

The English Pub: ACTELA Newsletter

Arkansas Council of Teachers of English and Language Arts



Letter from the President

ACTELA Board members were recently asked to consider the following writing prompt:

Assembling and sharing with others is an important aspect of professional growth and development. What are you most eagerly anticipating about NCTE this year, if you are going, or where else will you seek unity of purpose and exploration of ideas?

Some of their answers are highlighted on page two. Let us know if you have additional ideas about opportunities to gather and share.

Dear ACTELA Members,

I hope you all are energized and ready to begin the 2017-18 school year!

I spent my summer working on course design and professional development, and even enjoyed our area lakes and attractions. Past president Dixie Keyes and I went to an affiliate meeting in Atlanta where we learned more about NCTE and collaborating with affiliates from all over the country.



In order to share your ideas, I need your answers to some questions: What is the biggest issue for ELA teachers in Arkansas? What can ACTELA do to assist with this problem? What would you like to see in our newsletter? To learn about at

ACC? I look forward to your responses and wish you a wonderful school year!

Cindy Green, ACTELA President

cindy.green@virtualarkansas.org

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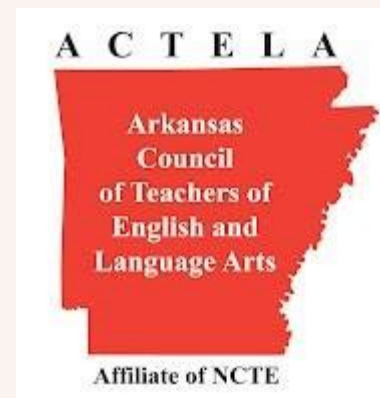
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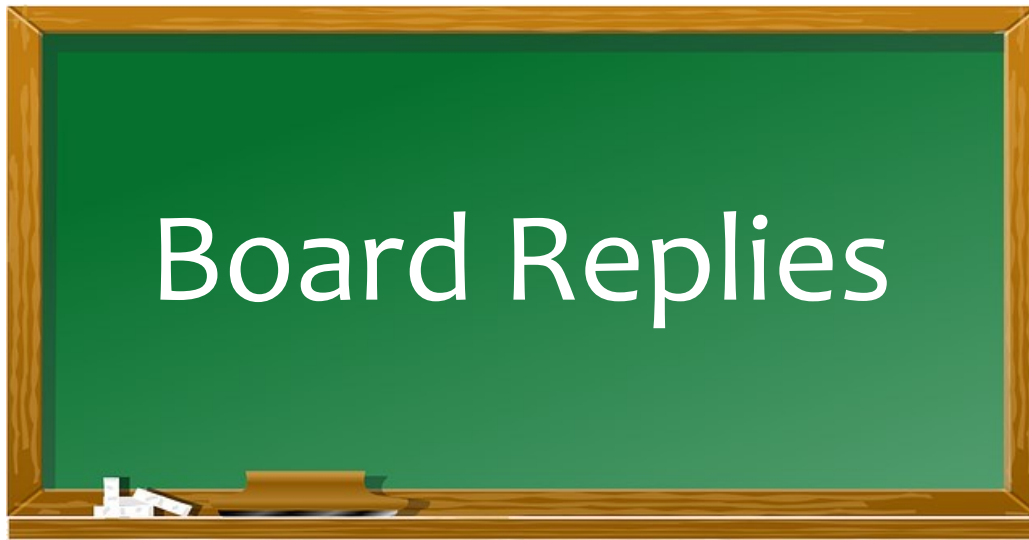
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Arkansas Council of Teachers of
English Language Arts





- ⇒ As always, I love the opportunity to meet and learn from YA authors at NCTE. The connections between works of fiction and how we meet the real world needs of students are so important, and the works of these writers allow us to provide students with both windows into the experiences of others and mirrors reflecting their own experiences. In addition to attending conferences like NCTE to grow professionally, I also find that I continue to grow by connecting with my PLN on Twitter. The plethora of resources that I find within this global community helps me to renew my commitment to professional growth continually. *Jessica Herring*
- ⇒ I am not sure about attending NCTE just yet, but I hope to be able to attend in November. This summer I have been really perusing resources through NCTE. This was something I had not really utilized in the past. NCTE just launched a digital close reading program, and I have signed up for that and created a digital classroom; I'm excited about using it with my students! The program is called Amplify--this is the description of the program from NCTE: **Introducing Amplify Close Reading, an interactive graphic novel that teaches close reading skills in a creative, differentiated, and highly rigorous way. In the context of an exciting dystopian adventure, students learn to analyze complex texts, focusing on key close reading skills such as responding to text-dependent questions and unpacking the ways authors persuade and convey meaning.** There are so many valuable and diverse resources provided by NCTE, more than I could use and something for everyone. I would encourage others to look at what is available and use what NCTE provides for teachers. *Cindy Green*
- ⇒ Unfortunately, I will not be attending NCTE this year. However, I will still be collaborating and sharing ideas here at home. I always look forward to the Arkansas Curriculum Conference, as that is where we can hear about what is happening around the state and in our K-12 schools, as well as our higher ed institutions. Along with attending the ACC, I am looking forward to starting a new year at UCA. We have had some shifts in leadership and this will be a great year to dive into new ideas and visions for our department and our programs. We often forget that some of the best ideas come from down the hall or from the office next door. Collaborating with my

