

ACTELA Newsletter

Arkansas Council of Teachers of English and Language Arts

At a recent meeting, ACTELA members were asked to respond to the following writing prompt:

Common Core encourages us to teach close reading of complex texts to our students. Choose a text you will use and say what one skill/strategy you will teach that is essential for student success in close reading.

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Letter from the President

As we move through the end of our summer months, I know we are all reflecting on our experiences last year and planning for our classes next year. Take a moment to congratulate yourself on all your hard work and all those students who grew from working with you last year. Your literacy work with students is so important.

I know many of you are beginning to grapple with Common Core implementation. Remember, you have some great resources at your disposal, the most important being **one another**. You might consider using the Arkansas Curriculum Conference (ACC) in November as a space to work with each other. We all have ideas and questions to share, and collectively we have applications and answers.

Other Common Core resources I can recommend are on the NCTE website:

<http://www.ncte.org/standards/commoncore>

<https://secure.ncte.org/store/commoncorestandards>

Finally, remember that the Arkansas Curriculum Conference (ACC) will be held at the Peabody on November 8th and 9th of this year. More information on the conference will be shared with you as we move into the school year.



Again, enjoy the remainder of your summer, and thank you all for your contributions to ACTELA.

Respectfully,
Donna Wake
ACTELA President

ACTELA Grant Request Funded

Arkansas Humanities Council Reach Grant to help fund Matthew Quick's visit to ACC and Little Rock. We have partnered with Little Rock Preparatory Academy (LRPA) so that "Q" will work with the students at that school the day prior to ACC. ACTELA board members (who are able and willing) will work with the teachers and

students prior to Q's visit. The grant is close to \$2000 and will pay for his speaker's fees for working with the kids, two of his nights at the Peabody, and the books for the students.



Donna Wake's Strategy

A project I would like to revise and re-enact with my classes focuses on John Steinbeck's *The Grapes of Wrath*. In the past, I have worked with students to create altered books based on a key aspect of Steinbeck's novel. Altered books are a form of mixed media artwork. Students take an old book and recycle it for new purposes by altering it with any of the following techniques: cutting, tearing, writing, drawing, pasting, burning, folding, rebinding, designing pop-ups, rubber stamping, drilling, bolting, or decorating. The students

may add pockets or carve niches into the book to hold artifacts (3-dimensional objects). Students may do something as simple as adding a drawing or text to a page or as complicated as creating carved relief sculptures from the pages.

In this project, students had to choose an aspect of Steinbeck's novel to explore further in their altered book. Topics included the dust bowl and migrant camps. Their alternations were creative but also involved research into the text itself and into facts from the time period represented in the book.

This focus required them to conduct close reading with a purpose. The resulting creations by the students were inspiring and among the best work I've seen produced in my high school English teaching experiences.



KUDOS

Dr. Dixie Keyes, Teacher Education, was the recipient of UCA's Faculty Achievement Award for Professional Service.

Poetry provides wonderful opportunities for teaching close reading. While the common core is much more focused on non-fiction texts, poetry is a wonderful medium for helping students develop reading skills. A poem does so much, often in a compact package, and could be used to develop any number of reading skills from recognizing figures of speech to identifying and exploring speaker and audience.

Linda Arnold's Skill

The particular poem I have chosen is Robert Frost's "Stopping by Woods on a Snowy Evening." The skill I would focus upon is the difference between denotation and connotation of words. The poet is very much engaged with using words that evoke feelings in the reader. An examination of the dictionary definitions and the evocative meanings would be worthwhile to build students' skills in looking at words for more than just their literal meaning. This could be done

by having students work in pairs to define and discuss words and their effects. Then the pairs could work in groups of four to exchange ideas, something like a jigsaw group. Another possibility would be to have students change certain key words in the poem and see how that changes the meaning or feel of the work.



Summer Haiku Board

Surfing Haiku

At a balmy beach,
I glide on a wave until
A shark bites my board.
Marcos Protheroe

laughing out loud
wine-making kits
in a dry county
Jeff Whittingham

Did I volunteer
To edit this newsletter?
What was I thinking?
Kay Walter

Busy little bees
search flowers ripe with
pollen
hurry back to hive.
Mark Englerth

Back to School Again
Did I have that nightmare yet?
The "lost my clothes" one?
Donna Wake

ACTELA Poets

Your work belongs here
in our next issue!
Share your haiku by
sending it to
<walter@uamont.edu>

Arkansas English Teachers of the Year

Since 2004, outstanding English and Language Arts teachers have been identified and formally honored annually by ACTELA.

