An Annual Magazine for Educators

Focus On:

Promoting Active Citizenship
—Critical Literacy & Civic Responsibility

New Teacher’s Guides: Language Arts & Social Studies

Articles by Noted Authors:
Daniel Goleman, Erin Gruwell, Jonathan Kozol, Sonia Nazario, & Barack Obama

Instill Critical Thinking, Resurrect Rhetoric, Encourage Activism & More

Reading Excerpts from New Titles
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Conceived in Liberty.
Dear Educator,

The American stories that move us start with ordinary people who are compelled to change their country: a group of shopkeepers and blacksmiths who met at Liberty Trees to overthrow an empire; a young lawyer from Springfield who saved the Union and freed a people; a group of women who said, “I’m as smart as he is, so I should vote,” and revised the Constitution; a seamstress who refused to move and thus launched the civil rights movement. Today, many young people who love their country are giving up their summer vacations and spring breaks to help rebuild towns devastated by Hurricane Katrina.

In America, change doesn’t start in Washington, DC; ordinary citizens bring it to Washington, DC. This is what I have learned in my own life—lasting change starts from the bottom, not the top.

When I was twenty-three years old, I got this crazy idea that I wanted to be a community organizer. It was an idea that came from the stories my mother and my grandparents would tell me about the civil rights movement—stories about young people sitting at lunch counters, riding on buses, and marching for freedom. I thought that this could be my way to help fight the injustices and the inequalities that still exist in our country.

I wrote letters to every organization in the country, and finally a small group of churches in Chicago gave me a job organizing neighborhoods devastated by steel-plant closings in the early 1980s. The churches paid me just $12,000 a year plus $1,000 to buy a beat-up car.

I spent weeks organizing our very first community meeting about gang violence. We invited the police. We made phone calls, went to churches, and passed out flyers. The night of the meeting, we arranged rows and rows of chairs. We waited. Then a group of older people walked into the hall, and an old lady asked, “Is this where the bingo game is?”

The meeting was a disaster, and the volunteers were ready to quit. I looked outside and saw some young boys playing in a vacant lot, tossing stones at a boarded-up apartment building. I turned to the volunteers, and I said to them, “Before you quit, I want you to answer one question. Who will fight for those boys if not us? Who will give them a fair shot if we leave?”

We didn’t reach every child, but we did help some.

The American story shows us that citizens are the catalyst for change. These are ordinary people who long for something better. Every day, this is the power that you as teachers hold in the classroom. You have the responsibility and privilege of guiding our young people to understand that challenges are met and injustices overcome because citizens just like them are standing up and demanding change. If you inspire them to act, then America will be transformed for the better, and the role of citizen will remain the most important political office in America.

This is what we can teach our young people together. Let’s turn the page and begin.

BARACK OBAMA is a U.S. Senator from Illinois and the author of The Audacity of Hope and Dreams from My Father.
Contributors

Wild Flowers: Aesthetics in the Classroom in the Age of Uniformity Dictated by No Child Left Behind

By Jonathan Kozol  Page 7

Through his inspirational writing, Jonathan Kozol offers advice—and hope—to young teachers immersed against their wills into the dreary, corporate-classroom atmosphere created by No Child Left Behind.

The Role of Critical Literacy in Citizenship

By Nancy Frey and Douglas Fisher  Page 13

See how critical literacy promotes civic engagement, as Frey and Fisher highlight texts that you can use in your classroom to foster a well-informed, active citizenship.

Let's Make Hypocrites!  By Jay Heinrichs  Page 60

Heinrichs, author of Thank You for Arguing embarks on a linguistic tour of rhetoric and presents exercises geared toward creating better citizens in your students.
Avenging Social Injustice Through Literacy: Using All-School Read

By Judith Turner  Page 88

Turner’s vivid and emotional account of her school’s project on Jim-Crow Florida—using Lay That Trumpet in Our Hands by Susan Carol McCarthy (right)—shows how an all-school read may be the perfect tool to awaken your students to the problems of the world—and inspire them to make a change.

The Power of Expectation and Environment

By Bill Strickland  Page 96

Bill Strickland was a disengaged high schooler who discovered the joy of pottery. Today, the potter-turned-CEO molds disadvantaged lives into their greatest potential at Pittsburgh’s Manchester Bidwell Center.

A Life Worth Fighting For: How Enrique’s Journey Teaches Students to Be Grateful Citizens  By Sonia Nazario  Page 102

Travel with migrant children through Central America’s “heart of darkness,” as they search for their mothers in the U.S., and bring your students to an awareness of how fortunate they are to be United States citizens.