peers is something that I look forward to each and every year! So, to those going to NCTE, I hope you have a fantastic time! For those of you sticking around the state, reach out to your peers, administrators, and others who share your passions. *Sunny Styles-Foster*

⇒ Attending NCTE has all the thrill of a successful family reunion with none of the baggage of genetic relation. At NCTE thousands gather excited about the ideas and challenges and rewards familiar to ELA teachers. Every elevator, every hallway, each restaurant, all public restrooms echo with conversations about students and lessons and policies and research ideas and tools directly relevant to our lifework. A conversation with any stranger can begin with “Where [or what level] do you teach?” The result is a new friend. The convention is a vast network of support instinctively aware of the importance of the work we do busily encouraging one another. What excites me most is the motivation to be a more informed, more thoughtful, more reflective teacher which I always find at the annual convention. I return inspired to be a better teacher, and my students reap the rewards. I find similar motivation in cross-disciplinary collaboration. When I work with colleagues in other fields, I remind myself of the fundamental necessity of literacy to every aspect of education. Students with strong reading and composing skills are good critical thinkers, curious learners, and capable researchers in any field of study they undertake. It would be a dull and dysfunctional world if everyone were an English teacher, but a successful ELA teacher’s students are humane and thoughtful scholars. Working with librarians, education faculty, public school teachers, and science instructors reminds me of how universal our constructs and tools are. When we find ways of reinforcing and echoing

**Be sure to read these blog posts
authored by our members, and
leave a comment to cheer us on:**

<http://blogs.ncte.org/index.php/2016/07/portrait-ncte-state-affiliate/>
<http://blogs.ncte.org/index.php/2017/02/teaching-dream-diversity-arkansas/>

one another's lessons, our students master their lessons quickly, and I am empowered to teach the best I know with all my heart. *Kay Walter*

- ⇒ NCTE has been a blessing in my life as an educator. Growing up, I always wanted to be a teacher. While attending college, traveling and attending a variety of conferences to enhance my skills as an educator seemed like a dream that would never come. At the NCTE conventions, I look forward to meeting friends, attending some wonderful sessions, and getting a lot of free stuff, but I'm sad to say I won't be attending this year. I have been asked to attend the Early Childhood conference in Atlanta, GA and present research I did in my graduate course concerning male involvement. NCTE is AWESOME! Being part of this group gave me the privilege of flying for the first time and traveling to places I have never been before. NCTE, thanks for enhancing my learning and making me become a better teacher for my students. With your help I change lives! *Brycial Williams*
- ⇒ I am most looking forward to seeing the session with Penny Kittle, Kelly Gallagher, and Nancy Atwell at NCTE. I have used their texts over the past decade, but it is so powerful to hear them speak of their work and how that translates to their classrooms. These aren't authors who live on the periphery and create professional texts based on great theories; these are current educators who spend their time *in the classroom* with students on a day-to-day basis. The work these educators bring to the audiences are authentic, practical, and effective. Who could ask for anything more? *Dawn Bessee*



What about YOU?

We want to hear your responses too! What do you love most about ACTELA and NCTE? What groups provide you with support and inspiration? Share your answers by sending them to our newsletter editor: walter@uamont.edu

LOOKING FORWARD TO NCTE 2017

The theme for NCTE 2017 is **Teaching Our Students Today, Tomorrow, Forever: Recapturing Our Voices, Our Agency, Our Mission.**

You can find more information here:

[http://
www.ncte.org/
annual](http://www.ncte.org/annual)

contact us if you want to ride. We are all looking forward to the best NCTE meeting ever. Don't miss the opportunity for a wonderful and enriching professional experience.

Anyone interested in ride sharing, contact your newsletter editor for opportunities to connect with others: walter@uamont.edu

ARKANSAS IN ST. LOUIS

Several ACTELA members will be presenting sessions at NCTE in St. Louis, and ACTELA is receiving affiliate awards for Newsletter of Excellence and Website of Excellence. Because the convention is close to home this year, the cost of travel will be minimal. Plane tickets from Jonesboro are available from \$65 roundtrip. Make plans to join us! UCA will take a school van again, so



acc 2017

ACTELA invites a featured author to address our conference each year. Past authors who have spoken at ACC include Matthew Quick, Sonia Gensler, Crystal Allen, Mike Mullin, and Christopher Paul Curtis. This year's conference will feature a writer from Arkansas, **Bryan Borland**.

