

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:

The month of February honors the rich history of African Americans in our country. Black history is an important subject to discuss with our families and friends. In what ways did you celebrate African American history and how do you incorporate this celebration into your conversations?

Their answers begin on page two. If you have additional ideas on this topic, share them with our readers by emailing the newsletter editor

Dr Kay J. Walter

Dear ACTELA Members,

It is hard to believe that it is almost time for spring break. As educators, time definitely seems to fly by! I want to take time in this letter to remind everyone how fortunate we are to work among wonderful and committed individuals in the state of Arkansas. As an organization, we are very excited to announce the UCA Media & Literacy Conference to be held on the University of Central Arkansas campus, Tuesday, July 9th & Wednesday, July 10th. This conference is a collaboration among UCA College of Education, Arkansas Council of Teachers of English and Language Arts (ACTELA), Arkansas Literacy Association (ALA), and the Arkansas Association of School



Librarians (ArASL), a division of the Arkansas Library Association (ArLA).

As many of you know, the Arkansas Curriculum Conference was dissolved two years ago, so this is ACTELA's first replacement conference. We are very excited about this conference and the interactions among these organizations. Please check out the conference site and register today. We are currently accepting proposals, so please consider presenting during the conference. We want to hear what you are doing in your classrooms! The theme for the conference is "Create, Curate, Collaborate," so get those proposals submitted!

With spring, many changes come our way. As ACTELA president, I'm excited about the changes and new direction we are headed, and I look forward to welcoming you to Conway this July!

Sunny Styles-Foster, ACTELA President

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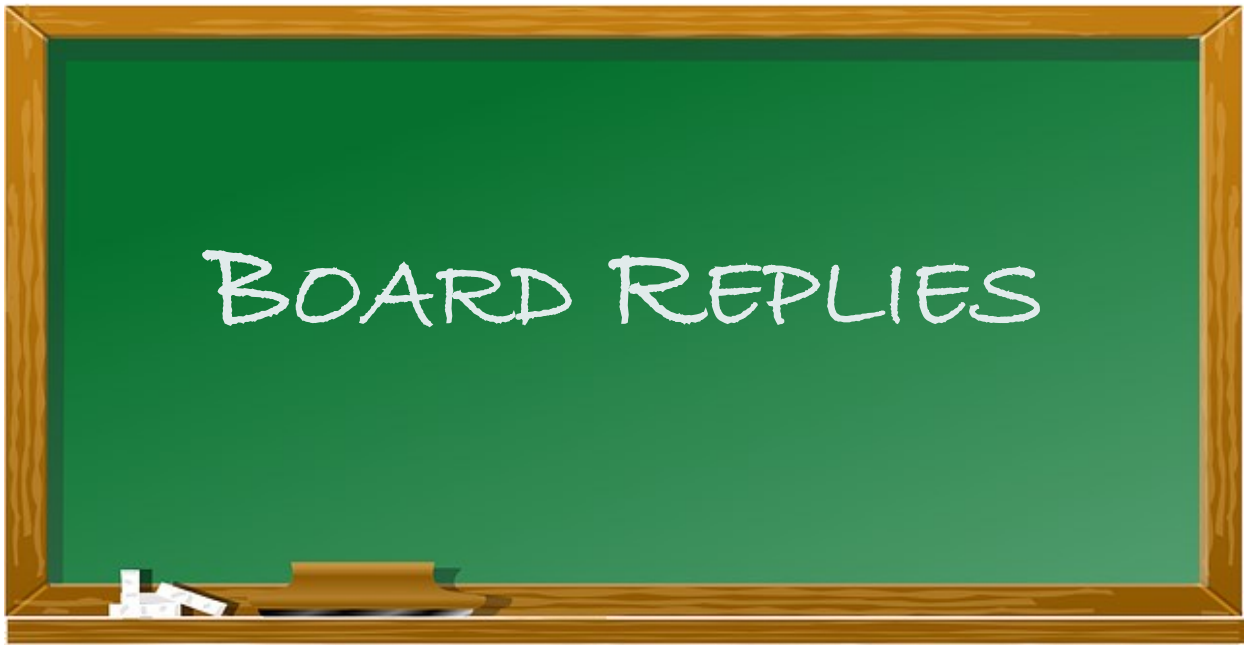
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Arkansas Council of Teachers of
English Language Arts





One thing I do on a relatively consistent basis is to help teachers plan for units of study during the month of February. I think it is important to learn about men, women, and children who may not have always been studied. It's so engaging and empowering for students to learn about people who are close to their ages who have chosen to do something to make a positive impact on the world. For example, Marley Dias, a 14-year-old who founded the "1,000 Black Girl Books," has collected more than 11,000 books with Black girls as the main characters, written her own book about positive activism, and spoken at national conventions. Misty Copeland, the first Black female principal dancer with the American Ballet Theatre, is also a young woman who inspires young people. I am always eager to learn more and share my knowledge with other teachers so that we, in turn, help honor the values and culture of our Black students.

Dawn Bessee

A young acting troupe performing Soul of a Nation written by Colin Cox came to visit my campus. It is a Black History Month play which discusses issues with the state of Black America, the Black Man and Woman, Black Hair, and the Black Lives Matter Movement. I encouraged all my students to attend. The dramatic performance opened racial discussions in my classrooms, and a student who rarely participates attended and was inspired to speak up in class. As a young black man, he was deeply moved by the ideas and images presented, and he was excited to share with other students who missed the expe-

rience. My students hear about racial difficulties in the national news, so the name Trayvon Martin was familiar to them. When I lamented the absence of Eric Garner's name, though, it was unfamiliar to most of them and presented a teachable moment.

Dr Kay J. Walter

I think it's so important to weave inclusive resources throughout our curriculum all year long. Students should be able to "see" themselves in the works that we study. I've always loved and tried to honor the saying that literature should provide both mirrors and windows to our students. Students should see themselves reflected in the texts we choose to read and teach, and they should open the eyes of our students to the lived experiences of those that are different from them. In my middle and high school classrooms, I made an effort to do this by including literature in the curriculum that featured diverse characters and by building a diverse classroom library.

