

The English Pub

ACTELA Newsletter

Arkansas Council of Teachers of English and Language Arts



Letter from the President

Write the World

Is an online platform for young writers to share ideas, explore talents, and provide feedback for growth.

It offers regular suggests to inspire writing and ongoing competitions. If you are looking for a way to motivate your students to make their writing public, try it out and let us know your results.

Email our editor at walter@uamont.edu

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Dear ACTELA,

If you are like me, you absolutely LOVE this time of year--the cooler temperatures, a dreary day now and then, and the beautiful autumnal colors! With the holidays just on the horizon, this is a good time to stop and enjoy the world around us. This time of year can be very hectic, especially if you are teaching. Instead of stressing about the holidays ahead, take a



little time out of your schedule to curl up with your favorite book, listen to your favorite podcast, or relax outside and enjoy the weather! Check out NCTE resources for great ideas to share with your classes, and consider how you can rev up your instruction during the fall and winter months. Most of all, take time out for you! We all deserve a little break every now and then.

Sunny Styles-Foster
ACTELA President

Stay in Touch!

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Arkansas Council of Teachers of English Language Arts



Editorial Note

by **Dr Kay J. Walter**

This month, *The English Pub*, catches us up on recent events. We have photos from the summer Media and Literacy conference, an introduction to ACTELA's Teacher of the Year, a report from higher education's efforts to help students bridge the gap between secondary and post-secondary English classes, and much, much more. Arkansas ELA teachers at all levels have been very busy! It seems like we never slow down but go from victory to victory all of which need reporting. Whenever I start to produce an issue of the newsletter, I wonder what we'll have to share with each other and the world. I fret over filling the first few pages, and then—miraculously—the stories come tumbling in and a few pages turn into dozens. Before long I find myself looking for places to trim a bit to make everything fit neatly and settle into lengths that are readable and well-illustrated. I hope the results are inviting and pleasing. You may even find pieces of the newsletter you wish your students would read. If so, share the link with them! Maybe you could even assign posting a comment online as a brief writing exercise. We try to answer all comments to assure our readers that their opinions count. Our most important audience is the ELA teachers in Arkansas, so remember this publication is for you. If you have ideas, photos, questions, comments, books, or assignments that inspire you, share them with us. If you know of conference calls for papers or publications calling for manuscripts, let us know. If there are issues you'd like ACTELA to address, tell us so we can report on it. We're here to share your news with the world, and the world is listening.



**JESSICA HERRING
WATSON WILL BE
ACTELA's 2020
-22 PRESIDENT.**

Meet Gina Bolick

Arkansas Teacher of the Year



Gina Bolick is currently in her fourth year of teaching. She taught 8th grade English for three years at Watson Chapel Junior High in Pine Bluff and is currently teaching 8th grade English at Bryant Junior High. She also serves as 8th grade dance coach. One of her passions is helping with BearsWrite Summer Camp at University of Central Arkansas. In addition, she teamed with colleagues to present student work at the 2018 National Council of Teachers of English Convention in Houston, Texas. Gina strongly believes in building relationships with students and allowing students to read and write on topics that are meaningful to their world.



**Annual membership
in ACTELA is only
\$20 in 2019.**

NCTE News

2019 NATIONAL CONVENTION

Baltimore, Maryland is the place to be this November for the annual NCTE convention. Literacy enthusiasts from throughout the nation, across the continent, and around the world will gather to share ideas and renew their love of ELA teaching. ACTELA will receive a national award for our newsletter at the Affiliate Breakfast, and we will be presenting at the Affiliate Roundtables.

REGISTER NOW!!

BECAUSE
WISDOM BEGINS
WITH WONDER

You still have time to register at the Early-Bird rate until November 11, but after that date the price to attend rises.

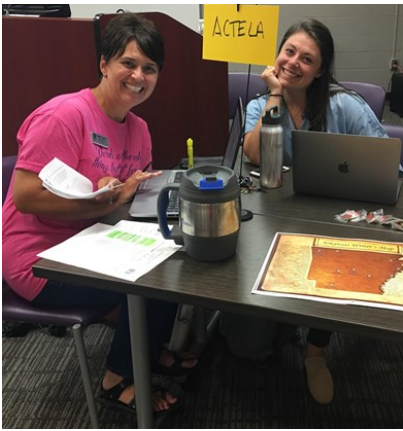
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MEDIA LITERACY

October is the month for promoting media literacy. There are many online resources to encourage the development of critical thinking skills through using media for research in the classroom. Here is NCTE's [Resolution on English Education for Critical Literacy in Politics and Media](#).

Erin Gruwell, teacher of the original Freedom Writers, will be speaking to NCTE Secondary Section Leaders, and we are all invited to join them on 20 November. [Learn more here!](#)



UCA Media and Literacy Conference 2019

by **Sunny Styles-Foster**, UCA

ACTELA President Sunny Styles-Foster (left) and Vice-President Jessica Herring Watson (right) work the information table in the exhibitor hall.



The UCA Media and Literacy Conference was held on the campus of the University of Central Arkansas on July 9th & 10th. This conference brought together the 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 conference was a huge success, with over 150 attendees and over 50 high quality sessions! We also had an exhibitor room where local authors and businesses were able to highlight and share their products and resources. We hosted continuous Skype sessions with authors from all around the United States. Thank you to Dr. Jeff Whittingham for organizing those sessions!

Huge thanks also go to Dr. Janine Chitty for bringing her pre-service teachers to the conference from the University of Arkansas Fort Smith. We would love to see more of our future educators next year. Save the date for next year's UCA Media and Literacy Conference to be held on July 7th & 8th. See you there!

Gina Bolick was honored as ACTELA Teacher of the Year.



All attendees and presenters received a t-shirt with their registration.



Rachel Shankles highlights the ArLA organization.



Arkansas author James Babb presented a session at the conference and hosted a table in the exhibit hall.



ArLA also hosted an Author Table.