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A VISION OF AN AMERICA WITH A COMMON DESTINY

#1 NEW YORK TIMES BESTSELLERS BY BARACK OBAMA

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—MICHIKO KATUTANI, NEW YORK TIMES

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—WASHINGTON POST BOOK WORLD

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Crown, HC, 978-0-307-23769-9, 384 pages, $25.00
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Spanish edition available: La audacia de la esperanza
Vintage, TR, 978-0-307-38711-0, 400 pages, $16.95

AudacityofHope.com
Across this nation, citizens of all backgrounds are grappling with big questions. Pressing topics such as education, the environment, civic participation, and the future of the United States are being considered and worked on at all levels. There is a sense of urgency, and a sense of determination to do something about it. And you, the educator, are on the front lines.

“The job of recalling higher education’s public purpose now falls to the institutions themselves. . . . A thoughtful twenty-first-century curriculum can and should renew higher education’s moral compact with America.”


What is education’s public purpose? What about this “moral compact”? These issues are surely not limited to colleges and universities; in fact, they are crucial to education at all levels. So it is with great excitement that we present you with the second issue of RHI.

Focusing on the topic of citizenship, this issue will help you to get your students interested and invested in the future of their nation. Whether you are seeking to employ new techniques in the classroom, or are even thinking of implementing school-wide initiatives, the teacher’s guides, essays, and articles presented here offer the collected wisdom of some of today’s leading educators and thinkers—wisdom that will surely help to motivate you and get you started.

So please turn the page and join this dialogue—this movement—to revitalize education’s moral compact, to better serve its greater public purpose. Our nation and our future truly do depend on it!

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Tales from the Teachers' Lounge
An Irreverent View of What It Really Means To Be a Teacher Today
by Robert Wilder

With his trademark wit and wisdom, Robert Wilder dissects the world's noblest profession—whether he's taming a classroom full of hormonal teenagers or going one-on-one with the school bully.

Wilder was twenty-six when he found his true calling. Leaving a lucrative advertising career in New York, he got a job as an assistant first-grade teacher at a Santa Fe alternative school—and never looked back. Now he brings his unique perspective—as a teacher, parent, and former student—to a series of humorous essays that show teaching at its most absurd...and most rewarding.

In Tales from the Teachers' Lounge, Robert Wilder charts life's learning curve with a warmth and humor you don't find in textbooks. By turns heartwarming, eye-opening, and uproariously funny, these pitch-perfect essays offer priceless lessons in life, family, learning, and teaching from a true lover of education.

Delacorte Press | HC | 978-0-385-33927-8 | 320 pp | $23.00
During the course of forty years of work among schoolchildren, I have developed a very close attachment to hundreds of our classroom teachers—especially, I will confess, to those who work with little children in the elementary years. I think that teaching is a beautiful profession and that teachers do one of the best things that there is to do in life: bring joy and beauty, mystery, and mischievous delight into the hearts of young people in their years of greatest curiosity and growth.

In the past five years, however, much of education policy has been taken over, to a troubling degree, by people who have little knowledge of the classroom, and no knowledge of the hearts of children, but are the technicians of a dry and mechanistic, often business-driven version of “proficiency and productivity.” State accountability requirements, correlated closely with the needs and wishes of the corporate community, increasingly control the aims of education that are being thrust upon the principals and teachers in our public schools.

But teachers are not servants of the global corporations or drill sergeants for the state and should never be compelled to view themselves that way. I think they have a higher destiny than that. The best of teachers are not merely the technicians of proficiency; they are also ministers of innocence, practitioners of tender expectations. They stubbornly refuse to see their pupils as so many future economic units for a corporate society, little pint-sized deficits or assets for the U.S. economy, into whom they are expected to pump “added value,” as the pundits of the education policy arena now declaim. Teachers like these believe that every child who has been entrusted to their care comes into their classroom with inherent value to begin with.

Many of the productivity and numbers specialists who have rigidified and codified school policy in recent years do not seem to recognize much preexisting value in the young mentalities of children—in particular, in children of the poor. A bullying tone often creeps into their way of speaking. A cocksure overconfidence, what Erik Erikson described as “a destructive conscientiousness,” is not unfamiliar, too. The longer they remain within their institutes of policy or their positions in the government, the less they seem to have a vivid memory of children’s minuscule realities and their vulnerable temperaments, their broken pencil points, their upturned faces when the teacher comes and leans down by their desk to see why they are crying.

This, then, is the challenge and dilemma for young teachers and for those who educate our teachers. As the highly controversial law No Child Left Behind intensifies in its effects, an unhealthy emphasis upon the “measurement of productivity” by the instrument of high-stakes standardized examinations as the sole determinant of success or failure in a given school is threatening the educational and psychological development of children and compromising the integrity of teachers and their principals. Principals in many schools are living in
a state of permanent anxiety and, because of fear of sanctions if they cannot pump the scores enough to satisfy the state or federal government, are doing things they tell me privately that they abhor.