Jessica Herring

*In my classes, my goal was to introduce works from a variety of African American authors. When I was in 7th grade, we learned mainly about MLK and Rosa Parks, and I want my students not only to learn about these leaders but to know that there is a great number of African American authors old and new whom they can enjoy. Therefore, I included pieces from Brent Staples, Maya Angelou, Malcolm X, Audre Lorde, Langston Hughes, Kwame Alexander, Angie Thomas, Jacqueline Woodson, and several more. All of these authors, poets, and speechwriters were part of our unit focused on authors' perspectives. In this unit, students focused on these guiding questions: What struggles do communities face related to equality and justice? How does experiencing societal conflict impact the way people see the world? How do authors use their voice to bring change? How can I use my voice to bring change? They then took those questions out to the community, interviewing relatives or community members. They later compiled their interviews into the newly-published class book *Behind the Curtain!**

<http://www.lulu.com/content/paperback-book/behind-the-curtain/24467260>

Elizabeth Vammen

I understand and appreciate the impulse that created Black History Month. But as a teacher, I also think that every month should be, say, Inclusive History Month. So I am determined to incorporate Black History, American Indian History, Women's History, The History of the Poor and Powerless, etc. into every course I teach, into the reading I do with my 8-year-old son, and into every appropriate conversation that I have with my colleagues.

Conrad Shumaker

Gallery Walking with Bradbury:

A Wake Up Call in Freshman English

by Grover Welch

Newport Special School District—High School

When Ray Bradbury published *Fahrenheit 451* in 1953, much of the technology he had written into the story had not even been invented yet. Televisions were hulking masses of tubes and wires with very limited programming; transmitters you could wear in your ears were not even possible as the miniaturization of circuitry was limited to space flight related to NASA. Despite the lack of these advances, his novel includes flat-screen televisions, ear-buds, and other futurist elements. His novel serves as a dystopian look at a society that has abandoned reading and knowledge. In the novel's buildup to catastrophe, its antagonist, Captain Beatty, addresses society's evil turn in dramatic dialogue--a dialogue that students were eerily drawn to and which I utilized for a lesson on futurism and our own dire societal precipices.

The dialogue happens as the novel's protagonist, Montag, has begun to embrace the knowledge he has found in books. Beatty, understanding the danger Montag has put himself in, comes to his home to both intimidate and inform him. Beatty tells Montag how society became so vitriolic that it tore away the ideas of individualism, idealism, and diversity. Instead, people embraced a society that strove to drive out any ideas that made citizens disagree, and replace them with a homogeneous, vanilla equality that lived in perpetual ignorance--a society where dreams, imagination, and creativity had died.



Grover Welch and his 9th grade English students take the opportunity to interact with Ray Bradbury's text in a Gallery Walk exercise.

In the course of my *Fahrenheit 451* unit, I pulled the dialogue from Beatty's speech into a series of charts. The individual quotes were placed in a gallery walk and students gallery walked and responded to the elements. In the course of the activity, they began discussing connections between Bradbury's use of Beatty and what is happening today. Especially relevant to them were the connections to social media and hate speech.

Students were asked to respond to the passage using post-it notes. The limited space of the notes allowed them to think about sections a chunk at a time. The passages included in the assignment, and the students' responses, were these:

"Classics cut to fit fifteen-minute radio shows, then cut again to fill a two-minute book column, winding up at last as a ten or twelve line dictionary resume."(52)

One student commented, "Wow, this is like my dad. All he reads are those bathroom novels in a minute."

"Then, in the twentieth century, speed up your camera. Books cut shorter. Condensations. Digests, Tabloids, Everything boils down to the gag, the snap ending."(52)

Several students pointed out how much this sounded like Facebook. One comment, "Snapchat anyone? I mean, ten-second snips and some people that is all they watch."

"School is shortened, discipline relaxed, philosophies, histories, languages dropped, English and spelling gradually neglected, finally almost completely ignored." (53)

"My spelling is awful. This made me think, am I becoming like this?" said one student.

"Now let's take up the minorities in our civilization, shall we?... Don't step on toes of the dog-lovers, the cat-lovers, doctors, lawyers, merchants, chiefs, Mormons, Baptists, Unitarians, second-generation Chinese, Swedes, Italians, Germans, Texans, Brooklynites, Irishmen, people from Oregon or Mexico."(54)

"It seems like everyone hates everyone, especially on Facebook," said a student. "I mean, hatred is literally everywhere."

"The bigger your market, Montag, the less you han-



Students challenge their understanding of text by creating questions and statements responding to Captain Beatty's argument in *Fahrenheit 451*.



Students ponder the implications Bradbury's book could have on today's world.

dle controversy, remember that! ...But the public, knowing what it wanted, spinning happily, let the comic books survive." (55)

Several students commented on the fact that people get their feelings hurt so easily. "I know people who get into fights, over something someone said on Snapchat. I go watch it and laugh. It's so stupid."

"We must all be alike. Not everyone born free and equal, as the Constitution says, but everyone made equal. Each man the image of every other,

then all are happy, for there are no mountains to make them cower, to judge themselves against."(56)

A student was extremely vocal on this quote. "NO," he said. "I don't want to be like everyone else. I want to be me and if you don't like that you can go away."

"Ask yourself, What do we want in this country, above all? People want to be happy, isn't that right? Haven't you heard it all your life? I want to be happy, people say. Well, aren't they? Don't we keep them moving, don't we give them fun? That's all we live for, isn't it? For pleasure, for titillation? And you must admit our culture provides plenty of these." (56)

"I wonder what Beatty thinks," said a student. "I have had bad things happen to me in the past, but I know that they have always made the good that much better."



Students are invited to respond to each other during Gallery Walks.

Students were quick to point out some very salient points about the quotes. One student commented, "It sounds so much like our world today. With social media tearing us apart. It seems like you can't say anything without someone yelling at you." She continued to point out how much we are losing because of our devices. Her contention was, "We seem to be going backward quicker than any society we have ever looked at. By the time I graduate college, people will not even know how to write letters anymore."

Students face unique challenges in today's world and are not blind to the

significance of behaviors. Many students commented during the gallery walk about presidential politics, Russian hackers, and other real world issues that are eerily similar to Bradbury's tale. It is no surprise that the novel still yields itself so well to classroom use. Paired with other texts such as "Superman and Me" by Sherman Alexie, "Learning to Read and Write" by Frederick Douglass, and "Burning a Book" by William Stafford, Bradbury's novel gets their attention. The students get to investigate the power and necessity of learning to read. With my ninth grade class, I emphasized the need to learn to read is more than just a skill to get through school. I encouraged students to see reading as a means to overcoming adversity, gaining or keeping freedom, and a necessary part of a functioning society.