The awards are presented at the ACTELA Fall Luncheon in Little Rock in conjunction with the conventions of the Arkansas Educators

Association and the Arkansas Conference on Curriculum.

Judging is conducted by a panel of ACTELA Board members. The panel considers the nominees' lifelong teaching, professionalism, and service, with emphasis on recent achievements.

2011 ARKANSAS ENGLISH TOYS

Steve Lance, University of Central Arkansas, Conway, College English Teacher of the Year.

Tara Seale, Bryant High School, Secondary School English Teacher of the Year.

Jamie Highfill, Woodland Jr. High, Fayetteville, Middle School English Teacher of the Year.

Debbie West, Nettleton Schools, Jonesboro, Elementary School Language Arts Teacher of the Year.

Policy on Involvement of People of Color

The Arkansas Council of Teachers of English and Language Arts (ACTELA) in collaboration with the National Council of Teachers of English (NCTE) has in place a policy on the in-

volvement of people of color. That policy was originally adopted in 2005. A new version was written and adopted this summer in accordance with NCTE suggested revisions.

ACTELA actively pursues diversity in its board and membership. Our committee structure allows open participation by all members; our projects throughout the year afford all members of the executive committee opportunities for involvement.

Outreach

ASU hosted a successful Ridgewriters Youth Writers Camp in July. For information about this event and its outcomes, contact Dixie Keyes at <dkeyes@astate.edu>



Discussion Questions For Teacher Use on Matthew Quick's *Sorta Like a Rock Star*

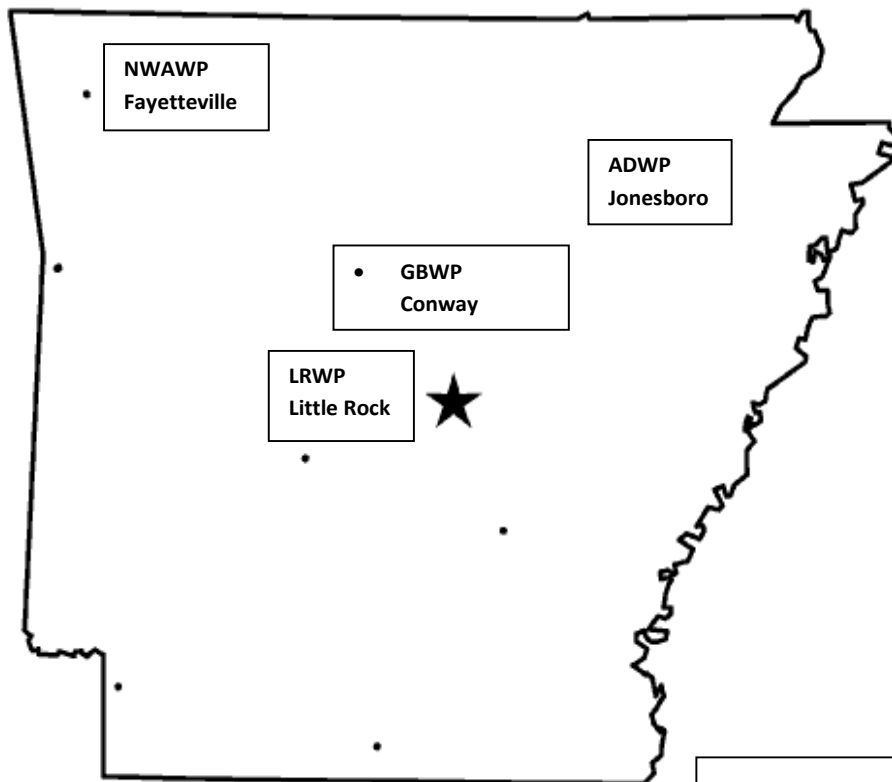
- Make a list of the contexts and the ways that Amber Appleton expresses hope to others.
- Which character(s) were you most surprised that Amber decided to bring hope to?
- Why do you suppose Amber's mother had lost hope despite the hope Amber seems to carry in her heart and life in the first part of the book?
- What did you most wish for Amber during the first part of the book?
- What role did the boys in her life play throughout the novel?
- Why do you think Amber couldn't help her mother more?
- Draw a chart which juxtaposes Amber's life "pre-mother's death" and then "after mother's death"? What are the key ways she changes and deals with this tragedy.
- What were your reactions to how she deals with the tragedy of her mother's death?
- How did haikus, receiving them and writing them, shape Amber's view on the world and on
- How did Amber inspire you or others who read the book to keep hope close or to help others have hope?

