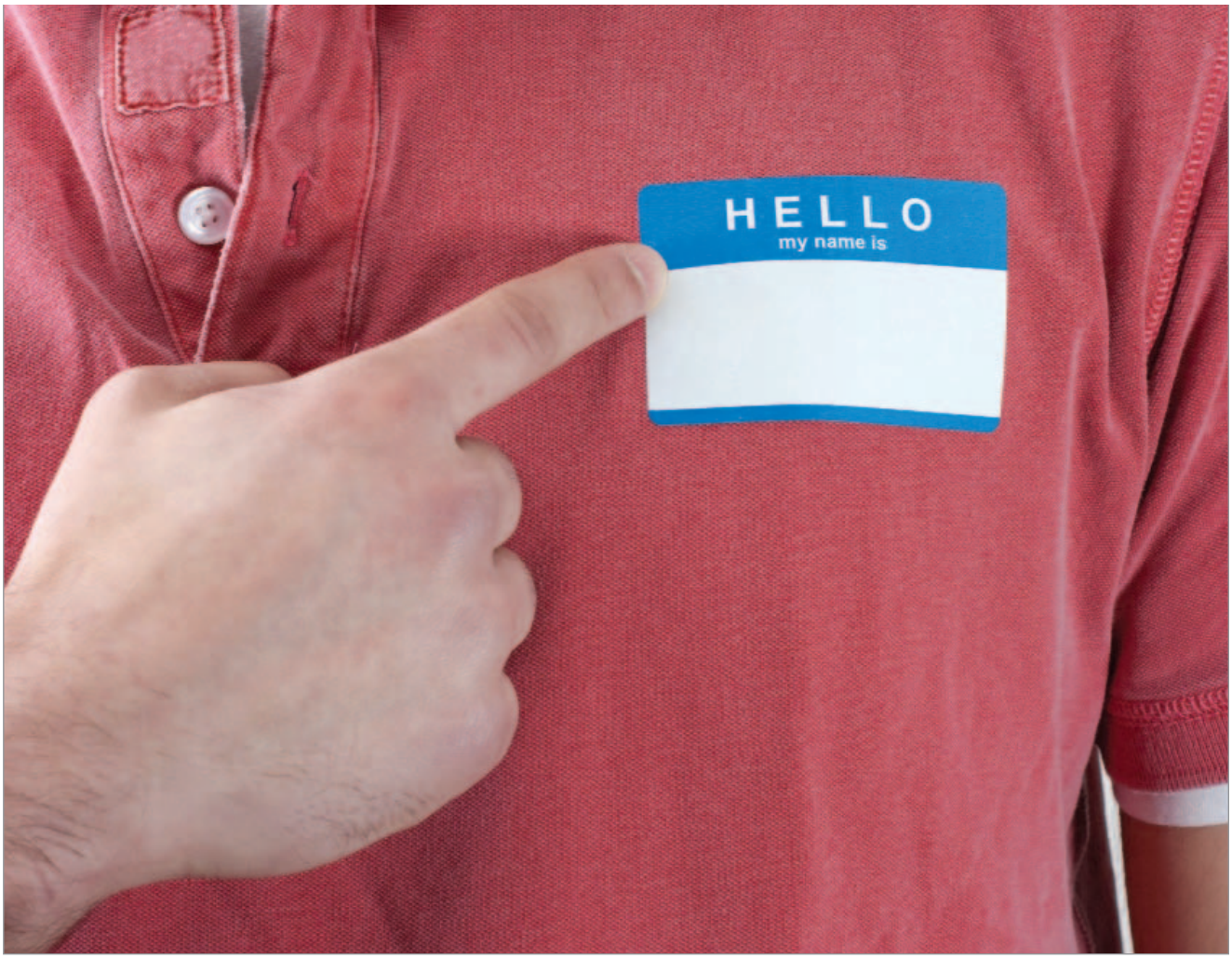
The Finns worked on teacher evaluation, the professional process in which teachers look over lessons, and how teachers collaborate. These were a big part of the Finnish overhaul.

The changes that took place in Finland respected the role of the teacher. School districts do not have boards of education. The principal and the teachers run the school and make decisions internally. The teacher is considered a professional; in Finland right now, teaching is a highly regarded career. The overhaul allowed teachers to change their schools for the better. They did look carefully at the teacher evaluation process and how to get teachers to put more into their lessons, even if they've taught at the school for years.

I believe strongly that student success is teacher linked. We have to start doing something at the teacher level because that's the key to success.

I have a problem with the evaluation process being linked so heavily to exams. Some teachers don't give exams. If you teach tiered or tracked classes, you can be teaching lower-level students. The literacy component is so important. I have students who are not reading past the third- or fourth-grade level. I'm not trained in literacy. I've been reading about it, but I can't teach someone how to read, or decode. I need more study in this area in order to feel I can be a better teacher.

How does a district positively empower teachers to want to become better for their students? That's the issue of evaluation, I believe. So much about evaluation is not about students. I believe that any kid can learn anything—I don't care what baggage they're carrying. It's up to us to find the modality, or the way, or the spark to light. If everyone believes that, then we have something truly wonderful happening in schools.



Using Naming Practices in the Developmental English Classroom

By Susan J. Behrens

Studying the origins and forms of proper names can be a critical key to understanding a fictional character's identity, nature, and place in a culture.

Teaching developmental reading at a community college a number of years ago, I assigned a short story that proved challenging for my students. Mainly, the students were frustrated by the protagonist's lack of a given name. It went against their expectations. I decided to use that frustration to point out naming practices as a key to fictional characters' identity, nature, and place in a culture.

Linguistic behavior often reveals cultural practices. In fact, sociolinguistics is dedicated to researching how language use intersects with cultural and social identity. One aspect of language use that sociolinguistics focuses on is naming practices. The study of such practices is called onomastics. While sociolinguistics and onomastics sound like esoteric electives that one might only find at the graduate level, the principles can be applied to the developmental English classroom to facilitate students' understanding of themselves both as readers and writers.

Before introducing a text, I ask students to freewrite on their own names: What stories can they tell? What do they know, or not know, about naming practices in their families, their culture, and across generations? We uncover cross-cultural and cross-generational trends when students share their freewrites. Issues that arise include the use of nicknames, repeated names in families, honoring relatives

by using the same first initial, preserving (or not) surnames upon marriage, and name changes over time.

I poll the class. How many students changed their names when they entered college (Liz becoming Elizabeth; James becoming Jim)? Who is using his or her middle name instead of first name, and why? We talk about the German government requiring new parents to select a name from a list of acceptable first names. I show them news stories about Japanese parents forced to change baby names deemed too "unusual" by society. Does anyone in the class have an "unusual" name that they regret? Or perhaps cherish?

The British say someone is "called" by a name; Americans say someone is "named." Do these verbs make any difference? What about when we use the copula verb, as in "I *am* Susan." What does this syntactic construction say about our sense of identity?

At this point, I present lists by decade of the most popular male and female names (http://www.ssa.gov/OACT/babynames/). These lists can also be found categorized by ethnic group at http://www.nyc.gov/html/doh/downloads/pdf/vr/ baby-names-2005-ethnicity.pdf. Lively discussions center around how many Jacobs someone knows vs. how few Phyllises. We next look up the etymology of names: http://www.behindthename.com/. "What does your name mean?" is a quite complicated question. We compare the stories we wrote about our own names to the official meaning of our names.

Finally, to make the transition to fiction, I present a list of celebrities and writers who have changed their names professionally. I ask students to add to the list. They may not know the real names of popular singers (Bono is Paul Hewson; Sting is Gordon Sumner), and I learn a thing or two about their generation's pop stars. Then I introduce the first of three texts I have worked with in the developmental classroom to give examples of how naming plays a crucial role in understanding character development and motivation.

Sandra Cisneros's *The House on Mango Street* is a great text to begin the study of an accessible contemporary novel that uses naming practices. Naming is a theme that runs throughout the book: people's names, street names, and even, in a few chapters, assigning appropriate names to clouds. Cisneros uses first-person narration, and we don't learn the narrator/protagonist's name until page 10. When we do learn it, its English translation is first introduced: "In English my name means hope. In Spanish it means too many letters. It means sadness. It means waiting." The main character, Esperanza, is named for her great-grandmother, and she mulls over that fact. Does this name suit her? "I have inherited her name, but I don't want to inherit her place. . . . " What does it mean to be named *Hope*? What do we expect from such a protagonist? We find repetition of expressions such as "one day," "some day," and "until then." Since the word has connotations of change, things being better in the future, I ask students to look for other signs of progression (or regression) in Esperanza's story.

When Esperanza experiences her first sexual encounter—an upsetting moment for her—the (unnamed) man involved calls her "Spanish Girl," changing who she is and obliterating for the moment her hope for something better. It takes the visit of three sisters (also unnamed, except for descriptions such as cat-eyed and old blue-veined) to show Esperanza where she is headed. Throughout, she expresses the desire to live in a "real house" unlike the one on Mango Street. These sisters tell her, "Esperanza . . . a good name," and "you can't forget who you are" even when she moves away. Throughout the book, our heroine does want to move away; she also wants to rename herself. . . . "I wish my name was Cassandra . . ." (another nod to thinking about the future). The sisters settle her down with their words, and she accepts herself: "I have gone away to come back."

How are the secondary characters in the novel named? Several have no names of their own, but are instead referred to by other aspects of their identity, such as their place in a family— "Louie's cousin" and "Mamacita"—or by physical aspects, as in "Fat Boy." In fact, these last two names are actually poor labels for the people: Mamacita is quite large, and Fat Boy is no longer fat, or a boy anymore. Yet the linguistic lag of the labels reinforces the transitory nature of identity, the true meaning of "hope": we all can change.

I ask students to correct this lag: rename characters as the story progresses. Could even the title of the book change from start to finish?

Trumpet by Jackie Kay is a fictionalized account of Billy Tipton, a famous jazz pianist who was hiding something never revealed—even to his son—until Tipton's death: he was actually a woman. *Trumpet* takes a famous trumpet player, Joss Moody (born Josephine Moore), and tells the tale from the son's point of view after Joss is dead and the secret made public.

> I'm going to track him down. I'm going to trace him back to when he was a girl in Greenock, to when he lived under the name of Josephine Moore. Josey? Jose? Joss. But where did he get the Moody? Or was that just Moody Blues?

What other names could Josephine have chosen, and why? What names are androgynous? We discuss how 19th-century men were called Laurie and how Alex is now an ambiguous name.

The son/narrator was adopted, and he too went through a name/identity change:

> Before I became Colman Moody, I was William Dunsmore. If I'd stayed William Dunsmore all my life I'd have been a completely different man. Definitely. I mean a William Dunsmore's smile would be different from a Colman Moody's smile. All my facial expressions would have been different. I bet even my walk would have been heavier if I'd been William Dunsmore.

What are the consequences of a name change? Would Colman really be a different man had he kept his birth name? How is his quest for Joss/Josephine influenced by his own identity questions?

In *Apex Hides the Hurt*, by Colson Whitehead, the issue of names is pinned to the identity of a town, not a person. Our protagonist is a nomenclature consultant. He works for an advertising agency to find the right name for products, and he is hired to rename a town that is looking to reinvent itself in order to reinvigorate its economy. "Some names are keys and open doors," says our hero of his job.

Should this town keep its current name of Winthrop, named for the preeminent white family in town? Change to the real estate developer's choice of New Prospera? Revert to its original name, Freedom, as a home for freed slaves? Our naming expert (who never gets a name himself) digs up the town's history and goes with the name that Freedom beat out when the town was first established: Struggle. And due to a stipulation in his contract, the town must stick to that name for at least a year.

What does it mean to live in a town called Freedom? Struggle? How do these labels influence the quality of life and purpose of the residents? What street names would we expect to find in a town with each of these names? I ask the students to be nomenclature experts and choose a name for this town.

With the work I outlined above, I hope to instill a greater linguistic awareness in my students as readers, and I also stress the crossover to their own writing. They are encouraged to explore and conduct their own research into onomastics, both qualitative and quantitative. The Linguistic Society of America has a subcommittee on onomastics. *Names*, the journal of The American Names Society, offers very accessible articles online: http://www.wtsn.binghamton.edu/ANS/. I show students a website that generates names randomly and sorts them into categories of *commonplace* and *unusual*: http://www.ideonautics.com/huzat.php.

In their own writing, students can generate combinations of first and surnames and match potential writing and speaking styles to these names. For example, how would a Randall McFarland write a sentence, compared to a John Smith? How would Randall's speech differ from John's? Issues of stereotyping arise, and we can work with gender identity as well. As the semester goes on, students start to pick up naming patterns in what they read on their own, and also in their television and DVD viewing. Media literacy is a secondary benefit of these lessons.