Though dystopian literature is popular in today's classroom, *Divergent*, *Hunger Games*, I find it interesting how long *Fahrenheit 451* has captured the imaginations of young readers. Stronger for the use of language and deftness at creating a society so desperately in need of a hero, Bradbury's novel has moved my students past thinking about word usage and into connecting their lives and future to a skill they were turning away from. As one student noted, "People like Beatty see the world as a bland grey. I don't want that. I want to see the colors of the rainbow. That only happens if we dream and accept diversity."



Rainbows symbolize the diversity and creativity of our students

AS TEACHERS, WE RECOGNIZE THE IMPORTANCE OF PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT. WE REGULARLY SIT THROUGH LECTURES, PODCASTS, AND VIDEOS WHICH INTRODUCE US TO NEW PRACTICES, SOFTWARE, EXERCISES, POLICIES, AND REGULATIONS. BUT THE SOFTWARE, ACTIVITIES, PRACTICES, AND LESSONS OF OUR OWN CLASSROOMS ALSO REPRESENT SUCCESSSES WORTH SHARING. SOMETIMES WE GET SO BUSY WITH THE DAILY CHALLENGES OF OUR LIVES AND OUR CLASSROOMS THAT WE FORGET TO VALUE OUR OWN VICTORIES SUFFICIENTLY. THESE VICTORIES CAN BE THE BASIS OF CONFERENCE PRESENTATIONS OR PUBLICATIONS THAT ACTELA MEMBERS OR OTHER TEACHERS WANT TO HEAR ABOUT. THESE EXPERIENCES, TOO, REPRESENT OPPORTUNITIES FOR PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT. FIND OPPORTUNITIES TO SHARE YOUR IDEAS ON PAGE EIGHT.

Calls for Papers

Are you looking for a conference? Here are some CFP websites we've found:

<https://www.cfplist.com/CFP/17824>

<https://call-for-papers.sas.upenn.edu/>

<https://networks.h-net.org/node/73374/announcements>

<https://stjenglish.com/category/conferences/>

<https://accute.ca/category/non-accute-cfps/>

<http://www.wikicfp.com/cfp/call?conference=literature>

If you know of others, please **email our editor** so we can share them in the next issue.

Spring Conferences

- 4th Annual Regional Students Scholars Forum at the LSUS University Center Friday, March 15, 2019
- Graduate Students in English 2019 Conference: "Opening Doors: Creating Opportunities for Difficult Conversations" at the University of Arkansas Saturday, March 9, 2019
- Second Annual South Arkansas Literary Festival at South Arkansas Community College in El Dorado Saturday, March 9, 2019
- Texas Tech University "Play" Conference hosted by The Humanities Center at Texas Tech in Lubbock, Texas Saturday, April 13, 2019

If you know of conferences we've overlooked, **email our editor**.

SOUTH ARKANSAS COMMUNITY COLLEGE PRESENTS:

South Arkansas Literary Festival

March 9, 2019

Featuring:

**CECELIA WILSON &
EDITH RÖPKE**

"Back to Bremen" reveals the struggles and heartache of civilian life in the World War II German home front.

**SOMETHING FOR EVERY
ENTHUSIAST!**

From YA reading recommendations to children's story time to a panel of librarians and educators - not to mention Starbucks - we've got it all!



**HISTORIAN TURNED NOVELIST
GEORGE ROLLIE ADAMS**

How a Junction City native transitioned from academic life to the world of independent fiction and wrote a novel about rural Arkansas.

Highlights include book signings, guest speakers, workshops, reading recommendations, and more!

UCA Media & Literacy Conference

The UCA Media and Literacy Conference is a two-day conference at the University of Central Arkansas sponsored by the UCA College of Education, Arkansas Council of Teachers of English and Language Arts (ACTELA), Arkansas Literacy Association (ALA), and the Arkansas Association of School Librarians (ARASL), a division of the Arkansas Library Association (ArLA)

The 2019 Media and Literacy Conference will focus on current issues in literacy and the use of media to support educators. This year's theme is "**Create, Curate, Collaborate.**" Conference attendees will receive twelve hours of professional development, lunch, and a t-shirt. Conference registration is as follows:

- Two-Day General Admission – \$65.00
- One-Day General Admission – \$45.00
- Two-Day Student Admission – \$35.00
- One-Day Student Admission – \$25.00
- Exhibitor – \$65.00

This year's conference will be held on July 9th and 10th at the UCA College of Education (Mashburn Hall) in Conway, AR.

[Participant & Exhibitor Registration Form](#)

Proposal Submissions

Proposals are now being accepted for the UCA Media & Literacy Conference! Please keep the conference theme, "**Create, Curate, Collaborate,**" in mind while writing your proposal. Submit your proposal using the form below.

[Proposal Submission Form](#)

First presenters will receive a free registration to the conference. All other presenters must pay the full registration fee.

NCTE News

Our president and vice president will be attending the Summer Leadership Meeting in Washington, D.C. ACTELA will be well represented and we look forward to hearing what they learn at our summer conference in July.

The 2019 NCTE Convention is scheduled for 21–24 November at Baltimore, Maryland. It’s time for us to begin making plans to take part in our national gathering. ACTELA wants to make a strong showing to let the organization know that Arkansas teachers of English and Language Arts at every level—birth through lifelong learning—are active participants in our profession. If you are already making plans to attend NCTE 2019, email our newsletter editor, and tell us what steps in your preparation process you are accomplishing.

If your proposal for a session was accepted, tell us your plans for presentation so we can be part of your audience.

ACTELA Board Members will meet during the Media and Literacy Conference in Conway this July. Contact your representative to provide input you want to share at this meeting.

NATIONAL RECOGNITION!

July 15, 2018

Kay J. Walter
Arkansas Council of Teachers of English and Language Arts
walter@uamont.edu

Dear Kay Walter:

Congratulations! *The English Pub* has been chosen as one of eight in the 2018 NCTE Affiliate Newsletter of Excellence Award contest. You and your affiliate can take great pride in the recognition this award brings to your affiliate for excellence in newsletter writing.