ACTELA extends its deepest regrets to Ryan Kelly and his family on the loss of their daughter, Amelia.

National Writing Project Summer Institute Offerings across Arkansas

- **Arkansas Delta Writing Project** in Jonesboro- Contact dkeyes@astate.edu or apply online at <http://www2.astate.edu/cpi/adwp/>
- **Great Bear Writing Project** in Conway- Apply at <http://sites.google.com/site/greatbearwritingproject/>
- **Little Rock Writing Project** In Little Rock- apply online through UALR.
- **Northwest Arkansas Writing Project** in Fayetteville- jamie.highfill@fayar.net OR cgoering@uark.edu; www.nwawp.org ;

Apply to the NWP site that serves your region! Visit www.nwp.org to find out more about the **National Writing Project**.



Join our communities of teachers who write and become a part of this teacher-centered network!





Submit your writing to Arkansas Anthology 2013

Arkansas Anthology 2013 is looking for outstanding writings!

The *Arkansas Anthology* (in print and online) is a collection of literary works written by Arkansas students and their teachers (K-college). The writings are judged, selected, and published annually by the Arkansas Council of Teachers of English and Language Arts (ACTELA), a non-profit professional organization.

Categories:

Short story (maximum 700 words)

Essay (maximum 500 words)

Personal narrative (maximum 500 words)

Descriptive paragraph

Poetry

“Fillers”: Very short, yet original pieces such as patterned poems, jokes, epigrams, metaphors, or similes.

Photographs & Artwork (we need a cover!)

There is NO entry fee for 2013, but publishable works of high interest and high quality are requested! Deadline: Entries must be emailed by March 15, 2013.

*Selected authors will receive an award certificate by the end of the school year and a copy of **Arkansas Anthology 2013** after it is published later that summer or early fall. A complimentary copy will be given to teachers who send the entries of winning students. Additional copies may be purchased for a nominal fee. **Editor’s Choice award winners will be invited to attend the ACTELA Luncheon in November of 2013!***

Format: Entries must be typed. Each entry must include this statement by the student and verified by either a teacher or a parent/guardian: **“This is my original work. I grant permission to ACTELA to publish this if it is a winning entry.”** Email signatures are acceptable. *Please avoid submitting plagiarized work!*

Each entry should include the following information: Student’s name, grade, and a **mailing address for both the school/teacher AND the student.** Include the teacher’s names with student entries!

ACTELA is an affiliate of the National Council of Teachers of English. <http://www.actela.org/>

Submissions: MSWord email attachments are required; Scanned art or PDF versions of **art** only will be accepted.

Email submissions as an MSWord attachment to Dr. Dixie Keyes, Editor, at dkeyes@astate.edu. Please write, “Arkansas Anthology 2013” in the heading of the email.

ACTELA Board Responsibilities

- Make plans now to attend ACC in November.
- Email Donna Wake your head shot and biographical comment for our website.
- Compose a haiku for our next newsletter.





Featured Author: Matthew Quick

Boy 21
Little, Brown & Company
(March 2012)

Basketball has always been an escape for Finley. He lives in broken-down Belmont, a town ruled by the Irish mob, drugs, violence, and racially charged rivalries. At home, his dad works nights and Finley is left alone to take care of his disabled grandfather. He's always dreamed of somehow getting out, but until he can, putting on that number 21 makes everything seem okay.

Russ has just moved to the neighborhood. The life of this teen basketball phenom has been turned upside down by tragedy. Cut off from everyone he knows, he won't pick up a basketball, and yet answers only to the name Boy21—taken from his former jersey number.

