

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:

We live in an increasingly global world. Tell about one specific activity you use to help students embrace it and broaden their scope.

Some of their answers are highlighted on page two. Let us know if you have additional ideas for bringing global awareness to students.

Dear ACTELA Members,

Another school year has come to an end, and as we relish the culmination of hard work, blood, sweat, and tears we are already looking to next year and our summer PD. A teacher's work is never really done.

ing their classroom methods, ideas, and experiences.



Be sure to take some time for yourself this summer: read a book, write some poetry, and ultimately re-fuel those teacher hearts for the next year. We all deserve a

I hope you are making plans to attend the Arkansas Curriculum Conference this November as some of our best teachers will be there shar-

break to reflect on our efforts and enjoy our successes.

Cindy Green, ACTELA President

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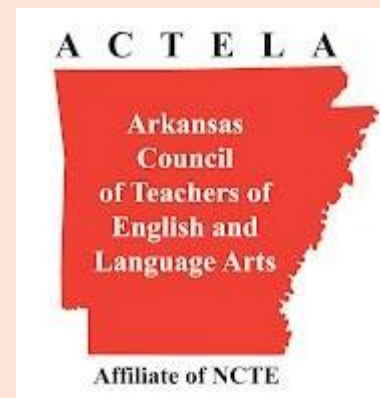
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We Want to Connect!

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Arkansas Council of Teachers of English Language Arts



Global Awareness



Arkansas is a rural state. Even our areas of concentrated population are not major cities. Our students tend to see their lives as detached from global concerns and sometimes struggle to connect to issues beyond the scope of their own experiences. The study of English and Language Arts presents many rich opportunities for helping them grow toward relevant and global connections. ACTELA Board members were recently asked to discuss ways they stretch the boundaries of student awareness to include global understandings. Here are some of their answers:

- ◆ In working with teachers and visiting their classrooms/students, I have used current event articles from www.newsela.org and www.tweentribune.com that address other cultures, other ethnicities, and other countries. Students analyze these articles and then discuss the issues being faced by the people involved in the event. Then the students debate the connections between their own lives and what is occurring all over the world. This activity moves beyond simply comprehending texts or gaining knowledge of current events; students gain a new appreciation of the connections between themselves and others. **Dawn Bessee**
- ◆ For preservice educators, I've begun developing assignments that involve digital media tools such as developing infographics on Piktochart or creating blogs using Word Press so my students can write for real-world purposes and involve themselves in forums where global connectivity is open to them. **Dixie Keyes**
- ◆ I try to bring in the work of Gloria Ladson-Billings. Her work in Critical Race Theory in Education and Culturally Relevant Teaching/Pedagogy is second to none. Sometimes I have to settle for smaller chunks, but on some occasions I have been able to utilize her thinking across an entire course. When used, I have found that it becomes a rather powerful and transformative lens of theory through which student and graduate student teaching practice can be focused into a more powerful form of literacy. An increasingly global world demands critical literacy, a more culturally equitable classroom environment, and ways for us to reach out and engage with all student identities. **Ryan Kelly**

- ◆ I encourage my students to watch and read the news. Often, they come to class with questions about events taking place in different parts of the world. I have them create Google MyMaps identifying locations of events. Then, they research the areas and learn about its history and culture. They collect their findings on their maps. This becomes an interactive tool for discussing current affairs and interactions between different cultures. [Aaron Hall](#)
- ◆ In my English 10 class, I have a unit on refugees. Students first learn about refugees by reading news reports, and short stories, and poems created by refugees. The culmination of this unit is a research article, students choose a country, research it and then write an article about how the conflict started and what is happening to the refugees. What countries are they fleeing to? What dangers do they face? What is being done to help them? I started this unit several years ago, but this is a really topical issue for our state and country and it is information students should know. Making the connection from the classroom to the world is invaluable. [Cindy Green](#)
- ◆ I teach 7th grade literacy and social studies, and our 7th grade state standards for social studies are all about geography. My students and I read *The Breadwinner* by Deborah Ellis and *A Long Walk to Water* by Linda Sue Park, both of which are set in other countries (Afghanistan and Sudan, respectively) experiencing conflict and turmoil. We spend an entire unit studying the cultures and histories of those countries, discussing conflict and war around the world, and becoming more aware of the world outside our small town. [Tyler McBride](#)
- ◆ One way that I help students connect with a more global community is by using Skype to connect them to others that have real world experience with classroom topics. For example, when we study Transcendentalism and Romanticism in American Lit, we read Emerson and Thoreau. We also read "Into the Wild" by Jon Krakauer. After our reading, we do a Skype interview with a friend of mine who hiked the Appalachian Trail, a 2200 mile journey. This gives my students the opportunity to connect their reading to a real world experience and hear about one person's experience in nature. It gives them the opportunity to hear about an experience somewhere between Walden Pond and Chris McCandless's journey to Alaska. I've found that this interview experience makes the texts that we read much more relatable and engaging. [Jessica Herring](#)
- ◆ One thing that I try to do is make real-life connections. Within our curriculum, we have domain units. Each unit last about two weeks. While reading, the children can make connections and understand the world better by using their prior knowledge. When that takes place, they are engaged more and are aware of what is taking place in the world around them. Since I teach kindergarten, I find it to be awe-