The judges noted that *The English Pub*, published by the Arkansas Council of Teachers of English and Language Arts featured interesting articles written in engaging, fluent voice that teachers will find useful; provided a pleasing balance of informational and creative articles; and was one of the few newsletters with a strong connection to state education programs. Judges recommended including more teacher-centric articles and noted there was a large number of articles that focused on post-secondary with much fewer focused on Pre-K-12.

Please make plans for a member of your affiliate to accept your award at the Affiliate Breakfast in Houston, scheduled for Sunday, November 18, 2018, at 7:00 AM--note that those attending the breakfast need to purchase a breakfast ticket in advance.

Thank you for your participation in the 2018 NCTE Affiliate Newsletter of Excellence contest.

Sincerely,

Julie Rucker, SCOA Region 3 Representative
Chair, 2018 Affiliate Newsletter of Excellence Award Committee

cc: Linda Walters-Moore
Jean Boreen

ANNOUNCEMENTS, AWARDS, NEWS, AND NOTES

2018 was a busy year for ACTELA.

Members traveled to, attended, and hosted gatherings of scholars. Our students enjoyed the benefits of our active involvement in scholarly life. We published books and articles and reaped the rewards of publicity, and we all benefited one another by sharing ideas. Here are some of the highlights of our achievements:

- **Over the summer, ACTELA Board Members were again involved in Bear Writing at UCA!** Bearswrite Writing Camp hosted author Mike Mullen on Tuesday, June 26th. He also conducted a reading of his latest book, “Surface Tension” at the Faulkner County Public Library at 4:00 p.m. This event was open to all interested teachers and middle grade and young adult readers. <https://docs.google.com/document/d/1jXwtgZ6TtSTxdPC4x8-So6DjTmO58c-d3luaMoonDoM/edit?usp=sharing>
- **Media and Literacy Conference:** The UCA College of Education sponsored the Media and Literacy Leadership Conference for librarians and educators in central Arkansas. The conference occurred on July 10th, 2018. The conference featured a Booktalk by Dr. Jeff Whittingham and Rachel Whittingham.
- **Pacific Ancient and Modern Language Association:** This conference met at Bellingham, Washington. Dr. Kay J. Walter spoke on John Ruskin and Modern Venice which covered effective teaching strategies for off-campus courses and developing travel seminars to Europe.

- Earlier this year, the Arkansas Department of Education brought teachers, curriculum leaders, and administrators together for an **ACT Aspire** alignment study. As part of the fulfillment of the mandate for peer review of state assessment programs under Title I of ESSA, participants in the study looked at the cognitive rigor and alignment of the ACT Aspire with the Arkansas Academic Standards. ADE plans to use the results to continue to provide input to ACT about the design and structure of the ACT Aspire assessment. ADE will release a report of the study's findings this summer via Commissioner's Memo. You can sign up to receive notifications of released memos at

<http://adecm.arkansas.gov/Subscription.aspx>

- Our newsletter editor, Dr Kay Walter, announces the publication of her article, **“Internalizing the Message,”** in *Minnesota English Journal 2019* and invites you to read it online in April and post a comment. Watch for a hyperlink in the next issue of our newsletter.
- **Eastern Arkansas Literacy Conference:** On June 27th and 28th of 2018, ACTELA partnered with Arkansas State University ERZ, Crowley's Ridge Education Service Cooperative, Great Rivers Education Service Cooperative, Northeast Arkansas Education Service Cooperative, Scholastic, and McGraw Hill to present the inaugural Eastern Arkansas Literacy Conference. The conference took place at the Arkansas State University Alumni Center in Jonesboro, Arkansas, and was available to regional K-12 teachers. Over the course of two days, attendees were treated to keynote speakers Jack Berckmeyer and Alan Sitomer before breaking into grade band-specific sessions. Teachers for grades K-4 attended break-out sessions with Dr. Timothy Shanahan and Scholastic presenters, Kim Towe and Kathy Griffin. Teachers of 5th-8th graders attended an



Just as all good writers do, Arkansas poet Kai Coggin draws inspiration from everything around her.



Kai Coggin shares her poetry, reading to a rapt audience from her latest book.



Kai Coggin and ACTELA Board Member Dawn Bessee enjoy a break during the meeting.



Dixie Keyes, who was previously ACTELA's president, is still active in events associated with our organization. She's always a bright spot in the things we do!



Dawn and award-winning writer, Crystal Allen, prepare for the middle grades session.

extended session with Laura Robb, and teachers of 9th-12th graders attended an extended session with Sarah Brown Wessling. The speakers for the breakout sessions on the second day of the conference rotated between the 5-8 teachers and 9-12 teachers. Authors and/or poets Crystal Allen, Kai Coggin, Augusta Scattergood, and Alan Sitomer, conducted those sessions. The theme of the conference was “Creating a Culture of Literacy.” The first day focused on effective instructional practices that help establish such cultures in the classroom, with topics ranging from unlocking complex text to integrating multiple medias into units of study that blend reading and writing. The second day focused on the craft of writing and the influence of reading on writing. Over 150 teachers from the northeast and delta region of the state attended both days. The response was very positive overall, and there are plans to host the conference biannually.

- On 2 January 2019, the father of our newsletter editor passed into immortality. Please remember the family in your thoughts and prayers. ACTELA is providing an honorary one-year membership in his name for a student member. The student selected to receive the **James J. Walter** membership is Ana Rodriguez-Mesa from University of Arkansas at Monticello. Congratulations, Scholar!
- Dr Kay Walter accompanied her Daddy on **Honor Flight DFW 39** in September 2018. Look for a report on their journey and the writing opportunities it offered her students in the classroom to appear in the next issue of our newsletter.
- **Tyler McBride**, ACTELA’s webmaster, and his wife are expecting an addition to the family in July. Congratulations and all our best wishes for a happy, healthy baby!
- ACTELA came home from NCTE 2018 in Houston with national recognition. We won the **2018 Affiliate Newsletter of Excellence Award**. The selection committee had suggestions for improvement, which we want to consider as we design future issues. Find their comments on page twelve and email your ideas for improving our newsletter to your editor: walter@uamont.edu