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Letters With Love

By Judith Harmon Miller

The only freedom that is of enduring importance is the freedom of intelligence.

—John Dewey, *Experience and Education*

Thanks to the unconscious memory of my mother's letters and two sets of love letters—one that alienated me from my mother and the other that sustained my first love—I was open to letting Nancie Atwell, an innovative English educator, enter my teaching life. In 1985 Atwell published *In the Middle*, a book in which she advocated a change from teacher-centered, classic literature–bound English courses to workshops in which the predominant activity was reading and writing, by students and teacher. Personal letters became the lynchpin for my practice of teaching English. Letter exchanges and reader response that encouraged book talk among the students was a surefire way to raise dedicated readers. This practice created a bond among learners, and between learners and the teacher, with books and writing as our common language, and it established trust and a natural environment in which authentic learning prospered.

Like a carpenter's shop in which master and apprentice worked side by side, the students and I read and wrote together. During class, the students' job was to browse the collection, select a book, read, write letters that contained their responses to the reading, and exchange these reader response journals with their classmates and me. My job was to spend class time reading my own book and responding to their letters. I stocked my eighth-grade classroom with the tools necessary to run reading workshops: bookshelves chock full of paperbacks and hardcovers; rug, pillows, and desks as workstations; and varieties of pens, pencils, paper, and notebooks as implements.

The key to the success of this pedagogy was the exchange of letters. The strategy effectively motivated young readers, sparked their adolescent curiosity, and generated inquiry. The overarching goal was to instill the love of reading: to transform students' association with reading from an assignment done for a teacher to a habit they willingly fell into for the sheer pleasure of it.

The assumption was that the more students were allowed to do what adult readers do—select their own books, lay aside those they don't respond to, generate their own responses to their reading, join book discussion groups, and even have more than one book going at a time—the more likely students would be drawn to a reading life.

Adopting these three simple concepts, defined by Atwell as "choice, time to read, and response," served to refine the learning principles I had grown to believe teachers needed to promote:

grant students a measure of autonomy
honor student thinking

create learning environments that offer a sense of community and immediacy

encourage students to interact honestly and naturally with each other

Simple did not mean easy. The pedagogy demanded organization that included clear directions and expectations, the collection of adequate resources, and the arrangement of schedules for letter exchanges. Students had their own spiral notebooks that they filled with letters to and from their peers and to me relaying their thinking about their book choices. *In* and *out* milk-bottle boxes facilitated the exchange of notebooks. I orchestrated the letter-partner pairings and the times for switching, and set time lines for handing in letters and requirements for numbers of letters; this was not a free-for-all program. The balance between exercising leadership and holding learners accountable, and the desire to minimize authority that invites resistance, demanded constant vigilance.

My most difficult task was coaching students on how to meet my expectation that they write letters based on Louise Rosenblatt's theories (*Literature as Exploration*) on reader response. My purpose was to wean them from the "book report" syndrome—the thinking of literature talk as solely plot synopsis or answers to factual questions. Instead I worked with them to use their writing to search out the meaning they were making of the novel. I had them refer to a list of prompts designed to encourage them to respond rather than answer, to think independently rather than mimic. At that time I read Robert Probst and other writers who published articles with suggestions for reader response prompts. *The English Journal* printed several articles with suggestions for reader response prompts. I offered students such starters for their responses as: I wonder; I was surprised that; I was reminded of. What questions do I ask myself while I'm reading? What images linger? To explore their reading process, I asked them to tell the story of their reading of the book. The correspondence served as a medium by which eighth-graders became students of literature, writing with the discoveries they made in creating their letters, exchanging letters, and receiving responses from other readers.

Marcie, a diminutive but feisty eighth-grader who by habit whisked her coal-black ponytail across the back of her neck, exchanged letters with me while she read *Little Women.*

4/20/88

There summer days reminded me of the lazy summer I had and hope for this year . . . I noticed that the family had teatime, I bet Tom Sawyer never heard of that. Amy reminds me of myself because whenever there is a party, we both have nothing to wear. I noticed there are a lot of French expressions, why is that? When Beth's bird died I pictured her sitting at a table but I got the image of the table from another book wich I got from another book. Isn't it weird how people think of those images? Amy's very clever in order to give her nose a nicer apperence she slept with a pin on her nose . . . I might try that sometime.

4/21/88

What does indolent mean? When the four of the sisters & Laurie are talking, it seems as if they should have an English accent.

Marcie demonstrates her capability to make personal connections to her reading and compare and contrast with other books she has read. She realizes it is legitimate to ask questions and she feels free to be playful in her responses—signs that she found the reading pleasurable. Though this writing acknowledged she was "talking" to someone, I urged her to address her audience directly. I wanted students to have the experience of writing to a specific audience, so we could learn how this not only facilitates the flow of their writing, but also is more likely to be authentic and honest.

Two days later Marcie included a salutation.

Dear Mrs. Miller

Little Women *is turning out pretty good. Death in a book has always interested me. I don't think I am cold hearted but since I don't know anybody close to me that died, I have a natural curiosity for the feelings of people who have experienced a death to someone close to them.*

The content of her letter provided me with a chance to direct her to thinking about one of the reasons we read. I wrote: "[Reading] *is our way of exploring our own feelings, a rehearsal for life."* The letter format sent a message that students did not have to leave their emotions at the schoolhouse door. At the close of her April 20th letter, Marci skips to a fresh idea.

I believe that Alcott is writing about her teenage years. I think a little bit of her is in each of the characters. I think she is most like Jo. There is something in Jo, perhaps more emphisis on her character than the others. Jo is more alive.

Notice how Marcie is constructing her own literature curriculum. In my response, I affirmed her willingness to risk forming her own theories about character. I encouraged her to accustom herself to pursuing the questions that pop up

when she reads. I suggested that she research a Radcliffe College publication on Alcott's life in *Notable American Women* because I wanted her to see that *a professional writer shares your idea about the connection between Alcott and her character, Jo.*

At the end of the month, I responded to the 14 pages of Marcie's April letters.

This work is incredible. I am fascinated by your insights, your questions and what you notice. I suggest when you ask Qs like what does dyspeptic, cambric and frugal mean, try writing about what you think they mean. See where writing responses to your own question leads you. Your writing is a tool to discover what you didn't know you knew.

Love and thanks,
Mrs. M.

When she finished *Little Women*, Marcie thanked me for the recommendation and sought out further recommendations. *"How about* Little Men*? Would* The Great Gatsby *be good?*

I wrote:

Dear Marcie,

I have not read Little Men. *Isn't Leah Stern* [a fellow student] *reading it? Ask her about it. The* Great Gatsby *is an adult book. It is a classic in American literature, beautifully written. You might try it, but my guess is you need to be older to appreciate or understand it—not that you are not smart enough—it's just a question of experience.*

In the remainder of the letter, I recommended *Alice in Wonderland*, *Treasure Island*, *Jane Eyre,* and *National Velvet,* and then I listed some authors: Madeline L'Engle, Robert Cormier, Scott O'Dell, and Willa Cather. I told her that her friend Katrina had read *Rebecca*; she might try that. These letter exchanges allowed me to tune into the mind of the student and teach literature from the place in which each student was thinking at that moment. Marcie explores vocabulary, character development, writing style and quality, genres, and the lives of authors, and she makes connections among authors and between her life and the lives of characters in the novel. She even makes up her own reading list. During May, Marcie decided to read *Rebecca, Tiger Eyes,* and *Walk through Cold Fire*.

Keep in mind that I shared the teaching role with the students. In their exchanges they swapped their knowledge and insights. My goal was to accustom them to the idea that learning was not just a two-way street between teacher and student, but a broader area, in which they had much to learn from one another.

Naturally, not all students who participated in this exchange of journals wrote with the same level of engagement or sophistication. My job was to be patient with those who resisted reading and writing and who were not yet ready for the complexity of thinking that I saw in Marcie. After several weeks of negotiations, Frank, a bright, cynical student who fought the workshop system tooth and nail, convinced me to accept his Radio Shack catalogues as reading material. Smitty spent most of his time during reading workshop cruising the bookshelf for choices, and, when he thought I wasn't looking, throwing an occasional glance to catch the eye of male compatriots; he rarely read, and never wrote a letter. His blatantly negative response to the workshop setting convinced me that I needed to create alternative approaches for him. Mac, an eighth-grader who still looked like a fourth-grader, read fewer books than students like Marcie and wrote to the minimum.

I have since learned that Frank graduated from the University of Massachusetts/Amherst with honors, Smitty is an auto-body mechanic in his hometown, and Mac became a teacher—evidence enough for me that patience and an understanding of different levels of maturity pay off.

Exemplary teaching is dependent on forging positive relationships; letters became a natural medium to accomplish that goal. Each year I adjusted and tweaked the workshop curriculum to improve what Atwell had taught me about building an English Language Arts program around the lure of literature and students' love of writing notes to one another. I learned to channel students' affinity for social interaction with book talk, opening up the potential of intellectual exchanges even in the midst of the social swirl of middle school.

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MAT Program Graduates Seventh Class in New York and First Class in California

This past June, the Bard MAT program graduated 62 new public school teachers, 45 from its New York State campus and 17 in Delano, California.

On June 4, the Master of Arts in Teaching Program at Bard College celebrated the graduation and certification of its seventh New York State class—45 secondary school teachers. Of these graduates, each of whom received a master of arts in teaching degree, three were certified as teachers of biology, 15 as teachers of English, 13 as teachers of mathematics, and 14 as teachers of social studies. On June 11, in Delano, California, the Bard MAT Program graduated its first class of 17 secondary school teachers, 12 teachers of English and five teachers of social studies.

The following students graduated from the New York campus:

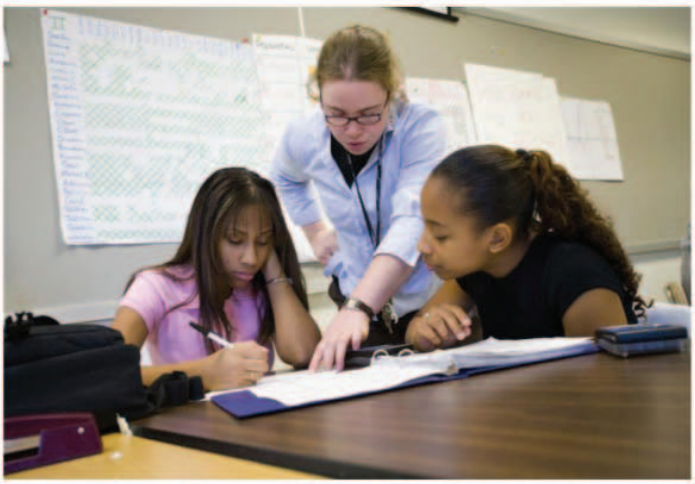
Kelley S. Abraham, History
John Luca Ahern, History
Alyssa Sharon Ali, Mathematics
Juanessa L. Allen, Mathematics
Jimmy Aquino, History
Tara Baranowske, Literature
Elizabeth Belikov, History
Margaret Meier Blayney, History
Michael Braff, History
Nancy Carol Buck, Mathematics
Matthew Carlberg, Mathematics
Evan Chadwick, Biology
Hassan-Shareef Champion, History
Rebecca A. Cleary, Literature
Ciana Rose DeBellis, Literature
Dwane A. Decker, Biology
Matthew Denvir, Literature
Caroline Williams Dicks, Literature
Gaia Willow Fried, History
Caitlin Beth Goldschmidt, Literature
Daniel Grenell, Mathematics
Aziz A. Jumash, Mathematics
Matthew David Helffrich, Biology
Alan Ross Kadlec, Mathematics
Katrina Lynne Kaplan, Literature
Kristen M. LaPlante, Mathematics
Jacob Corey Leibold, Mathematics
Katharine Wood Louis, Literature
Kelly Marie Maguire, Literature
Julie A. Mancini, Mathematics
Elizabeth A. Masalsky, Mathematics
Jacob Alexander Meyer, Mathematics
John Joseph Peacock IV, History
Geordarna Poulten, Literature
Glencora Roberts, Literature
Benjamin Kyle Robinson, Mathematics
John Michael Ruby II, History
Eva Seligman, History
Victoria Stanley-Becker, History
Shawn P. Strack, Literature
Andrew Strawinski, History
Alfonso Tyrone Strong, Literature
Kelly Tompkins, Literature
Christopher Garrett Walsh, History
Stephanie Wisniewski, Literature

The following students graduated from the Delano, California, campus:

Natalie Banuelos, Literature
Rhonda Brand, Literature
Elizabeth Cooke, Literature
Noemi Garcia-Reyes, History
Casey Gill, Literature
Barbara Grigsby, History
Andrew Guss, Literature
David Heller, History
Andrew Hupp, History
Angelina Huwe, Literature
Lindsay Kuntz, Literature
Manuel Miranda, History
Ian Nemeschy, Literature
Scott Raymoure, Literature
Michael Rich, Literature
Cathy Rudnick, Literature
Alison Sickler, Literature

Surrounded by family, friends, and Bard MAT Program faculty, the graduates celebrated the culmination of an intense program that integrates theory and practice, study and application, through an active collaboration between MAT faculty, public school teachers, and MAT apprentice teachers. The MAT Program at Bard recognizes what many studies have demonstrated: within schools, the classroom teacher plays the most influential role in student learning. The Program educates teachers who can help public school students develop the thoughtful self-determination that builds from a genuine enthusiasm for learning and the ability to apply the understanding of a discipline to the pursuit of living more fully and responsibly.