Bryan Borland is founding publisher of Sibling Rivalry Press, an independent publishing house based in Little Rock that has been honored by *Library Journal*, *Poets & Writers Magazine*, the American Library Association, and the Library of Congress. He is author of three collections of poetry, *My Life as Adam*, *Less Fortunate Pirates*, and, most recently, *DIG*, which was named both a Stonewall Honor Book in Literature by the American Library Association and a finalist for the Lambda Literary Award in Gay Poetry. He is a Lambda Literary Fellow and winner of the Judith A. Markowitz Emerging Writer Award. For more information about Bryan Borland and his company, visit www.bryanborland.com.

Bryan Borland will deliver the keynote address at ACTELA's Luncheon: "The Power of Poetry: From Rural Arkansas to the Library of Congress" in which he will discuss his journey from Monticello High School to the Rare Book and Special Collections Vault of the Library of Congress, where any book he writes, edits, or publishes is housed for perpetuity. In his breakout session, "Poetry Isn't Dead: Getting Students Excited About Poetry" Borland celebrates the current state of American Poetry and gives tips to energize the next generation of poets.

Get your tickets for the ACTELA Luncheon when you register for ACC! They come in limited supply, and you will want an opportunity to take part in our business meeting. Join us for ACC 2017 at the Little Rock Marriott and Statehouse Convention Center on 2-3 November.

- ◇ Our ACTELA Preservice members will be presenting Roundtable discussions of their research. Come see what the next generation of English and Language Arts teachers are excited about and offer your input.
- ◇ Board Members will be facilitating another installment of the annual Writeathon. Come create with us!
- ◇ We'll be discussing options for future regional meetings. Voice your opinions.
- ◇ The ACTELA table will have free tickets for the Butler Center Reception. Get one so you can join the party.

Find more information about ACC 2017 here:

http://arkansascurriculumconference.pbworks.com/w/page/79024613/Arkansas_Curriculum_Conference

Travel Seminar to Venice

Graduate or **Undergraduate** Credit in English Available
through **University of Arkansas at Monticello**

Itinerary for Spring Break 2018

March 17 to 26

- 17th flight begins from Little Rock to Venice
- 18th arrive Venice and travel to lodgings <https://www.hihostels.com/hostels/venice-venezia>
- 19th tour **Basilica di San Marco**
- 20th tour Ruskin Exhibition at **Palazzo Ducale**
- 21st day of rest and reflection
- 22nd tour **Scuola di San Giorgio degli Schiavoni**
- 23rd tour **Gallerie dell'Accademia di Venezia**
- 24th meet with representatives from **Guild of St George** for lesson in John Ruskin
- 25th return to Venice airport, overnight flight to USA
- 26th travel to Arkansas

For enrollment information, contact the instructor at walter@uamont.edu

Have you ever wanted to study literature in Europe? It's time to make plans for the travel seminar scheduled for March 2018. If you have a passport and are interested, email the instructor: walter@uamont.edu to learn about the hybrid seminar on Venetian Influences on Victorian Literature which will be offered through the **University of Arkansas at Monticello**. If you don't have a passport yet, now is the time to apply for one so you aren't left behind. Contact the instructor for further information: walter@uamont.edu

Ready, Set



When does literacy begin? In those early days when letters first start to make words? Before then in kindergarten or preschool when we learn to hear and tell stories? Sooner than that when we first learn to name our realizations and desires? Earlier still when our receptive vocabulary encourages the vocalization of our needs? Even earlier yet when in-utero our mother's voice becomes familiar to our growing awareness and the songs she sings in private become our lullabies?



A Life Rich in Literacy Begins Early.

by Dr. Kay J. Walter

University of Arkansas at Monticello

How soon do we recognize brightness in a child's mind and feed a developing hunger to know more? The sooner the better! Lifelong learning can begin with infant stimulation, and a life of literacy begun well grows strong. I often declare to my students that university struggles with *The Wasteland* can be traced to childhood inexperience with *Old Possums Book of Practical Cats*. Canonical writers write for children too, and while modern works offer young lessons in diversity and exploration of contemporary social concerns, much can be learned from Browning's story of the Pied Piper of Hamelin Town. We should enrich reading of classic texts rather than attempting to supplant them.

But how can we lay a strong foundation for young learners which will yield a lifelong fascination with literacy? Is there an age when a young mind will benefit optimally from exposure to new and complex ideas? When Adam Clemons first went with me to Europe, he was in his mid-20s. The next year we went back and took his girlfriend with us. She was younger and came home his fiancée. Now, both are in graduate programs studying for terminal degrees. They have been married seven years. This summer they went to England with me again, and we took along their first son, seven-month-old August.

Some of our friends thought we were crazy:



“He’s too young to travel.”