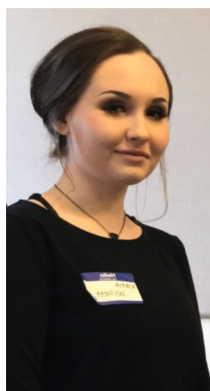
JAMES J. WALTER
14 SEPTEMBER 1925 –
2 JANUARY 2019

DO YOU REMEMBER GIVING YOUR FIRST SCHOLARLY PRESENTATION AT A PROFESSIONAL MEETING? THESE DAYS OBTAINING ADMISSION TO GRADUATE PROGRAMS OF STUDY ANTICIPATES EXPERIENCE WITH PREPROFESSIONAL SCHOLARSHIP. MOST PROFESSIONAL MEETINGS DISCOURAGE STUDENT PARTICIPATION, BUT EVEN UNDERGRADUATE STUDENTS HAVE IDEAS AND PERSPECTIVES TO SHARE. WE CAN INCLUDE STUDENTS' THOUGHTS, WORDS, AND IDEAS INTO OUR SCHOLARSHIP. IN 2018 I PROPOSED PRESENTATIONS WHICH INCLUDED STUDENT SPEAKERS AT TWO PROFESSIONAL MEETINGS. FOR BOTH THESE CONFERENCES, NO UNDERGRADUATES HAD EVER BEEN ALLOWED TO PARTICIPATE. I PROPOSED PANELS OF FLASH PAPERS BY MY STUDENTS FOR THE EAST TEXAS ENGLISH LANGUAGE AND LITERATURE CONFERENCE AT ANGELINA COLLEGE IN LUFKIN, TEXAS AND FOR THE ARKANSAS PHILOLOGICAL ASSOCIATION CONFERENCE AT UCA IN CONWAY. ETELL FOCUSED ON PEDAGOGICAL CONCERNS, AND I OFFERED OUR PRESENTATIONS AS FIRST-PERSON EXAMPLES OF THE TEACHING PRACTICES IN MY CLASSROOMS. THE THEME OF APA WAS "ORDER AND DISORDER IN LITERATURE, CREATIVE WRITING, AND TEACHING." STUDENTS FROM MY SHAKESPEARE AND LITERATURE CLASSES SHARED THEIR UNDERSTANDINGS OF THIS THEME IN CANONICAL BRITISH LITERATURE. MY RESPONSIBILITY WAS TO OFFER A CONTEXTUALIZING INTRODUCTION FOR THE SESSION, A BRIEF CLARIFICATION OF THE CONNECTIONS BETWEEN EACH STUDENT'S RESEARCH AND THE THEME, A TRANSITION TO THE FOLLOWING PAPER, AND A SUMMARY OF OUR IDEAS WITH CONCLUSIONS ABOUT THEIR APPLICATION TO ANY CLASSROOM AT THE END. AT BOTH CONFERENCES, THE SUCCESS OF MY STUDENTS' PRESENTATIONS RESULTED IN FUTURE PLANS TO INVITE AND INCLUDE UNDERGRADUATE PARTICIPATION IN ALL MEETINGS OF THE HOST ORGANIZATIONS. WHAT FOLLOWS ARE RESPONSES MY STUDENTS OFFER TO THEIR EXPERIENCES WITH PREPROFESSIONAL CONFERENCING:

Katie's View

by

Katie Willett



As undergraduate students, rarely do we find ourselves in an upper level academic setting. In-depth studies are reserved for graduate school, we tell ourselves, using that as an excuse to provide the bare minimum in a class setting. This does not suggest that class discussions cannot be enlightening; the atmosphere is simply different when we are surrounded by professors who are passionate about a mutual subject.

Dr. Kay Walter provides opportunities for her undergraduate students to experience graduate level education through attending professional conferences throughout the year. On October 19th, 2018, Dr. Walter took us to the annual meeting of the Arkansas Philological Association hosted by the University of Central Arkansas. We were the only undergraduate panel allowed to present.

Two months before presenting, my classmates and I were given the theme of this year's conference: Order and Disorder. The broadness of the theme gave us the opportunity to interpret and examine literature in a way we had not before. I myself was given the challenge of exploring this theme in the works of William Shakespeare, something I underestimated.

There were many ways I could have taken an easy approach to my paper. Order and disorder could be interpreted broadly. However, I knew from previous cours-

es with Dr. Walter that there was a certain level of excellence. This challenge yielded results, and resulted in an interesting thesis for my paper: the order within disorder in Shakespeare's most famous plays.

After the completion of our papers, we spent weeks rehearsing. We were presenting on a panel, therefore our public speaking skills would need to be freshened up. Through encouragement and constructive criticism from, we perfected our tone, speed, and overall presentation in just a few practice sessions. We were prepared for what we assumed would be the wolves.

Luckily, those "wolves" turned out to be nothing more than enthusiastic academics. In between panels, we were able to socialize and establish connections with professors and graduate students throughout the state. This is something that will give us an edge when applying for graduate schools in the very near future. The panels each varied greatly. From panels devoted to linguistic studies, creative fiction, and academic studies, we all walked away with more knowledge than we had before.

When it was our turn to present, we were all surprisingly calm. The weeks of practice and encourage from Dr. Walter made us confident in our papers and ready to share them. With Dr. Walter providing helpful transitions between each reading, our presentations flowed smoothly. Two significant academics in our audience were UAM's Dr. Kate Stewart and Lyon College's Martha Heasley Cox Chair in American Literature, Dr. Terrell Tebbetts. Both scholars expressed positive responses to our presentation, which made us quite giddy.

To be surrounded by academics passionate about their studies is honestly a treat. You get to experience enlightening discussions that are not always common in undergraduate classes. Thanks to our professor, my classmates and I walked away with a better understanding of literature, as well as connections with graduate schools in Arkansas. Dr. Walter later informed us that due to our excellent work, the conference has now been opened to include undergraduate students every year. I looked forward to returning in the fall of 2019.



Constance's View

by

Constance Burch

For the rules to be broken purposely, one must know the rules! A student new to the academic world would have no reason to enter where the heads of the scholarly world reside, and the heads therefore would have no cause to include them. But why not? What is it that distinguishes one group from the other?