Jeanne Trawick shops the wonderful jewelry at Kendra Street's booth.

UAFS pre-service teachers who presented at the UCA Media and Literacy Conference include (L to R) Golden Mulkey, Dakota Padilla, Emilie Payne, and Allison Thompson.





Arguing, Writing, and **Murder**, Oh My!

by **Madison Peschock**

Ocean County College

In 46 BC, Cicero stated in his essay “On the Best Style of Orators,” “He is the best orator who by speaking both teaches, and delights, and moves the minds of his hearers. To teach them is his duty, to delight them is creditable to him, to move them is indispensable” (67). While Cicero was a great orator and not an English teacher, he provided teachers with three major points that we can learn from. We, as teachers of writing, should be teaching, delighting, and moving our students, but performing all of these functions at the same time is not only exhausting but almost impossible when teaching composition or research by using traditional essays in a textbook. Students don’t want to read and often come to class unprepared to learn. However, I have discovered a way to get students to read and be interested in learning. By using a murder trial as a unit in the classroom, I find that students not only are taught how to think critically by examining evidence, they also learn many other important skills. In practicing their problem solving skills, they learn how to interpret/analyze facts, how to determine biased research, the difference between primary and secondary sources, how to work together, how to argue, and how to form a claim. Thus, using a real legal trial in the English classroom not only will enhance your students’ skills but also teach, delight, and move them.

I first got the idea to spice up my college writing courses and ditch the traditional essays published in a textbook when I read a study published in 2012 entitled “Why University Students Don’t Read: What Professors Can Do to Increase Compliance”—by Mary E. Hoeft. This article determined that several factors contributed to why students do not read. One is they often work and their work schedules and their social lives interfere with their time to read. However, this study had students providing suggestions to professors about what



would make them read. Their suggestions include: “1.) give quizzes, 2.) give supplementary assignments and 3.) give frequent reminders about the interesting assignments that [are] due” (Hoeft 9). The word the author of this study emphasizes is “interesting.” In fact, Hoeft explains that students want “assignments that capture their attention: make it sound more interesting! Get us more interested in the topic” (Hoeft 9). With this idea in mind, and the idea of what topics are “hot” in pop culture, I started to ponder what types of topics were interesting to my students. I took a survey in my writing courses. My students responded by explaining they were interested in crime tv shows and superheroes. Since I was not interested in superheroes, I used crime as the subject to craft my unit and assignments.



Here is how to craft a successful unit on argument using a murder trial in the writing classroom:

First, find a controversial murder case that has both journal articles and internet articles or newspaper articles written about it. Be sure that there is media footage on *youtube.com* to show in class. Examples of famous murderers might include these: Betty Broderick, Casey Anthony, Scott Peterson, Jeffrey MacDonald, and the Menendez brothers.

Next, find a variety of different articles written about the case. Copy these for students and distribute them in class for students to read, but first show them video of the case.

Introduce the class to the main people involved in the case. Let them see who the defendant is as well as the prosecutor and defense lawyers. Present to them the argument—who is the defendant and who is/are the prosecutors. Show a video from *youtube.com* that summarizes the case such as from MSNBC or another news story. (This will hook them).

Next distribute the articles and ask the students to read and annotate one to five articles. (I can cover one article per class or two per class if they are brief.) Engage students with group questions and then hold a discussion of the main points that both the prosecution and defense will use to create their cases. Be sure to point out where there is bias in the articles and discuss what sources are acceptable, better, and best to support the points. Next, discuss what a claim is and ask students to form a claim on the case. Once students do this, divide them into two groups—the prosecution and defense. Have students pick out what support/proof they



will use for the main points for their side.

Next, allow students about half a period to discuss their supports/proof in their groups. During the second half of the class, hold a mock trial. As the teacher/professor, you will be the judge. Ask one student from each group to come to the front of the room to present one main point and get them to argue, but reinforce the need to prove everything using evidence.

Finally, explain how to structure an argumentative essay. The students should be ready to write an argumentative essay on the case.

I was surprised at how enthusiastic my students became when I used this unit, and I think you will be too. Many of my students wanted to conduct more research and talk about the assignment with friends outside of class. The most important outcome I saw was that essay grades were significantly higher than when I used traditional essays from our textbook. Thus, students became delighted and moved because they were engaged in the content of the class, and they had fun while learning.



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Creating a Growth Mindset and Stocking the Freshman Toolkit of Strategies

by **Terry Nugent**

University of Arkansas at Monticello

Summers make me antsy. By July, I can't wait to get back into a classroom and meet new students, especially freshmen. New freshmen are optimistic, a bit giddy at starting a new chapter in their lives as "adults," and simultaneously terrified. Adding to the excitement and anxiety of transitioning to college is the seemingly incomprehensible processes in the offices of placement and financial aid. As an Assistant Professor of English, I cannot begin to explain the intricacies of financial aid, but I know that data shows that traditional remediation does not work. The state of Arkansas is in the process of replacing stand-alone remedial courses with co-requisite remediation programs. The co-requisite program allows students to begin their first-year writing courses on time, and for those who need it, extra support is provided concurrently. Additionally, all institutions of higher education have been implementing programs to address the needs of new students like Summer Bridge Programs and First-Year Experience Programs. These are designed to introduce students to campus resources, familiarize them with the technology and systems utilized for class platforms like Canvas or Blackboard, and foster a sense of community. Furthermore, scholarship has shown that most incoming freshmen believe college will require more writing than in high school, but they are rarely prepared for the amount of reading expected. First-generation students struggle with knowing the unspoken rules of the academic culture.