“He won’t remember the trip.”

“He’ll spoil your fun.”

“It’s too much trouble to go abroad with a baby.”

“You won’t be able to take him where you want to go.”

This advice was, no doubt, well intentioned, but it was misguided. We had a wonderful trip, and no one enjoyed it more than little August. He charmed crowds everywhere we went, found himself constantly the center of attention, giggled in his dreams, and flew for free.

Will he remember the trip? Probably not. Will the journey have value in his developing literacy? Absolutely! It becomes part of the family legend and will be a source of pride for the lad. He will have photos to help him tell the tale, and he will know and grow surrounded by the assurance that literacy matters—early and always.

Consider—which odds would you rather bet on—that a child kept close to home will grow up well educated or that little August will learn to love to read? The deck is stacked here.

August’s parents are now settling into new jobs. His father is the new African and African-American Studies Librarian at Berkeley, and his mother is a nurse at Berkeley’s hospital. He has very good odds of becoming an early seeker of wisdom.

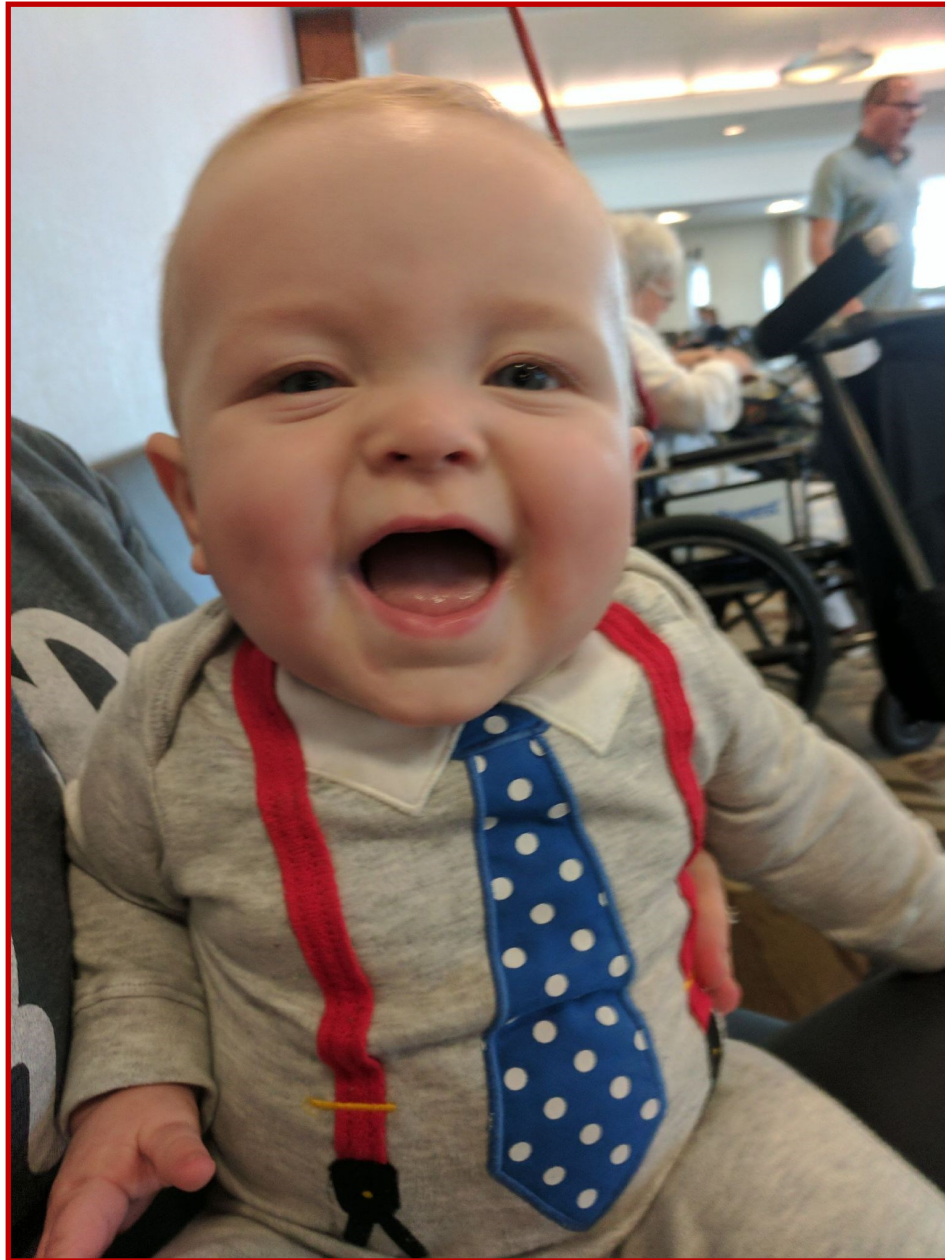
Little August will grow up with tales of visits to the Lake District home of John Ruskin, to Ruskin’s *alma mater* in Oxford, to Rudyard Kipling’s home in Sussex, to the coast once invaded by the Norman conquerors whose arrival shaped our modern English tongue, to the Scottish Borders home of Sir Walter Scott nearby the ancient abbey ruins.