What level of understanding would be enough to bridge the gap between them? Long ago, higher education consisted of a student spending time with a scholar and conversing over matters of thought. How interesting that higher learning began with a conversation!

In the fall of 2018, I was lucky enough to experience my first professional con-

ference of English scholars. This conference has never been open to undergraduate students before, but my instructor was gracious enough to reach beyond the limits of the normal work with the administrators to gain access for a group of us. We the undergraduate students of UAM were challenged to prepare and present professional papers and we graciously accepted. Now why would we students of insufficient ranking agree to the task? Because he experience offered us the opportunity to listen to what some of the top minds in our field had to discuss, to hear how they chose to discuss it, and to discover what methods they chose to present it to their fellow scholars; that's why.

I observed a panel of poetry, given by learned poets John Zheng, James Fowler, and Craig Albin. They presented their own works, discussed the editing process, and praised each other's efforts. I enjoyed an interesting presentation on "Tracking Adaptive Entropy in *The Tempest*." Glenn Jellnick discussed his idea on the evolution of thought in the progression of society and how it shapes the construction of a play such as *The Tempest*, as well as the effect on the observers as history changes right before their eyes. I enjoyed this session the most. My instructor and I sat in on the fiction session. Dwayne Coleman shared a rendition of Sir Gawain, Jay Rudd shared his piece "Strange Bedfellows," and (my personal favorite) Conrad Shumaker's story titled "The Two Graves of Acey Cobb." In particular, Conrad's reading was delightful.

Over lunch, our group discussed how we found ourselves more equipped for the experience than we previously thought. We learned that our education at UAM has prepared us in ways we weren't even aware of. We engaged with scholars active in a professional life and stood triumphant in our efforts. We came away with a new level of confidence and a lot of new tools to forward our progress on our paths of higher learning. So, my question is this: When did the education of undergraduates become restricted to the classroom? Students should be encouraged to share their understandings, too. Scholars can learn from the thoughts and ideas of a fresh perspective just as the students learn from the scholars. A generous sharing of thoughts and converging of methods is the greatest form of education possible, and we all have a part to play in contributing to education.



Jeff's View

by

Jeff Whitson

The APA conference at UCA was my first conference where I presented a pedagogical piece based on the interruptions and narrative voice in various Shakespeare plays. The conference was a great introduction to the idea of presenting scholarly essays and research, as well as creative fiction and nonfiction works. Our panel's session went off without a hitch. Everyone properly presented thought provoking and interesting topics that maintained the theme of "finding order in chaos." Overall, the conference provided us with a higher understanding for the need of conference presentations. If you are hesitant about pre-

paring a paper and presenting at a conference, don't be. The environment is friendly and allows for all perspectives to offer sound ideas which contribute to education.

Emily's View



by

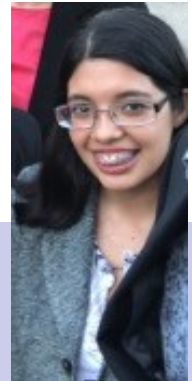
Emily Smith

The conference I attended last fall was a great experience. This is the second time I have attended a conference with Dr. Walter, and I find the experience of speaking in front of professors to be great for confidence building. I get the opportunity to be on the other side of the podium and express what I have learned. The feedback I get encourages me to learn more about my topic. I come back from a conference excited and feeling as if I have expanded my capabilities.

Ana's View

by

Ana Rodriguez-Mesa



Last semester, a group of students, Dr. Kay J. Walter, and I traveled to Lufkin, Texas for the East Texas English Language and Literature Conference hosted by Angelina College. As is always the case with us, a regional conference is the opportunity for a road trip. We drove from Monticello, Arkansas to Lufkin, Texas. Although it was a long drive, we didn't mind, as we enjoyed each other's company and especially enjoyed making a few pit stops here to see sites of interests along the way. We visited the Jim Reeves memorial in Carthage and stopped whenever we were hungry for our favorite foods. For this trip, we all decided to do something we hadn't done before – we decided to go camping. We spent the weekend at this beautiful campsite where we slept on hammocks for the night inside a very cozy little cabin. The kind folks at Angelina College approved our panel for the ETELL conference (although we were undergraduates) and we presented on experiential learning and how service-learning projects and traveling positively impacts student success in the classroom. We met a lot of welcoming, supportive professionals, presenters, and vendors and enjoyed hearing new ideas and sharing our own thoughts. The people at Angelina College were so impressed by all our presentations and we received lots of positive feedback from them. They were also kind enough to give us advice about career opportunities and graduate schools. It was a very encouraging and educational trip for all of us.



UAM presenters at ETELL include students (L to R front) Emily Smith, Jomarea Beal, Ana Rodriguez-Mesa, and Caleb Hayes and their teacher, Dr Kay Walter (back).



Dr Kay Walter discusses experiential learning assignments in her presentation.



Student Ana Rodriguez-Mesa presenting on service learning and the educational benefits of traveling.

Arkansas Anthology

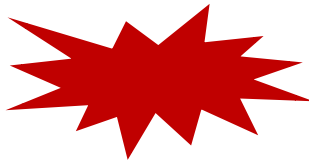


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Teaching Super Powers

by

Dr. Kathleen Shahan and Dr. Suzanna Guizar

University of Arkansas at Monticello

Self-Efficacy and Empathy



Picture by Marvel Comics

Empathy and self-efficacy have not been strangers to education. These two super powers assist educators in the tasks of mentoring and teaching from kindergarten to college. These powers have been especially meaningful in careers involving children and teaching. Think of all the teachers who have had a long-lasting impact on your consciousness. Mrs. Green always had a snack for children who missed breakfast. Coach Smith was a good listener when you were struggling with home or school issues. These teachers probably had a strong sense of empathy or efficacy and, with a highly developed skill set, made a difference in students' lives. Consider teacher efficacy within the affective domain as belief in the abilities to operate successfully in the classroom and produce positive student social and learning outcomes.

Efficacy has been defined as “the power to produce an effect” (Merriam-Webster, 2018). The classroom effect may include relationships furthering students' abilities to learn as they feel they belong and are in a safe environment. Bandura (1997) described self-efficacy as a person's belief in their own ability to manage and succeed, the persistent belief that if there is a way it will be found. Schwarzer (1992) touted self-efficacy as the “belief that one can perform a novel or difficult task, or cope with adversity in various domains of human functioning” (p. 217). Self-efficacy plays a role in how we think and how we pursue and accomplish our goals.