One way we in first-year writing programs must attempt to meet these documented needs is as simple as being mindful of how we frame our feedback on papers. For example, attaching a note card to the paper providing authentic positive feedback on what was done well, addressing the top three issues a student needs to work on, and explicitly communicating the expectation that they can reach high standards reinforces a growth mindset. This mindset is critical to success as students encounter new challenges. As I've been reminded by both my own children and my students, in high school they knew their teachers and often saw them outside of the school environment; thus they were known and had some sense of security. Anyone teaching freshmen must remember that change is stressful for all of us; new routines, new foods, and new people, even when viewed positively, still disorient us and make us more susceptible to illness and depression. Taking time out to have students discuss

what's been a challenge and what's gone well can help them to feel part of a community and practice problem solving skills.

Another difference between high school and college is the writing expectations, especially for those who complete their high school English courses prior to their senior year. Those who take college English courses in high school often focus on writing that emphasizes timed exercises in preparation for the college entrance exams. Students who succeed in high school have often mastered the expectations inherent in formulaic assignments and expect college writing to be much the same. Yet First Year Writing programs often disrupt these expectations, emphasizing writing that is theoretical, critical, and less explicit. Students are expected to write four to five major papers during a semester ranging from a minimum of 500 words to 1500 words with papers due every three to four weeks. Furthermore, writing-intensive courses will frequently require daily or weekly reading responses or exercises to be turned in or posted in their online course shell. This volume of production in the freshman writing class, but also in their other courses, can easily overwhelm students leading to a spiraling cycle of issues. Students who take gen ed English courses in high school find themselves competing in college with more mature peers who have had two years to adjust to the new environment.



Students in Dr Nugent's freshman writing classes enjoy working together to plan their revisions.



Working together helps Dr Nugent's students become part of a community of support.

These increased expectations across the disciplines are addressed in David Bartholomae's essay "Inventing the University." Bartholomae argues that students enter college to find that each discipline requires its own formats, conventions, and ways of knowing. In college, writing is viewed as a means for thinking through concepts and synthesizing information gathered from multiple sources including lectures, experiments, textbooks, and both academic and non-academic texts. Accordingly, any practice in interpreting charts, statistics, films, speeches, and fiction



Dr Nugent's students stop by his office to work, grab a snack, or just visit.

presented in both print and digital formats and analyzing their rhetorical elements will benefit freshmen as they move into academic writing for all majors. While the need to be able to summarize, analyze, and synthesize texts is a common thread in discussions of student transitions, a more basic skill is rarely mentioned. Perhaps the greatest skill a student needs before entering college is learning to take notes on lectures and texts effectively and *for a purpose*. Too often, students will attempt to write down everything in a lecture or mark up everything in a reading without first asking *what do I need to know and why?* Learning what is important in a subject, how the lecture relates to the assignments, and how to then create useful notes for completing an assignment or preparing for a test is both a critical and practical skill students need. Ultimately, first-year writing

programs seek to instill in freshmen both a growth mindset and a well-stocked toolkit of strategies from which they can draw in their academic journeys. College professors appreciate the preparation public school ELA teachers give their students to help them thrive during this experience.



**DONNA WAKE
IS ACTELA'S
2020-22
SECRETARY.**

KEEP IT IN YOUR POCKET!

by **Emily Jackson**, UAM



Do your students still try to use their phones surreptitiously in your classroom? Do you get tired of policing rules about cell phone use at school? We've found a technological way to incentivize time away from electronic stimuli. Pocket Points is an app created to make you more aware of your phone use. You can earn points by simply staying off your phone! When first downloading, you will be prompted to create a profile, and from there you can log when you are in class or driving as phone-free time.

Lock your phone when you get to class or when you get in the car, and you will earn points toward gift cards or discounts. As a college student, I am always on my campus so when and where I can earn points is a little odd, but using it in a highschool classroom could prove very beneficial. Not only can your students earn points for standard rewards, they can work towards goals and prizes you, as their teacher, have set up for them. Download the app and let us know what you think of it and how you use it. If you experiment with it in class, have your students write and offer their feedback too! Email your ideas and responses [here](#).



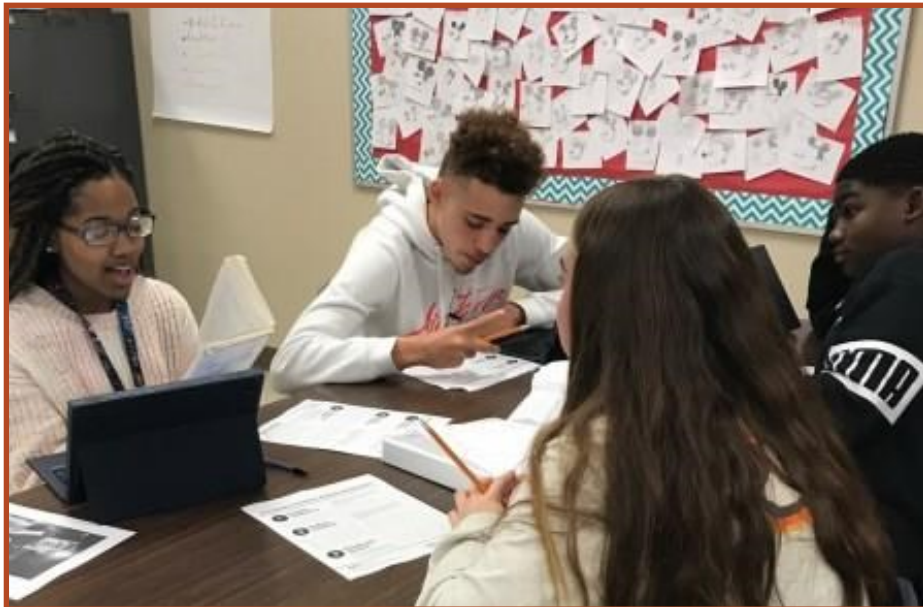
Creative Approaches to Reading

by **Grover Welch**, Newport Special School District—High School

The book is small, maybe 100 pages, and as soon as I hand it to the student he exclaims, “Ah, another book.” Unfortunately, this is how most of my ninth-graders respond to any demand I put on reading, whether I’m sending home an article to read for class or asking about their own reading lists.