As their final year of high school brings these two boys together, "Boy21" may turn out to be the answer they both need. Matthew Quick, the acclaimed author of *Sorta Like a Rock Star*, brings readers a moving novel about hope, recovery, and redemption.

Sorta Like a Rock Star

Little, Brown & Company (May 2010)

Amber Appleton lives in a bus. Ever since her mom's boyfriend kicked them out, Amber, her mom, and her totally loyal dog, Bobby Big Boy (aka Thrice B) have been camped out in the back of Hello Yellow (the school bus her mom drives). But Amber, the self-proclaimed princess of hope and girl of unyielding optimism, refuses to sweat the bad stuff. Instead, she focuses on bettering the lives of her alcoholic mother and her quirky circle of friends: a glass-ceiling-breaking single mother raising a son diagnosed with autism; Father Chee and The Korean Divas for Christ (soul-singing ESL students); a nihilist octogenarian; a video-game-playing gang of outcasts; and a haiku-writing war vet. But then a fatal tragedy threatens Amber's optimism—and her way of life. Can Amber continue to be the princess of hope?

With his zany cast of characters and a heartwarming, inspiring story, debut YA author Matthew Quick builds a beautifully beaten-up world of laughs, loyalty, and hard-earned hope. This world is Amber's stage, and Amber is, well...she's sorta like a rock star.



See Matthew Quick in person at the Arkansas Curriculum Conference!

8 November 2012
Peabody Hotel and
Arkansas Convention Center

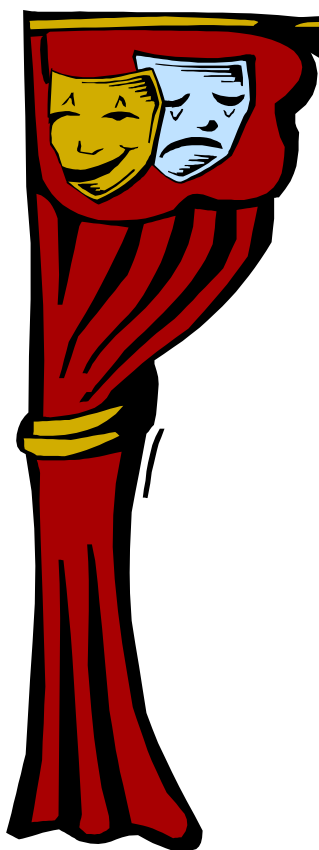
For more information contact Donna Wake at <dwake@uca.edu>

Matthew Quick (aka Q) is the author of *The Silver Linings Playbook* and two young adult novels, *Sorta Like a Rock Star* and *Boy 21*. His work has received many honors (including a PEN/Hemingway Award Honorable Mention), has been translated into several languages, and has been called “beautiful...first-rate” by The New York Times Book Review.

The Silver Linings Playbook has been adapted into a movie starring Robert De Niro, Bradley Cooper, and Jennifer Lawrence. Its release date is November 21, 2012.

Q lives in Massachusetts with his wife, novelist Alicia Bessette.

<http://matthewquickwriter.com/>



Founded in 2005, **TheatreSquared** (T2) is Northwest Arkansas's regional theatre, producing professional work that is challenging and heartfelt, intimate and entertaining.

In addition to its work on stage, the theatre's educational outreach programs serve an additional 7,500 students and teachers throughout Arkansas.

TheaterSquared (T2) will be showcasing its newest production, *Histories Mysteries*, at the Arkansas Curriculum Conference. This cross disciplinary performance is sure to draw a crowd! Book your seat now!

<http://cmase.umark.edu/ACC/>



Global Perspective

on Teaching English

Go for Literature Now.

(or Teaching Literature in China)

By Qumei She

Should English as a Foreign Language (EFL) programs include literature? How much? Could EFL students read and enjoy literature? How soon? It is generally accepted that reading literature can greatly benefit EFL students linguistically, culturally, and aesthetical-

ly, but in China literature in English is taught to English majors in their third year. The reason is that EFL students need a good foundation in English before they start reading literature. But how can we be sure students have reached such a level? Are American freshmen ready for literature? Certainly more ready than EFL readers, but American teachers are often heard lamenting about students' incompetency. However, no matter how unready they might be, freshmen are plunged into reading college-level texts right from the start. In fact, it doesn't really matter how ready or unready they are; they will benefit from and enjoy the course if they are well motivated. Nor do I think EFL students should wait. Exactly because their English knowledge, both linguistic and cultural, is inadequate, and because they are learning English in a non-English environment, literature offers the most accessible and profound cultural context they can get.