The Bard MAT Program's curriculum leads to a master of arts in teaching degree, with concentration in the content areas of biology, English, mathematics, or social studies, grades 7–12. The Program offers advanced study in these academic disciplines and complementary field-based study of issues in teaching and learning.



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Lessons Learned from THE KING'S SPEECH

By Ann Jackowitz

This critically acclaimed film, winner of four Oscars, is also a wonderful teaching tool.

The King's Speech, released in 2010 to critical acclaim and four Oscar awards, is also a wonderful teaching tool. The film unintentionally explores many pedagogical techniques that educators can use to engage their most challenging students.

Based on historical fact, the film is the personal story of an unlikely relationship that developed between an Australian commoner, Lionel Logue (1880–1953), an unorthodox, controversial speech therapist and would-be thespian, and Prince Albert (1895–1952), an extreme stutterer since childhood. The prince is not only a member of the royal family, but also second in the line of succession to rule the British Empire. The dramatic opening scene shows Prince Albert terrified to speak publicly but required to do so because of his position in the royal family. He steps up to the microphone to present the closing speech on a BBC radio broadcast at the Empire Exhibition in London in 1925. Inevitably, he stutters, and the long pauses and silences are painfully noticeable. The speech is a disaster, and the prince is humiliated before 100,000 spectators and listeners throughout the world.

After seeking treatment unsuccessfully with a number of royal physicians, Prince Albert, in an effort to mollify his wife, sees Logue as a last resort. Thus begins a partnership that lasts a lifetime. While the historical impact of this collaboration was significant, we learn also that the quality of the relationship was decisive in the success of the treatment.

Logue's approach to his student is based on several important concepts. First, Logue establishes a set of rules, or boundaries, when he meets his student for the first time. Logue makes it clear to the prince and his wife that there is no room for discussion: Logue is in charge. He and Prince Albert will meet alone every day in Logue's office. There will be no smoking, even though the royal physician has said that smoking is a relaxant and could aid the prince with his malady. In order to break down the traditional distance between commoner and royal, they are to call each other by their first names: Dr. Logue, as the prince calls him, is Lionel, and Logue will call the prince Bertie, the family's nickname for him. Logue calls Prince Albert Bertie almost immediately. It takes the Prince much longer before he can use Logue's first name. (I know of one charter school in New York City where teachers and students call each other by their first names. This is an inner-city school that serves high-risk students; all participate, and it works well.) Additionally, Prince Albert needs to be a willing partner, and he is required to practice at home an hour a day and do the exercises Logue prescribes, as encouraged by Albert's wife, his greatest supporter.

Prince Albert's self-esteem is at an all-time low, and his credibility among his peers shattered. The prince believes that a stigma is attached to having a speech impediment and he views it as a weakness. To gain the prince's trust—and Logue knows this will take time—Logue's goal is to show the prince that nothing is inherently wrong with him. He has no lack of intelligence, no physical defect. The first exercise the teacher uses is unusual and creative. He asks the prince to read aloud the "To be, or not to be" soliloquy from Shakespeare's *Hamlet* and tells him that he will be recording his voice. At the same time, Logue asks the prince to put on padded earphones and listen to recorded music so that he is unable to hear his own voice. At first, the prince obliges Logue but is frustrated by the technique; he quits, but when he is home, he plays the recording and discovers that he did not stutter. With Logue's help, he starts to unlearn old behaviors and practice new ones. He takes his first step toward believing in himself and his teacher.

When Logue asks personal questions, Prince Albert tells him, "We don't talk about ourselves outside the family, or even among us." The prince's resistance is palpable but Logue's reaction is emphatic. In order to get at the root of the problem, personal histories are imperative. As the trust develops, so does Albert's acceptance of Logue's rules. When Prince Albert does reveal himself, Logue learns that when he gets angry, or when he speaks to himself or his immediate family, he does not stutter. With this information, Logue can incorporate these aspects of the prince's personality into the exercises. He uses the prince's

strengths to help him move forward. As an example, during a session, Logue purposely makes Albert angry; then he tells him to intersperse curse words while speaking nonstop. The prince speaks jabberwocky with enthusiasm and no stutter.

Stuttering interrupts the fluency of speech. To help the prince regain that fluency, Logue teaches him breath control, slowing down the rate of his speech and interjecting pauses where there had been hesitations and silences. Other techniques include frequent gargling with water, intoning vowels for 15 seconds in front of a window, and singing the words being read—all aimed to improve Albert's speaking delivery. Logue also has the prince rolling on the ground, noisily jiggling his cheeks, and dancing around his office. By working alone with Prince Albert in his office, Logue is able to break down the prince's inhibitions, in an environment that becomes relaxing for him. Being enthusiastic and relevant are great ways to get and keep students engaged. Logue loves his work and it shows. He has confidence in himself and in his ability to "cure," that is, to teach successfully. His constant encouragement was certainly a factor in Prince Albert's overcoming his stammer. With Logue's relentless perseverance, the prince begins to learn how to cope with his disability.

When King George V dies, Prince Albert's older brother, Edward, ascends to the throne. Less than a year later and to the surprise of all, King Edward VIII abdicates his throne for Wallis Simpson, the American woman he loves. Prince Albert becomes the new monarch, something he neither wanted nor expected. He ascends the throne in 1937, as King George VI**.** The new king recognizes that he needs Logue's guidance, and they do some preparation for the coronation; although Albert will have only a few words to say, his anxiety level is high. With Logue's instructions, and his sensitivity to Albert's needs, the new king sails through the event beautifully.

The next step in the learning process is Logue's coaching the king. The most challenging speech of the king's lifetime comes in 1939, when war with Germany is declared. In the past, Prince Albert needed to speak in public as a representative of his father and the royal family. Now, as King George VI, he represents himself and England in major national and international speeches. He has to find his voice; this voice must be strong and unwavering as it is broadcast live into millions of homes. England needs a leader who can rally and unite his nation. In perhaps the most dramatic moments of the film, King George VI, secluded in a womb-like tent with his teacher in front of him, speaks to his country:

> In this grave hour, perhaps the most fateful in our history, I send to every household of my peoples, both at home and overseas, this message spoken with the same depth of feelings for each one of you as if I were able to cross your threshold and speak to you myself. . . .
>
> There may be dark days ahead, and we can no longer be confined to the battlefield. But we can only do the right as we see the right and reverently commit our cause to God.

With total command, he adds, "If, one and all, we keep resolutely faithful to it, then with God's help, we shall prevail."

Afterward, Logue tells the king that the reason his work had success with shell-shocked World War I veterans was because he went deeper, beyond the language exercises, beyond the breathing exercises and relaxation therapy. The king's job, says Logue, is "to give them faith and let them know that a friend [is] listening." The voice that could not speak is transformed, as Albert becomes the voice of the Empire. Logue remained at Albert's side for all of his major speeches, throughout his life.

Logue was able to transfer his understanding of stuttering into an individualized plan for curing the new king. What can we, as teachers, learn and apply from his methodology? How can the quality of the relationship in a one-on-one setting be adaptable and applicable to a classroom of students?

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All references to the film and all quotations are taken directly from the screenplay:
http://www.deadline.com/tag/the-kings-speech-screenplay/

Through a Historical Lens: The Civil War

By Andrew Lichtenstein

The attention to detail that entertains so many Civil War enthusiasts and historians misses the point.

The Civil War, like all wars, was fought for many complex reasons, with many complex results. That, however, was not a concern of mine when I began traveling across the United States taking photographs about the Civil War for its 150th anniversary.

The complete denial that slavery even played a role in the conflict, as argued by some whites in the South today, is interesting. The "Confederate heritage movement" argues that this was a war in defense of true American political freedom, against the tyranny of a powerful Federal government. While that is a disturbing continuation of a racial view of our nation, I also find it to be the natural evolution of Ken Burns's inclusive history of the Civil War. By crafting a narrative in which the horrible slaughter and sacrifice was equally shared by both sides—each of them noble and brave in the midst of this national tragedy, which might have been true enough in the trenches—Burns equated the struggle to end slavery with the one to keep it. Yes, General Robert E. Lee, especially when compared to several of his northern counterparts, was a man of tremendous personal integrity, bravery, and military skill. But all of his efforts were devoted to a cause that, 150 years later, most Americans would find criminal. I would no more want to glorify his memory than I would General Rommel's.

Anybody can play dress up. I had little desire to chase around the tens of thousands of Civil War reenactors on their annual pilgrimages to the battlegrounds of the war. This flag was the first version of the Confederate Naval Flag, this button is an exact replica of the one found on this regiment's uniform. . . . For me, all the attention to detail and accuracy that entertains so many Civil War enthusiasts and historians misses the point. I'd rather spend my afternoon with a camera looking for Mose Wright's abandoned church in East Money, Mississippi. In 1955, ninety years after the Civil War ended, Pastor Wright had the courage to stand up in open court and identify the two white killers of his nephew, Emmett Till.

Above: John Brown's farm outside of Lake Placid, New York, 2011.
Right (top): Confederate Heritage rally in downtown Montgomery, Alabama, 2011; the women are sitting at the exact spot where Rosa Parks boarded the city bus; **(bottom):** reading of the Emancipation Proclamation, Juneteenth, Gavleston, Texas, 2010. Juneteenth commemorates the abolition of slavery in Texas in 1865.

Lesley Sawhill-Aja (*far left*), artistic director of New Genesis Productions, works with students on a Shakespearean project.

Lesley Sawhill-Aja, Teaching Artist

By Caroline Ramaley

Sawhill-Aja's New Genesis Productions is a nonprofit youth theater program that specializes in Shakespeare.

Lesley Sawhill-Aja has more than 30 years' experience as an actor. She has also worked for the past 15 years as a teaching artist, collaborating with schools in Delaware, Dutchess, Greene, and Ulster Counties. In 2002 Lesley and her husband, producer Ron Aja, formed New Genesis Productions (www.newgensisproductions.org), a nonprofit youth theater company. New Genesis offers two-week summer Shakespeare intensives for young actors from 8 to 17, and a school-year Shakespeare master's project for teens.

As someone who trained as an actor, what sparked your interest in working with young people?

I started as an actor as a young person, so I think that's the strongest given. When I was seven, I saw a production of *The Merchant of Venice*, and it ignited my passion for acting—that moment on stage, that sense of the grandeur of the language and the lights and everything. It just turned me on, and I began lessons in acting and dance. Then, as an adult working as an actor in New York, I had a few small opportunities through grants to work with schools. When we moved to the Catskills, offering my work to elementary schools was a natural path, and I found that I love to direct young actors. They're so pure of heart and genuine.

How did Shakespeare, in particular, become your vehicle for teaching young actors?

When we moved upstate, I developed Shakespeare Story Theatre, which adapts Shakespeare's plays for children. SST gives children small acting roles and links scenes with narration. As a teaching artist, I was able to take SST into the schools, which gave teachers and students a means of experiencing Shakespeare in a contained way. I wanted to give the kids more theater time, so we started a summer Shakespeare camp and built an outdoor theater on our property. We've built from there to what New Genesis offers today.

Describe some of the work you've done in local public schools.

I've done different things at different levels, in both middle and high schools. In Red Hook, for example, I did a high school residency of *As You Like It* and *Twelfth Night*—a great experience. A requirement of the residency was that we do the full script, and the students committed themselves to learning their roles. It was heartwarming to see students who, realistically, might never act again, go from being intimidated by Shakespeare to really taking it on. The teachers, too, took the production very seriously; it connected with the curriculum, which is key to this kind of school residency.

What are some of the techniques you use to help young actors understand Shakespearean English and be able to communicate in it?