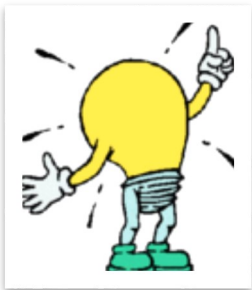


some to bring these things to them at an early age. Our job is to prepare them for the next level and making sure they understand the global world. Since children learn through engagement and play, creating valuable centers and learning activities (hands-on) will enhance their understanding! **Brycial Williams**

- ◆ I believe students should travel, so I take a class to England to study British Literature each summer. For students who do not have the opportunity to join in my travel seminar, I assign research projects that require connecting with international literary organizations. My students learn to network with scholars around the world who are interested in their research topics and locate professional conversations and publication venues for their interests. **Kay Walter**



Dr. Kay Walter and her travel seminar visit England's Lake District.



What about you?

How do you inspire your students to stretch their understanding and think globally? Send best practice activities and ideas to our newsletter editor to share with the other members of ACTELA.

AEJ

In the Realm of Advocacy

Submissions are currently under review for AEJ Volume 1.2 (Spring/Summer 2016) which will focus on Advocacy. Stay tuned for more information soon! If you have ideas you want to propose for future AEJ themes, share them with our journal editor, Janine Chitty ACTELA123@gmail.com.

Meanwhile, read the current issue of AEJ here:

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

LOOKING

Bedroom Mezuzah



BACK



Cabin Doorway Caption

BOARD RETREAT

Board Members met for a group-think about pressing ACTELA issues at the Rock House Cabin atop Petit Jean Mountain over a weekend in early March. The agenda included the following concerns:

- **ACTELA budget and how to spend our money wisely**
- **ACTELA responsibilities for ACC 2016 publicity**
- **ACC 2016 keynote address**
- **2016 NCTE Summer Affiliate meeting**
- **Moving TOY grant applications to Google Forms**
- **QR codes for ACC 2016 luncheon materials**
- **Moving the ACTELA website to Weebly**
 - **ACTELA t-shirts and designs**
 - **Social media duties for ACTELA**
 - **Newsletter and AEJ ideas**
 - **Developing a Writing Vision**



Rock House Cabin Kitchen



Board Retreat 2015



Sunny and Cindy are busy making plans.

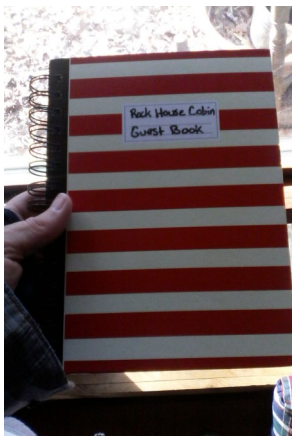


Kay makes sure we have a campfire.



Board Members gather to work through agenda items.

We left these words in the Guest Book:



When ACTELA needed a space to gather, we came here . . . to think, to discuss, to envision, to stand united in our efforts to advocate for the students of literacy, English, and Language Arts in Arkansas; for their teachers; and for our combined goals. We found rest, peace, and a calm height from which to view the prospect of our future. We leave grateful for the opportunity to declare that future full of success!

Dr. Kay J. Walter
University of Arkansas at Monticello
For Arkansas Council of Teachers of English and
Language Arts



Mia is our own ACTELA baby, born during ACC.

LOOKING FORWARD

ACC AND NCTE 2016

The luncheon speaker for this year's ACTELA Luncheon is Sonia Gensler. Her talk is entitled "[What writing has taught me about young readers.](#)" Find information about her and her writing on page seven. Page eight contains useful ideas for reading her books with your students. Be sure to get your tickets!

- ◇ ACC will also host an Arkansas poet. Read about her on page nine.
- ◇ Our Preservice scholars will be presenting Roundtable discussions of their research. Come see what the next generation of English and Language Arts teachers are excited about.
- ◇ Board Members will be facilitating a Writeathon. Come create with us!