In many schools, at least one quarter of the year—and, in the poorest inner-city schools, as much as three quarters of the year—is stolen from instruction to drill children for exams. Recess is increasingly abolished. In Atlanta, they have purposely constructed schools that have no playgrounds so that no time can be “wasted” on activities that have no payoff on exams. Chicago has largely abolished recess, too; the only exceptions that I know are a few high-scoring schools, mostly in affluent communities.

More troubling, perhaps, the teaching of the liberal arts has been truncated in these kinds of schools as well. Subjects that will not be measured by high-stakes examinations—history, geography, science, art, and music—are either abandoned altogether or presented to the children only on a token basis that denies them any opportunity to gain the cultural capaciousness that is enjoyed and valued by the children of the privileged.

Worst, perhaps, is the distortion of the language arts in increasing numbers of these schools. In many districts, teachers are being handed scripts to read, “aligned,” as it is said, with items to be tested on exams. The questions teachers ask are dictated by the script, and the answers children must provide are in the script as well. Teachers are also sometimes told they must hold timers in their hands. Not one minute can be wasted on a moment of frivolity, an episode of whim, a bit of interesting repartee, that might slow the rapid pacing of the drill demanded by the script.

What happens to a lively and excited teacher in one of these heavily test-driven schools? One of the things she quickly learns is that she cannot just go up to a chalkboard on a cheerful Monday morning and write, in big bold letters, “Outcome of the Lesson: I read my kids a poem of Langston Hughes—or Gwendolyn Brooks or, for that matter, a lyrical verse of William Butler Yeats—and discovered that they loved it!” As a bright, young teacher in one inner-city school observed to me irreverently, “What’s love got to do with it?” It was a good question. The word “love” does not appear in No Child Left Behind. Nor do the words “exhilaration,” or “compassion,” “kindness,” “joyful curiosity,” or “delight in what is unexpected”—all of which would probably come first for almost any teacher working with young children.

Saddest of all, because of the tight timing—everything within this kind of classroom has to be “on task,” a dreary term imported from the business world—a child who wants to tell us something that is not on task becomes a threat to the curriculum.

Six-year-olds, as every first-grade teacher knows, are experts at subverting lesson plans. One of the likable tendencies of children of that age is to meander off into the blissful kingdom of irrelevance as frequently as possible. “Teacher?” the child says. “Guess what?” “What?” the teacher says. “I went to the zoo on Sunday with my Uncle Pookey—and guess what?” “What?” the teacher says again. “I saw a baby bear!” And then the child starts to pile on the “ands” and “buts” for one of those seemingly eternal run-on sentences that cheerfully forgets where it began.

But sometimes at the end of all those “ands” and “buts” there’s a piece of hidden treasure where the child tells us something that we never knew about him up to now. And good teachers use that piece of hidden treasure to unlock motivation and to bring that child back into the classroom work that must be done, but with a sense of purpose now that would have been absent, and remained invisible to her, if she had been forced to cut him off.

“Oh, sweetie, that’s a beautiful story that you told us. Now let’s see if, when we go back to our desks, you can write it down for me with all those interesting details you included. . . .”

And this, of course, is not limited to young children; students at the secondary level also like to venture off on interesting tangents, albeit to reveal deeper and perhaps more important insights into their personal lives, accomplishments, and challenges.

But in too many inner-city schools, where teachers work beneath the sword of stipulated time-constraints dictated by the testing pressures that they face, the teacher has to cut that child off before he tells his story and never gets to find that treasure in his heart and never gets to turn that key that might reveal to her the deepest sources of his motivation and potential.

What, then, should good teachers do? How can a grown-up who knows very well, because of her own
first-rate education, that practices like these would never be permitted in the schools that serve the children of the white and middle class, navigate the challenge of surviving in one of these schools? How can she practice her profession in a school devoted to the drill-and-kill regime that one of my teacher friends refers to as “the Pure Unhappiness Agenda” and is driven by the methodologies of stimulus-response that are prescribed almost exclusively for children of the poor?

In college, in her early education courses, the teacher has been thoroughly immersed in the enlightened world of Erikson, Jean Piaget, Vigotsky, Robert Coles, as well as in the limitless delights of opening our children’s minds to literary works such as the beautiful and tender books of Eric Carle. If she’s like most teachers that I know, she also holds close to her heart the legacy of my beloved friend and my best mentor, the irreplaceable Fred Rogers, who cautioned us repeatedly to give young children time to ask their questions and to listen to them carefully.

Suddenly, she walks into the icy universe of B. F. Skinner. She did not become a teacher out of a desire to train children in subordination of their spirits or to subdivide the continuity of learning into mini-chunks of balkanized cognition, as required by those endless lists of “requisite proficiencies” that must be posted on her classroom walls.