I've never been fearful of the language of Shakespeare. When people say, "Oh, that must be so difficult for young people," I just don't agree that it's an issue. That said, we try to make the language fun, and embrace it in an active way. When I'm working with young actors who are approaching Shakespeare for the first time, I make it very physical—we work with a single phrase, like "I beseech you, my Grace," and I give them a physical challenge to do along with it, which allows them to express the phrase fully. I also have them express the language boldly, in an almost over-the-top way, so that they get over their fear of the words and can develop a voice connection to them. Then, as they work on developing a character, we explore linguistic moments, looking at the meanings of particular words and at punctuation. I ask the older student actors to record in their scripts what their lines mean to them in their own English, alongside Shakespeare's—that's very challenging for them.

You've worked with a number of the same young actors over the course of several productions. How do you help them continue to grow?

I was trained in the Meisner technique, and I bring that to my work with all of the actors I direct. It helps them learn a way of working—how to respond when they pick up a script, how to make choices, what to *do*. The technique first emphasizes developing yourself as an improvisational actor working moment to moment within a governing set of circumstances. It moves on to exercises that develop an actor's ability to be in touch with emotion, to understand the social forces that inform a play, and to develop the emotional and physical lives of a character through text work. With this group of teens, I have a sense of where each of them is in the process, and when they're ready for it, I work with them on the next part of the technique.

You've recently directed *Hamlet* with a group of teens—what kinds of questions did you ask the actors about the play?

Our questions came up through rehearsal. Questions like "Where's Polonius's wife?" and "Does Hamlet truly not love Ophelia?" A really interesting exchange occurred between the actors playing Claudius and Gertrude. I asked them, "Is Gertrude smart?" because I felt that was important to the characters' relationship. He said, "No!" at the same time that she said, "Yes!" She felt that Gertrude was Hillary Clinton–smart. He argued that Claudius thinks of her as dumb, as needing to be taken care of—and maybe he does.

What's the role of costumes?

With Shakespeare Story Theatre, the costumes give young children a connection to the play. You hold up a hat and say, "This is Rosalind's—here you go." A child puts on the hat and feels that she's Rosalind. Costumes give kids an immediate connection to the physical life of the character, and they know what to do with that. Costumes may be the last part of the process that should happen for an adult actor, but kids just have a natural understanding of costume. With older students, what should happen organically is that as they're developing their characters, costumes are being created appropriately alongside what they're developing, and there's a magical gel.

Do you have any advice about teaching Shakespeare for classroom teachers?

Get the students up on their feet. Have them try acting the lines, even if it's not the whole play. That's so important.

Teaching the *Why* Instead of the *How* in English Class

By Matthew Denvir

The precursor to honing one's ability to write is the understanding of why that ability should be honed at all.

In March 2011, I went into my student-teaching placement at Onteora Middle School with some grand ideas about teaching English. I believed—and still do—that the subject of capital-E English is about identity formation, critical thinking, social awareness, and more. And yes, grammar is important. But as I quickly learned, the real world has a way of complicating ideals, if not shattering them altogether. Plainly put, I learned that teaching English is hard, and convincing students that the subject is worthwhile can be one of our greatest challenges as English teachers.

A moment that sticks in my mind is one in which a resistant student remarked, "Why are we doing this? We already know how to write." In a sense, he was correct. He, especially, could write fairly well. All the students could write. Some were more skilled than others, but they could all put their thoughts down on paper and enter into the communicative world via written language. Because of this, I began to consider not focusing so much on the *how* of writing, and instead emphasizing the *why*.

This isn't to say that writing mechanics are unimportant. They are important and worth teaching. But the precursor to honing one's ability is the understanding of why that ability should be honed in the first place. Students who don't understand why they are learning something will resist learning it. And instead of fighting student gripes about pointlessness, we, as English teachers, should build upon students' natural tendency to desire a purpose. We should provoke them to investigate the importance of reading and writing. We should let them look for and discover their own reasons for learning capital-E English.

This thinking led me to devise a weeklong lesson that emphasized the *why* over the *how*. It was the last lesson I taught my eighth-grade class at Onteora, during the final week of a monthlong unit on *The Diary of Anne Frank*. Students had, up until this point, learned about the Holocaust, read the play, and written some Holocaust-themed fiction of their own. For the last part of the unit, I wanted to devise a lesson that would encourage students to see the connection between the literature and the world. I wanted them to see that human rights violations, such as those on display in *The Diary of Anne Frank*, are not a thing of the past. And I hoped that this lesson could allow students to investigate why writing might be important.

The plan I came up with was experimental from the start. I knew that it was far from perfect and that I'd certainly have to view it as a learning experience. The lesson entailed having students research current human rights issues, choose one issue to focus on as a class, and write real protest letters to relevant people in response to the issue selected. It was, admittedly, a bit too ambitious for a one-week lesson. But I wanted to learn from it. I wanted my students to feel as though they were writing something real and important. I wanted them to see how the act of writing itself can be real and important. And I wanted to see if that were even possible. I called the lesson "Writing for Social Change."

In my lesson plan, my stated goals were: "Students will see the connection between the themes in *The Diary of Anne Frank* and current human rights issues. Students will understand the importance of the written word as a tool for resisting oppression and injustice." For me, the latter goal was most important. With this assignment, I was most interested in how students would respond to a task that carried more weight than a grade—an assignment with real-world implications.

For me, one of the most difficult aspects of this assignment was the planning stage. I found myself constantly playing a mental game of "Anticipate that Possible Problem." One of my major concerns was how to assist students in researching current human rights issues. I didn't want to hold their hands, so to speak, throughout the entire research phase, but I didn't want to leave them entirely unassisted. So, I did something I generally don't like doing: I made a worksheet for them to fill out. It asked questions about the certain human rights issue each student wanted to pick, questions about people involved, locations, and other facts. Though I think worksheets can often be too easy for students, I figured this would be a good way to ease my students into a task they might find difficult to begin.

The other dilemma I faced in the planning stage was the issue of sending letters as a group. When I came up with the whole idea, I wanted to have each class period select an issue and write to that issue as a unit. I wanted this assignment to be community oriented for a number of reasons, the

most important being that a packet of letters would be a more effective way to get a message across. But I didn't want to force a student to take up a stance that he or she didn't believe in. Since some of the human rights issues on the table were somewhat controversial (gay rights, abortion rights, etc.), I tried to think of a way to accommodate those students who wanted to write about a topic different from the one chosen by their classmates.

I wasn't entirely pleased with my solution, but it did, to some degree, achieve what I wanted. I informed each class that they would have to vote on a human rights issue to write about as a class. For the issue voted on, I would provide a large stamped envelope for the mailing. I also told them that if they wanted to write about something else, they could. In the latter case, however, they would have to take care of sending the letters themselves. I did this mainly for logistical reasons. I simply could not keep track of where and how to send about a hundred individual letters.

A positive and unexpected side effect of this method came on the second day of the week, when each class period debated and voted on human rights issues to write about. From my perspective, the debates proved stimulating and intellectually demanding for those students willing to take a stance. Students took sides and made persuasive arguments; some displayed real and impressive knowledge of the issues they had researched. A girl in the third-period class made a passionate, convincing argument about women's rights in Pakistan. While most of the class was at first divided among various issues, her arguments persuaded the majority of students to come to her side, and that class wrote about women's rights in Pakistan.

The other classes also had fruitful debates. First period ultimately chose marriage equality in New York State (not legal at the time). Second and ninth periods both chose to write about the rampant domestic violence in Turkey. Sixth period chose gay rights in Cameroon. And a significant number of students chose different topics: child soldiers in Yemen, gay rights in Togo. Though first period was the only group to select marriage equality collectively, other students chose that topic independently.

These debates and ultimate selections gave me hope that my lesson was achieving its designed purpose. Students showed passion and genuine interest for their chosen topics. They called me over to their desk just to show me an interesting piece of information they found. They were collaborating and, for the most part, seemed genuinely excited about the prospect of partaking in a real protest. I hoped this enthusiasm would carry over into the writing portion of the assignment, that students would see that the written word could play a major role in social transformation and social protest.

Things changed, however, on the third day, when students began writing their letters. With topics chosen and research done, they had the tools necessary to make a statement in writing. And I noticed some significant differences in their reactions to the project.

Many students continued to have the ideal attitude. Instead of simply following my rubric for the grade, some went above and beyond the call of duty, and wrote with creative flair and clear passion. For example, one student wrote, "I was told from a very young age, 'There isn't enough love in the world.' So why not act upon every opportunity to give or receive it, even if you happen to fall for someone of the same sex." Another student wrote, "Women are human beings too, they breathe, and feel, and love, and care." Both of these passages exemplify those students who used the written word in genuine attempts to articulate and present their beliefs to those with opposing beliefs. These students took up the task at hand and were able to understand the *why* of writing. They believed that their task, writing protest letters, was important, and treated it as such.

In contrast, some students expressed only a concern for getting a decent grade, asking me what I wanted them to do. Others told me plainly that they didn't care about the assignment, or that they didn't care for the topic chosen by the class. When I told them they could choose whatever topic they wanted, they said they wanted to go along with the chosen topic because it would be easier. A few students even told me that they didn't feel passionately about any human rights issue. And many students said something along the lines of, "These letters aren't going to change anything."

The lesson did not seem to achieve its second goal with these recalcitrant students, as they were not attempting to investigate "the importance of the written word as a tool for resisting oppression and injustice." They were, understandably, more concerned with merely getting the assignment done. I use the word *understandably* because working for the grade seems to be standard operating procedure for many students. These students weren't revolting against my lesson; actually, many of them were being "good" students by seeking to do acceptable work. But I didn't want them to do merely acceptable work; I wanted them to try to understand why they were doing the work—writing these letters—in the first place.

By Friday an acceptable majority of students had finished the work. They printed out their letters, I provided envelopes, and we mailed a variety of "protest packets" to embassies, governments, and the Governor of New York.

Many students were excited and openly wondered who might read their letters, while others clearly viewed the project as just one of many writing assignments undertaken during English class that year. I left the experience glad I tried it, but with some nagging questions.

How can we, as English teachers, effectively teach the *why* of writing? This is a difficult question because it entails more than just writing, reading, and language. If we taught students about why they should write, we'd be teaching them much more than the writing itself. We would teach them the importance of caring about the world and wanting to engage with that world. We would teach them that being passionate about a topic is a good thing. We would teach them the dangers of introversion and the importance of communication and expression.

As I discovered throughout the course of the lesson, some students will not outwardly feel passionate about anything. Or perhaps they won't see school as the ideal environment in which to express genuine beliefs and feelings. Either way, they resist considering why they write. They resist thinking seriously about why (or even why not) they should take English class, and what they do in it. Going into the future, I will continue to think about this challenge. It's important that students consider why they write and why others have written in the past. I want my students to see writing as an act of identity construction and a real tool for social and political change. I want them to at least consider the possibility that the act of writing is a skill worth honing.

Some weeks after my placement at Onteora, marriage equality was legalized in New York State. I'm sure a packet of letters from a group of eighth-grade students was not a deciding factor, and my students probably realize that also. However, I hope they realize that they played a role, even if a small one, in social change, and that change comes about because of people like them who perceive an injustice and try to fix it through their spoken words, their actions, and their writing.

Lesson Plan: Writing for Social Change ("The Pen is Mightier than the Sword")

By Matthew Denvir

Introduction: The Holocaust was a terrible and tragic moment in human history, but it is, unfortunately, not the only atrocity ever committed. Genocides, war crimes, and other human rights violations are not a thing of the past; they are still a part of our world. In these past few weeks, we have discussed the importance of using the written word to tell stories about genocide. For the last week of the unit, I want to take this idea one step further. I want us to use the written word to actually combat injustice. For this assignment, each class period is, as a group, going to select a human rights issue to protest, and students will write letters to world leaders, embassies, or anyone who will listen.

The Assignment

Day 1: You will each research human rights violations currently happening around the world and will choose one that you feel particularly strong about.These websites are helpful starts: **http://amnesty.org/; http://www.hrw.org; http://www.humanrightsfirst.org/.**
Day 2: Each class will vote on the specific issue they want to write about.
Day 3–4: You will spend class time researching and writing letters.
Day 5: Letters will be mailed to relevant parties in one packet. (LETTERS ARE DUE ON THIS DATE!)

Letter Requirements/Tips

- Letters must be at least three paragraphs long, no more than a page.
- They should be in a proper format (which I will show you later).
- In your letter, you should state what human rights violation you wish to protest and why.
- Letters should be professional. They should have no grammatical or factual errors.