Inspired by such a belief, I have designed an elective course for and teach literature to the freshmen and sophomore English majors in my university in China. One semester, two hours a week, is devoted to the reading of essay and fiction, and the other to poetry and drama. I teach 40-60 students in each class. I prepare my own teaching materials, instead of using the published literature textbooks in China, for they are meant for upper-division literature courses. I select the most accessible works by such writers as Shakespeare, Wordsworth, Byron, Kipling, Woolf (essays), Dickinson, Fitzgerald, and Housman. I even used the best-seller *Tuesdays with Morrie*, by Mitch Albom. Bruce Pattison is right when he says: "The reputation of the work is irrelevant What is too difficult will only set up a disaster for literature and will fail to establish a reading habit, which is essential for self-teaching" (197). (continued on next page)

ACTELA/Arkansas Foreign Language Teachers Association District V

invites all English and Language Arts teachers to their joint conference at the University of Arkansas at Monticello, Memorial Classroom Building (MCB) Room 312.

Saturday, 6 October 2012 from 9 am to 4 pm

For more information, contact Dr. Marcos Protheroe at 870.224.3232.

<marcos.protheroe@se2.k12.ar.us>

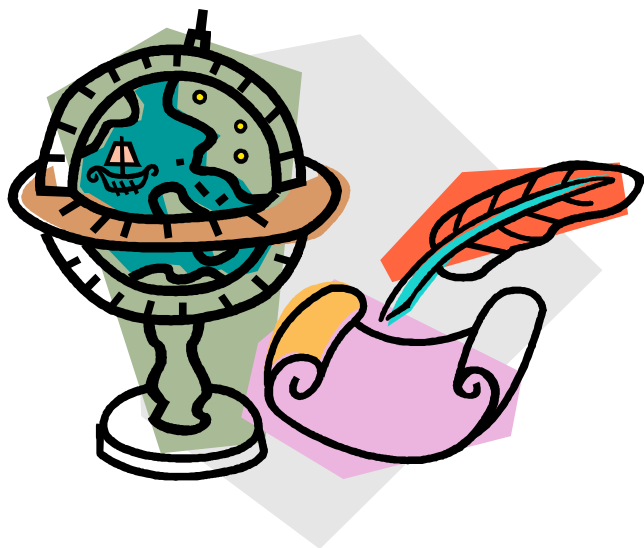
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Meanwhile, I take care not to assign an overwhelming amount of reading. My primary concern is not how much the students can cover in one semester but how to make their literary experience in English enjoyable, and then, only then, can reading literature be beneficial. To make them experience literature more personally, I have requirements other than reading and writing. When we study poetry, a public poetry reading/recitation is organized, and for drama, stage performance is required for everyone. It has turned out that students enjoy such activities immensely. Thanks to the support of an American teacher, a graduate of Notre Dame University, my students have put on a Broadway musical “Into the Woods” (2009) and a Shakespeare Parade (2011), where highlights from six of his plays were acted out.

These results have proven that non-native English learners, in spite of their modest vocabulary and insufficient cultural knowledge, can enjoy, and, as a result, benefit greatly from reading literature in English. Unlike other language materials, there is so much more in literature to push the EFL readers forward than pull them back. In fact, non-native learners especially need to know they can appreciate literature to get rid of that humiliating grade-school feeling of learning a foreign language. They shouldn’t and needn’t wait, if their teacher knows what to teach and how.



Featured Author: Spelile Rivas



Spelile Rivas is the award winning author of *No Time for Monsters/No Hay Tiempo Para Monstruos* which won the Tejas Star Book Award in 2010 - 2011.

Spelile's *No Time for Monsters* presentation (perfect for children from Pre-Kindergarten to 5th grade) is in both English and Spanish and is extremely interactive. She has developed variations of the presentation to account for different grade levels as well as different levels of English proficiency on the part of the audience.

She has also developed variations of the presentation to guide teachers in using bilingual books with children and a writing workshop entitled, *High Five for Better Writing* for students grades 5 - 9.

