

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:

A teaching career is demanding and consumes our time. Some of our duties seem like mindless make-work, but there are also times we treasure. What is the most profitable use of time for which you are grateful as a teacher?

Their answers begin on page three. If you have additional ideas about times teachers should be grateful, share them with our readers by emailing the newsletter editor here:

Dr Kay J. Walter

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Hello ACTELA,

It is with sadness that I am writing my final letter from the president. I wanted to take this opportunity to reflect on my two years as president of ACTELA and to pledge my support for English teachers across the state of Arkansas and beyond!

As an organization, we have undergone some big transitions over the course of the two years I have served. From losing our state conference in 2017, to having a year with no income, to joining with other wonderful literacy organizations in our state to help host the UCA



Media and Literacy Conference this past July, our organization has thrived.

I know that Jessica and Aaron will do amazing things, and I wish them all the best. I also know that we can't have an organization without our members. Please keep supporting ACTELA. If you have friends or colleagues who would like to be members, please encourage them to join. We have much to offer, and I know even better things lie ahead.

Thank you for allowing me to serve this great organization and the wonderful teachers of Arkansas. I wish you all the best.

Sunny Styles-Foster
ACTELA President

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Arkansas Council of Teachers of
English Language Arts





Editorial Note

by Dr Kay J. Walter

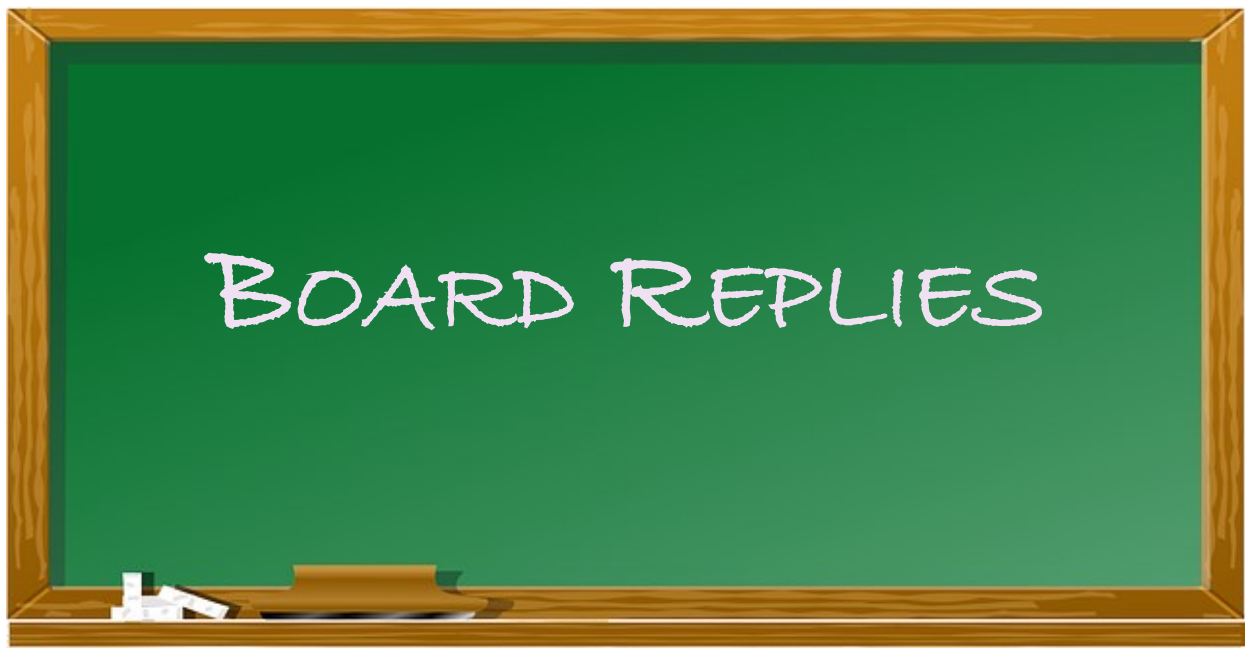
The time has come to say *adieu* to 2019. *The English Pub* has enjoyed a bumper year with a dramatically expanding readership, first experiments with editorial assistants, newly featured serial articles, and contributions, feedback, and comments from around the world. Big changes lie ahead for 2020. The time has come to say goodbye to our outgoing president, Sunny Styles-Foster, under whose steady leadership ACTELA has survived the dissolution of ACC and regrouped into even more relevant regional meetings. In the coming year we'll welcome the new guidance and insights of our president-elect, Jessica Herring Watson. Jessica is not really unknown, of course. She has long been active in the endeavors of the ACTELA board and in providing supportive contributions to *The English Pub*.

In 2019 our newsletter has been the basis of a grant application for funds to support a literacy activity. We'll all keep our fingers crossed that the judges recognize the importance of our accomplishments. We've introduced a celebration of young readers and writers, and we're grateful for all the parents who support our efforts in the ELA classroom by encouraging and enabling young learners to practice their literacy skills at home and then share their pictures with us.

Please send photos of the young readers and writers in your life too, and if there are ideas or issues you want us to report on, we welcome your input and feedback [here](#). We wish you a happy and fulfilling holiday season and look forward to your report of the exciting adventures you plan to enjoy in the coming year.



My current writing project is a double review of these two books. I'll bet you could guess which one I will be busy reading over the holidays. Send us photos of your current projects too.



- ◆ Without a doubt, I am most grateful for the time I get to spend in class interacting with my students. When I first made the move from the K-12 classroom to higher ed, I don't think I fully understood how much my schedule would change and how much more time I would spend in an office or in front of my laptop. While I value the time I have on my own to write, learn, give feedback, and create content, the best part of my day, every day, is the time I get to spend in class with my students. Engaging with them, seeing their passion develop as soon-to-be educators, and encouraging their growth as professionals is what I love most about teaching. Early in my career as an educator, I was fortunate to have a principal and mentor whose teaching philosophy was represented by the James Comer quote, "No significant learning occurs without a significant relationship." I've adopted the same philosophy in my teaching. I've learned that those relationships are possible because of the administrative work we do--efficient and clear feedback and grading, responsiveness to concerns and questions, consistent expectations and standards all help students perceive us as reliable and trustworthy. However, those building blocks of trust can grow and flourish into something really wonderful through our interactions with students in the classroom, through those "Aha!" moments when we see a spark of learning, and through the opportunities to facilitate success out of struggles. I am eternally grateful for my career as an educator. I love all of it, and I can't imagine doing anything else!
Jessica Herring Watson, University of Central Arkansas

- ◆ The most profitable use of time as a teacher is one-on-one, mini-conferences

with students. I have updated my student-teacher feedback model to work in the computer lab environment where the whole class is writing while the mini-conferences are taking place. Each student has a designated time during class that I sit with him or her for a few minutes and discuss what that student needs to complete the assignment successfully. This time of interaction builds rapport and trust with each student and creates a learning community for my class. I am grateful after these class sessions because I gain an overview of the assignment progression and humanize the writing process in a way that gives value and voice to each student despite the class size.

Dr Sarah Winterberg,

University of Arkansas Fort Smith

- ◆ I firmly believe that the healthiest thing in all Creation is the human mind in the act of learning. I am most grateful, therefore, at the times I recognize my own opportunities to learn from the authors I read, from my colleagues, or even from my students. Whenever I engage with other humans we can unite to share ideas and concerns. If I listen, I learn that I can still learn, and I take back to my own office and classrooms new insights and a renewed excitement for the challenges a lifetime of teaching presents. Together, we are mighty, and for that I am very grateful.

Dr Kay J. Walter

University of Arkansas at Monticello

- ◆ I find that those times when I can become creative in my lesson planning and can give students their own opportunities to become creative are so rewarding. The insights and analyses that my students explore through creative expression are well worth the hours of preparation, the class periods of instruction and productivity, and the day or two it takes to get through presentations. I enjoy seeing my students take pride in their work and the insights that they develop while working together toward a goal; in the end, I know I've not only given them space to be critical thinkers through projects but also a collaborative atmosphere to learn to work together in a community.

Mindy Lynn, Brookland High School

- ◆ When I get to have academic discussions with my students, those are my favorite days. My students like them too. I love to listen to them discover things about literature by listening to one another. It is classroom magic!