Things to Remember

- You will be writing real letters to real people, so your letters should be thoughtful and appropriate.
- You don't have to choose an international issue. There are national issues such as gay rights or immigration that you could choose.
- Your classroom represents a variety of people with a variety of political views. While discussing issues, be respectful of different opinions, even if you disagree with them.
- Finding out where to send these letters may prove tricky. But if we can't find an address, the United Nations complex in New York City is a safe bet.
- If, for whatever reason, you are uncomfortable with this assignment, you can opt out and write a mini-research paper instead. It won't be more or less work than the letter.

Teachers in Residence: A Year in the Life of the Urban Teacher Residency

By Justine Haemmerli and Michael Sadowski

In Bard's new program in the South Bronx, MAT students experience the daily life of a school building for seven months, taking their graduate courses and doing their student teaching all within one urban campus.

In 2010–11, the Bard Master of Arts in Teaching Program began its unique Urban Teacher Residency Program (UTRP) for teacher preparation in the South Bronx, funded by grants from the Petrie Foundation and the federal government's Fund for Improvement of Post-secondary Education (FIPSE). At International Community High School (ICHS) and two neighboring middle schools (MS 224 and MS 343) that share the 345 Brook Avenue education complex in the South Bronx, Bard MAT students had the opportunity to experience the daily life of a school building for seven months. They took their graduate courses and had their student teaching experiences all within one urban campus.

As site coordinator for Bard's New York City–based MAT, Justine Haemmerli set out to design a yearlong experience for MAT students that would make the most of the program's unique opportunity at 345 Brook Avenue. Following is Justine's description of a year in the life of a UTRP student.

MAT in New York City

The pedagogical rationale behind the apprenticeship cycle for the year is that students are engaged in school life from Day One even while they ease into their role in the classroom. This means increasing their hours in the public schools incrementally, so as not to overwhelm the balance between apprenticeship and graduate course work, and also honoring the relationship between the public school teachers and our program. Teachers need a little time to become accustomed to having a student teacher, and we want to make the transition as smooth as possible.

September Observation Cycle

September was a month of observations. All MAT students were paired with a teaching team at ICHS; the teachers on each team all instruct the same students, so attaching ourselves to this pre-existing structure allowed our Bard MAT students to see the same students from three perspectives: that of a student, a humanities teacher, and a math/science teacher. For the first week, MAT students shadowed a high school class for two full days a week, following them to every class and "living the school" from the students' perspective. The next week, MAT students shadowed a teacher on the same teaching team; this allowed them to see many students, including those whom they had shadowed the week prior, from the teacher's perspective. The third week had MAT students shadowing another teacher on the same team, in a different discipline. In this way MAT students saw the same students in a different context, to juxtapose class dynamics across the disciplines.

Beginning the Focus in Discipline-Based Classroom

With a well-rounded view of the ICHS students and teachers, MAT students were then paired with a teacher on a different teaching team at ICHS, within their own discipline. They worked in this teacher's classroom for five hours per week in addition to taking MAT graduate classes in the building. During this time, MAT students moved from observing small groups of students to working with them; by the end of November, some MAT students were planning and leading mini-lessons and "Do Nows" (introductory activities that warm students up to the day's academic work), while others continued to focus on facilitating small-group instruction in the ICHS classrooms. The main focus for this stage of apprenticeship was to allow MAT students to develop relationships with students, get a feel for the day-to-day life of the high school classroom, and begin to create a "teacher presence" by assisting in the planning and delivery of small pieces of instruction.

During this phase, all MAT students were observed by the New York City site coordinator, who met with them to debrief them on their role in the classroom and what else they might like to try pedagogically for the rest of their time in the fall placement classroom.

Expansion within the Brook Avenue Campus

In December, MAT students branched out to new classrooms, including those in the middle schools housed within the 345 Brook Avenue school complex. This was the MAT Program's first foray into these schools, and we were warmly welcomed by many teachers (and the administrators) in MS 224 and MS 343, who were eager to have the MAT students help out in their classrooms. We waited until the winter quarter to bring the MAT students in to the middle schools because we already had a relationship with ICHS, and it made the most sense for us to get our bearings during the first round of placements within an institution we knew well. We also wanted to solidify our relationships with the middle school principals and teachers and give them time to get to know us, before MAT students came into their classrooms.

These placements continued through March, with the hours of classroom time increasing (beginning with eight per week in December and ending with 10 per week in March) to allow for more involvement in classroom planning and co-teaching. In another new feature of these winter placements, MAT students and their public school mentors are required to meet once a week to plan lessons together, and to work toward a more formal review of the apprentice's progress. Additionally, MAT students are observed during this phase by a discipline-based faculty supervisor to assess their progress in the classroom. The focus of this phase is twofold: to give MAT students more experience in planning and delivering portions of daily lessons, and, by their being in the same class every day of the week, to give them more exposure to the weekly development and flow of a lesson.

Branching Out across the City

In March, MAT students left the Brook Avenue campus for the remainder of the year and began full-day teaching placements in schools spread across four of the five boroughs of New York City. These placements are all-day, every-day experiences in which students are urged to live the daily life of a teacher and eventually assume full instructional responsibility for at least one class every day.

Having completed the vast majority of their course work, MAT students have only one graduate course during this cycle—a weekly seminar with an MAT faculty member in the Bronx, in which they share their student teaching experiences with their classmates and discuss the triumphs and challenges of the profession. Students use the weekly seminar as a workshop for their classroom-based research project, a capstone of the program that requires them to collect and analyze student data at their school placement, toward a better understanding of student learning in their discipline.

Changes for This Year

In its pilot year, 2010–11, the Bard MAT residency program at 345 Brook Avenue had its share of growing pains, but many of its elements continue this year. The value of MAT students' taking their graduate courses within a working K-12 school building is immense, and they continue to do that. The September observation cycle continued. With growing MAT enrollment, students' fall-winter school placements are expanding beyond the building to a small cluster of neighboring schools in the South Bronx—within a limited radius, so that MAT students can still be in residence on Bard's unique public school "campus" in the South Bronx.

In addition to continuing our work in developing and maintaining strong apprenticeships, the Bard MAT Program in New York City is expanding to provide various professional development opportunities to teachers across the city. Our 2011 cohort is participating in a new First Year Program for graduates that includes field visits to their classrooms led by Justine Haemmerli, and a monthly seminar extension taught by Karen Hammerness; both of these initiatives provide ongoing support throughout the graduates' first year as teachers.

For other teachers in our community, the MAT Program is offering graduate courses for Bard credit for teachers in literature, history, and mathematics; a monthly networking night for educators and New York City–based organizations that work with teachers; writing workshops through the Bard Institute for Writing & Thinking curated to be applicable and relevant for New York City teachers and students; and access to cultural events in collaboration with partner organizations throughout the city.

A Plea for Inefficiency

By Scott Raymoure

Ninth-grade students at Paramount Bard Academy studied Gary Soto's poem "Saturday at the Canal" and then produced their own book of poems.

What is the right atmosphere for creativity?

Preferences vary, but liberty seems to be a universal. Personally, my favorite pastimes become torture if the speed and manner in which I do them are imposed and monitored for compliance. As I write this (and I love to write), I'm listening to music, drinking coffee, surfing the Internet, snacking, and just plain daydreaming. How does the work ever get done? Or, more pertinently, *where* is the creating done?

This question of creativity is central for an English teacher, if you agree that instilling the capability for original critical thinking and problem solving is a primary English Language Arts objective. However, behavior management is also a core issue in public education, which includes citizenship and conduct goals that are more restraining.

The difficulty of reconciling this tension between creativity, with the liberty it requires, and etiquette training came to a flashpoint during my Bard MAT studies when I was able to lead a short unit of instruction with my student-teaching partner, Casey Gill. We decided that our goal would be a creative writing project; the students would cement their understanding of figurative language by using it to express their unique perspectives. Day One focused on reading and analyzing "Saturday at the Canal," a poem by Mexican American writer Gary Soto. On Day Two, students would use Soto's work as a template for a poem (or song) about their life.

Day One went very well.

I will never forget our drive home after Day Two. If Casey and I had been cartoons, our heads would have been circled by orbiting stars and little chirping birdies.

The plan seemed simple: create a bubble map of the topic, convert the points into phrases using figurative elements they had studied, and organize those passages into a poem. The students would work independently with a little peer help and discussion allowed, as Casey and I roamed the room in support. It would take 60 of our 90 minutes.

First came a quiet settling in, followed by low chatter and the slow doodling of spidery circles. The rest of the class was a blur of Casey's and my darting through the din of seemingly idle social banter to pull them back to quiet, on-task writing for the few seconds we stood directly before them. It was like trying to stabilize walls of water, but we didn't pull the plug. By the end of class most of the students had worked to only about halfway to the goal. We thought we had failed.

But a strange thing happened the next day. We gave the students a 20-minute extension to finish their work and a written reflection. The result is the collection that follows, which we think is filled with poems of some wonderful creative artistry. Every student present for both days contributed, and self-assessments showed that they were in control of their connotations.

When I considered their comeback, the reason was clear: their process was the same unbridled inventive process I allow myself. Inspiration doesn't tick-tock ride the clock. Our creative writing is much more about what goes on around us and inside us when we aren't writing than about the moments in which we scratch out its results. I don't do all the "off-task" things I do to avoid the work—they are the work. The students got excited by their memories and wanted to share them, which (eventually) led to original ideas. The mind needs these alternating currents to create; it gives us continually fresh images and ideas to color our heavens. Ideas connect, and in a lightning flash you have a clever turn of phrase or a metaphor—poetry.

The moral is, distractions are necessary; you have to spend time to charge the cloud. If I want a page of creative, original writing, I can't give students 30 minutes to accomplish it simply because it takes 30 minutes to write 300 words on a page. That's a pencil race. I need to be prepared to waste a little time, and let go of the fine-tuned efficiency of classroom management (just a little) to cultivate the artistry. The result—students in touch with their creative thinking process—is well worth it.

My Life: Poetry of the Students

Produced by ninth-grade students from the Paramount Bard Academy, Delano, California, in the spring of 2011.

The Summer Town *By Mary Miranda*
the small town greets with open arms
friendly people are abundant here
the regular heat kisses the growing plants
letting them strive here
grape vines wine & twine
their way through the vineyards
giving a feeling of mind-blowing mystery
everyone is like a large family
but sometimes we have our fights
riding around you see paintings
& graffiti, showing potential artists
the polluted air suffocates & holds me back
this town is never quiet,
but this town is never loud.

PBA Is Like Life *By Oliver Young*
PBA is like life
You have the good and the bad
Sometimes it's amusing like art
Other times it's a jungle with all the kids
With the food being great and also the break
The abundance of work makes this school seem fake
But breaks could also seem short
The day after would make me want to go to resort
'Cause not talking is boulder lifting for me.
For the normal days are boring and long,
And all the work makes the day seem wrong.
At the end of the day when school's out
As I walk out the door I want to shout
Because it's Friday and school's out.

McFarland *By Diane Garcia*
McFarland is small but I wish
it had a mall.
It's like a desert in summer.
We have to go to the next town
just to buy clothes.
Nothing happens much.
We are surrounded by fields.
It's boring and calm and McFarland
is depressing when no one's around.
There are two parts of this town
a bridge separates them.
I would like to live in a better
town though
But this town is ok even if there are
really hot days. Every one knows each other
'cause it's very small.

Our Big Ole Valley *By John Andreas*
Our valley is big.
It's big and long and boring.
Our big valley with pollution
It's Big and long and dirty
Our valley is big and full of agriculture
It's big and full of greens
Our big valley has Los Angeles
It's big with cities
Our big valley has gold
It's big with gold rivers
Our big valley is a valley
I want to get out of this
Big, ag, city, gold valley with
Its dirty air.

I Live in a Pool *By Jaqueline Rojas*
I live in a pool full of red and blue.
All of these gangsters around scare me.
I can't go out without worrying.
I live in a melting pot.
It's full of hidden danger.

Everyone around try to influence us to do bad things.
They want us to do drugs and drink.
I feel like a bug who can't escape.
I'm trying to escape this town,
But I can't seem to get out.
I'm surrounded by white walls.
There's no fun, nothing to do.

Welcome to PBA *By Frankie D. Guerra*
Welcome to PBA
All the teachers know what to say
you're here for 9 hours everyday
except for Tuesday
Then you can go home and play
Small town Delano everybody say hey

After Friday I go to church and pray
Then go back to Bakersfield to enjoy the holiday
we have to wear uniform Monday thru Thursday
But on Friday we could wear whatever we want all day
Then I feel bad when I can't stay
I hang out with my friend Jay
we are just glad it is Friday

My Hometown *By Matthew Hernandez*
I live in an ocean full of red and blue sharks
When I go for a swim and come out I get a lot of marks
From the cops to the gangs
They are sometimes same

But everything isn't bad
Because we have parties and get glad.
Everything you know isn't true
Because not everyone bangs red and blue

Sweet Love Words *By Kimberly Molin*
There are words that show feelings, some words
express different thoughts some words transform
us all. (they touch the deep of our souls)
there's magic words: sweet ones simple ones but powerful
Some words have (ambrosia) flavor Someones Roses smell
and color there are words finally that bring us hope and
peace.
amongst all words however my choice goes to those
that mix innocence with a lot of passion and
So much like the word eagerly enjoy the ones that
Come from our lips is my love for my family
(It doesn't conquer all things!!)