August watches his daddy explore a library dedicated to John Ruskin.

August has been to visit all these places, and we have the pictures to prove it.

We hope to go again, before he grows old enough to require separate airfare, but I would like to take him regularly, to measure his growth by how he fills Ruskin's Seat in the Brantwood gardens. It will be a joy to watch him develop a life of literacy, and I will bet he does. It's never too soon to begin a life of learning. August is well on his way and growing fast!



August Clemons takes airport waits in stride. He believes international travel is fun!

If, unlike August, you have yet to enjoy your first trip to Europe, you'll want to make note of the class being offered for graduate credit over spring break. Venice could be your beginning! See page seven for details.

Arkansas Anthology 2017

ACTELA is proud to announce the publication of *Arkansas Anthology 2017*. This issue is completely interactive and also available as a downloadable pdf here:

http://actela.weebly.com/uploads/2/4/7/4/24748280/2017_arkansas_anthology.pdf

Past issues of *Arkansas Anthology* are available online as pdf files under the INITIATIVES tab on our website here:

<http://actela.weebly.com/arkansas-anthology.html>

The call for submissions for *Arkansas Anthology 2018* is available here:

http://actela.weebly.com/uploads/2/4/7/4/24748280/call_for_submissions.jpg

Contact Aaron Hall for further information about access or submissions.

ARAnthology@gmail.com

AEJ

Turning the Digital Page

Submissions are now undergoing final reviews for AEJ Volume 3.1. The issue theme is Turning the Page. If you have ideas you want to propose for future AEJ themes, share them with our journal editor, Janine Chitty

ACTELA123@gmail.com

The current issue of AEJ is available online here:

<http://arkansas-english-journal.weebly.com/current-aej-issue.html>

The call for manuscripts for upcoming issues is available here:

<http://arkansas-english-journal.weebly.com/call-for-manuscript-submission.html>

You can support our journal by sending us your scholarship and encouraging your friends and colleagues to submit theirs for review too.

ANNOUNCEMENTS, AWARDS, NEWS, AND NOTES

- ◆ **Dr. Janine Chitty** has been promoted to Associate Professor at UAFS. Hurrah, Janine!
- ◆ **Dr. Kay Walter** is beginning her first school year as a Full Professor. Can we say “sabbatical request”?
- ◆ **Dr. Kay Walter** is the author of a literacy link! An article she recently co-authored begins on page twenty here: <https://arlib.org/resources/journal/Summer2017/ArkansasLibrariesSummer2017.pdf>
- ◆ Another recent publication co-authored by **Dr. Kay Walter** and Kathy Davis will be available in the upcoming issue of *AEJ*. Well done, Scholars!
- ◆ The upcoming issue of *AEJ* also includes a column authored by **Dr. Kay Walter**. You’ve been busy!
- ◆ A review of *All Great Art is Praise: Art and Religion in John Ruskin* by Aidan Nichols, OP authored by **Dr. Kay Walter** is forthcoming in *The Companion*. Be on the lookout for its appearance here! <http://www.guildofstgeorge.org.uk/shop/journal-publications/>
- ◆ **Dr. Jeff Wittingham** is beginning his first year with a new title at UCA—Full Professor!
- ◆ *The English Pub: ACTELA Newsletter* has been awarded an NCTE Newsletter of Excellence Award. Congratulations to our editor, **Dr. Kay Walter**, and hurrah for us!
- ◆ **Holly McDonald** is starting a new position at Monticello High School as teacher of speech and forensics. All our best wishes as you explore the interdisciplinary facets of English in persuasive and oral communication!
- ◆ **Brycial Williams** opened a summer Learning Academy to help students excel in literacy. What an visionary!
- ◆ ACTELA’s website, overseen by webmaster **Tyler McBride**, has been awarded a 2017 Website of Excellence Award. Well done, webmaster, Hip, Hip, Hooray!
- ◆ Shout out for our newest student member, **Caleb Hayes**. Welcome, Scholar!