Cindy Green, Virtual Arkansas

- ◆ Even though I am now a college instructor, I still enjoy the time I spend planning for lessons. Creating interactive and engaging lessons is always my goal, and I truly enjoy being able to experiment with new ways to facilitate

learning in my classrooms. Planning is critical to being a successful teacher, regardless of whom or what you are teaching.

Sunny Styles-Foster, University of Central Arkansas

- ◆ To me, the most useful way to spend time in a classroom is getting to know your students. Not getting to know who their best friend is necessarily, but getting to know what they know, don't know, or are confused about or interested in. As a student, when a teacher extends a hand to me and asks how I feel about a subject, I immediately feel more confident, or reassured, depending on the topic. And as a summer teacher at the Boys and Girls Club, I could see that the kids in my class enjoyed coming in every day because I asked what they thought, rather than just handing them direct instruction. (Although, I know some days direct instruction is essential.) So time best spent in a classroom is time you spend talking *with* your students.

Emily Jackson, University of Arkansas at Monticello

- ◆ When I first entered the classroom four years ago, I realized my scholars were not always aware of their reading levels or standardized testing scores. As a young student I remember asking my mother if I did well every time she got a sheet of paper with my testing data on it. She never knew the answer because she did not know how to read the scores. When I realized my scholars did not know where they stood when it came to their reading levels or English skills, I decided to start holding "data chats." I used highlighters to show my scholars what their scores meant. I loved seeing the surprised looks on their faces when they realized they were reading above grade level. In addition, I would teach them how to calculate how many points they needed to grow to be "on target" for their grade level. We would talk about what they could do when they were



not in the classroom to grow in reading and writing. Every time they would take a growth test, they would learn how to compare their scores. It is nice to see scholars come back years later to talk about their scores and to see how proud they are of their accomplishments.

Gina Bolick, Bryant Junior High School

This Time of Year

by Grover Welch

Newport Special School District—High School



Well, the weather outside is frightfully like summer, and being in the classroom is not necessarily delightful for many teachers this time of year. It is the few weeks between Thanksgiving and Christmas break that teachers so often fear. Visions of no-school days are dancing in our kids' heads, and no amount of sugar plums will soothe our aching hands, brains, and feet.



MR WELCH'S CLASSROOM IS A SPACE WHERE STUDENTS ARE ALWAYS BUSY READING, WRITING, AND LEARNING—EVEN AS HOLIDAYS APPROACH.

It is the end of the year in the English classroom, and students are quick to be ready to put down their tools and head on out for the break, but for teachers it is crunch time. We have to prepare for semester exams, get kids ready for these tests, and hope and pray we can teach a couple more standards before the lights go out on 2019.

Curiously, I like this time of year because I can often get much closer to my students. In the course of restorative practices, we can share traditions, holiday flair, and goals for next year. Using reflective writing in the classroom aids in these

efforts. It is every teacher's dilemma: students can sit and toil at a tome, or they can sit and be creative and engaged. I choose writing.

My students start by doing a self-inventory of the past year. We write first about what went well this year using expository timed writing. This year I gave the following prompt: "Write a well-organized essay that discusses three things at which you feel you have succeeded this year. Be specific and include details."

I don't ever want to forget to have kids celebrate their own successes. I have students write about good games they played, trips they went on; one even wrote about a foal his father birthed in their barn this year. Students enjoy the exercise in reliving good memories.

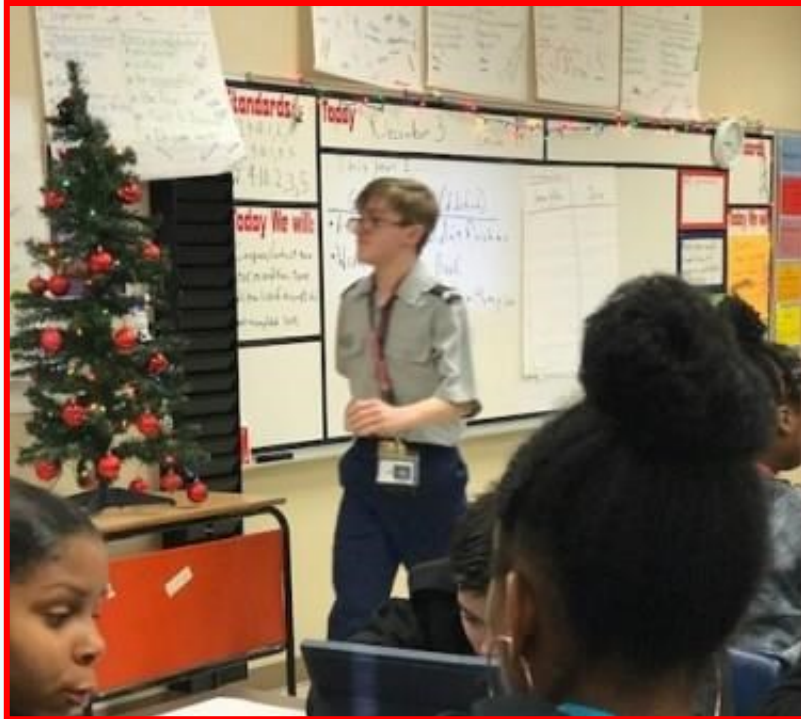
My students' responses were very insightful:

- "I got put in a class that I did not want to be in. But I made a deal with my mom to try it for a semester. Then I started to think it wasn't so bad. I have really begun to enjoy it and will stay in the class."
- "For the first time in my life, I accomplished something that I was really proud of."
- "Being part of football helps me practice for real-life . . . having to overcome difficult times."

We move on with this writing and topic into looking at some traditional folk tales. I really appreciate resources like Commonlit.org for the many stories we can find there. This year I chose two short stories: "The Tuesday of the Other June," by Norma Fox Mazer, and "Snow White," by The Brothers Grimm. These stories both featured antagonists with envy and jealousy. The themes matched up perfectly for our classroom writing. We have deep discussions in class about how the characters are guided, or misguided, by their choices.

We explore themes and characters in the two stories, then we bring in our expository writings. Students reread their expository writing and try to notate what decisions they had to make to be successful. Then we take both of the other texts and discuss the positive choices which are being missed, trying to pinpoint where the characters are going in the wrong direction.

This introspective look at the three texts, one self-generated and the



STUDENT ASSIGNMENTS AND RESPONSES DECORATE THE WALLS EVEN AS CHRISTMAS APPROACHES.

other two published, lead us to open discussions into areas that students find epiphanic.

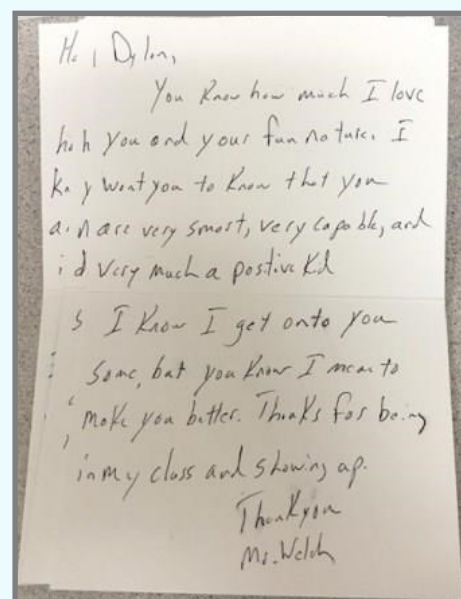
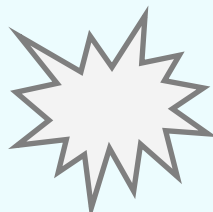
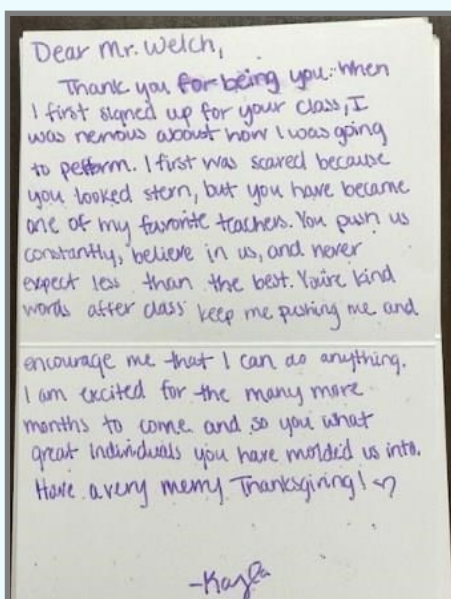
In class, one student embraced my assignment and wrote about the challenges of losing someone at Christmas while also pointing out all the good things that are simultaneously happening in the family. He had quietly been suffering through tough times, but through this writing he was able to change his perspective and look at the tragedy through a different lens.