On the other hand, the lists are there, and so, too, are the tests. And teachers who dislike these regimens, no matter how intense their feelings, do not have the right to simply shut the whole thing from their minds, because their students, like it or not, are going to be judged and sorted by the scores that they receive. So here, as in so many other situations teachers face, they have to balance some of their most deeply held convictions against the practical necessity of defending students from the punishments and sanctions they will otherwise incur.

How does a teacher handle this? How does she soften the effects of this regime, and how does she express her reservations about other aspects of instruction taking place within her school, without ending up as an outsider in the school and ultimately undergoing what is now politely known as “termination”?

I try, as gently as I can, to offer those who ask these questions answers that some of the best and most successful younger teachers have passed on to me. First, I urge beginning teachers to treat with great respect the best among the veteran teachers in their buildings who are seasoned in the complicated politics of public schools. If novice teachers turn to them, these teachers will not only share with new arrivals teaching strategies they have acquired from their own years of experience, but will also feel protective towards them and try to defend them, if this is needed, in encounters with administrative figures.

Second, I urge young teachers, if they sense that they may find themselves dissenting from some of the pedagogic practices enforced within their schools, to be sure that they are very, very good in other areas that are held in high importance at most public schools. The maintenance of sensible and firm control over a class of energetic little kids is, properly, a matter of concern to almost any principal. Especially with a group of children who have suffered from high turnover of teachers in preceding years, with the often riotous results this has in fostering an insurrectionary atmosphere within a class, a teacher who is able to restore an element of serenity becomes a precious asset to the school. No matter how distressing to a principal her deviations from a scripted regimen may be, that teacher becomes nearly indispensable.

Third, I’d recommend a good, big dose of sly irreverence and the saving grace of what I’d call a subtle and ironical detachment in the face of certain policies and practices a teacher bitterly dislikes but must observe in order to protect her children and her job. Many teachers, for example, even without ever speaking these explicit words, have figured out a way to make it clear to children that they consider high-stakes testing, at the
also available

**THE SHAME OF THE NATION**
The Restoration of Apartheid Schooling in America

In *The Shame of the Nation*, Kozol makes a powerful and persuasive argument that America needs to finally face the ongoing problems with its urban schools. Filled with the passionate voices of children and their teachers and some of the most revered and trusted leaders in the black community, *The Shame of the Nation* is a triumph of firsthand reporting.

Three Rivers Press, TR, 978-1-4000-5245-5, 432 pp., $14.95

Crown, HC, 978-1-4000-5244-8, 416 pp., $25.00

**RACHEL AND HER CHILDREN**
Homeless Families in America

Kozol focuses on the mothers and children he found in the “temporary” shelters of New York City’s welfare hotels—buildings full of shattered dreams, wounded families, and children who believe they have no future. He discovered that the basic problem is a criminal lack of affordable housing in the wealthiest country in the world.

Three Rivers Press, TR, 978-0-307-34589-9, 320 pp., $13.95

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**New!**

**LETTERS TO A YOUNG TEACHER**

In this collection of his letters to Francesca, a first-year teacher in a Boston elementary school, Jonathan Kozol reflects on what he calls the “beautiful profession” she has chosen while he also tries to guide her through the unexpected challenges she encounters.

Together they confront the disheartening resegregation of our schools and the obsessive testing mania that is turning many schools into little more than test-prep factories. But they also share the happiness of teaching children, celebrating the many moments of sheer jubilation in Francesca’s class as her students begin to flourish in the hands of their hardworking teacher. *Letters to a Young Teacher* is an enticing invitation to the classroom and bound to become a classic among educators.

Crown, HC, 978-0-307-39371-5, 304 pp., $19.95

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very best, to be a miserable game they and the students are obliged to play, but that their judgment of the children’s intellect and character and ultimate potential will have no connection with the numbers tabulated by a person who is not an educator, and has never met them, working in a test-score factory three thousand miles away. Some gutsy teachers also say this openly to children, especially because increasing numbers of their principals now feel exactly the same way.

Finally, even in the most adverse conditions, the most inspired and most energized and incandescent younger teachers I have known bring into their classes a contagious sense of merriment from the very happiness they feel in being in the company of children. No matter what the obstacles they and their children face, they believe the work of a good teacher ought to be an act of stalwart celebration. It is in that sense of celebration that good people who have chosen out of love to work with children find their ultimate salvation from the cold winds blowing down from Washington and from the technocrats of uniformity who are for now, but will not be forever, in positions of great power.