America has a reading problem. Arkansas has a reading problem. I have a reading problem. Students today have become addicted to the one-minute fill-up of information they can glean from a Google search, most not even going beyond the search results.

I recognize this in students every time we try to have informed discussions in class. They regurgitate a fact or idea with no knowledge of the context for what they are actually saying, attributing quotes to inaccurate persons be-



Mr Welch’s students read and write together.

cause of a meme or video online. How can we break this cycle and bring back a curiosity for background knowledge?

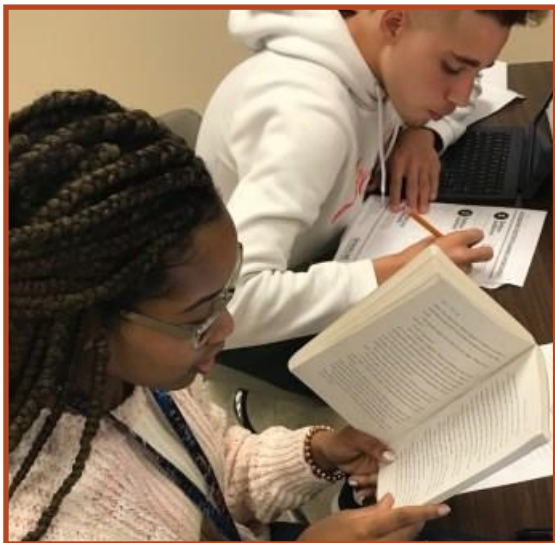
I know that research has proven children who read many different texts improve in background knowledge, comprehension, fluency, and writing (Krashen). However, I watch as my poorest students fall further and further behind their fellow readers. No amount of reading intervention and tutoring can completely alleviate this deficit.

As teachers, we are called constantly to find ways and methods that will help students read proficiently. No matter what we do in school the way to improve reading is to read as much as possible—widely and often.

I have worked this year to identify and try to overcome some of the obstacles to reading in my classroom, thinking of it as a lab of sorts to study and analyze. It is filled with books in the form of a classroom library.

The action research I am attempting has already begun to change my practice and generate ideas. I began with self-reported lists from students of current and past readings. With these, I began to clarify a vision of the obstacles. Finding most of the students were reading well-below-grade-level texts, I instituted challenges to encourage higher levels. One such challenge resulted in creating what I call Bounty Books. These are books of significant value that I reward with some type of prize. The first of these Bounty Books was *Moby Dick*. I declared that anyone who reads this book and presents on the story can receive two Whale Bars (chocolate brownies with white frosting).

I have also started discussing books I have read with my students telling



Nia Wren reads from *Keep Me in Mind* to fellow students during Read/Share in Mr Welch's 9th Grade Pre-AP classroom.

them how much I am liking the most recent read. I make sure they know I am a voracious reader. When students ask me how I can remember facts and dates and information, I always say, “I read it and therefore I learned it.” This has resulted in Mr Welch’s Challenge for which my students are trying to read the books I read after I’m finished.

Reluctant readers, however, are ever-present. They present the biggest hurdle. I try to tackle this with a concept I call Read/Share. At least once a week I call on students to share their favorite page of the book they currently read. I usually only have one or two share at a time, and the practice is growing in popularity.

Taking time in class to read anything is part of this process. I have limited time each week with students, but I have to give at least a fifth of my overall time to them for reading.

I also tell my students that the experience of reading is often the greatest reward. By making reading a priority in the classroom, I create a sense of urgency around the skills I am reinforcing.

Donalyn Miller wrote in a blog post, “Dormant readers, who possess the reading skills needed for academic tasks, see reading as a school job—not as an activity in which they would willingly engage outside school” (Ascd.org). This idea feels extremely poignant when I consider the current reading students in my classroom. They see reading as something they should be graded on and only read if they see some type of motivating factor. As a teacher, I have to fight the urge to give them reading assignments and grades as motivators. These do not work; instead, they often fall into the idea that reading is that “school job.”

“The Commission on Reading’s Report Becoming a Nation of Readers (Anderson, et al.) recommends two hours of silent sustained reading a week, but increasing curriculum demands and the need to prepare students for standardized tests have made independent reading time a luxury in many classrooms,” says Miller.

I see the time in school as the gateway to getting students reading. Using interest-based classroom reading, I am able to raise interest in students, celebrating students who are reading more than average. Creating positive talk around reading and encouraging engaging discussions contributes to their interest because I am genuinely taking an interest in what they are reading.

I also “genre talk” a lot in my room. I bring in conversations about television shows, movies, and pop culture. I tie these into genres that may be interesting. A most recent example was the show *Riverdale* on the CW network. I let my students spend three to five minutes discussing the most recent episode then transitioned them into YA books that would pre-

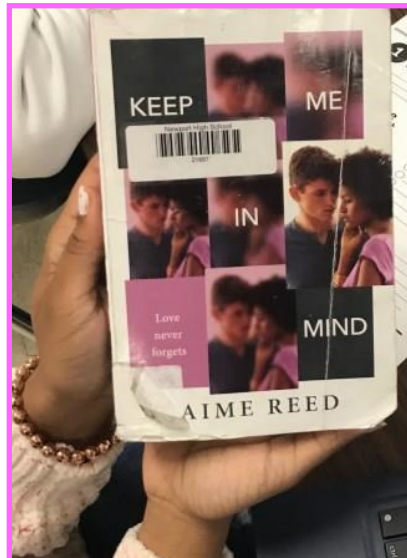


Cameron Culclager reads from his online text, *Fahrenheit 451*, sharing his own annotations with student Diana Hernandez.

sent the same type of experience. Again, this takes time out of the classroom curriculum, but it encourages growth that will benefit both student and teacher.

I also have allowed students to bridge between texts we are working with in class and out-of-class reading. In a recent essay, my students tied themes and ideas from *Fahrenheit 451*, by Ray Bradbury, to both the *Hunger Games* and *IQ*. Two novels I had not introduced in lessons suddenly became available to my classes. I was able to change some classroom plans and insert these texts back into our learning in several of the following lessons.