See Spelile Rivas in person at the Arkansas Curriculum Conference!

8 November 2012

Peabody Hotel and
Arkansas Convention Center

For more information contact Donna Wake at <dwake@uca.edu>

Special Anthology Initiative!

Would you like to create and build, or have your students create and build a Class Anthology or a School-Wide Anthology? If so, we have a special initiative for you!

We want you to attend a session at the **2012 Arkansas Curriculum Conference** and bring questions, any anthologies you've created in the past, and a plan to begin.

At the Anthology Session, we will feature time for you to interact with other ELA teachers from across the state where you can gain ideas about producing a collection of student writings! The editors of the *Arkansas Anthology* will also show previous issues and discuss their experiences in anthology production.

And the most wonderful news—we will give a set of the *Arkansas Anthology* to an ELA teacher (or several) who attends with a developed plan for a Class or School Anthology.

For more information on this special session at ACC, contact Dixie Keyes at <dkeyes@astate.edu>

CALL FOR PAPERS
Arkansas Philological Association
October 18-20, 2012
Arlington Resort Hotel and Spa
Hot Springs, Ark
“Reading Between the Lines: Present, Past, and Future”

The English Department at the University of Arkansas at Pine Bluff is proud to host the 2012 Arkansas Philological Association Conference October 18-20, 2012 (Thursday evening through Saturday afternoon) in historic Hot Springs, Arkansas. The APA welcomes scholarly papers on any topic pertaining to the literature of any nation or period, language, philosophy, popular culture, the teaching of writing, English education, as well as literary criticism from other places and periods. Creative writers are also encouraged to submit original works of poetry, drama, or fiction. For scholarly papers, please submit the title and a 500 word (maximum) abstract; for creative works, submit the entire work and a note of context, if useful. Please note if you would be interested in chairing a session. Note that the maximum reading time is twenty minutes.

Deadline for Electronic Submissions: Wednesday, September 19, 2012. Electronic submissions are preferred and may be sent to sandersk@uapb.edu. Hard copy submissions should be postmarked no later than Monday, September 17, 2012. Questions can be directed to sandersk@uapb.edu or

Kevin Sanders
Department of English
University of Arkansas at Pine Bluff
1200 North University Drive
Mail Slot 4980
Pine Bluff, Arkansas 71601
Office: (870) 575-8617

There will be discounted rooms at the host hotel (the Arlington) until **September 18, 2012**. **It is imperative that all reservations and credit card numbers are received by the cut-off date.** Contact reservations at (501) 609-2566 or 1-800-629-9768.

Conference updates will appear on our Writing Center site: <http://www.uapbwriting.org/APA> .

UAM Faculty Reflects on Presentation at 2011 ACC

by Dr. Kay Walter



This year Dr. Alayne Zimmerly and I joined the Arkansas Council of Teachers of English and Language Arts to find new opportunities for conversation between public school and university teachers of reading and writing. When we were invited to take part in the 2011 Arkansas Curriculum Conference, we were quick to collaborate on a proposal to direct a session. We made our joint presentation, entitled “Reading and Writing Strategies for Teaching King Arthur Stories,” on 4 November in Little Rock. We didn’t expect to excite much interest on the last afternoon of the meetings, but the nearly two dozen people who gathered in the audience proved our main point—that stories about King

Arthur have widespread interest and enduring appeal.

A recent article we read in *Educational Leadership* emphasizes the need for students to undertake the study of complex texts while developing literacy skills that prepare them for college, and the Common Core anchor standards for reading and writing reflect this idea. Students whose instruction time is based on less demanding reading are at a disadvantage because “[t]he clearest differentiator in reading between students who are college ready and students who are not is the ability to comprehend complex texts” (Bauerlein 28). Our presentation focused on the use of two modern novels about King Arthur as examples of complex texts.

The novel which formed the basis of Dr. Zimmerly’s approach is *Over Sea, Under Stone* by Susan Cooper from her Dark is Rising series. This book is written for a middle grades audience, and Dr. Zimmerly explored reading skills and activities to assist midlevel students in mastering this book. Comprehension, language, characters, connections, and assessment were the key points she covered.