To these glowing spirits—and there are more of them than ever coming to our urban schools from colleges and universities today—I always say: Resist the deadwood of predictability. Embrace the unexpected. Gather the children around you on the reading rug and shower their years of innocence with all the soft epiphanies and eccentricities and unpredictables of wonderful imaginative literary work. Immerse them in the satisfaction of aesthetics for its own sake, not for any god-forsaken “economic” purpose. Listen to their stories, too. Revel in their run-on sentences. Dig deep into the world of whim. Sprinkle your children’s lives, no matter how difficult many of those lives may be, with hundreds of brightly colored seeds of jubilation. Enjoy the wild flowers!

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**About the Writer**

**JONATHAN KOZOL** is a renowned educator, activist, and National Book Award–winning writer. In his new book, *Letters to a Young Teacher*, he gently guides a first-year teacher into “the joys and challenges and passionate rewards of a beautiful profession.”
What is critical literacy? How is it relevant to your students, and why should you incorporate a critical literacy approach into your lessons? In this section, your fellow educators will help shed light on this approach and will offer some useful tips for ensuring that your students are developing the critical skills they’ll need to be effective citizens.

Nancy Frey and Douglas Fisher offer a straightforward definition of critical literacy and discuss the ways you can begin using the technique with your students. Glenn Devoogd discusses the importance of deconstructing the “winner’s bias” in social studies instruction and in historical texts. Barry Gilmore talks about ways that the critical skills necessary for participation in our democracy can be modeled through innovative classroom governance techniques. You’ll also find exercises and activities for teaching the Constitution, Banned Books Week, and how to handle popular media in your classroom.

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Critical Comprehension of Social Studies Texts
by Glenn DeVoogd ........................................... 21

Choice and Voice: Democracy, Participation, and Critical Literacy in the English Classroom
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“Too Much Information!”: Tips to Help Your Students Make the Most—And Best—of Today’s Media
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On Censorship
by Pat Scales .................................................. 39

The Constitution of the United States of America
by Nancy Schick .............................................. 47
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The Role of Critical Literacy in Citizenship

by Nancy Frey and Douglas Fisher

Many historians support Kennedy’s perspective that a strong democracy is preserved and improved through the active participation of its citizenship. Interestingly, a similar sentiment might be interpreted differently when expressed by the American Civil Liberties Union, an organization that has frequently situated itself as an advocate of controversial positions on immigration laws, free speech cases, and affirmative action legislation. Knowledgeable readers might react to the choice of the word “liberty” in a variety of ways depending on who is using it. Support of, or opposition to, the work of the American Civil Liberties Union; an understanding of the issues this organization supports; and a knowledge of history all serve to influence the interpretation of the words they use. It seems reasonable to suggest that the interpretation of “liberty” would change if the quote were attributed to John Quincy Adams.

Understanding the various influences on our thinking, questioning the assumptions made by authors when they write, and examining the various perspectives that guide our understanding are at the heart of critical literacy. As we will explore further, critical literacy is vital in the twenty-first century. As citizens in a democracy, we are responsible for thinking deeply about the texts we read and for interrogating our assumptions and the perspectives promoted by authors. In short, citizenship requires participation, and that participation is based on an understanding that we can question without fear.

What is Critical Literacy?

Critical literacy is the practice of challenging texts through an analysis of the roles that power, culture, class, and gender play in the message. Texts are approached with an understanding that multiple perspectives exist and can be influenced by the author’s and by the reader’s experiences. McLaughlin and DeVoogd (2004) have reminded us that “critical literacy helps us to move beyond . . . passive acceptance and take an active role in the reader-author relationship by questioning such issues as who wrote the text, what the author wanted us to believe, and what information the author chose to include or exclude from the text” (p. 6). Educators in Australia and New Zealand have pioneered this construct since the early 1990s, and there it has grown to be an integral part of literacy education from kindergarten through the twelfth grade. The Tasmania (Australia) Department of Education describes critical literacy extensively in its content standards and frameworks, reminding teachers of three questions readers should consider:

- In whose interest?
- For what purpose?
- Who benefits? (Tasmania Department of Education, 2006, ¶ 4)

Students become critically literate through exposure to and discussion of readings that address social, politi-
cal, and cultural issues. Critically literate students examine the beliefs and values that underpin texts, question the purpose and the message, take a stance on issues, and formulate action steps when needed. Luke and Freebody (1999) describe four “families of practice” necessary for every reader to assume:

- **Code breaker**—understanding the text at the surface level (alphabetic, structural);
- **Meaning maker**—comprehending the text at the level intended by the author;
- **Text user**—analyzing the factors that influenced the author and the text, including an historical grounding of the context within which it was written;
- **Text critic**—understanding that the text is not neutral, and that existing biases inform calls to action.

It is this fourth practice that we will explore further. We hope to ensure that students develop an understanding of the bias that exists in all texts. To put it another way, an African proverb states, “Until lions have historians, hunters will be the heroes.” Using critical literacy, readers actively seek to understand what the historians say, consider what the voiceless lions might express, evaluate both messages to achieve a more nuanced understanding, and then use the information to take action.