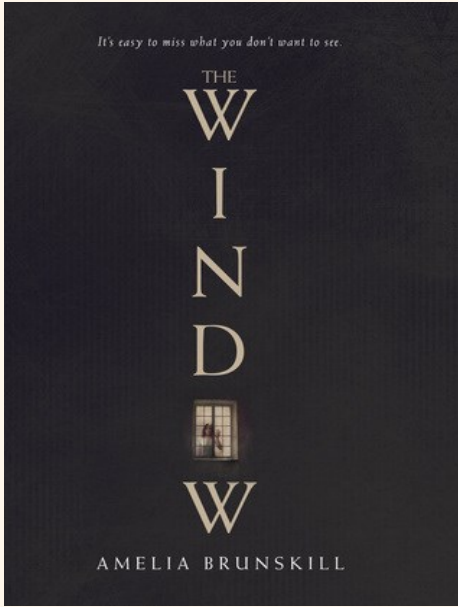
Now as we study *The Odyssey* we are branching out even more and students have brought in connections between the gods of the text and recent video games. I am encouraging students to see these texts as related because these connections open opportunities to improve learning and excite students. It is hard to make these connections unless we allow our kids to lead the way. Such approaches can open up the experience of reading for reluctant readers and possibly change their thinking on and about reading.



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FROM THE LIBRARY BELOW THE GIBBARY



***The Window* by Amelia Brunskill**

Random House / Delacorte Press

Publication Date: April 3, 2018

ISBN: 9781524720292

Identical twins, Jess and Anna Cutter, could not be more different from each other. Jess is reserved and intellectual; Anna is a social butterfly. When Anna falls to her death from her bedroom window, it's not just the grief talking--Jess knows there is more to the story than everyone else thinks, even if her sister did keep some secrets from her. As Jess begins to edge closer to solving the mystery of her sister's death,

she discovers that someone would definitely rather she not know the truth about what happened to Anna.

Atmospheric, creepy, and dark, *The Window* is a suspenseful thriller with all the hallmarks of a good mystery. Misdirection, red herrings, and a race toward the bombshell (if not entirely surprising) conclusion will keep readers guessing until the end. Jess engages in some (very) questionable behavior while trying to answer her own questions about her sister's death, and she is quite an odd and entertaining character who is nevertheless engaging and accessible.

Titles that pair well with *The Window* include Stephanie Perkins's *There's Someone Inside Your House* and *One of Us Is Lying* by Karen McManus, which has a sequel (titled *One of Us Is Next*) due out in January 2020.

Allie Stevens, Director of Calhoun County Library in Hampton, AR

This review is adapted from the original version which appeared on www.yalsa.ala.org/thehub in October 2018.

READERS AND WRITERS



LUCY

Amber reports that her children are capable writers as well. She recruited their help with a recent assignment to write to veterans for an Honor Flight Mail Call, and together the family was able to produce a note for each veteran on the trip. Amber says, "I involved them in my homework and we were able to finish a thank you note for all the veterans on the list!"



JAKE

The children of Amber Wreyford are proud to have library cards from the Lincoln County Library in Star City. They use their library regularly and read together as a family on a daily basis. Thanks to Amber for sharing these photos of her children.



LIBRARY CARDS

We teachers are grateful for Amber and all parents like her who appreciate the importance of helping us develop literacy skills in Arkansas children. Keep up the great work, you guys!



KIRA

Jacob Ryan Scott, 8th grade, age 13; Lucy Okalani Scott, 10th grade, age 15; and Kira Riley Scott, 5th grade, age 10



THE WREYFORD READERS



Nathan and Angela,
the grandchildren of
Constance Burch, like
to read together.

Emily Jackson has been reading since early childhood. The children in her life are also early readers. The following pictures show some of her cousins reading.

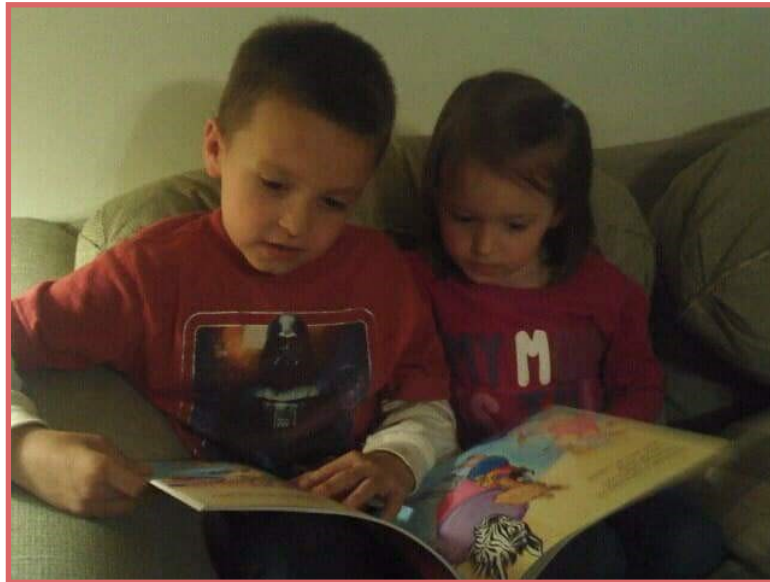


ELLIOTT

LENNON



AUSTIN



EMMA JO



**TIMBER
KATE**

ANNOUNCEMENTS, AWARDS, NEWS, AND NOTES

- Dr Kay J. Walter presented a paper, “Mary Lamb, John Ruskin, and Needlecraft,” at the North American Victorian Studies Association conference in Columbus, Ohio this month. Her undergraduate, Braden Taylor, went with her as one of 19 undergraduates selected from North America to take part in the Undergraduate Research Event.
- At the end of the month, Dr Walter presents “Changing Weather, Changing World: John Ruskin’s Victorian Vision of Global Climate Change” at Victorians Institute in Charleston, West Virginia.
- Dr Walter is also looking forward to NCTE in November, where she will make a presentation at the Affiliate Roundtable Session on “Producing an Award-Winning Newsletter.”
- *The English Pub* has been nominated for the [Library of Congress 2020 State Literacy Awards Program](#).
- This month our newsletter extends a welcome to new readers from Kentucky and Italy as well as towns in Arkansas including Malvern, Smackover, and Yellville.
- ACTELA is excited to announce the 2020-2022 slate of officers! Please join us in welcoming these individuals into their new roles: Jessica Herring Watson, President; Aaron Hall, Vice-President; Donna Wake, Secretary; and Janine Chitty, Treasurer.