In his writing, he was able to think through some of the feelings he was already dealing with. This proved to be an opportunity as a teacher to show him, in a short card, that I thought of him as one of “My Kids.” I wanted him to know I loved him no matter what. We share the personal connection that drives a writing classroom.

After these writings, my students and I spend time in class discussing what it means to have completed the year. We create word clouds on the board of all the things that go into a year. In the ninth grade classroom, kids want to be going fast and growing up. Often they forget to pay attention to important moments in their lives. I like to tell them, “Humanity often marks time with tragedy and the bad things that happen. We need to turn this around and think of all the good things happening to us.”

It’s hard to figure out what we can do differently to provide valuable learning experiences for our students, but being in an English class affords an embedded learning approach. I ask for expository writing. We write argumentatively over candy cane selection, and even manage a holiday poem or two.

To round everything out, I have students write thank-you notes to teachers. They can choose which teacher to write, and I provide the cards. They are free to be grateful. I also try to get notes written to kids. It is amazing what kids write and getting one or two notes from students really can fuel a teacher’s passion. I received some encouraging and positive messages from my students this year, and I always look forward to receiving these keepsakes.



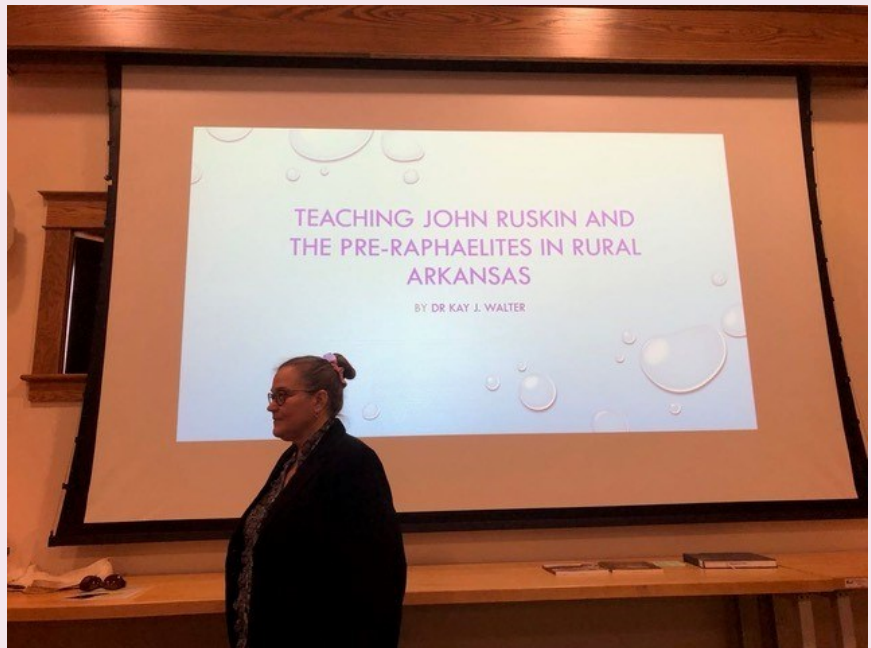
Autumn Accomplishments

by Dr Kay J. Walter

University of Arkansas at Monticello

The October 2019 issue of *The English Pub* recorded my summer literacy adventures in the European Summer article that began on page 24. Autumn has not brought much more leisure to my life. It has brought more help, though. One of my former students, Constance Burch, has undertaken an online graduate program through a school in Arizona which focuses on adult education, grant writing, and post-secondary instruction. Life circumstances have delayed her start in that program, but her desire to develop and polish her teaching skills remains keen. In result, we developed a course she could take which will transfer into her program in Higher Education Pedagogy. We meet regularly and discuss pedagogical principles and concerns, and then we go together into a freshman writing class to put them into practice.

Among her lessons and those of my freshmen, I also find myself committed to multiple conference presentations. Thus, I have become a living example of a process writer for my young composers. They have seen my notes morph into drafts, grow through myriad revisions, develop into papers, blossom slideshows of images,



THE ROYCROFT CAMPUS WAS EAGER TO HEAR ABOUT ELA EDUCATION IN ARKANSAS.



AN IMAGE OF RUSKIN LACE WAS PART OF THE TALK IN OHIO.

and return the fruit of success stories. Meanwhile, they have been writing papers of their own. While I have been away, my graduate student has been their cheerleader and fellow composer.

When I go, I leave behind the packet of collected drafts I have written as well as the final version and a printout of the slides. Constance takes these to class so that my



I WAS ABLE TO INTRODUCE A STUDENT TO CONFERENCING AT NAVSA.

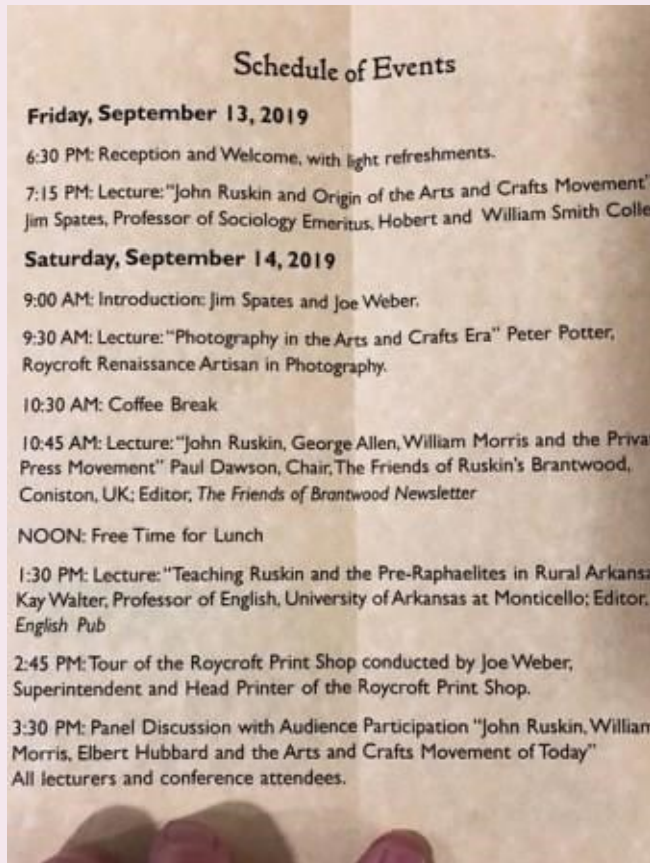
students can see the final outcome of my work. As I return from each trip, I find my students busy and productive, improving their skills, and full of new ideas and questions about their readings and their assignments.

Thus, I have been able to fulfill my promises to speak at three conferences so far this semester. In September, I went to New York for the John Ruskin and the Beginning of the Arts and Crafts Movement event on the Roycroft Campus. I spoke there about “Teaching John Ruskin and the Pre-Raphaelites in Rural Arkansas.” Listeners were fascinated with stories of how students in Arkansas become invested in experiential learning projects, write compellingly, and share their lessons with others in ways that benefit their own communities of support.

In October, I travelled to Columbus, Ohio for the North American Victorian Studies Association Conference. My undergraduate, Braden Taylor, was one of only 19 students selected to participate in NAVSA’s Undergraduate Research session. I presented a paper on “Mary Lamb, John Ruskin, and Needlecraft.” Braden applied ideas about political economy to the cost and value of education in the 21st century. Braden produced a 4 foot by 3 foot poster for this event, and again my freshmen writers got a visual lesson in writing as a recursive process. He visited my classroom to show students the numerous drafts he had written and the feedback he had received on his paper and answered questions about the proof-reader’s marks I had made.



KAY WALTER SPOKE IN THE ROYCROFT POWER HOUSE IN NEW YORK.



At the end of October, I flew to Charleston, South Carolina for the Victorians Institute Conference for which I produced a paper on John Ruskin and his Victorian predictions of the current global climate crisis. Again I left a packet of drafts for Constance to share with the freshmen, but this time she had something more. She too must produce written work for our graduate course, and we are still building her editing skills. She had her own returned draft to show, and I heard how the students laughed to see the same marks on her paper which they find on their own.