**What Is the Relationship between Critical Literacy and Citizenship?**

Critical literacy skills are vital for citizens of an increasingly “global village” (McLuhan, 1962). The instant availability of information and misinformation from all corners of the world requires that readers sort through the barrage of messages, analyzing them for truth, authenticity, and integrity. Critically literate citizens are less vulnerable to propaganda because they understand the role of values and beliefs, and consider the sources from which these messages emanate.

The notion of civic literacy is central to a revitalized civics education movement. The Center for Information on Civic Learning and Engagement (CIRCLE) has called for an overhaul of civics education in the U.S., noting that the majority of current curricula emphasize “great American heroes and virtues,” but lack critical analysis of injustice in the American system (2004). Importantly, young people ages 15–25 who had been exposed to this approach to civics education were “more trusting,” an arguably dangerous belief in a complex world, while the small minority (9%) who had experienced a curriculum emphasizing critical examination of social injustices such as racism were the most likely to be registered voters. At a time when civic engagement is more important than ever, it would seem that critical analysis of, and within, a democratic system yields a more engaged citizenry. The point should not be lost that the freedom to engage in this discourse is possible because of a democratic system.

**Promoting Civic Engagement through Critical Literacy**

Critical literacy often involves the use of essential questions developed for students to use in constructing understanding. For example, the three questions cited by the Tasmanian Department of Education (referenced above) can serve as excellent general essential questions. In addition to these broad questions, we advocate the use of specific questions that promote civic engagement. Students can use two such questions to examine the beliefs, values, and experiences of Americans:

- **How do multiple perspectives enhance and inhibit the practice of freedom?**
- **What is our responsibility as citizens to preserve the freedoms of others?**

To answer these questions, students must engage with a wide variety of texts and they must be encouraged to focus on big ideas. The remainder of this article organizes text selections around four big ideas that students can explore as they read and learn to become critically aware.

**Examining Personal Freedom**

Books that examine personal freedom challenge students to define the rights and responsibilities of individuals within the context of a local community. These questions can be addressed through a critical examination of the lives of fictional characters by inviting students to examine the decisions characters make as citizens in very different communities. One such character is Sofia, an adolescent girl in *The Tequila Worm* (Canales, 2005) who wins a scholarship to a prestigious boarding school in another city. Her experiences with her classmates are colored by differences in social class, language, and culture. However, she also feels the pressure from her family and *barrio* neighbors not to forget...
the traditions of the Latino community. Her story mirrors the experiences of so many young people in the U.S. who must redefine personal freedom and identity as they move between worlds.

Robert Cormier's *The Chocolate War* (1986) challenges readers to determine how their personal freedoms hold implications for a school community's well-being. This novel recounts the experiences of a boy attending a Catholic school who refuses to sell chocolate bars for a fundraiser. With the tacit support of a teacher, he is subjected to bullying in and out of the classroom. This novel raises vital issues about the duty of a society to protect nonconformists, and examines the consequences to an individual who does not receive that support. This novel ends on a dark note, and the use of a school as a microcosm for a larger society is unsettling for some teachers. However, with good reason, this book continues to be one of the most talked-about young adult novels.

“Every war has turning points, and every person, too” (Rosoff, 2004, p. 68). So observes Daisy, the teenage protagonist in Meg Rosoff's *How I Live Now*. Set in England sometime in the near future, Daisy watches as the country is invaded and the norms of society are stripped away. She finds herself in a world without adult supervision, and without the guidance of others must make decisions about what is best for herself and the people she cares about. Her struggle to define what she expects of herself can provide students with insights into the responsibilities of personal freedom when it exists at the expense of others.

**Examining Social Injustices**

A democratic nation that views liberty as “unfinished business,” as suggested in the quote from the ACLU at the beginning of this article, will necessarily uncover its own violations of the freedom of its citizenry. Students need to understand that discussion of these topics ensures that these mistakes will not be made again. For example, the Salem witch trials of 1692 continue to resonate in our history. *The Witchcraft of Salem Village* (Jackson, 1956) provides an historical accounting of the mass hysteria that plagued a small Massachusetts settlement and ultimately put to death twenty of its citizens. This book serves as a great companion piece to the classic short story “The Lottery,” written by the same author. It is a disturbing story that describes a small town’s annual practice of putting to death one of its citizens to serve as a scapegoat for all the wrongs of the community. Students can discuss how the themes of Jackson’s short story influenced her nonfiction. This case has resonance in modern history as well, especially in the McCarthy-era trials of the 1950s.