SHARE THE NEWS!
SEND IT [HERE](#).



Prague



Strahov Monastery Library



Infant of Prague



Haddon Hall



York Minster



Beethoven manuscript



Find more information about these pictures in the article on page 24.

European Summer

by **Dr Kay J. Walter**

University of Arkansas at Monticello

Arkansas gets too hot for me. I love it here when autumn arrives, but I like to spend my summers in Europe. I prefer to share my adventures, taking students along to explore the haunts of the writers we study and the scenes of the stories we read. This year offered professional opportunities I couldn't resist, though, so I went to Europe alone. I missed my young ones, but I had plenty work to keep me busy.

As an English teacher, I have to travel affordably. The students and I mostly stay in youth hostels or campgrounds and frequently cook our own meals. When I am alone, I stay with friends. My first lodging this year was in Sheffield. A fellow Companion of the Guild of St George, Susie Doncaster, offered me her spare room, and another friend invited me to take part in the [Story Forge](#) Storytelling Event at the [Fat Cat](#). I shared my contribution, "Why I Am from Arkansas," and was moved by the listener who put her hand on my arm and whispered, "That was beautiful!" While I was with Susie, she took me to York to see the museum exhibition, *Ruskin, Turner, and the Storm Cloud: Watercolours and Drawings*, and we also toured [Haddon Hall](#), which served as Prince Humperdinck's castle in *The Princess Bride*.

I moved on to stay with a different friend to fulfill my next duty to attend the Second Faulkner Studies in the UK Symposium and deliver my paper, "Faulkner and the Moral Influence of Aunts." It was



Dr Kay Walter

a very curious experience to be a British literature specialist from the American South delivering a paper on William Faulkner to enthusiasts in London. It was good to find evidence that the significance of Faulkner to English studies is globally recognized.



**Susie Doncaster
in her garden.**

My next visit was to Prague. I flew out of Stansted Airport, and yet another friend met me at the airport when I landed in the capital of the Czech Republic. In Prague I toured churches and was amazed to come face to face with the Infant of Prague in the Discalced Carmelite Church of Our Lady Victorious. I also toured the [Lobkowitz Palace](#) where I heard a concert and saw paintings by Brueghel and manuscripts of Beethoven and Haydn. I had lunch at the castle. I toured the [Strahov Monastery Library](#) and wondered at the handiwork of ancient scribes and craftsmen. I also toured an American school and took part in a writers' workshop with new friends I made there before I flew to the UK again.



Prague airport

Back in England, further professional responsibilities awaited me in the Lake District. The Coniston home of John Ruskin hosted the Friends of [Brantwood](#) Study Day and Annual General Meeting, and I was asked to update the Friends on the successes I've had teaching Ruskin in rural Arkansas. My students' ideas, service learning projects, and written responses to assignments were of keen interest to many people I met, as was our newsletter. Some of the Friends are now regular readers following our Arkansas adventures in ELA teaching and contributing input and feedback for our enrichment.



Brueghel

Among all the going and speaking, there wasn't much down time to rest, but I did manage to find time to propose conference presentations for this fall. North American Victorian Studies Association and Victorians Institute both accepted my abstracts for presentation, so a busy summer has somehow morphed into a frenzied fall. But that's a story for another issue! Stay tuned for a follow-on report of my adventures to New York, Ohio, and South Carolina in the next issue, and if you have travel tales of your own to share, [send them to us!](#)



Improved Literacy through Good Teaching

by **Suzanna Guizar and Jeffrey Longing,**
University of Arkansas at Monticello

Teacher quality is the most important factor for increased student achievement. Other variables such as socioeconomic status and district resources are important factors, but the quality of the teacher continues to be most important for student success. All students need well prepared and experienced teachers; however, the distribution of such teachers is very inequitable (Barth and Nitta 16). Minority students and children who are in high-poverty schools are assigned novice teachers at twice the rate of non-minority students and children in low-poverty schools. These children are also more likely to be taught by teachers that do not have majors or minors in the subjects being taught. Similarly, many states have discovered that high-poverty schools and schools with large percentages of minority students have more novice teachers than low-minority and low-poverty schools.

What is the solution to this problem? Improving salaries, working conditions, or something else? According to Jeff Longing, improved salaries will and do improve retention rates in schools that are considered high need (100). Hanushek, Kain, and Rivkin indicate that “a school with 10 percent more [minority] students would require about 10 percent higher salaries in order to neutralize the increased probability of [teachers] leaving. Similarly, one standard deviation decrease in school average achievement equates to 10-15 percent higher salaries to hold exit rates constant” (38). They also indicate that improving working conditions is a means for reducing teacher attrition in high-minority schools. Hanushek states, “if schools with high minority concentrations have more disciplinary problems, rigid bureaucracies, poor leadership, high student turnover, and general safety concerns, improvement in such directions may reduce teacher turnover. (And, improvement in these dimensions may simultaneously have a direct benefit for student performance)” (41).

Another option for schools with large populations of minority students is active recruitment of minority teachers. Schools with large numbers of minority students increase the likelihood that teachers will leave; however, Hispanic and Black teachers are more likely to remain in schools that have similar characteristics according to Hanushek, Kain, and Rivkin (37-38). Researchers

also find that “The availability of [teachers of color] may also substantially reduce the costs of hiring for these schools, but they remain underrepresented (20 percent) relative to the student population” (40).