- ◆ **Dr. Kay Walter** has been elected as Secretary of her local quilting club, Town and Country Quilters EHC. Write on!
- ◆ **Sunny Styles-Foster** will be the new MAT program coordinator and MAT field coordinator at UCA. We wish you our best!
- ◆ **Britney Andrews** got married. ACTELA sends best wishes for a long and happy future to the couple!
- ◆ **Cindy Green** and **Dixie Keyes** were co-presenters at an affiliate leadership meeting in Atlanta where they shared our journey to create the journal, *AEJ*. We are proud you have good reasons to brag!
- ◆ **Dixie Keyes** was co-facilitator with an educator from Georgia for a session about Multicultural Programming. Are you aiming to spread our network of collaborators? Great idea!
- ◆ **Dixie Keyes** is co-editor of a new book. *Crossroads of the Classroom: Narrative Intersections of Teacher Knowledge and Subject Matter* is available here: <https://www.amazon.in/Crossroads-Classroom-Narrative-Intersections-Knowledge-ebook/dp/B01MUDN1SA>
- ◆ **Melinda Francis** graduates this month with a specialist degree in Educational Leadership from UCA. Congratulations, Graduate! Do



you have pictures to share with us? We want to see you in your regalia!

- ◆ **ACTELA** has been awarded an NCTE Kent D. Williamson Affiliate Membership Award for increasing its membership by more than 25.5% from 2016 to 2017. Together we are mighty. Go us!



Students from the Learning Academy started by board member Brycial Williams proudly display their credentials of completion. Brycial has promised to write an article for the next newsletter to share with us this summer adventure, so be on the lookout for more news and photos from Brycial!

History in Our Own Backyard

by Holly McDonald, Monticello High School

The concept of history as a present reality wasn't foreign to me. I grew up on a farm in Desha County, Arkansas. About two or three farms down from ours, there was a lonely cemetery in the middle of a field. A smoke stack could be seen from the church we went to every Sunday and Wednesday. These were the visible relics of my backyard history.

In December of 1941, Japan bombed Pearl Harbor, Hawaii. This led to a fear of Japanese people.

“Are they spies?”

“Are they loyal to America or Japan?”

“President or Emperor?”

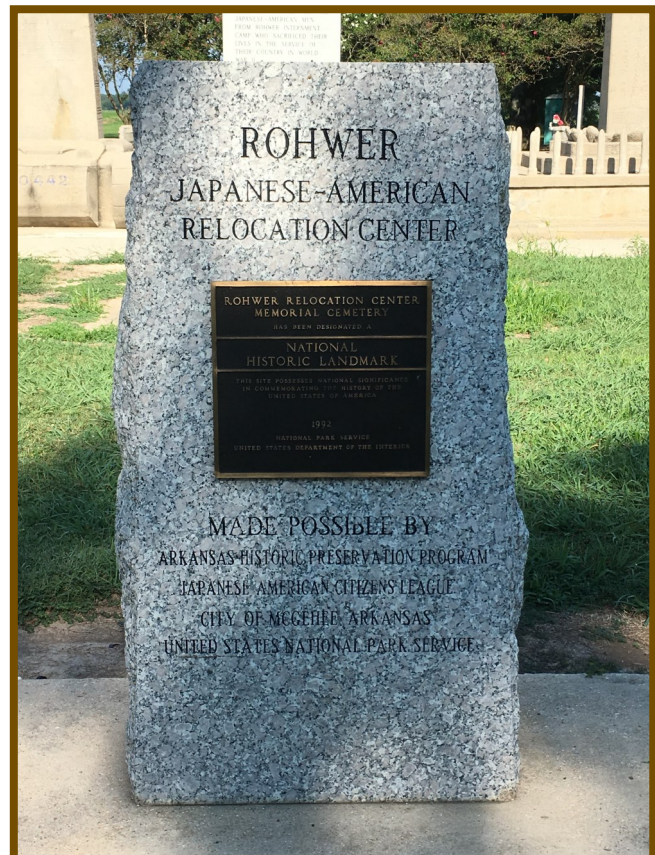
Two words were whispered and echoed across our country: YELLOW PERIL.

Due to the alleged severity of the threat of people of Japanese ancestry, President Franklin D. Roosevelt signed Executive Order 9066. This order allowed for the government to set up military zones, and to intern people of German, Japanese, and Italian descent.

There were ten detention camps set up in the United States; two of these camps were in Arkansas. One camp was in Jerome, Drew County and the other was in Rohwer, Desha County.

My family has been in Desha County for quite some time. I can remember Nana, my grandmother, telling me that she remembered the Japanese people getting off the train to go to their Internment camp. My mom and aunt told me they went to the cemetery after church as a picnic spot. My great-grandparents' house was once part of the Internment camp; they bought it when the camp disbanded and moved to its current location.

I followed in the family tradition of



This stone memorial marks the dedication of the Rohwer Japanese-American Relocation Camp.