Slavery looms as one of the United States’ greatest national tragedies. Even so, it can be a challenge for teachers to lift the institution out of the history books and make it relevant to today’s issues. Teachers can begin with primary source documents such as Frederick Douglass’s *My Bondage and My Freedom* (2003) and *Narrative of the Life of Frederick Douglass* (1963) to help students understand the context of the time and the experiences of one who lived it. These texts are accessible and compelling, and can lead to an in-depth analysis of the period of Reconstruction after the war—especially in understanding the period’s successes and its broken promises to African–Americans. *Cause: Reconstruction America 1865-1877* (Bolden, 2005) provides students with an understanding of how the stage was set for the civil rights movement, women’s suffrage, and the trampling of Native American rights during westward expansion. *Jefferson’s Children: The Story of One American Family* (Lanier & Feldman, 2002) brings the story of enslaved people into the twenty-first century, as it recounts the work of the descendants of Thomas Jefferson and Sally Hemings, an enslaved young woman owned by the future president. This book is written by members of both sides of the family and serves as a valuable resource into the multiple perspectives of Americans today as they continue to grapple with the legacy of slavery.

**Examining Controversial Topics**

Few classroom experiences engage adolescents and young adults like the opportunity to debate controversial topics. These experiences are critical to the development of an involved citizenry. As citizens of a democracy, they will soon vote and participate in organizations and community efforts on issues large and small, and these classroom debates can help to shape the way the students address the issues at hand. For example, the debate around gun control remains on the front pages year after year, as citizens wrestle with issues of public safety and the right to bear arms. A book such as *American Youth* (Lamarche, 2007) can help students think about this topical issue critically—examining multiple perspectives. Lamarche introduces us to Ted, a ninth-grader involved in a gun accident. The author doesn’t take sides, but shows us an American landscape of talk radio, religious influences, gang violence, and changes in rural communities brought on by rapid development.
Like gun control, censorship is a hot-button issue. To what extent should a society exercise control over what is spoken or what is read? These liberties are perhaps never more compellingly challenged than in Ray Bradbury’s *Fahrenheit 451* (1987). This dystopian view of a society in which censorship runs rampant and critical thought is discouraged in favor of a television world of spoon-fed information has implications for the society we live in today. Teachers might invite students to compare Bradbury’s world with the equally dark *We* (Zamyatin, 2006). First published in 1921, this book inspired Aldous Huxley’s *Brave New World* and George Orwell’s *1984*. Zamyatin’s novel describes a thirtieth century society in which all individual freedoms have been eliminated. Books such as *We* and *Fahrenheit 451* should prompt discussion on how far a government’s freedom should go, and what is the responsibility of its citizenry to preserve freedoms for others.

Students need information to balance what they are reading in these novels, so that they more fully understand the cautionary messages of these authors. Can censorship such as this really occur? How precarious are the rights of individuals? To this end, *To Establish Justice* (McKissack & Zarembka, 2004) is a must-have in any classroom. The authors have created a student-friendly text that describes the rights and responsibilities of American citizens as described in the Constitution, then chronicles the court battles that have addressed these struggles. Short but informative chapters on the rights of non-citizens, African Americans, women, people with disabilities, and gays and lesbians are described in detail. The chapter on the rights of students is of particular interest to adolescents.

**Examining a Call to Action**

No understanding of the responsibility of citizenship would be complete without an examination of how our beliefs and values as a nation have shaped the definitions of personal and societal freedoms at key points in our history. When these changing definitions conflict with existing practices, Americans answer the call to action. This may occur at the personal level, as it does in Ron Suskind’s *A Hope in the Unseen* (1999), a biography of a young African American man’s struggles while growing up in Washington, DC, and attending Brown University. The author describes Cedric’s lonely high school experience as an ostracized student among classmates who did not share his academic goals. Cedric’s

Above: Rosie the Riveter poster, “We Can Do It!”, 1942.
vision for himself leads him to take personal action to acquire the education he wants.

There are many examples of rising to a call for action in our nation’s history. *Decision in Philadelphia* (Collier, 2007) brings the controversies surrounding our country’s birth to life, detailing the ways the founding fathers struggled to balance states’ rights with federal power, expand on individual freedoms, and reach a compromise on the issue of slavery. Rather than simply recording an account of the events, the author uses major figures, such as Washington, Madison, and Hamilton, as well as lesser-known but influential men such as James Wilson and Elbridge Gerry, as lenses to examine the arguments.