I miss my students in the hours I spend away from my classrooms. It always pleases me to return to Arkansas and find them busy and productive. I see their writing and classroom skills improving, and I welcome their smiles. I

know, though, that independence as a writer is our goal. The less they need me, the faster we progress. The example I set of a professional writer undaunted by steady demands for work, for patience, for painstaking revision, and for ongoing cheerful performance in public arenas is one they find motivational. We all have reason to be proud of the accomplishments we have to show this autumn, doubly so because we can be proud of one another as well as of ourselves.

CHANGING WEATHER, CHANGING WORLD:

John Ruskin's Victorian Vision of
Global Climate Change

Professional Development through Sharing Ruskin

by Braden Taylor
University of Arkansas at Monticello

I first learned about John Ruskin during my senior year in high school. My teacher introduced Ruskin to my class by talking about his interest in nature. During this time I was not particularly interested in mountains or trees, so I mostly ignored this lesson. We did not go into Ruskin's political views. I quickly dismissed his ideas. My first year in university, during my Composition I class, we were asked if we had ever heard of John Ruskin. My hand slowly raised. When asked if I knew what he did or wrote I assured my professor and my classmates he wrote little more than on trees and mountains. I had never heard of Ruskin's Library Edition, and I could not imagine the 37 volumes filled with wide-ranging ideas. I was unaware most of my semester would be consumed by reading about Ruskin. In this class is where my research in Ruskin grew from a short paper to a major change in my life, graduate school preparation, and true scholarly research.

My true research started in British Literature II. We read "Of Kings' Treasuries" at the beginning to prepare for our semester. I asked what else Ruskin had to offer, and my professor told me if I enjoyed what I read I should look into *Unto This Last*; I bought a copy that night. As I read I began to understand that Ruskin was talking about far more than nature or even more than economy. The way he discussed the treatment of labor workers, his push



**BRADEN TAYLOR TOOK PART IN
AN INTERNATIONAL CONFERENCE.**

for education for all, and the impact of the two on the community was stunning to me. My research developed from primarily focusing on Ruskin and the cost of labor to talking about the connections between labor and education. I was able to take my paper to the University of Arkansas at Fayetteville's research symposium and get great feedback, furthering my scholarship. I first learned of the North American Victorian Studies Association after my professor told me about a conference opportunity where my research would be presented to a much larger audience. If my application to take part in the Undergraduate Research Event were accepted I would be flying with her to Columbus, Ohio.

My professor and I completed the necessary paperwork to apply for participation and for a travel grant, and my work was approved and funded for presentation at NAVSA I was unaware of how many scholars my age would be there. When I learned it was 19 including myself, I realized how important this was. I would not be presenting my full paper in a panel with similar papers. I had to take my entire paper and turn it into a poster that was appealing to the eye and still captured the original ideas. Over the course of two months, with the help of friends, I took my paper and turned it into an attractive 36x48 inch poster that would represent all of my research from the past semesters. It was challenging to get my ideas arranged and printed, but I finally had my poster ready in its carrier, and we packed up and flew to Ohio.

I was able to attend any panel I wanted while at NAVSA. I took advantage of listening to amazing speakers from around the world talk about their passions. I learned so much about topics that normally would only be mentioned briefly in my classes. Victorian manuscript observation, rape and sexual violence in the Victorian era, painting and literature overlap, and of course Ruskin came up in almost every panel. I was able to ask questions and interact with the speakers. I was introduced to professors at universities I had only ever heard about. I was from small town Arkansas talking to Ph.D.'s from Manchester, Harvard, Boston, and many more exciting places, and these professors did not talk down to me as if I were only an undergraduate. They had proper, well-thought-out answers.

The poster went up the day before I was to talk. Seeing it for the first time propped up on its easel with light shining down on it, I could not help but be proud. It stood out from the other posters because there were colors and pictures.



**BRADEN PRESENTED A POSTER
ON 21ST CENTURY EDUCATION.**

People were stopping and reading the titles of others, but they lingered to read my body points. When the time came for me to stand up and talk about my poster, I was fully prepared. As one person walked away, two more would walk up and ask another question. They would say “I heard what you told them, but I would like to know about this,” and I was able to talk with full confidence that I knew what I was saying about *my* research. Almost everyone I talked to was a scholar with a background in Victorian Studies who could on the spot read my poster and develop a question, but there was one who was not like the others.

A true working man walked by, in a delivery driver’s jumpsuit complete with name tag and company logo patches on his sleeves. As he happened to walk through the crowd, he saw my title. He walked up to me said, “This poster is about me.” He told me that my poster, from across the room, caught his eye because it had the word “Labor” in bold and he knew he was a laborer. He read my poster and asked questions. He told me he never went to college because he was hard-of-hearing and had trouble in school. But he always looked to better himself and those around him with what he had to offer. He volunteered to help others who were deaf or hard-of-hearing. He told them that their disability should not hold them back and that education was key to their success. This working man was truly captivated by what Ruskin had to say and how I interpreted it. It did not matter if any other scholar at NAVSA ignored my poster. I was able to connect with someone who had never heard of Ruskin and see clearly how a great Victorian writer has relevance to his life and to my own.



BRADEN SHARED HIS IDEAS WITH A DIVERSE AUDIENCE.

ANNOUNCEMENTS, AWARDS, NEWS, AND NOTES

- ⇒ ACTELA sends hurrahs and hearty congratulations to English and English Ed December graduates who will be joining the ranks of ELA teachers and their support network next semester. Find individual names and photographs from A State and UAFS on page seventeen.
- ⇒ Dr Kay J. Walter is scheduled to take part in the Affiliate Extravaganza at NCTE this month, presenting a talk on “Publishing an Award-Winning Newsletter.” ACTELA certainly has expertise in that area to share with other affiliates!
- ⇒ Emily Jackson took part in a conference for the Southwest Association of College and University Housing Officers in Jonesboro this month as a Resident Assistant for her university.
- ⇒ Dr Kay J. Walter hosted Leigh Pryor Sparks, Assistant Director of MA and PhD Programs in English at UA Fayetteville for a visit with students at her university about “Applying to the



A RECENT UAM GRADUATE, DR KAY J. WALTER, AND DR LEIGH PRYOR SPARKS WERE AMONG THOSE WHO TOOK PART IN A TALK ABOUT APPLYING FOR GRADUATE STUDIES IN ENGLISH.

Graduate Program in English.”

- ⇒ Students from Dr Kay Walter’s classes wrote letters of gratitude for US Military Veterans to celebrate their journey with Honor Flight DFW 43.
- ⇒ ACTELA welcomes dozens of new readers to our newsletter this month. In particular, we celebrate visitors from Bigelow, Springdale, Ozark, Buckner, Alexander, Carlisle, and North Little Rock in Arkansas. We love the diversity of our global readership, but our primary focus remains ELA teachers in our own affiliate—so, Arkansas literacy enthusiasts, hurrah!
- ⇒ *The English Pub* also welcomes our first reader from Nebraska. Let’s keep spreading the word!
- ⇒ Dr Walter’s UAM scholars are making presentations this month. Stay tuned for a report on their successes in the next newsletter.



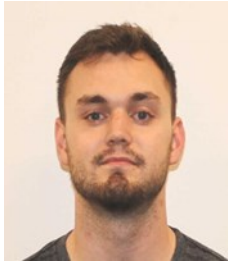
DR WALTER’S STUDENTS MADE MANY COLORFUL CONTRIBUTIONS TO THE MAIL CALL FOR VETERANS ABOARD HONOR FLIGHT DFW 43.

Basic membership in ACTELA begins at \$20, and student and lifetime memberships are also available [here](#).



ACTELA WELCOMES NEW TEACHERS

A State graduates



Carr Hill, born in Memphis and raised Highland, Arkansas, is completing his internship at Cave City. He enjoys teaching English and has ambitions also to coach football and other sports.



Jared Huffmaster, born in Bunkie, Louisiana and raised in Paragould where he graduated from Greene County Tech High School, is completing his internship at Paragould High School. His teaching experiences include being a Youth Pastor at Calvary Baptist Church.



Vivian Southwell, born in Jonesboro, raised in Caraway, and graduated from Sloan-Hendrix High School in Imboden, will complete her internship at Gosnell Jr. High this December. She has been offered an 8th grade teaching position at Gosnell, starting this January.