What I Think of PBA *By George Busto*
PBA is like a home, but with students and teachers.
There, restrooms are closed roads.
People who misused them are loads.
Some studying students stood rude.

Though, that won't give me a bad mood.
Students had to spend hours like they are spending
for college.
But out of it, they are gaining more knowledge.
The classrooms look like as if it cleans itself every
now and then.

Looking at them, those are opposites of a pig pen.
Where I learn, staffs serve edible lunch.
Give it up, you'll have nothing much.
Students, some are humorous.
They make boredom less numerous.
Teachers are pleasant.
They make me and students not end up as peasants.

Earlaz *By Adilene Calderon*
I'm from Earlaz, Califas.
Straight out of the cuts.
There ain't nothing but fields.
And also good people too.
Yeah there might be good people, but there's also
gangsters too.
Either than that U can find great friends that will
always have your back.
All the time when you're with friends, U have a great
time and U always keep smiling. I won't judge U
because everybody wants to have fun when they're with
their friends. While you're kick'in it with your friends
you're wondering if you should go to the swap meet,
And get a chullo.

Delano *By Jeremy Risi*
Delano is small.
I feel like I am living in a small town compared to
Bakersfield or LA.
In Delano we have agriculture.
Agriculture is the icing on the cake in Delano.
In Delano at my home we have nice neighbors.
They make Delano like a big family.
Delano can be boring
it can be so boring that you might think it's fun.
Delano can be very unsafe.
It is best to hang out with a buddy around town.

What's Cool about PBA *By A. Jose Garcia*
What's cool about PBA is that when you get no homework
You could stay up all day.
The sports at PBA are also very cool like baseball basketball
which are fun and exciting.
What isn't great about PBA is when we get out at five.
It's almost if you have no life. Just kidding.
The classes are very long, longer than usual.
When you hang around with the friends at
School it is fun and cool.
And when we all hang out on the field
Everyone is chilling with each other.
And the teachers make everything interesting

INSTITUTE FOR writing & thinking

Applying IWT Practices in the Preparatory Classroom

By Kate Sullivan

If I respect my Preparatory students so much, why did I not, after my first IWT course, try Institute methods with them?

After taking the weeklong IWT course "Thinking through Narrative" in the summer of 2009, I reflected that I had gone into the course looking for ways to better engage students in my "low level" American literature course but had ended up applying the Institute practices almost solely in my Advanced Placement literature and composition course. I see now that this was in part due to my need to find a way back into a course (AP) that I had not taught in a number of years—a way to feel that, in a course so focused on critical reading, I was not leaving out the human student. However, I also see that taking the risk of trying Institute methods in the classroom was much easier with students who almost always succeed. We teachers of honors classes joke that no matter what we do, the students will probably do just fine on the AP exam and in college; they are smart kids.

And then there are my non-honors students, a track my school calls Preparatory (a.k.a. Prep)—students not only below the honors level but also below a level called Accelerated. The name Preparatory was given, I suppose, in order to have the students (and their parents and the community) perceive that even our lowest level is a high one, in which students prepare for college, just as they do in the nearby, revered, college preparatory schools. Of course, no one seems to know what Prep stands for, and the tracks are perceived as they usually are: "smart" kids, "regular" kids, and "problem" or "dumb" kids. I joy in having the "problem" and "dumb" kids because they are, of course, not dumb at all. While inference and fluid prose do not come easily to many of them, they are often bright, spirited, creative, and honest; they'll say, "I didn't read it" rather than memorize a Spark Notes entry on symbolism in Mrs. Dalloway. These are students I work with to convince of their intelligence and worth, students who leave my room, I think, feeling respected in a new way.

But if I respect them so much, why did I not, after my first IWT course, try Institute methods with them? I think some of the reason is similar to why I hold off so long on officially allowing the subjective into our reading (for it is there no matter what, is it not?). I need to make sure that my students can read critically. These American literature students are juniors (which means it is a year of high-stakes testing), and at the Preparatory level, many of them belong to our school's "failing" subgroups—minority, ELL, special education, according to No Child Left Behind—and their scores are watched by administration hawks. Though Institute practices certainly seem to produce authentic learning for my AP students, and for my colleagues and me during summer workshops, they and we have the basics down. Not so my Prep students. Thankfully, by going back to Bard in the summer of 2010, I had a chance to think about how to apply the workshop to my non-AP students. I heard

about the successes of my colleagues, many of whom were repeat IWT-ers, with similar students, and I left the week braver, ready to shake up my normal classroom practices.

I also had to face some of my own assumptions and prejudices. I did not think Prep students would volunteer to share their writing. I was not sure they would write enough to share. I worried that they, many of whom have behavioral disorders or ADHD, would not stay quiet during journal writing. I worried that if I allowed them much freedom in the creation of theses (as we had had in "Inquiry into Essay"), none would ever get written; these are kids who supposedly need their hands held every step of the way. But two Bard summers were enough to nudge me; two transformative summers made clear to me that the practices were proven and I just needed the guts to try them.

IWT in the Preparatory Classroom

In the 2009 "Thinking through Narrative" workshop I was introduced to "Image Explosion" and later had great success with it in my creative writing course, using "Elegy for My Innocence," a poem by Stephen Dunn. This poem is essentially about loss of innocence, which has evolved as the theme of the semester-long American literature preparatory course. As the poem is an apostrophe to an abstract noun, it proved rather difficult for teen readers, so I never even shared it with my Prep juniors. When, in the 2010 IWT's "Inquiry into Essay" we tried the "Text Explosion" exercise, a slightly more analytical version of "Image Explosion," I realized the twofold possibility of exploding the poem: if students were allowed to engage the poem through personal narrative ("Image Explosion") or risk-free objective processing (one way of applying "Text Explosion"), they would be much more likely to find their way to understanding "loss of innocence" personally and/or contextually.

And need them to understand it, I did. For a number of semesters, I had been shocked by how frequently Prep students misinterpreted "loss of innocence" or by how hard it was for them to put their understanding into words. It seems such a universal, logical concept. Still, when their final exam asked them to prove that a loss of innocence had taken place in each of the texts read during the semester, students were clearly working in uncomfortable territory, often forcing their analyses into my or a dictionary's definition. Rather than feel along with a 16-year-old protagonist's growing up, a student would grab onto my statement that losing innocence might mean realizing something and would fixate on a passage in Tim O'Brien's *The Things They Carried* containing the word *realize*. As a result, this student would overlook a character like Mary Anne, fresh from Cleveland Heights on night patrol with the Green Berets, wearing a necklace of human tongues. Instead they would write about how the character Tim O'Brien "realized" that writing saved his life, for he had been innocent to that knowledge before—technically correct, but missing the point.

As a sort of last resort, and a test of IWT practice, I decided to have my Prep students explode "Elegy for My Innocence," in hopes that rather than *learn* the meaning of "loss of innocence," they would *experience* it and thus, hopefully, internalize its meaning. This was also a chance to put my money where my mouth was, to show that I had faith in the capability of these students. Here is the poem in its entirety:

Elegy for My Innocence

You always stumbled in,
came out smelling
not quite like a rose.

Your most repeated gesture:
the blush.
You didn't know how to hide.

I do not miss you, but experience
is the guest
who only knows how to stay.

You, at least, were built to go,
which is why you can be loved.
I remember everything you craved.

Interesting, how you were diminished
by whatever you got. Sex,
knowledge, you kept going up in flames.

Each year you became
a little more dangerous,
eyes wide, the same poor reflexes

for pain. I last saw you
in Texas, 1963. No need by then
for a goodbye. Yet I've heard

that at the end of a long passage,
a lifetime, something like you exists,
terrifying and desirable,

and that no one who hasn't sinned
ever arrives. Innocence,
we could be such friends

if that were so. I'd start out now
if I didn't know
the lies told in your name.
—Stephen Dunn

It took great restraint, but I somehow kept myself from doing any explaining of the poem. I simply read the poem twice to my students and asked them to circle any word or phrase that jumped out at them because it reminded them of something, intrigued them, or confused them. I then asked them to use the chosen phrases to begin short paragraphs of their own, paragraphs that could either be personal narratives of the triggered memories or explorations of meaning. I was surprised by the number of students who asked if, instead of a paragraph, they could write a stanza of poetry, and happy when I caught myself before insisting that the usual prose format be followed. What resulted was nothing so artful as what emerged from my creative writing students, but, in the end, students got it.

In class the next day, I read the poem aloud once more, quite slowly, and invited each student to interrupt me after I had read his or her chosen phrase, to then repeat the phrase and read his or her paragraph (or stanza) in full. And here came the next surprise: though a number of students did not volunteer, the vast majority did. And when they did, the rest of the class was not only respectfully silent, but also actively listening and curious. Granted, moments of loss of innocence are usually significant and dramatic (which provides some voyeuristic pleasure), but having become jaded by infrequent homework completion at this level, I had somehow forgotten that the students actually liked to share, especially about themselves.

In this way, "Text Explosion" helped change the tone of my classroom and also helped me to know and assess students on so many levels. Some responses, such as the following, simply helped assure that students got loss of innocence:

"We could be such friends" again, and that is what I want most of all. You just left and left me in the dust. We had been inseparable for eight years and you just pushed me aside. This new friend couldn't be half the friend I was. I was always there when no one else was. When your dad came home angry my house was your safe haven. I want you to feel the pain that I feel. Step into my shoes for one day and see how big of a hole you left in my heart when you walked out.
— Sarah Peters

"You, at least, were built to go, which is why you can be loved." This phrase reminds me a lot of friends or family or even pets who left or died and you still feel love for that person. For example, when your grandparents passed away, the feeling of loss and love kicks in.
—Brenda Xelhua

"You kept going up in flames."
Every little spark destroys a small bit of me.
Pain, anger, the urge to let out,
the want to let everything go.

Flames are higher and higher,
stronger and stronger,
more urges to be burst out,
more likely to explode and let my true self out.
—Rebecca Anderson

"I last saw you" the summer of 8th grade, that awful "for sale sign" that was pounded into my yard. The fun we had, best friends for life, brothers and sisters at that. The thought of eaving the state that I only knew was the hardest thing to process through my mind. This was the day I found out I was moving to Illinois.
—Jessica Morrison

After all responses were read, I asked students to journal about and then share (more IWT in action) what the responses seemed to have in common. The threads were clear: loss, change, growth. My Prep students could articulate the poem's meaning better than the more "advanced" students in my creative writing class, and when we got to the final exam months later, this understanding seemed to stick. Most essays reflected a confident understanding of the theme.

"Text Explosion" gave me reason, right at the beginning of the semester, to praise students, to insist that they had proven their ability to tackle a difficult text by simply entering into it, by questioning it. I also was able to praise creativity (the poem response above), humor (the first excerpt below), and downright wisdom (the second excerpt below).

"I do not miss you" huge afro. Washing you five times a week was awful. I spent $10 every two weeks for shampoo and conditioner. I hated combing you everyday, especially in the morning, my dark black nappy hair.
—Dezhawn Seargent

I was innocent, but instinct takes innocence away with a sharp breath. And that night in the alley, against those four men, we came out on top. Even though my personality remains mostly unchanged, my innocence was gone. It's amazing how in perception about life. Just one event can change perception about everything. Innocence is a terrible thing to lose.
—Matt Sikora

Students saw each other's skill, and their own. Again, I had reason to praise wholeheartedly. As a result, we started our semester academically, honestly, personally. In short, we were forging a real learning community.

At the end of that day, I asked students to type up one page, due to me a couple days later, about a time when they had lost some of their innocence. This writing sample was to be their best possible work, organized and proofread, to serve as a diagnostic tool to help guide my writing instruction. No one complained about the prompt (as had happened with different prompts used in previous semesters), and most students turned something in (also a success). Before collecting this homework, I asked students to pick a sentence or two to share with the class—a chance to see if the success of "Text Explosion" had been a fluke—and was again met with active participation and respectful listening. As with "Text Explosion," not all students shared, but a classroom ethos was taking hold: I was interested in them, they were interested in each other, and the tone was one of respect.