Positive emotions may increase confidence in our teaching and learning skills, whereas negative emotions may decrease confidence and lead to poor performance in the classroom. Efficacious

teachers believe in their own abilities and in having the necessary competencies to meet students where they are. “The strength of people’s convictions in their effectiveness [and others] is likely to affect whether they will even try to cope with given situations” (Bandura, 1977, p. 193). Studies have shown teachers with high self-efficacy will use positive reinforcement as intervention techniques, whereas teachers with low self-efficacy will use more restrictive methods when dealing with challenging behaviors or situations (Brophy & McCasline, 1992).

Teachers with a strong sense of self-efficacy view problems in the classroom as tasks to be mastered, form a stronger interest and commitment to their classroom activities, and demonstrate a resilience. Teachers with a weak sense of self-efficacy may avoid the challenging issues that arise in the classroom, assume that they are not capable of accomplishing difficult situations, focus on personal failings, and ultimately, lose confidence in their teaching abilities. In addition to the quality of efficacy, the highly effective educator has an internal mechanism of empathy to assist in developing positive relationships.

Teachers are probably highly in tune with empathy without necessarily knowing the definition of the skill. Merriam-Webster (2018) defines empathy as

The action of understanding, being aware of, being sensitive to, and vicariously experiencing the feelings, thoughts, and experience of another of either the past or present without having the feelings, thoughts, and experience fully communicated in an objectively explicit manner.

Further research indicates there are several benefits for educators to incorporate empathy into their classroom instruction as seen in Hollingsworth, L. Didelot, M. and Smith, J. (2003). The learning community is the setting in which to develop lifelong tendencies to showing empathy towards others.

Owens (2015) describes the following benefits of empathy in education: 1) Empathy builds positive classroom culture; 2) Empathy strengthens community and; 3) Empathy prepares your students to be leaders in their community. When students are in a risk free or safe classroom, they may not have to be focused on emotionally defending themselves and may be able to let down boundaries and develop social and emotional skills. Sornson (2014) asserts empathy is at the core of successful classrooms with these tips:

- a) Have a safe learning environment
- b) Have well-established routines and classroom procedures
- c) Help students develop listening and observation skills
- d) Teach self-regulating skills (e.g., regulate emotions, delay gratification, and staying focused;
- e) Model empathy. Someone is always watching
- f) Build relationships with students and teach students how to build relationships with others.

These are huge responsibilities to ask from teachers that require their time, emotional attention, awareness, and preparedness. Teachers have strengths and weaknesses just as students, and they can develop social and emotional intelligences to become more efficacious and empathetic. These are intelligence skills of social and emotional learning found in the work of Sternberg and Grigorenko (2009) and Bradberry and Greaves (2009).

In the educational world of deadlines, committees, PLC meetings, and other jobs as assigned, educators from pre-school to the university continue to display these super powers of self-efficacy and empathy. Quality teachers are lifelong, reflective learners who continue to hone their skills. Psychologists and researchers alike conclude efficacy and empathy are vital to positive relationships. Furthermore, these skills align with the belief that educators can assist students overcome obstacles that impede their success in school and in life. Efficacious and empathetic teachers are indeed super heroes

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ACTELA is considering the future of our conferences. Are we ready to move fully into the digital age? How would you feel about an online conference? Share your thoughts. Email them to our newsletter editor walter@uamont.edu

In an independent survey of the development of the British novel, one of my students discovered a love for Thomas Hardy. She identified strongly with his protagonist, Jude Fawley, a young man who desperately wants an education. The circumstances of his life conspire against him, as the circumstances of our students' lives often do. Ana wants to bring this novel to our attention, and so she offers the following book review of Hardy's masterpiece in prose fiction.



The Cost of Education:
Jude the Obscure by Thomas Hardy
by Ana Rodriguez-Mesa
University of Arkansas at Monticello

Shocking to the public of his time, Thomas Hardy charted unexplored terrain with his novel *Jude the Obscure*. Tackling topics such as marriage, religion, and education, Hardy dared to write with such frankness as to scandalize his audience and mask his true genius. This novel is in fact a deeply moral work, displaying certain ethical and social issues through a tragic story with characters one will find hard not to love. Jude Fawley is a man born into the working class but with deep aspirations to attend the university. As a young boy, Jude teaches himself Greek and Latin while helping his great-aunt run her bakery. He dreams of traveling to Christminster, a city he believes is the center of educational achievement. Eventually, Jude decides to take up work as a stonemason and starts saving his money for his studies.

Jude is passionate, hardworking, with self-discipline that is sure to carry him far. Jude's naivety, however, is his ultimate downfall. After walking home to his great-aunt's one day for the weekend, Jude encounters Arabella Donn who quickly fascinates Jude with her womanly charm. Jude suddenly finds himself trapped in a marriage which obscures his aspiration to go to university. Jude and Arabella's marriage eventually ends, and he finally travels to Christminster. Set back by his marriage, Jude finds it hard to maintain employment while at the same time saving to study. At Christminster, Jude meets his cousin Sue Bridehead who fascinates him. The tumultuous relationship between Sue and Jude begins when he introduces her to Mr. Phillotson, his old schoolmaster, who offers Sue a job. Jude's life becomes entangled as his feelings for Sue grow.

From this point on, Jude's life is full of conflicts. Hardy explores the Victorian ideals of mar-

riage. Sue marries Mr. Phillotson not for love but to honor a loyalty promised to him for helping her career expand. Sue quickly regrets her decision and is repulsed by her new husband; she cannot fathom the idea of consummating a union with someone she does not love. As her affections for Jude grow, it becomes apparent to Mr. Phillotson that he must let Sue go. Against all advice from his companions and against social norms, Mr. Phillotson allows his wife to go with her lover. Jude and Sue enter an emotional attachment which pushes the conventional boundaries set by the society around them. Sue's religious ideas of marriage have been thwarted by her experience with Mr. Phillotson. An old family curse also bars the couple from conventional marriage: their family's marriages always end in disaster. While a forced marriage is accepted by societal norms, the relationship between Jude and Sue is beset by the tragedy of society's reluctance to accept their love as legitimate.