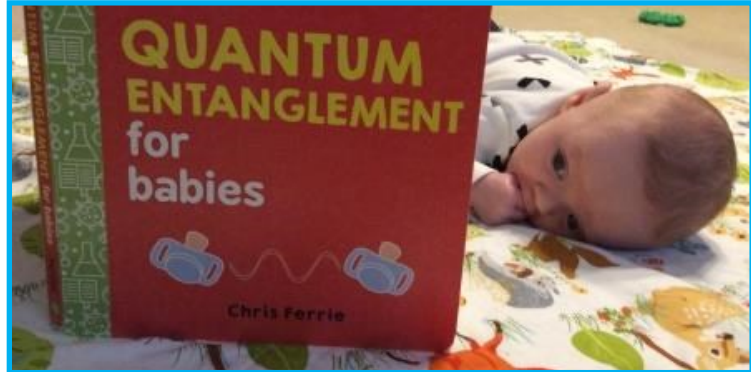
UAFS English with Teacher Licensure December graduates include Golden Mulkey, Dakota Padilla, Kelsey Holmes, and Emilie Payne.

UAFS December graduates with a Bachelor of Arts in English include Jennifer Kelly, Ashley Hill, Lynette Thrower, Jasmine Hayes, Shelby Cox, Grace Lambert, Jackalynn Self, and Meagan Dooly.

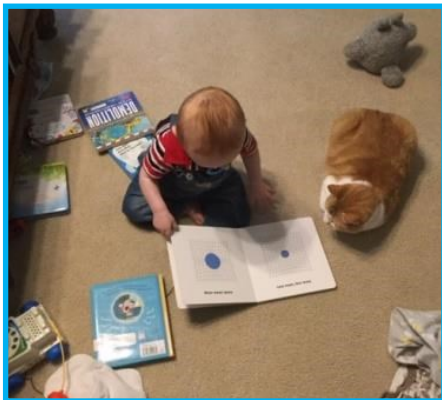
Readers and Writers



A sophomore from Monticello High School, Sabina Harper Day age 14, proudly presents her library card.



Courage Holmes already has favorite books. Read more about his literacy adventures in the article by his mother on page twenty.



Courage and his student



Cindy Smith shares the excitement of reading in her family with this photo of her grandchildren.

FOLLOW UP ON THE WREYFORD READERS

WHILE I WAS AT NCTE I RECEIVED THE FOLLOWING MESSAGE FROM AMBER WREYFORD ABOUT A YOUNG WRITER IN HER FAMILY WHO CONTRIBUTED LETTERS FOR MAIL CALL, HONOR FLIGHT DFW 43:

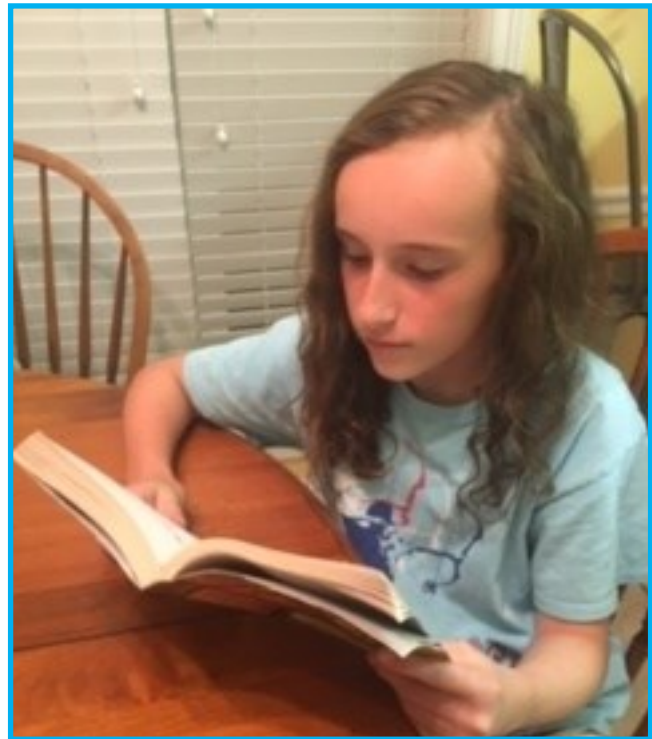
Greetings!

I just wanted to share briefly that my youngest, Kira, received a letter Saturday from Mr. Stubblefield in Texas. He thanked her for her letter that he received on the honor flight and told her things about himself. She was ecstatic and can't wait to take it to school and show her teacher.

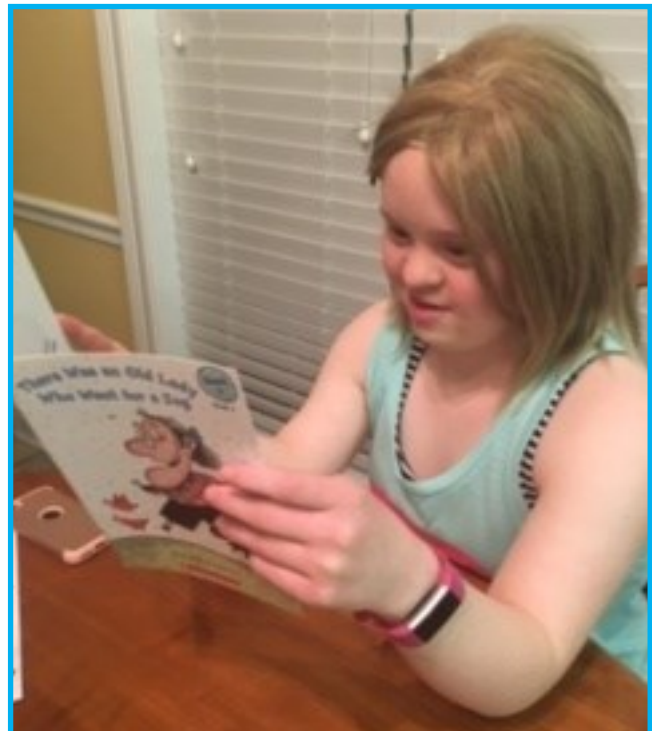
Thank you for this opportunity!

WHEN YOUNG WRITERS SEE THAT THEIR WORDS GET RESPONSES, THEY LEARN THE POWER OF LANGUAGE FIRST HAND.

For information about taking part in an Honor Flight Mail Call, email your editor [here](#).



Above and below, Hannah Hutson shares photos of her two younger sisters reading their favorite books. Great work setting the example to teach them the importance of literacy, Hannah!





Effective Early Literacy

by **Joy Holmes**, Ouchita Baptist University
and New Life Church College

We have a redhead son, nearly 2 years old. His name is Courage.

Having a kid has done all kinds of things to us; two of them have been bringing up memories of our own childhoods and contemplating what values we want to share with him.

I remember being an enthusiastic reader, studying toothpaste tubes and shampoo bottles intently starting in the 1st grade. I knew confidently that one day I would know what “cocamidopropyl betaine” was, like all grown-ups do. At my hometown library, children could not check out books on their own until age 10. Once I reached that magic age, I began to borrow so many books that the library instituted a check-out limit (30). My favorite title the year I turned 13 was *Crime and Punishment*.

One of my husband Jason's earliest memories is learning how to read around age 5, and then his mother hiding her books on ancient religions because he was insatiable. In the sixth grade, he took an assessment test which placed him as reading at a

collegiate level. Jason's favorite that year? A World Book encyclopedia he had bought at a yard sale.

Since the beginning, we knew we wanted our kids to be readers. But as far as we could remember, we just had always loved to read. How did we get there? I didn't know how to instill the reading bug in Courage, other than modeling it and reading to him.

So we bought him books. Lots of books. We asked for books. Lots of books. We sang bouncy rhymes and read *Little Blue Truck* and recited every Mother Goose ditty we could remember. We asked grandparents and babysitters to read with him. He sometimes enjoyed it, sometimes tolerated it. But we were also working on tummy time and nursing and solid foods and sleeping well and the host of other needs babies have. Then and now, I usually feel concerned I am ignoring some key part of his development.