Emboldened by the success of "Text Explosion," I approached our first essay assignment in a new way. Traditionally, I had given students an almost fill-in-the-blank for the thesis of this essay (having been told by teachers who taught the course before me that students needed this crutch). In all honesty, I was very afraid to give this up. I had offered students more freedom in the past and they seemed to feel lost and ultimately unsuccessful. But that was before IWT, and now I hoped I could use a series of journal prompts to help them find meaning.

Students were to write a group essay about a short story of their choice. All the short stories involved a young protagonist losing innocence in some way, and we had spent much time with a model story, discovering the many ways an author reinforces meaning (for example, choice of simile or imagery). I decided to allow students to focus on the meaning of their choice as long as they could prove how the author's craft achieved it. The problem: helping students to articulate meaning. These are students who can often talk about a story but not write about it, who can have a heated discussion only to stare at a blank computer screen for a 51-minute period when it comes time to focus their ideas. So I had them get out their notebooks, get in their groups, and respond independently and in writing to a series of prompts (compiled from both IWT summer workshops I've attended):

This is a story about . . .
I feel most connected to this story when . . .
I feel most disconnected to this story when . . .
This story reminds me of . . .

These prompts not only allowed students to put into words what they understood about the stories, but also encouraged them, indirectly, to address trouble spots (points of disconnect) and to acknowledge personal connections ("This story reminds me of . . . ") that might get in the way of a more analytical reading. After quiet writing time, I simply had students go around in a circle, reading (not summarizing!) their responses. Again, students were quiet at appropriate times and shared when they were supposed to. I made it clear that it was OK if they didn't feel able to respond equally to each prompt, that if their effort was honest, they could have a pass once in a while. What I tried to impress upon them, and what I think they discovered, was that with a little patience, any text can be entered; that questioning/inquiry always provides a doorway; that when you think you basically have the same idea as a peer, reading what you have written instead of providing a summary shows that usually you each have a little something new to add; that if you listen well, you do not always have to discuss each other's responses to grow your ideas.

After students shared their responses to the initial prompts, I provided another: "The main character changes from someone who . . . to someone who . . . " That day, students left class having articulated, unbeknownst to them, what we call the story's "so what?"

When we reconvened the next day, I gave them time to reread their stories, a chance to notice how the author showed the character's development. Students did not grumble; they annotated. They owned their stories. The next day, they generated original theses.

I ended the short story unit with one more IWT-inspired practice: individual reflections on the group reading and writing experience. This metacognitive process helped students to be more active in their learning as they identified their (and group members') strengths and weaknesses, indirectly making goals.

While I would love to be able to report that IWT practices remained central in my Prep classroom after this opening unit, I am not sure I can. But perhaps I do not give

myself enough credit. As I reflect right now, I realize that although I was not always consciously going back into my IWT bag of tricks, I often asked students to stop and write through a problem or to read around their written exploration of texts. I also made a strong effort to be sure inquiry was our way into *Death of a Salesman*; all discussion was a result of student questions, and not just generic discussion questions but student-identified moments of confusion, interest, emerging pattern, etc.

Still, I wish our culminating essay on the play was not simply a response to a question of my making ("Has the character of your choice reached self-actualization?"), no matter how much students got interested in the psychoanalytic lens. I am left wondering at the desired balance between student-generated and teacher-generated text-interrogation questions. I would love to get to the point with these students and, say, *The Things They Carried*, when I can ask them to notice (anything from the purposefulness of the imagery in the chapter "Speaking of Courage" to the nonchronological ordering of the chapters) and then make sense of their noticing.

What will it take to get there? Time to plan, letting go of the way things have been done, being unafraid for a project to fail.

Onward

Tomorrow I must decide on the required punishment for my student whose final exam parroted Spark Notes. I feel sick thinking about it.

I have, however, happily planned a little speech for my students. What makes me smile is knowing that rather than meeting my students with a wagging finger and disappointment, I feel ready (through writing this reflection, no doubt) to come into class as my students' cheerleader and guide, to remind them that I do not expect them to say something brand-new to the world, just something new to themselves, something that can be reworked and revised, a seed idea they can grow.

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"Elegy for My Innocence" is reprinted from *New and Selected Poems: 1974–1994* by Stephen Dunn © 1994 by Stephen Dunn. Used with permission of the publisher, W. W. Norton & Company, Inc.

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The Academic Research Project

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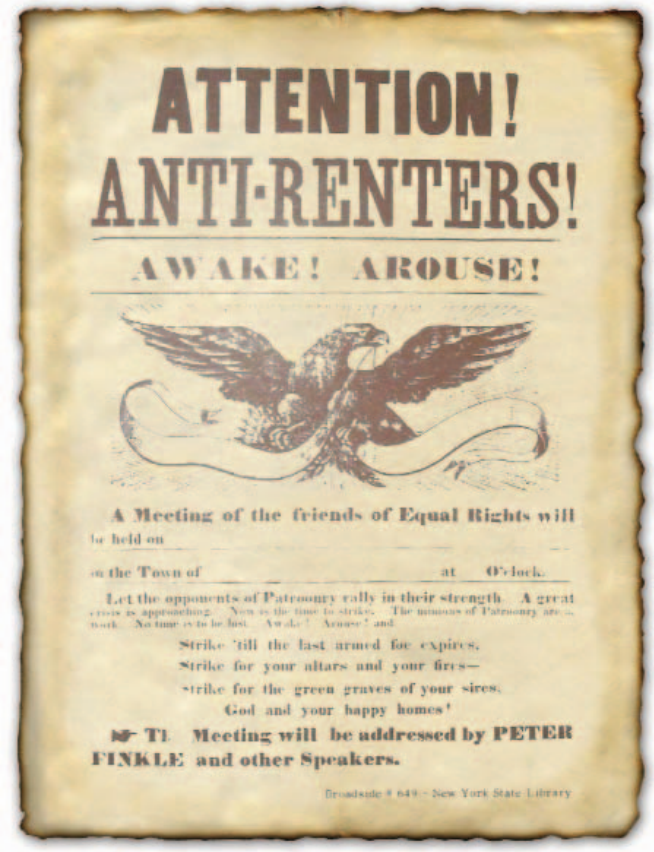
School Textbook Analysis: The Anti-Rent Era and Garraty's *The American Nation*

By John L. Ahern

No explicit reference to the anti-rent movement in New York State is made in John A. Garraty's high school textbook *The American Nation: A History of the United States*, ninth edition. The establishment of tenanted estates, Rensselaerwyck in particular, is briefly described in a section on French and Dutch settlements. The same chapter explores the history of New York State under the banner of "the middle colonies." In the next chapter, Garraty covers the effects of monarchical turmoil in England in changing policy toward the administration of the American Colonies, specifically that Charles II discouraged representative assemblies and implemented a land-grant system to provide the crown with income. The ensuing establishment of tenanted estates along the Hudson and Delaware Rivers is treated in a particularly favorable light. The text quoted below would assuredly touch off a lively debate among the authors I read in constructing my academic research project regarding the degree to which farmers on New York's tenanted estates were members of the petty bourgeoisie.

> But ordinary New Yorkers never lacked ways of becoming landowners. 100 acres could be bought in 1730 for what an unskilled worker could earn in three months. Even tenants on the manorial estates could obtain long-term leases that had most of the advantages of ownership but did not require any capital.


ATTENTION!
ANTI-RENTERS!
AWAKE! AROUSE!
A Meeting of the friends of Equal Rights will
be held on
on the Town of at O'clock.
Let the opponents of Patroonry rally in their strength. A great
cross is approaching. Now is the time to strike. The minions of Patroonry are a-
sleep. No time is to be lost. Awake! Arouse! and
Strike 'till the last armed foe expires,
Strike for your altars and your fires—
strike for the green graves of your sires,
God and your happy homes!
☞ The Meeting will be addressed by PETER
FINKLE and other Speakers.
Broadside # 649 - New York State Library

This is the last mention of manorial estates in the textbook, though prominent participants of the anti-rent era are lightly sketched later. Garraty describes James Fenimore Cooper's *Littlepage Tales* (among these, "The Redskins or Indian and Injin," deals heavily with the anti-rent era and undisputedly supports manorial landlords) as "a long series of tales of Indians and settlers that presented a vivid, if romanticized, picture of frontier life." Garraty omits the fact that Cooper's

text juxtaposes Native Americans, anti-rent "Indians," and the Indians of the Boston Tea Party. *The American Nation* contains a two-page biography of prominent Whig anti-renter Horace Greeley, but no mention of the subject matter of his body of work. Only Greeley's humble beginnings and his successful career as a writer and editor are explored.

Though New York's anti-rent era is ignored, *The American Nation* is a carefully written textbook. The secondary scholarship used to cover the mid-19th century was published in large part between the mid-1950s and late 1980s. It includes Sean Wilentz's *Chants Democratic*, Patricia Bonomi's *A Factious People*, J. P. Greene's *Peripheries and Center*, and multiple works by G. B. Nash and Edward Countryman. Charles Beard's 1913 work, *An Economic Interpretation of the Constitution,* is heavily cited and is described in historiographical terms as "having caused a veritable revolution in the thinking of historians about the motives of the founding fathers."

Nevertheless, like an "abusive government," according to Appleby, Garraty made the anti-rent era "disappear." If we are to judge Garraty by all the worthy themes he brought to the fore, this is no great crime. His text treats economic marginalization thoroughly. The omission of the anti-renters reflects an editorial choice, not historiographical censorship.

I do not think it possible to learn what Appleby calls "the full story of the American past" over the course of a high school career; this takes years of study and above all, a personal and genuine interest. I agree with Appleby's assertion that a comprehensive national history is a cultural imperative. Still, without an engaged learner, no textbook, no matter how enlightened, inclusive, or extensive, will ignite historical inquiry. I submit that though far superior to the pageantry of 19th-century historiography, *The American Nation* remains a pageant in which thousands of characters make a cameo and take a bow while the drama, tension, and continuity essential to plot are lost in the narrative.

The American Nation remains a pageant in which thousands of characters make a cameo and take a bow while the drama, tension, and continuity essential to plot are lost in the narrative.

Garraty's text displays the sensibilities of a progressive and social historian. His narrative conscientiously includes histories of the marginalized. The Native American perspective is frequently offered in images and in testimony; the economic and social roles of women throughout the various eras of American history are thoroughly addressed. Moreover, *The American Nation* closely studies the cultural, sociological, psychological, and economic aspects of slavery. The historiography of economic development from industrialization to the present pays particular attention to immigrants and other disadvantaged groups.

Despite Garraty's inclusive historiography, which reconciles what Joyce Appleby calls traditional and multicultural approaches, like any book that endeavors to study the history of the United States from the colonial era to the present, *The American Nation* is in many ways a "grand narrative." Through the careful treatment of delicate topics, Garraty's text answers Appleby's call for the complication of a simplified narrative of American nationhood. The nation is not anthropomorphized into a being with lofty purposes in the manner of 19th-century historians.

The further one gets from the center of the anti-rent drama in geographic terms, the more the topic loses relevance. However, since the anti-rent story starts in the courts of 17th-century Europe and ends with our market economy, to a New York student the anti-renters provide a narrative thread of continuity. As a student myself, I remember getting the false impression that the history of the United States skipped New York between the American Revolution and the progressive era. Manifest Destiny and westward expansion, the systematic extermination of Native Americans, and the various battles of the Civil War were firmly branded into my mind, but somehow I thought that New York reached a stasis that remained undisturbed until the present. Though I can provide no empirical evidence to support the assertion that my impressions are shared, the genuine curiosity that the topic of my research project sparks among my friends gives me pause. Anti-renters are news, at least to us. Their story can help us place the history of the United States in context.

I would prefer the organic option:
making the anti-renters characters in my classroom.

In "The People's Past: Teaching American Rural History," Peter Argersinger makes the case for the primacy of "focus of study" and "conceptualization" in the teaching of history. He argues that key historical concepts, like gemeinschaft/gesellschaft (community/society) and entrepôt/hinterland require a pedagogical presentation that makes clear students' historical context. The anti-renter's changing economic and social cultures exemplify these themes in the context of New York State. That is, for a New Yorker, the anti-rent era provides an excellent opportunity to study economic and societal changes over time, locally.

The two great historiographic virtues of the anti-rent era, vibrance and proximity, are useful to the social studies teacher in New York State. I can imagine two possible ways to teach anti-rent history, one parenthetical and one organic. The former is straightforward. If Garraty's textbook were the structural backbone of my class, I would insert the anti-renters into our study of Chapter XIII, "Toward a National Economy." I would dedicate three lessons to the topic: the first based on primary documents to study the lease in fee, the second based on a close reading of the Rensselaerwyck tenants' Declaration of Independence, and the third treating the rhetoric and violence of anti-renters by examining the depositions and court testimonies in the trial for the murder of Bud Steele. Mini-lectures and group work would strive to depict New York as part of an economic tradition with European roots, and explore discrepancies between the application of republican ideals in theory and practice.