In 2016, the majority (77%) of schoolteachers were female, and only 23% were male (Hanford). From the 23% of male teachers, Asian and Hispanic male teachers increased by over 200% from 1988-2012; Black male teachers increased by 30%, and White male teachers increased less than 10%. The data reveal that most teachers are White females and that males and minority teachers are underrepresented in the public schools. A study using student-level administrative data from North Carolina reveals that same-race teachers can reduce the rate of student expulsions (Lindsey and Hart). Students also learn better when their teacher has similar characteristics, such as the same gender and culture as the learners (Hanford). Seth Gershenson and colleagues find that if Black students have one Black teacher in third through fifth grade the likelihood of their graduating high school and attending a four-year college improves noticeably (16). This same study also reveals that Black students improve their math and reading skills and experience fewer behavioral problems when taught by a Black teacher, as compared to a White teacher. Public schools throughout the U.S. continue to recruit, educate, hire, and retain quality teachers. However, to improve literacy, as well as other competencies, for all students (especially the underrepresented populations), a concerted effort must be made to attract teachers more representative of the students’ identities.



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Arkansas State University's Delta Symposium XXVI: The Haunted South

Call for Papers

The Department of English, Philosophy, and World Languages at Arkansas State University opens a call for papers and presentations for the twenty-sixth annual Delta Symposium, April 8-11, 2020 in Jonesboro, Arkansas. The Delta Symposium features a wide variety of scholarship and presentations that focus on the Delta's history, culture and literature. Individual and panel presentations on topics relevant to the Arkansas and Mississippi Deltas and southeastern United States are welcome.

Special consideration will be given to proposals that specifically address this year's theme of "The Haunted South." The symposium organizers will present research that explores the theme of literal hauntings by providing a forum for the study of haunted sites, ghost stories, legends and memorates as well as other research on the paranormal. The Delta Symposium committee also is interested in ways that *haunting* serves as a symbolic trope in creative expression. What memories of the past metaphorically continue to haunt people in our region? How has the trope of the "haunted south" remained salient to writers, artists, photographers, and musicians in the Delta and the wider region? How might the theme of hauntedness relate to memory studies, critical theory, and other approaches to contemporary studies of literature and culture?

The Delta Symposium presents work from multidisciplinary approaches including literary criticism, cultural studies, history, anthropology, folklore, ethnomusicology, sociology, speech communication, arts and art history, and heritage studies. Although proposals that have direct connections to Arkansas and the Delta are especially welcome, more general proposals that also address the theme within Southern history, culture, and heritage will be considered. The 2020 event will conclude on Saturday with the Arkansas Roots Music Festival through continued support from KASU FM 91.9.

The deadline for entries is December 20, 2019. Each entry should consist of the following: Presenter's name and affiliation and a 150-word abstract of the presentation as well as a current Vita (2 pages max). Please include your address, phone number, e-mail address, and the technical needs for your presentation.

Delta Symposium Committee
c/o Dr. Gregory Hansen, Chair

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Visit us on the web at AState.edu/delta-symposium

ELA teachers tend to love their jobs. Often they spend their vacations reading, writing, and gathering with other literacy enthusiasts. But work is always work, and we all look forward to times of rest. Do you, like me, admire those who make it to the end of a successful career? Carolyn Ashcraft has recently announced that she is retiring from an honorable career as a state librarian. We'll interview her for the next issue to see how she managed it. Stay tuned to hear her story!



I'm claiming this one!

by **Dr Kay J. Walter**, UAM

The further I go on my journey as a teacher, the more I see the successes of my work manifest in the fruit it bears through student achievement. I record my victories in their glories, count my blessings in their book collections, and measure my progress in their travels. My students are, without question, the best parts of me. I take great pride in their accomplishments. Our global perspective this month reveals one of my moments of pride. It is authored by a former student who has recently completed her graduate internship in Ireland. In this article, she shares with us her love of learning. I certainly didn't have to teach her that! When I see the vivacity with which she embraces educational opportunities, even while pregnant, I am glad to have had a chance to contribute to her intellectual development and say, "I knew her when she was young." The pride in her ongoing success is the reward I claim as her teacher, but the victory is all hers to celebrate. Her tale is yours to enjoy.



Global Perspective

LIVING THE IRISH STORY

by **Brontë Pearson**, Johns Hopkins University

I stepped off the plane at Dublin International Airport with butterflies



The vibrant Temple Bar district in central Dublin is best known for its authentic Irish eateries and pubs with a backdrop of floral arrangements and traditional Irish music.

churning in my stomach—granted, those butterflies were partly my baby girl twirling about inside me at 24 weeks gestation, but they were also a fluttering of excitement and anticipation. I was entering my last year as a graduate student at Johns Hopkins University, and I had come to Ireland to serve my residency: Marine Science and Science Writing on the Emerald Isle. My itinerary for the trip included meetings with internationally renowned scientists from Trinity College and University College Dublin, social events with Irish science writers, field trips to coastal hot spots and wetlands, and free exploration through the streets of Dublin. Traveling alone internationally while halfway through my pregnancy was nerve-racking, but I knew that embarking on this adventure would change my life in more ways than one.

Before arriving, I read Colm Tóibín's novel *The Blackwater Lightship*, a haunting story about a woman named Helen who is reunited with her mother and grandmother after ten years of feuding as they learn her brother Declan is dying from AIDS. The story takes place in Helen's grandmother's cottage, which sits on a crumbling cliff by the Wexford shore of the Irish Sea, a mere two hours from Dublin. Tóibín's crisp, vivid prose romanticizes Helen and Declan's childhood memories of splashing about the cool cerulean seawater, guarded by the Blackwater lighthouse that dimly splays its light into the evening of Declan's life, and it is the sea that ultimately brings the story and the final chapter of this estranged family's life together. The imagery was invigorating and inspired me to experience as much of the coast as I could; it was clear that the sea was an integral part of Irish upbringing and culture.