The day I finally brought him to our local library was a breakthrough for us. The Faulkner County Library has a wonderful array of children's regular and special programs, including one for the youngest set called Mother Goose on the Loose. We didn't start attending until Courage was 8



Courage, son of Joy and Jason Holmes, is an early reader.

months old, but immediately I noticed a difference in how I interacted with him. Watching Mary Spears Polk, the enthusiastic Storytime Programmer, give the same material vitality every week encouraged me so much. Maybe it was okay that I was reading the same books many times over. Maybe it was okay that I was “stuck” on the same 10 nursery rhymes and same 3 songs. My “stuck” was meeting Courage's need for repetition.

Mother Goose on the Loose made it easier for me to think of ways to play with Courage. I could incorporate props like handkerchiefs and shaker eggs into rhymes, sing special songs while I dressed or changed him, tap out rhythms on tambourines. Suddenly I was having much more fun. In hindsight, these seem obvious, but I had been in a parenting fog. I was glad for the help.

Mary also encouraged us to sign up for the FCL branch of the free nationwide 1,000 Books Before Kindergarten program: a challenge brilliant in its simplicity. Parents and caregivers keep a log of books read with their child until they reach 1,000 read before kindergarten. Every 100 books earned Courage a sticker, his name on a “wall of fame,” and kids meal coupons around town. (They've since added a free book after we completed the program.)

We had been reading with Courage before. Now we were reading an average of 10 books spread throughout the day. Courage didn't care about his name on a paper star on a wall, but I did. It was a tangible, public declaration that probably I was an okay mom. Locally more than 400 families have signed up, and I love the idea that some of them may be as reassured as I am.

Since he's begun walking, Courage sometimes does something I find remarkable. After banging about with his toys, he'll go quiet and I'll peek at him flipping through *Baby Loves Quarks* or *Goodnight Moon*. On his own. He's gentle with the pages, nods and points, and talks to himself about the pictures. In his own way, he's reading.

If he's squirmy during a diaper change, I often give him a small board book, the equivalent of reading on the toilet. If he's playing keep-away, I grab a book and start reading it aloud. He almost always is drawn in, plopping comfortably in my lap. Sometimes he asks to start over.

And all at once, he's begun to sing, both with us and on his own. “Baa Baa Black Sheep” was his delightful first song, but “Edelweiss” was his completely unexpected second.

I asked Mary specifically what changes she's noticed in Courage since we've been attending Mother Goose on the Loose. Her observations could not have been more heartening. “I can tell that he is sung to at home by how comfortable and joyful he becomes when we sing in storytime. His vocabulary has grown enormously. He no longer mostly listens to adults talking, he participates in the conversations more and more. I know that he is read to at home because I see him pick up books at the library, take them to his mom, and sit in her lap. He's ready to read! [...] Being able to witness this kind of growth and development in a child in conjunction with a deepening social relationship with the entire family, is the gift that keeps me passionate about my job.”

Maybe these would have happened without the library. But certainly Mary, and the other staff there, have been friendly faces and knowledgeable contributors and observers to his growing literacy.

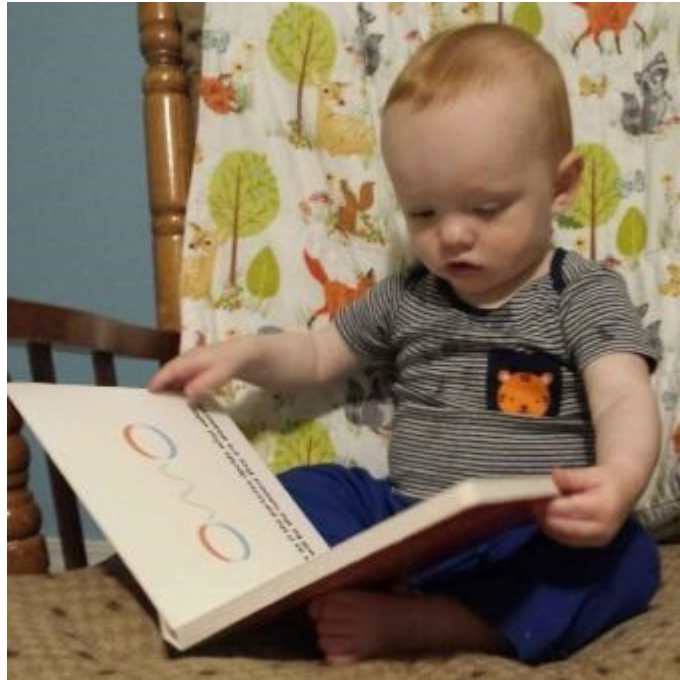
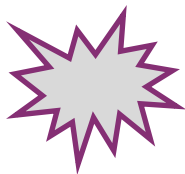
Mary told me a story about another family. “There are two young girls who are homeschooled that come to preschool



Courage enjoys telling himself stories about the pictures in his books.

storytime regularly. I think one is four and one is six. They walked in to storytime with books that they had written, illustrated, and bound themselves. They were so proud and wanted to read their books to me. So, we did!" In several ways, this gave me a vision of what promoting literacy could look like in Courage in a few years. Not just reading, but creating, stories.

Courage will be joined by a little sister this spring. With any luck, she'll be a redhead. With our help, she'll be a reader.



Because his parents read to him,
Courage enjoys books as a pastime.



Questions for Courage can be directed to the newsletter editor [here](#).



Pet by Akwaeke Emezi

Pet follows Jam, a selectively mute, transgendered teen who lives in a Utopian version of the America we know today. Her town, Lucille, has been rid of “monsters,” or evildoers, by the town’s “angels.” All the children of Lucille are taught that there are no politicians, no police, no crime, no miserly billionaires, or bigots. Evil has been eradicated and people are able to live their lives worry free. Or so they think. When Jam accidentally bleeds on a painting of her mother’s creation, and what looks like a terrifying monster crawls out of it, she is faced with truly gruesome reality—what if everything is not as it appears?

The challenges that Jam must face are very timeless—good vs. evil, right vs. wrong, and the age-old story of the wolf in sheep’s clothing. Yet author Akwaeke Emezi peppers the story with nuances that feel very, very new. The portrayal of family bonds and self-assurance are subtle within the storytelling, but the messages are strong. The picture of this world is a fascinating balance of surreal and futuristic and the magical realism that accompanies the telling is quite refreshing.

This book is great for a wide range of readers. It is accessible to younger readers, but many adult readers can benefit from reading it as well. Jam is 15 and faces issues that most young people (or former young people) can relate to. She is getting older, the world is getting scarier, and she is having difficulty communicating with her parents for the first time. Although this is a rather short book, it is packed with many, many captivating layers that will keep you intrigued and thinking long after you set it down.

Review provided by Elizabeth Newman, Monticello Branch Library

NCTE News

WELCOME WELCOME

Did you miss it? [NCTE 2019](#) in Baltimore, Maryland was an amazing experience in Spirited Inquiry. I met people from Chicago, Bermuda, Hawaii, and Maine. I made new friends, visited the Pratt Library, ate fresh seafood, and heard some incredible speakers. Stay tuned for more pictures and a report in our next issue.

AND MEANWHILE

The new [call for proposals](#) is already open for the [2020 NCTE Annual Convention](#) in Denver, Colorado on November 19-22. Proposals are being accepted through January 15th. It's time to consider what you want to share with your ELA colleagues from around our nation and whom you want to collaborate with in designing your presentation in response to the theme:

¡Confluencia!

Songs of Ourselves



Here are two photos of your humble editor, reaping the rewards of work well done at NCTE.



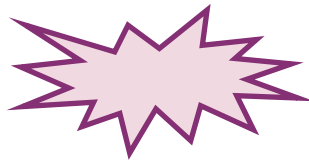
Arkansas Anthology



No news is good news! We're still waiting for word of *Arkansas Anthology 2019*. Until it arrives, enjoy the downloadable copy of the interactive *Arkansas Anthology 2018* which is available **here**.

A call for submissions as well as other past issues are available **here**.

For more information, contact **Aaron Hall** about access or submissions for 2020.



AEJ 2019

A Learning Journey: Exploring New Paths to Teaching and Learning

A call for manuscripts and submission guidelines are available here:

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

Support this journal by sending us your scholarship and encouraging your friends and colleagues to send theirs for review too. Submit your documents to

ACTELA123@gmail.com.

Arkansas English Journal Volume 5.1 is available online **here**.

Ask a Librarian

One of my career goals is to survive the life of a literacy enthusiast and supporter, to retire at the end of a long and successful career and enjoy the fruits of my labor. People who do so are my heroes.