I would prefer the organic option: making the anti-renters characters in my classroom. In addition to the three-lesson unit, my lessons would make frequent reference to anti-renters and anti-rent events at relevant points in the curriculum. My purpose would be to contextualize New York State throughout U.S. history. For example, when studying the transfer of power to the English in 1664, Dongan's land grant to Kiliaen van Rensselaer shows that the British preserved and promoted the existing Dutch elite class. Working with this readily available primary document, we could study the mentalities of both the English Crown and ambitious colonist. Later, when studying the expansion of the railroads in the 1850s, documents of the explosion of cash crops along the Albany and Schoharie Railroad could be used to examine the railroads' effects on the prosperity of New York. The anti-rent era answers both the historiographical question, "So what?" and the philosophical question, "How did we get here?" It is my hope that a dynamic study of the anti-rent era would stoke student interest in these questions and spark autonomous historical inquiry.

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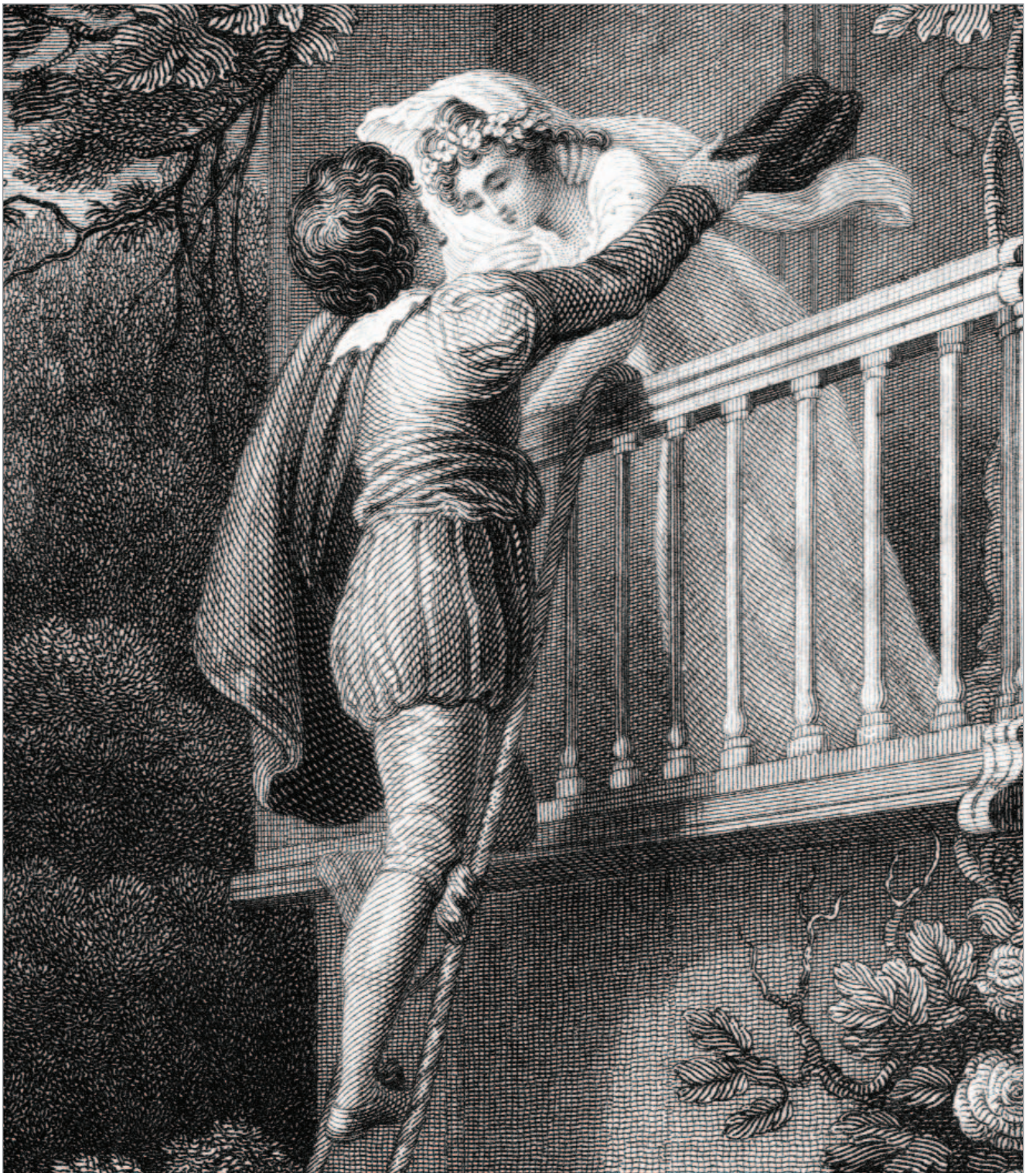
Notes from the Field

State of Doubt

By Derek Furr

One reason that Hamlet endures is that it perfectly dramatizes the state of doubt, which begins at the turning point toward adulthood; it is also the essential, disconcerting lesson of literary study.



A 10-year-old boy sat in front of me at a matinee performance of *Hamlet*. Next to him was his mother, and then came two girls—a sister and her friend, I suspect, both about 8 years old. Throughout the performance, the girls quietly consulted the plot synopsis on their program and nodded knowingly or shrugged in confusion. Between scenes, they quickly whispered opinions and assurances. Slumped in his seat, occasionally sighing, the boy seemed less engaged by Hamlet's distress. Maybe he fully understood the Prince's agony and found it tiresome, a verbose variant of the moral dilemmas all too familiar to 21st-century preadolescents. More likely his slouch was a defensive posture; he masked his confusion in ennui. He perked up, however, when Ophelia and Hamlet were together on stage. "That's his girlfriend?" he asked his mother as Hamlet began strongly encouraging Ophelia to take herself off to a convent. In his whisper was evident the hopeful tone that says, "I've got it!"

I was reminded of a similar moment nearly 20 years ago, when my wife, Caroline, and I attended a university theater production of *Hamlet*, and two 10-year-old boys, away from any adults, sat in front of us. There was no slouching but plenty of bewildered glances and shrugs and whispering during applause. At intermission, a young man came over to them—a stranger, clearly, for he asked their names.

"I'm impressed by how attentive you're being," he said. "What do you think of it?"

One of the boys replied, chuckling, "Well, I'm seeing it, but I ain't understanding it."

The young man smiled and asked the boys just to tell him what they thought they did understand.

The second boy began, tentatively, "So that girl, Ophelia, she's his girlfriend, right?"

The young man responded with an enthusiastic "yes," wisely choosing not to quibble, and not only did the boys give each other a high five, they proceeded to offer a respectable summary of the plot, without the benefit of a cheat-sheet in the program.

"I did love you once," Hamlet admits to Ophelia, who has followed her father's directions and returned Hamlet's billet-doux.

"Indeed, my lord," she responds, "you made me believe so."

The outward show of affection, like the inky cloak of melancholy and the tattered weeds of madness, can be primarily sartorial, ready-to-wear and recognizable, but opaque for all that to the soul's designs. We do need to believe that Hamlet has loved Ophelia, that he has an emotional breadth that encompasses romantic love; he is considerably older than she and of an age to commit to her. But his present absorption in his parents' shocking affairs leaves insufficient space for romance, except insofar as it contributes to his reluctant project of analysis, detection, and retribution. Like Ophelia, and despite our vantage point on Hamlet's psyche, we're uncertain whether "I did love you once" implies that it's over.

For Hamlet and Ophelia's attachment is, at best, disrupted, just as all the verities of human relationship have been called into question in the play. "Is she his girlfriend?" a boy asks, hopefully but tentatively, because he perceives that the answer may not be simple, even if he cannot articulate why. One reason that *Hamlet* endures is that it perfectly dramatizes the state of doubt, which begins at the turning point toward adulthood; it is also the essential, disconcerting lesson of literary study.

In a short class I taught recently to a group of adolescent actors, we studied the central role of the question in *Hamlet*. First, we simply collected all of the questions in Scene One and sorted them. Which could be readily answered? Which could not? The murky midnight watch is a scene of uncertainty, and uncertainty breeds suspicion and anxiety. We then turned our attention to the love letters scene, and I asked small groups of actors to run the lines and list the questions that Hamlet and Ophelia ask—sometimes literally, but often in the bemused or frustrated nature of their statements. One way that the dramatic tension in *Hamlet* can be construed is that the younger generation (Hamlet, Ophelia, Laertes) confronts the failings of the older—its self-interest and prevarication, its dubious pleas for forgiveness, its flawed, grimy humanity. The result is not merely adolescent disillusionment with adults, though it is partly that. Hamlet recoils and Ophelia declines because they see what they may become.

Interestingly, after several months of rehearsal, the young troupe gave a moving performance in which there was little doubt that Hamlet and Ophelia were in love, if under duress. For a teenager, the sincerity of young romance must be indubitable, a trusty preserver when the ship of state is going down. That's perhaps closer to *Romeo and Juliet* than *Hamlet*, and it's no coincidence that the troupe had played the tale of the "star-cross'd" lovers during the previous summer. Maybe they were playing variations on it in their own young lives.

Dion croons over the Belmonts, "Each night I ask the stars up above / Why must I be a teenager in love?" When my nephew turned 14, he went on his first date. That, at least, is what he and his junior-high friends called gathering as a small, co-ed group of couples to see a movie. They depended on their parents to drive them, and my brother was drafted to act as chauffeur and chaperone. A good soul and honest, my nephew asked his dad if it would be okay, provided the occasion presented itself, for him to put his arm around his date. My brother has an enviably amicable relationship with his teenage son, and a gift for the quick, light-hearted, and ironic response, but the question brought him up short.

"Do you remember when we were 14?" he asked me. "Things just weren't this advanced. You got a girlfriend by checking the 'yes' box in a love note, and then the only thing that changed was sometimes you might say, 'That girl over there is my girlfriend.'"

I could commiserate because my 8-year-old frequently reported who was "going out" with whom in Grade Three. Holding hands on the playground was as common as playing kickball, though the former needed to go unnoticed by the playground monitors.

In my high school, at the buckle of the Bible belt in the early Reagan era, there was an ordinance against "public displays of affection," which was school board argot for such manifestations of hormonal overload as holding hands or kissing in plain sight. I suspect that the intent of the rule was to encourage sobriety and repression; after all, can your mind be on algebra if your hands are on Angie? Be that as it may, every teenager duly noted that being "affectionate"—let the scare quotes signify a wink and a nudge—wasn't forbidden, at least not by the letter of the law. We were just instructed to keep it to ourselves, on what is now called the DL, or so I'm advised by the younger set. Love blossomed in the dark, dusty spaces between school buses and under bleachers and in the otherwise forbidding crowds around lockers between classes. For a 16-year-old, the three minutes from bell to bell could generate a charge sufficient to light the next hour in English, where the text could easily be *Romeo and Juliet*, standard U.S. high school fare for over a century.

Let us imagine that the scene is the greatest stolen moment of young romance in the language. Recall that Romeo falls in love with Juliet at first sight at the Capulets' masquerade ball. Oblivious to having been revealed to Capulet by Tybalt, Romeo quickly makes his way to Juliet and the two are, within seconds, holding hands. Students of the Bard will surely point out to my brother and me that Juliet is 14.

Romeo
If I profane with my unworthiest hand
This holy shrine, the gentle sin is this;
My lips, two blushing pilgrims, ready stand
To smooth that rough touch with a tender kiss.

Juliet
Good pilgrim, you do wrong your hand too much,
Which mannerly devotion shows in this;
For saints have hands that pilgrims' hands do touch,
And palm to palm is holy palmers' kiss.

Romeo
Have not saints lips, and holy palmers too?

Juliet
Ay, pilgrim, lips that they must use in prayer.

Romeo
O, then, dear saint, let lips do what hands do!
They pray; grant thou, lest faith turn to despair.

Juliet
Saints do not move, though grant for prayers' sake.

Romeo
Then move not while my prayer's effect I take.
Thus from my lips, by thine my sin is purged. [kisses her]

Juliet
Then have my lips the sin that they have took.

Romeo
Sin from my lips? O trespass sweetly urged!
Give me my sin again. [kisses her]

Juliet
You kiss by th' book.

You pause the video and flick on the lights. Dion lifts his head from his desk and asks, "So that one is her boyfriend, right? I mean, I'm hearing it, but I ain't understanding it." To which you reply, "Maybe you understand more than you think." And so the classroom discussion begins.

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