The book which my approach considered is *The Hollow Hills* by Mary Stewart from her Arthurian Saga. This book is written for a secondary audience, and I discussed writing skills and activities for the high school classroom. Group

reading quizzes and individual annotation of the text, brief essays that incorporate source material and identify a context, an annotated research bibliography, oral presentations of research results, and online publication of book reviews were among the classroom activities I discussed.

In the conclusion of our presentation, we invited our audience members to join our quest for successful ways to incorporate complex texts into reading and writing curriculum by teaching



King Arthur stories. The universal appeal of Arthuriana encourages student interest, and its rich variety makes it appropriate for every level of instruction. In response to our conference experience, we have both committed to teaching an Arthurian text in our own classrooms this year, and our next presentation will reflect the travel seminars we taught in Great Britain over the summer.

ACTELA Membership Form

January, 2012 – December, 2012

Name: _____

Address: _____

City: _____ State: _____ Zip: _____

Phone: () _____ E-mail: _____

School: _____

District: _____

School Address: _____

City: _____ State: _____ Zip: _____

Co-op: _____

Job Title (include Grade, Subject): _____

I am a pre-service teacher (yes/no) _____ College/University _____

Please send this information and \$15.00 to:

ACTELA

c/o Dr. Jeff Whittingham, University of Central Arkansas,
College of Education - 104 Mashburn Hall,
201 Donaghey Avenue, Conway, AR 72035

Transformations: Teaching for the Future Today

ACC Conference 2012

November 8-9

Statehouse Convention Center, Little Rock

The new Common Core State Standards are changing the landscape of education in Arkansas. The 2012 Arkansas Curriculum Conference is designed to explore these new and future standards that will provide educators the tools and understanding for classroom application.

<http://cmase.uark.edu/ACC/ACC2012/index.html>

Arkansas Council of
Teachers of English
and Language Arts

c/o Dr. Donna Wake

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**Submissions to the newsletter can be
emailed to the editor, Dr. Kay Walter.
<walter@uamont.edu>**

Purposes of ACTELA:

- To stimulate professional development and to facilitate cooperation among its members.
- To provide opportunity for group study and discussion for improving the quality of instruction of English and Language Arts.
- To act as a clearinghouse in circulating pertinent information and in keeping teachers informed as to the latest education movements and findings.
- To publish significant findings, if possible, in the form of bulletins, monographs, or newsletters.
- To encourage participation in activities designed to promote the teaching of English and Language Arts.
- To offer professional presentations in a public forum.
- To integrate the efforts of those who are concerned with the improvement of instruction in English and Language Arts at all educational levels

K a y W a l t e r ' s R e s p o n s e

The first and most important lesson I try to teach students to help them read closely is to look carefully at words. Our students live in a world with a very low flashpoint. They have been taught that skimming is a form of reading, and it is the only one they have much practice with. Even the most intelligent of them have short attention spans. They think sending or receiving emoticons are viable forms of language communication. They do not understand the power of vocal inflection to affect written language. They rely on predictive text to create words.

They cannot distinguish words they don't know from a word they do know with most of the same letters, so when they try to read *wont*, for example, they are wont to see *want*. They rarely punctuate, so they may even misread *wont* as *won't*. The obvious truth that neither of these misreadings results in a cogent idea does not

disturb them. They assume they are too simple or the meaning is too abstruse to comprehend a complex text.

The rule in my class is simple: You have to read with a pen in hand and circle words you don't know. We all know that we should look up unfamiliar words, but if I stopped to investigate, define, and memorize all the words I didn't understand, I would not get much reading done. I can, however, notice these words, circle them, and ask my teacher or look them up later.

The skill to recognize unfamiliar words is more complex than it first appears. Like *wont*, some words seem familiar but are used in unfamiliar contexts. The more often students are able to recognize what they don't understand, the more likely they are to learn close reading skills.

I ask my students to do such reading with a short passage—a chapter from a novel for my freshmen or a

poem of several pages like "Ode: Intimations of Immortality from Recollections of Early Childhood" by William Wordsworth for more advanced readers. In this poem, my students can learn that the *cataract* blowing "its trumpet from the steep" has nothing to do with anyone's eyes. Once we determine the need to circle *cataract*, we can define it and learn the joy of comprehension that accompanies close reading of a complex text.