NCTE 2016

ARKANSAS IN ATLANTA

Board members have already submitted proposals for sessions at NCTE in Atlanta and for sessions for ACC. We have more sessions proposed for ACC 2016 than we were able to schedule in 2015, so there will be lots of information to share and learn. We are all looking forward to the best conferences ever and hope to take school vans to minimize the cost of travel. Make plans to be there!

ACC 2016

FEATURED AUTHOR

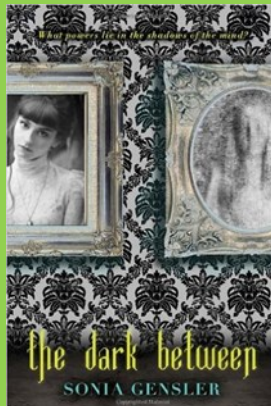
SONIA GENSLER



SONIA GENSLER is the author of two young adult novels, *The Revenant* (Knopf, 2011) and *The Dark Between* (Knopf, 2013), and a new novel for middle grade readers, *Ghostlight* (Knopf, Fall 2015). Things that go bump in the night are just the beginning in *Ghostlight*, when a summer film project in a frightening old house becomes a real-life ghost story.

As a child growing up in rural Tennessee, Sonia dreamed of teleporting to medieval Europe to experience firsthand the bygone days of chivalry and romance. When international time travel proved impractical, she compensated by devouring books and making up soap operas with her friends. Countless recess periods were devoted to swapping stories, most of which featured epic romances with favorite celebrities. This tradition continued through high school.

As an adult, Sonia experimented with an assortment of professions suitable for a dreamy bookworm—museum interpreter, historic home director, bookseller, perpetual graduate student—before finally deciding to share her passion for stories through teaching. She taught literature and writing to young adults for ten years, and she still thinks fondly of her days in the classroom now that she writes full time. Sonia currently lives in Oklahoma with her husband, and together they spend the summers in England. For more information, visit www.soniagensler.com.

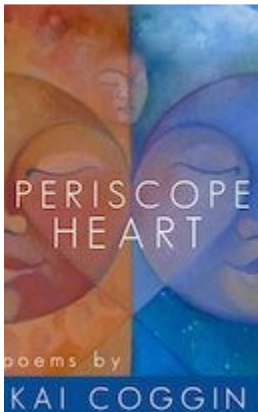


ACC 2016 FEATURED POET

The Arkansas poet, **Kai Coggin,**
will be joining us at ACC this year.

Kai Coggin is a poet and author living on the side of a small mountain in Hot Springs, AR. She holds a degree in Poetry and Creative Writing from Texas A & M University. Her work has been published or is forthcoming in *Split This Rock*, *Yellow Chair Review*, *ANIMA*, *Blue Heron Review*, *Lavender Review*, *Broad!*, *Elephant Journal*, *The Bitchin' Kitsch*, *Cliterature*, *IT-*

WOW, *[empath]* quarterly, *Catching Calliope*, and other journals, as well as anthologized in several collections. Kai is the author of *PERISCOPE HEART* (Swimming with Elephants Publications, 2014). Her poetry has recently been nominated for The Pushcart Prize and Bettering American Poetry 2015. She is also a Teaching Artist with the Arkansas Arts Council, specializing in bringing poetry and creative writing to youth.



Visit her website for more information:

<http://www.kaicoggin.com/>



Have you ever wanted to travel to the United Kingdom to study Shakespeare and the other British authors you teach? Now is the time to begin making plans for the travel seminar scheduled for June 2017. If you have a passport and are interested, email Dr. Kay Walter: walter@uamont.edu to learn about the graduate seminar which will be offered through the University of Arkansas at Monticello. If you don't have a passport yet, it's not too late. Now is the time to apply for one.

Let's Go!