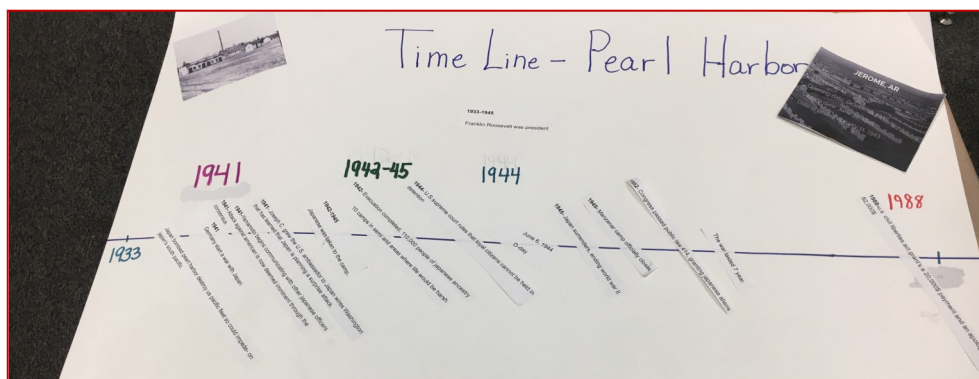
This shadow box illustrates a student's design of living quarters at the Rohwer Camp.

becoming a teacher; it is something I am born to do. I wanted to share my passion with my students. Last year I taught English at Star City High School in the southeast part of our state. I asked, this last summer, to attend a workshop put on by the World War II Japanese American Internment Museum in McGehee. I was able to attend this workshop and took so much away from it to share with my students. I learned things from this workshop that didn't honestly cross my mind as a child. The workshop was the foundation for a unit in the classes I taught. I developed lessons in "History in Your Own Backyard."

We began with a question: "Is it okay for the government to remove or relocate people for the perceived safety of the nation?" Students were eager to

puzzle over the idea. I often use open ended questions to inspire serious consideration of a new unit idea. Most of the students were very responsive and gave reasons for both why it might be and why it was not okay. I began to explain that this happened to people of Japanese descent during World War II. They didn't realize there were Arkansas ties to this historical event. They were amazed that their families and neighbors actually lived through such history.

We were able to take a look at historical non-fiction documents like Executive Order 9066 and Evacuation Order No. 19 that allowed the WRA to set up camps for relocating people of Japanese descent. They



This student project provides a timeline of the Pearl Harbor Attack.

came from their homes across the nation to a remote place like Arkansas. Students couldn't believe that this happened so close to home.

We read the young adult novel *When the Emperor was Divine* by Julie Otsuka. This novel showed students a real-life depiction of life in the camps from a child and pre-teen perspective. They were captivated. They didn't understand how history could seem so real before they read this novel.

When the time came for a project, students were excited to demonstrate what they learned. We broke the class project into groups: timeline, model, diagram of a room, paper, and letter exchanges. The students' engagement in the assignment was obvious, and they wanted to "show what they know."

As a class we decided to present our findings to a wider audience. We sent invitations to our building principals, assistant superintendent, and superintendent. These administrators formed a professional audience for the student presentations. They were also able to explain each aspect of their learning fully. My co-teacher and I made Japanese food for the students. We made a normal Japanese dish and then a dish that they would have eaten in the Internment Camp: Weenie Royale. The traditional meal was well received, but the Weenie Royale wasn't a class favorite.

My desire was to take my students to the place where my love for this unit started, in Rohwer, but it wasn't to be. The funding wasn't available to take the students from our school to the McGehee museum and then to visit the cemetery.

Since this time, I have joined ACTELA and learned about Linda Arnold Mini-grants. The next time my students are this thrilled by and absorbed in investigating the unit we are learning, I will be ready to reward them with a field trip to visit the history in their own backyard.



An instructional sign at Rohwer provides historical details for visitors.

Global Perspective

Our wider view of literacy endeavors for this issue is provided by a scholar from Texas A&M. **Micah Waltz** is a graduate student in the Biomedical Sciences Program at the vet school with a focus in epidemiology, an instructor of biomedical sciences undergraduates, and a travelling teacher in the Study Abroad program TAMU hosts in Bonn, Germany. I met Micah at Idaho State University when he was a teenager whose varied interests led us to work together on a performance of Shakespeare's *Twelfth Night*. His scientific studies in Zoology, Physiology, and Neuroscience coupled with his current interest in learning methodology and critical thinking prepare him to train upper-level Aggies to write for the sciences and offer him the opportunity for international travel. Micah says "There are more similarities than differences in our teaching. Students everywhere struggle at learning to write proficiently, and we must all work together to help them master the skills of effective communication." Watching scholars like Micah grow into professional success stories is a priceless reward of teaching ELA. **Dr. Kay Walter**

A Reflection on Language During a Study Abroad

by Micah J. Waltz

Texas A&M University

As I sat in the small lobby of a hotel in Berlin, waiting for a university student to talk to me about her paper, I considered why writing a single paper for a six-week course was difficult. The students knew on the first day of class that they would have to write a paper to pass the class. In every lecture I emphasized how the day's materials was necessary for their paper. During every excursion, the students and I talked about how the trip illustrated a point they needed to reflect upon as they wrote their paper.