Carolyn Ashcraft has served Arkansas literacy for many years as a librarian, and she recently announced her retirement at the end of the year. In the following interview, she tells us about the history of her career and offers advice for Arkansas teachers and literacy advocates.



What is your favorite book?

That's a hard one. I'd say the one book that has always stuck in my mind that I like to reread from time to time is To Kill a Mockingbird. It's Southern; it's true to life; it has conflict. I like the whole story behind To Kill a Mockingbird.

How did you learn to love books?

As a child, I don't recall much reading in the home when I was a toddler. It was pretty much once we got to school, which for us was first grade and just learning to read. And then mother started taking us up to the library about once a month to let us get books to read.

So you had an early library experience then?

Yes, definitely.

Have you ever met a famous writer?

I've met most of the writers that we bring into the state [such as] Rick Bragg and Terry Kay who wrote To Dance with the White Dog and most recently Delia Owens and Lisa Wingate. Outside of that when I've gone to conferences I have sat in on some sessions, but I've never gotten to shake the person's hand and have a real conversation.

Who's your favorite author? And I guess maybe by that I mean living author?

Gee. I'd almost rather go back to nonliving and say Maya Angelou. She's great. She wrote so many different things. I really liked her writings.

What is it you love about her as a writer?

Knowing her background story. She's from Arkansas. [I understand] the trials and tribulations she went through and then to see how revered she is by so many and really how she accomplished so much in her life. [She is a] Very strong woman. Very strong woman.

When did you decide you wanted to work in libraries?

In 1968. I was in the sixth grade in Sheridan Elementary School. Sheridan's my home town. My class would walk over to the school library for like 30 minutes of librarian time. Ms Waddle asked me and my teacher if I could be her library helper. She let me sit in her chair, and I'd take the card out and have them sign it and stamp the due date. I felt so empowered sitting at that desk. After everyone got their books I got to alphabetize the cards and help put the books back on the shelf.

Tell us about a time that challenged your career choice and how you endured it and overcame it.

I wanted to be a school librarian. I went to UA Monticello to get my teaching degree because you can't just go straight into a library degree program. I went to UAM and got my English degree and I taught for a semester. I absolutely hated teaching and you used to have to teach for five years before you could go into the school media library program so I spent a whole summer in Monticello not working and thinking how I had spent four years of college to get a teaching degree and couldn't stand it. Through luck or the Good Lord my sister-in-law was a secretary here in Little Rock and she was on maternity leave. She talked her boss into letting me fill in for her. And I was a very good secretary because one of the things I taught was English and typing. I came up to Little Rock and drove back and forth and worked for a year as a secretary. I liked the change. I like helping people, and I like filing and that kind of stuff. It gave me the break that I needed and a job until a library position opened up.

Were you eligible at that point for a library job?

Technically, I wasn't. The job was at the Grant County Library, the one in Sheridan. It required eighteen hours towards the masters degree, and I didn't have the hours. But people there know each other and they took a chance on me that I would start work and work toward getting the 18 hours while I was there. At that time [a professor] came up here from LSU to UALR, and was trying to establish an accredited library school, so I took my hours here in Little Rock, which was nice. Unfortunately the program didn't make, but I had my eighteen hours so I worked at the Grant County Library for the next five years.



When did you get your MLS?

I finished up my MLS during the summers of [19]89, 90, and 91. I spent [those summers] in Tuscaloosa at the University of Alabama. In 1986 I had been offered and accepted a job at the Saline County Library at Benton. That job required the MLS, so again I was hired conditionally with the understanding that they would help me get my masters. When I applied for library school at Alabama, I had to start all over because they would not accept any of the hours [I had earned in Little Rock]. So I spent three summers in Tuscaloosa. My board allowed me that time off, and I went and got the masters degree.

I've been fortunate over the years and had great mentors that gave me great advice and people who have supported me. The doors have just opened up at the right time and provided me opportunities that I was able to avail myself of.

What are your future plans? Are you going to give up literacy advocacy, or how do you plan to remain involved?

I am on the Arkansas AARP Executive Council and they also support literacy efforts and programming for senior citizens (55 and above). I use it as an opportunity to tie libraries as resources for the older generation, and I'll continue to do that for at least the next two years. That keeps me involved on the state level. Locally I've already had someone hit me up to join the Friends of the Library at home. I'd like to have at least a year that I just chill out and enjoy being off work. Then I'll probably try and do something locally to help support them. I don't want to get in the way of someone, but I feel like I have something to contribute. I also buy books for the young ones in my family.

What advice do you have for English/Language Arts teachers in Arkansas about how we can help our students love reading?

Realize that there are all various formats of materials out there. There are now graphic novels and ebooks. Just realize that there are various formats out there, and not one format fits everybody. Strive to encourage them to read something. It can be an ad, the newspaper, a magazine. Have them spend time just reading. Make it fun. We want them to read for fun and for pleasure.

There are various formats out there, and not one format fits everybody.

What are you most grateful for in your career in promoting literacy?

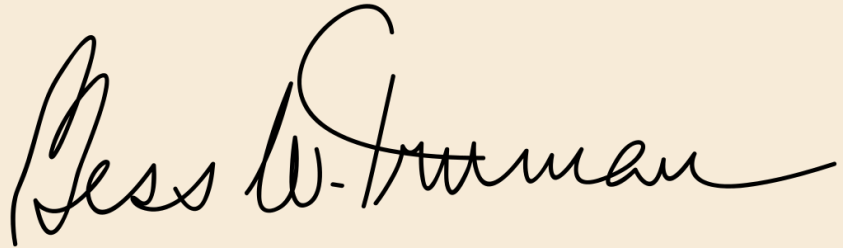
Impacting people's lives. The lives that have touched me and the lives I've been able to touch. Paying it forward. So many people have helped me, and I want people to think I've helped others.

[I have had] a good fifty-year run since 1968. I've worked with many people and [had] a rewarding career.

New things come along, and I think, would I do that? The younger generation has that energy and excitement now to do things in a different way and that's just wonderful. UAM was a great place to get my start. Things just change and you have to learn to roll and adjust with changes.

What are you going to read next?

I [am going to read a book about] Bess Truman. My preferred reading is actually American history and nonfiction biographies.



THE 2019 YALSA TEENS' TOP TEN TITLES WERE ANNOUNCED IN OCTOBER. DOWNLOAD THE FULL LIST WITH ANNOTATIONS NOW AND SHARE THEM WITH YOUR TEENAGE READERS. HAVE YOUR TEENS READ A GOOD BOOK RECENTLY? THEY CAN SUBMIT IT HERE TO BE CONSIDERED AS A NOMINEE FOR THE 2020 TEENS' TOP TEN.



Sunny Styles-Foster shows off the ACTELA flyer from NCTE.

ACTELA's former president, Dixie Keyes, lost her mother recently. Our thoughts and prayers are with you, Dixie.

Keeping up with the Joneses

Our series of interviews with the Jones family begins with a talk with Dr C. Morrell Jones, the patriarch of a family of teachers.



Where did your career in teaching begin?

My first teaching position? You mean how did I get involved?

Well, did you set out to be a teacher?

No. No, I was going to be a doctor. That's what I had said I was going to be when I was in the sixth grade. In fact I came out here to AGM and spent two years out there [accumulating] 90 hours. Then I realized that wasn't what I wanted to do. I came back home, came to the house, and told mother "I'm not going to go back. I'm going to teach." And she said "okay!"

Was your mother a teacher?

No. My mother finished the 8th grade. My dad finished the 3rd Grade. But they believed in education.

Tell me about your first teaching job.

So I did two years at AGM and I went to Fayetteville and did the third year because I needed a math course to complete my major and it wasn't going to be offered at AGM. And so I went up there and graduated in three years. But in March, the school board from Stewartsville, Missouri came to campus and interviewed me for a job and I took it.

What were you teaching there?

I taught biology and all the math courses. I taught general science and math, algebra, trig, and coached volleyball.

Which teacher had the biggest impact on you?

That would have to be Ms Jenkins. She was my biology teacher in high school in Monticello.

Why did she have such an impact?

She was excited about what she was teaching and fostered my interest in science because all kids are interested in animals because they move, but not every kid is excited about plants. [In] Math, basically the teachers I had changed how I wanted to teach because I didn't like how [my high school] classes other than Ms Jenkins's were taught. She fostered joy in learning.

What do you think is the most important thing teachers can do to develop literacy skills in their students?