Religion plays a vital role as well in this novel. Sue is the embodiment of a free-spirited woman with doubts about religious conventions. Jude's aspirations to become a successful academic lead him down the path of religious studies: he seeks to be a bishop or a deacon and studies Biblical texts. As the story progresses, readers notice a shift in religious perspective in Sue. After Little Father Time's tragic murder/suicide, Sue begins to become increasingly concerned with religious sanctions. She is convinced that this tragedy is Divine retaliation against their sinful relationship. Sue decides that the only way to amend their sins is to return to their rightful spouses no matter how unhappy they might be. Sue returns to Mr. Phillotson who gladly takes her back and Jude returns to Arabella. Sue has forced herself into an unhappy marriage as repentance; Jude's life ends shortly after returning with Arabella as illness overcomes him.

As the hardships of life overcome Jude, his ambitions for an education gradually become less and less important although he never stops obsessing over Christminster. This is ultimately the story of a working-class young man struggling to pursue an education which Jude discovers few are entitled to receive. This novel perhaps reflects facets of Thomas Hardy's own life: Hardy, like Jude, had not been able to afford an education at Oxford or Cambridge despite his interest in scholarship. Class distinctions had a lot to do with who was able to receive an education and who didn't during Hardy's time.

Despite the somberness of the novel's plot, Hardy writes a finely-crafted tragedy that focuses on many important issues such as religion, education, and marriage. Jude and Sue's romance, although beset by unimaginable hardships, breaks the mold of a conventional marriage. Society's resistance to their relationship ultimately causes its demise. Religion is a focal point in this novel as the two main characters struggle with their religious doubts and the consequences of their so-called "sinfulness." Without question, this is a novel hard for readers to process and Hardy's audience was shaken by it. Nevertheless, *Jude the Obscure* is a diamond in the gritty reality of life.



Do you have a story about teaching or learning to share? What novel is your favorite for exploring the gritty realities of life? Share your ideas in our newsletter: water@uamont.edu

Global Perspective

Service Learning and John Ruskin

by

Dr Kay J. Walter

University of Arkansas at Monticello

February 2019 makes the 200 year anniversary of the birth of John Ruskin. Throughout the year, global celebrations indicate ongoing and current interests in studying this author, his art, his writing, and his influences. The United Kingdom, Italy, the United States, France, and Japan all advertise the openings of art exhibitions, professional gatherings, and tea ceremonies. In my own classrooms, students are busy with experiential learning project based on our studies of Ruskin. They are researching and writing about the connections between John Ruskin and their own major fields of study. They are sharing Ruskin's ideas with groups at schools, churches, children's activities, and senior citizens' groups.

They seem particularly interested in sharing Ruskin's ideas about education and his efforts to mentor people like the publisher, George Allen, the adventurer, John Thomas Hobbs, and the sculptor, Benjamin Creswick. They challenge children to envision themselves as first-generation college students and ask them to express gratitude for people who have encouraged them and acted as their mentors. Further, they ask the children to see themselves as mentors and then they help them write about lessons they have mastered which they can share to benefit others.

Some of the children write Thank You notes in response to the lesson, which are delivered to the people they are grateful to for helping them. One teenager in a local high school wrote these words to her parents:



Thank you, Mom and Dad,
16 years ago you left Mexico so my siblings and I could have a better future. You work hard to provide us with a roof over our heads, clothes, food, and everything we needed. Growing up was easy because I had your unconditional support every step of the way. From the 1st day of kindergarten where I was scared to be left alone because I could speak only Spanish. You went to soccer games and basketball games even though I didn't play for 2 years but you were still there supporting me. You gave me advice which you went all out, you hung my honor rolls on the wall where they will remain. You paid my ACT so I could score a higher grade. Thanks for that. You work hard at your jobs to make my life possible. For that I have no words, just my unconditional gratitude.

Younger students are proud to tell the stories of how they set good examples and become role models for the people in their lives. One child sees his influence this way:

I would be a good role model for my cousin because I taught her to be kind. I taught her to share she used to be mean to people but kittens and puppies and other baby animals she was nice to. I taught her to be more careful.

Another student sees her talent at playing games as a way to set a good example. She says this:

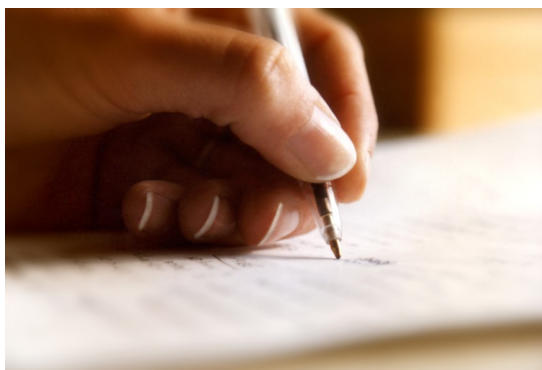
I would be a good role model for my nieces by teaching them to play dominos. My quality is to be helpful. I play dominos at the table with my nieces and I have to go to the other side to help them lay down a domino at the house.

Older children share their influences and their aspirations. Here are the words of two responders who have listened to and understood the wisdom of their educators:

My Coach's are Influential to me because they push me to my limits. The Coaches here make you work your hardest. They will push you to your best. They influence me because they help keep me in check with my grades and how well I am doing. I would like to influence kids who think they can't do things to do them. If kids have bad grades and say they can't bring them up you need to encourage them.

My foster dad, soon to be my father, is someone who influences me the most. He is always pushing me to do/be the absolute best I can be and give it my all. Even when I fail, he is always positive

and there to help pick me up and let me do it again until I succeed. There are two main forms of impact. Let's focus on the positive kind, being kind, honest, generous, and helpful.



As teachers, we still have much to learn from the words of our students. If we nurture and mentor them with kindness, they will have the capacity to multiply the benefits they receive. Ruskin would approve these results.

Developing Connections



Whom do you wish you could improve connections with?

Is there someone you think we should all hear from? Send contact information to our [newsletter editor](#), and we'll solicit ideas from people of interest to readers for upcoming issues.

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The next issue of our newsletter will cover Women's History Month. What women do you admire for their scholarly and educational contributions? How do women continue to break barriers in professional and academic settings? Email us your thoughts at walter@uamont.edu

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