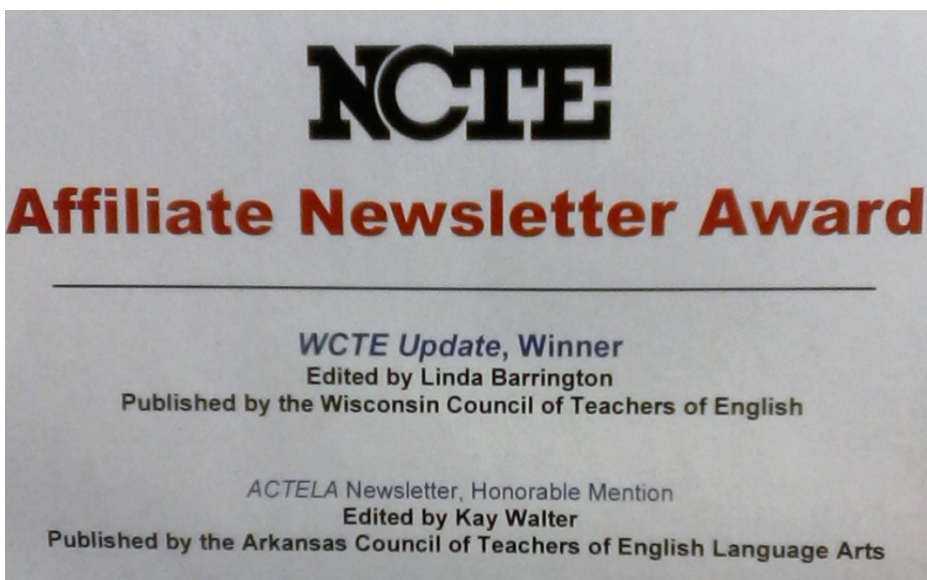


ANNOUNCEMENTS AND AWARDS



- ⇒ Ryan Kelly won the Arkansas State's College of Education and Behavioral Science Teaching Award this year.
- ⇒ Brycial Williams was chosen as the East Arkansas Community College's 2016 Distinguished Alumni Award winner.
- ⇒ Jessica Herring won an International Society for Technology in Education (ISTE) grant to teach coding and robotics in conjunction with literature.
- ⇒ Jeff Wittingham is Coordinator for Arkansas We the People, which will provide professional development for middle and high school teachers in civics and government focusing upon the Declaration of Independence, U.S. Constitution, the Bill of Rights and the rights and responsibilities of citizens.
- ⇒ Tyler McBride is our new ACTELA Webmaster.

Hurrah for us! Our editor, Dr. Kay Walter, was recognized at the Award Breakfast when ACTELA Newsletter received Honorable Mention at NCTE.



Global Perspective

Celebrating **Books** in the United Kingdom

Florence Garvey, Pevensey and Westham School, Sussex, England

WORLD BOOK DAY

My name is Florence Garvey and I am nine years old and my brother Arthur is six. We both go to Pevensey and Westham School in Sussex, England. It is a nice new school next to the old schoolhouse and close to a very old castle.

On World Book Day in March we all dressed up as characters from a favourite book. We took our books to school and read them and talked about why we liked them. I have been reading *Harry Potter and the Philosopher's Stone* and dressed up as Hermione Granger. My brother dressed up as Charlie from *Charlie and the Chocolate Factory*.



Some of my friends dressed up as Harry Potter and other characters from the books, and some of my teachers dressed up as the teachers at Hogwarts School. There was also a Dorothy from *The Wizard of Oz*, and Billy the Kid from Roald Dahl's book. There were lots of Star Wars and Superheroes costumes, but they didn't have proper books to read, just comics. Two boys dressed up as Toothless and Hiccup from *How to Train Your Dragon* and that was funny.

It was a very good day, and at the end of the afternoon the whole school had a parade of everyone in their costumes.

I like the Harry Potter books because the stories are exciting and I don't want to stop reading even when I'm getting tired. I think the descriptions are good because I can imagine the places and the clothes in my head. There are seven Harry Potter books, and I am going to read all of them.

Our homework was to have a photograph taken of reading a book in an unusual place to show in our class. I went down to the beach but it was very cold and windy. Arthur loves football and sometimes goes to watch with dad. I thought his photo was very funny because he didn't look at the footballers while dad took his photo, even though he really wanted to.



Florence Garvey reads J. K. Rowling for homework.

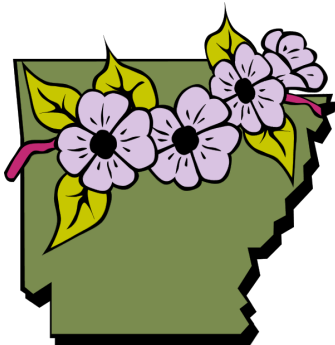


Her brother, Arthur Garvey, reads his homework during a soccer match.

Note:

World Book Day (also known as International Day of the Book) is organised by UNESCO to promote reading. In the U.K. it is held each March on the second Thursday. Every child or young person under 18 receives a token of £1 to put towards the purchase of a book, and many publishers have additional special reductions for the period, including selected titles at just £1, so these titles are effectively free to the children.

Making Connections



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

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

Have plans to travel this summer, ACTELA? Professional travel is a vital form of education that encourages networking and learning beyond the classroom. Share our newsletter and contact information with teachers you meet, and encourage them to connect with us. Bring back stories and best practices from their classrooms too and share them with us!

Email Contacts for Questions/Comments

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Teacher Initiatives

oliverc@conwayschools.net

Have ideas you'd like to see discussed in our newsletter?
Send them to our newsletter editor at walter@uamont.edu