Introducing this has to occur when these kids are 1-2 years old. They have to hear lots of language so that they get a handle on it, not once they get to school. It needs to be introduced early. They've got to be talked to, read to, sung to. 61% of the students in Arkansas are not reading on grade level.

We have our abc program. But students still can't learn the vocabulary because they don't have the background. This background comes before school when they are basically listening.

The first time children see anything new they have to get their hands on it.

[Children need to learn with] Hands on through third grade.
Let them talk and let them see that talking is the same as print. Let them talk into a recorder and let them write down what they are saying so they can see it.
The first time a child sees anything new they have to get their hands on it.
We need to teach according to how children develop.
We have to teach children based on what they know.

Who inspires your work?

The students. That's the reason I've stayed in the classroom for 61 years.
[Being in] Administration didn't work [for me] because I wasn't working with the students.
Students inspire me in two ways: The student who wants to learn and the student who says "no, I'm not going to learn"--that's a challenge to me.

Why do you think literacy skills are important outside of English/language arts?

Because if a child can't read he's going to miss a lot. You have to be able to read. This is why we must teach literacy skills in all areas. **In all areas.**
Science is the most difficult with all the big words. Students will miss a lot in math if they don't read the problem correctly.

What advice do you have for ELA teachers in Arkansas?

We need to spend time talking to individuals because that's how you get to hear the most language, the most words.
My first student was a student who did not read or write, and I taught him how to write his name.
Talk to [your students] without getting irritated. For adults and high school students, they have to have a reason to learn.

What are you most grateful for in your career?

The opportunity to work with young children. I've worked with a lot of people who believe the same things I do. Teachers are models.
I have 8 grandkids and 18 great-grandsons who are learning great literacy skills.

We'll continue this series by interviewing another teacher in the Jones family for our next newsletter. Contribute questions [here](#).

Global Perspective

Merely an Introduction to Documentation and the Incarceration of Ezra Pound by Tara Rowe

Tara Rowe was nineteen years old when I first met her. She was one of many freshmen that year in my composition classroom, a quiet girl, easy to overlook, who sat near the back corner of a crowded room. It might have been many weeks before I noticed her except that I got an email bringing her to my attention. Tara was already a proficient writer, and she had an active blog with followers throughout the world. She was keenly fascinated with politics, and her particular interest was the career and assassination of John F. Kennedy. As she did in response to so much of her life, she recorded her thoughts of the first day in attendance that year at Idaho State University in some detail, and among them she described me. Her readers were struck by her words, and one of them decided I should see them too. He found my contact information, I suppose, in the ISU faculty directory and sent me a link with a message that simply said, “If you are the same teacher Tara describes in this post, you might want to read it.” [See for yourself](#) what Tara had to say about her English teacher that day:

Fall Classes Resume

Today fall classes resumed at Idaho State University. For me this means fifteen credits, not too many, but just right for me! It probably means for my handful of faithful readers you'll have a few wound up arguments from me after my political science and history classes. Fair warning.

The college experience is much less crazy this year, as opposed to last, my freshman year at ISU. This morning it was me lying in bed laughing at the frantic freshman running through the house trying to figure out what to do this first day of school as I relaxed and didn't have a single fear!

My English teacher is quite interesting—no that doesn't do her justice! She grew up in Texas, moved to Arkansas, got her doctorate, and here she is at ISU teaching



me! She has a fine southern accent and is very excited when it comes to literature. I think we will get along just fine. If we were only reading Faulkner... (I actually came out of that class for the first time thinking I could be an English professor and be happy about it. I have this problem everytime I encounter great instructors who present great content! Happened with philosophy, but it just hasn't quite struck me in the math department!)

Seems to have been a productive first day and I'm anxious for tomorrow and the days that will follow. I'm a geek like that! Hopefully with all that is happening I will find the time to write interesting and informative posts. Please hang with me, eventually I'll post something!

That post was made way back in August of 2004. In early September of the same year, her [blog post](#) mentions me again:

Methods of Higher Education

What as college students are we seeking? Today in my English 102 class, my professor explained to us that in comparison to the European school system, as college freshmen we are at least 6 years behind our European counterparts. At the time we receive a BA or BS degree, we have caught up to where the average European high school graduate is. Why is this?

Our public school systems are lacking. Severely deficient, we are being denied our basic educations as high school, junior high, and elementary students. When we, the few, set out for post-secondary educations, we are unprepared for the rigorous course work. As what I consider to be a successful product of public schooling, I was surprised by these statistics. Surprised, but not shocked. I know there are teachers within the system who fail in meeting the required curriculum. My first two years of high school were inadequate and never was I expected to do anymore than pass, much less excel. My two final years of high school were much more progressive and adequate, but even then I encountered a teacher who showed "Cool Runnings" at least fifteen times. I admire and appreciate those public school teachers who are overworked, underpaid, and yet miraculously are attributed to the success of graduates like me.

Despite our public school background and our high school experiences, we come to college not knowing what we want. From an educational perspective, we lack motivation. We aren't aspiring to reach our greatest potentials, but are merely setting out to attain a degree in a particular field of study. Why are we not here to become educated? I sit through a higher division history class twice a week frustrated with how little I've learned about European history in my life. I read book after book hoping to one day understand the Kennedy assassination. I'm enthralled with CSPAN daily. Yet I am not satisfied with how much I collectively "know."

I'm not your typical nineteen year old, but shouldn't we all seek for more than

what we have. As students in institutions of higher learning our number one objective should be to obtain knowledge. To become an educated individual who will better society. Why are we here if not for that purpose? If you are sitting in a college classroom today and don't know for what reason, it is about time you start questioning. And just because you are here to get a degree or a certificate and know exactly how you'll go about it, that doesn't mean you are reaching your full potential and gaining the highest education you possibly can.

Thanks to Kay Walter I've learned this today, I've been inspired to seek for my true potential, and hope all of my college counterparts will give it at least a moment of consideration.

My days of teaching composition classes in Idaho are long past now. Tara's blog has been inactive for years, and she has moved on to interests in other areas of research and other writing projects. Just like all of us who write, Tara knows that sometimes the burden of composition gets heavy, and sometimes the words won't come.

When she wrote to me in the spring, Tara was in a slump. She needed something engaging to prime the flow of words. I noticed an online call for contributions to a collection of essays about Ezra Pound. I know Pound is among Tara's ongoing research interests, so I shared the call with her. It sparked her imagination just as I'd hoped it might, and she soon shared with me a query letter proposing a chapter for the book.

Her proposal was, of course, accepted, and before long I was getting photos of piles of books about Pound which she was re-reading. Summer came, and she asked for, and received, an extension of her deadline. Her chapter grew and grew, as writing projects will, and by the time she let me see, it was amazing. I learned so much I hadn't known about Ezra Pound!

Tara's biggest struggle along the way was documenting her resources. She is accustomed to writing histories, and she is adept with Chicago documentation and with the APA style manual, but MLA was a documentation style she had left behind in my freshman composition classroom.

Tara has agreed to write a Global Perspective for us about her recent writing experience. She would have told her tale in this very issue of *The English Pub*, but ill health has impeded her work. She is sick, and I trust we will all send our best wishes for her speedy recovery from the lingering sinus infection which has plagued her all fall and saps her strength.

We can look forward to an engaging story from Tara in our next issue. She will write for us about her struggles with documentation and will share her thoughts on teaching it. Her ideas are worth our patience. This I know.



**TARA ROWE WITH IDAHO POLITICIAN,
RICHARD STALLINGS, AND ISU
LIBRARIAN, LEONARD HITCHCOCK**

Developing Connections



Are there active scholars in your household? Do they have library cards?

[Share photos with us!](#)



2019 Affiliate
Newsletter of Excellence Award

Literacy and NTCE is the official blog of the National Council of Teachers in English

<http://blog.ncte.org//>

The next issue of our newsletter will appear in the new year. Take some time over the holidays to decide what news you have to share with your fellow ELA teachers. What have you accomplished that deserves recognition and will inspire your fellow literacy enthusiasts? Send words and images [here](#).

Email Contacts for Ideas and Input

Membership

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Anthology Submissions

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Teacher Initiative

sunnyf@uca.edu

Our next newsletter will report on NCTE 2019 as well as other presentations made by our affiliate members. What contributions to scholarship are you making? Write and tell us all about it [here](#).