We had arrived in Frankfurt, Germany five weeks earlier. Our coordinator's directions guided us to a meeting location in the airport—clearly marked in English. We were

met by English-speaking college students who were employed by the company our study abroad office partnered with. It's a good thing we had help on hand because we were about to face many obstacles to success which grew out of cultural naïveté.

The first cultural barrier arose while walking to the bus that would take us from Frankfurt to our home-base in Bonn. My students all claimed



This sign in Bonn announces the birthplace of Beethoven.

they had packed light, but one student's roller bag was as large as she was! As we walked across the cobblestones, thumps and bangs, punctuated by occasional profanity, highlighted a fundamental truth.

We were not in America anymore. The first of many assumptions students had made became apparent: sidewalks and roads were not smooth, continuous pavement the way they are in American cities. We were truly ABROAD.

After we made it to Bonn and settled the students with their host families, classes began. My own first assumption struck from the shadows. Our classroom's projector did not have the right adaptor for my device. It also did not have speakers. I had anticipated technological infrastructure equal to the classrooms I knew in Texas. This was clearly a mistake, and I had a quick review lesson in how to monitor and adjust. Slowly I began to recognize cultural assumptions my students struggled to overcome and was able to help them.

1. They expected signs to be posted with both the native language and English.

In the USA we are accustomed to dual-language guidance. We commonly overlook Spanish or French words to find the English versions of instructions, but in Germany we needed to understand German. We all made naïve assumptions. Through the first week, students came to class late because they had missed a bus or train. At first, this was a language barrier. Students went to the wrong platform to catch their bus or accidentally got on a train going in the opposite direction.

We approached this problem with laughter, always emphasizing the importance of student safety first.

The initial shock to navigating a foreign city soon faded away. We all became familiar with the transportation systems and how to use them to get to a correct destination. This led directly to uncovering a second assumption that students came with.

2. Approximately on time does not mean being on time.

In the beginning, students nervously started early to allow for errors, but after the students became comfortable with the transportation system, they stopped budgeting extra time for making mistakes. This led to their developing an important social awareness. If they were running up to a bus as it pulled away from a bus stop or ran onto a platform as the train doors were closing, the bus or train would leave without them. Sometimes the lines they were using ran once an hour. This was shocking and difficult—they had never considered the possibility that hitting the snooze button could cause them to miss an entire class. These students were accustomed to academic success. They came from families which provided the support network neces-



sary for them to study abroad as undergraduates at a prestigious and pricy university. It took some time to realize they were learning to master precision.

This assumption led to the discovery and exploration of another false assumption that students had made.

3. They thought being immersed in one language would help them learn another language quickly.

Language was a struggle from the start, but the students quickly began speaking a bastardized mix of English and German. They were soon able to make their way around Bonn and find methods to ask for what they needed. However, when they went to other countries during free weekends, they forgot that they did not know enough Spanish, French, or Italian to do the same, resulting in panicked phone calls about how to read a train board or bus schedule.

The students came back excited to learn. They wanted to learn a different language. They wanted to learn how to interact with their world. These students were both comfortable with their curiosity and capable of navigating the unfamiliar. Until this trip, they had yet to realize on a visceral level that their world was a small corner of the actual globe. The students became hungry for relevant history, local culture, anything about the new part of the world where they found themselves.

This trip was transformative.

Writing is an essential skill in today's world. Writing is a tool by which we can assess a student's logical thought process and their ability to support a point with evidence. Being able to think logically and to support a point is a critical skill for any student's success outside of school.

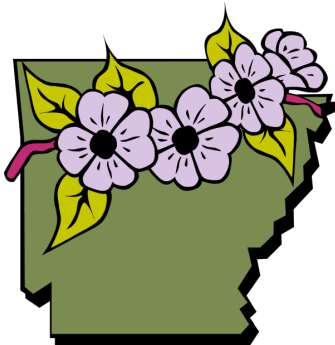
The students wanted to learn relevance. They were excited during the trip to apply their burgeoning language skills, their understanding of history and culture. This study abroad experience was a personal education. Teachers are facing a monumental and—I argue—an exciting challenge. We need to teach students deliberately how to take what they learn and apply it so they can bring their knowledge together to move from behind the sheltered walls of academics and assume the mantle of adulthood.



Micah Waltz shares Germany with his students and colleagues while they study abroad.

Questions and comments for the author of this Global Perspective may be addressed to Micah via the newsletter editor: walter@uamont.edu

Growing Connections



Literacy and NCTE is the official blog of the National Council of Teachers of English:

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Do you have stories to share of your summer travels or projects? Did you re-connect with a former student or peer? Read a good book? Write a conference presentation or a creative work of fiction? Discover a useful article or website? Share your investigations, challenges, innovations, and inventions with your colleagues by sending them to our newsletter editor walter@uamont.edu.

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