While I never visited Wexford, I plunged into the chilly sea at Sandycove, braved the damp salt marshes at Bull Island, and sailed across the stretch between the fishing hotspot of Howth to the uninhabited island of



Oscar Wilde has three memorial sculptures at Merrion Square Park in Dublin.

Ireland's Eye, where I absorbed and marveled the majesty of the waters that permeated so many of the experiences lived and written about by my Irish literary heroes. I also learned of the threats to Ireland's coastal regions by invading plastics and Styrofoam and the toxic effects of ocean acidification on coastal marine life brought about by the warming climate. I felt inspired to learn more about how to preserve these areas so that more stories and artists could be born from them. I had been to the ocean once before, but it was in Ireland that I recognized just how valuable the sea and its coasts are to sustaining all walks of life. I took notes and investigated citizen science projects aimed at coastal preservation, and I was inspired to write stories and share with the world the work being done and needing done, perhaps inspiring others too. While I have not published these pieces, I learned a lot through the



Irish writers have an intricate and fascinating relationship with the sea and the coastline.

research and writing processes and even started my own citizen science project back in the states. It all began with Colm Tóibín's words, but his would not be the only ones to impact my journey.

During my ten days in Ireland, I stayed in a dorm room at Trinity College, the alma mater of prolific writers such as Jonathan Swift, Oscar Wilde, and Bram Stoker, and the home of the famous Book of Kells. Surrounding the college is a large wall of Portland stone with a gated entrance on each of its four sides; the principal front stretched 380 feet across the eastern entrance framed by large Corinthian pillars. Stepping through the gate into the main quadrangle was like traveling back in time or entering a fantasy book; the preservation of the buildings and their own histories produced a residual energy of change and power produced from the work executed within its walls that came to change the world in a plethora of disciplines. I suddenly became a part of a rich, magical history that

yielded some of the world's greatest gifts in literature, art, and science. I attended classes in the Swift Auditorium, met with some of Trinity's top scientists, mingled with writers like climate change specialist Olive Heffernan, and explored the university's zoological museum: home to over 25,000 specimens, including the Ireland's last Great Auk. In the evenings, I lay beneath the open window in my private dorm room and welcomed the mellifluous lilt of Irish music bubbling down the street from the Temple Bar district.

Between classes and on free days, I explored the city on foot and dabbled in Irish cuisine—my favorite being traditional Dublin coddle. I stood before masterpieces by Monet, Renoir, and Caravaggio in the National Gallery of Ireland and explored the grounds of Dublin Castle. I browsed ancient Egyptian hieroglyphs and Buddhist manuscripts from Thailand in the Chester Beatty Library, and I climbed the steep steps to the top of Martello Tower where James Joyce found inspiration for the opening scenes of his great

masterpiece *Ulysses*. Ireland housed a broad spectrum of historical and artistic treasures that I would never experience anywhere else on Earth, and each moment I spent there further enriched my cultural palette.

Each day concluded with a new tale to tell. I wrote poems and listed ideas for stories in my notebook based upon the information I had learned and the experiences I gathered during that day's journeys. I felt

I had learned more about science, literature, art, and history in that ten days than I had in all my years of schooling. Although I was still suffering from morning sickness, my curiosity overtook my physical setbacks, and my experiences remained rich and fruitful. I only wish I had had more than ten days to explore.

I had been out of the country once before, but never had I experienced such an array of cultural opportunities. Ireland broadened my horizons as a writer, a scientist, a reader, a student, and a mother, but most importantly, it influenced my values and my appreciation for global concerns and cultural differences. On my final day in Dublin, I visited Oscar Wilde in Merrion Square Garden. A bronze statue of the poet and playwright lay lounging atop a boulder on the edge of the park, his face inquisitive and framed by a questioning hand. I was reminded of one of my favorite quotes of his: "To live is the rarest thing in the world. Most people exist, that is all." I looked into the statue's frozen eyes and thought, "I am living." I swore to dear Oscar that I would return someday and enrich my soul even more deeply, and I would explore more than just the southern tip of Ireland next time. I promised to seek out other destinations for learning and growth beyond Ireland too, for I could no longer stay stagnant; my heart and mind had tasted a previously unknown global beauty, and I yearned for more opportunities to engage with the world I inhabit. I realized how much I had been missing by keeping myself locked inside of my comfortable bubble in



Dublin Castle functioned for 700 years as the seat of British power in Ireland.

southeast Arkansas and limiting myself only to books and other's testimonies. There is truly nothing equivalent to personal experience.

Although an international adventure may be out of reach for the time being, it is a goal of mine to continue exploring and enhancing my personal literacy and cultural competency and to give my children the opportunity to do so as well. If I could offer a single piece of advice, it would be this: explore the world without limitations, and let your wanderlust guide you without question. There is art, music, literature, wildlife, landscapes, architecture, food, and traditions that we do not even know exist, and perhaps, if we experienced culture more intimately, we would become better people for it. It is not enough to simply exist and know. We must live and understand.

**Questions or
comments for
our author may
be directed to
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walter@uamont.edu



KEEPING UP WITH THE JONESES

The next issue of our newsletter will include the beginning of a series of interviews with the Jones family. An unusually high number of them work in literacy education in Arkansas. We want to know all about their story. If you have questions for them, let us know and we will ask. Send your ideas to our newsletter editor [HERE](#).

Developing Connections



What is the biggest project you are currently working to complete? Show us what's on your desk! Send us pics.



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 cover gratitude. What are you thankful for in the middle of this academic year? Do you have victories to celebrate yet? Why are you optimistic about your spring semester? Can your students see their own progress? Send your ideas [here](#).

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How do you motivate your students to write? Do you have a favorite prompt you assign year after year? How do your students respond to it? Share your ideas by sending them to our newsletter editor [here](#).