World War II represents another turning point in U.S. history, as groups and individuals had to determine how they would answer a call to action. Michael French has adapted James Bradley and Ron Powers’ powerful epic *Flags of Our Fathers: Heroes of Iwo Jima* (Bradley & Powers, 2001) in a companion book for younger readers called *Flags of Our Fathers: A Young People’s Edition* (2005). The authors follow the lives of six young men through grim triumph, the white-hot glare of media attention, and their conflicted feelings about their roles that day. On the home front, women struggled to redefine their role during the war. *Rosie the Riveter* (Coleman, 1995) tells the story of American women who ventured into the workplace in unprecedented numbers during the war. Coleman continues the story with the transition to peacetime, as many women wanted to continue to work, but met with great resistance from many of their fellow citizens. The 1943 cartoon on page 98 is a study in this contrast. A strong “Rosie” carries an air of confidence, as well as a hammer and lunch pail, in this positive image of the contributions of these workers, yet a small character at the bottom corner reminds her, “You gotta come right back as soon as the war is over!”

Perhaps the best example of civic engagement is when one citizen advocates on behalf of another without regard to personal benefit. *Left for Dead* (Nelson, 2002) describes the efforts of Hunter Scott, an eleven-year-old from Pensacola, Florida, who learned about the World War II disaster suffered by the men of the USS *Indianapolis* while watching the movie *Jaws* with his father in 1996. Hunter researched the court-martial of its captain, who was found guilty of “hazarding” his ship, leading to the deaths of 880 men in shark-infested waters off the coast of Palau. Although the survivors felt their captain was wrongly convicted, they were not able to clear his name. Hunter’s interviews with survivors for a history fair project led to a personal campaign to set the record straight. His advocacy on behalf of the now-deceased captain included politicians, high-ranking Navy officials, and the media. His testimony before the Senate Armed Services Committee, as well as the submission of new evidence uncovered by Hunter, led to his full exoneration in 2000. *Left for Dead* serves as an excellent example of the power of an individual to right a wrong.

**Conclusion**

Critical literacy and citizenship come together at a point in time when our country continues to define its beliefs about freedom at home and in the world. We are reminded that, “good-heartedness and power are insufficient for creating a just world. Some modest development of the intellectual virtues seems essential for future human survival and well-being. Whether the energy, the resources, and the insights necessary for this development can be significantly mustered remains open. This is certain: we will never succeed in cultivating traits whose roots we do not understand and whose development we do not foster” (Paul, 1993, ¶ 58).

A critical literacy approach that invites readers to question, debate, consider other perspectives, and take action is consistent with civics education. Kennedy’s reminder that democracy is “an untiring effort” should serve as a reminder of the power of reading critically for teachers in classrooms across the nation.

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George Orwell’s adage that “history is written by the winners” is often repeated in classrooms around the country. But the knowledge that our standard history is only one version of past events is rarely acted upon when considering alternative pedagogies or content. All too often, we educators acquiesce, repeating the winner’s version of social studies written in the textbooks and failing to recognize that we are not fulfilling our pledge to a country that, ideally, strives to treat people fairly regardless of their beliefs, power, or socioeconomic status.

Examples of this “winner’s bias” in textbooks are common, but since we are so familiar with history as it’s been taught over the years, they are hard to recognize. Take, for example, one line in a typical eighth-grade social studies text that describes the death of approximately fifteen million native people in South and North America as a result of disease when Europeans first explored and immigrated to the New World. There are whole chapters in the same book that describe exploration of the Americas and the European–American movement to the western territories of what is now the United States, but only one line concerning the fifteen million natives who died during and as a result of this expansion. The fact that so little is written concerning this extremely important fact in U.S. history is evidence of bias in this social studies text.

It is unjust to Native Americans to minimize or to avoid discussing the toll of disease shortly after the first European immigration. When one begins to think in this manner, other problematic issues inherent in the way we typically think about our history begin to emerge—both in relation to issues of fair representation and issues of truth. Most U.S. history books discuss Pre-Columbian Native Americans in several chapters, but issues of power and perspective are given limited consideration. Typical texts do not explore the inevitable effects that the sudden weakening and deaths of so many native people had on the rapid immigration and expansion of European immigrants in the U.S.—and how that makes our country so different from British colonies in Africa or India. In contrast to their experiences in Africa or India, European Americans had a relatively easy time moving in and homesteading the land vacated by the natives. By avoiding this topic, some social studies texts also leave other important issues unaddressed, such as the unintended negative consequences of easy travel and the evolution of diseases. These issues are not only of concern to Native Americans but to all people.

This emphasis on the “winner’s perspective” presents a skewed view of history that allows readers to make incorrect assumptions about the identity and character of European and Native Americans—both past and present. These incorrect assumptions allow readers to construct a view of themselves and others that may lead to further oppression. Therefore, it is important not to limit students to one particular version of history. Instead, in order to dismantle forms of institutionalized oppression, they should be allowed to explore other perspectives that give voice to those marginalized by society. Critical literacy is an approach to comprehension that encourages the reader to identify and dismantle the perspectives of power and the biases in texts.

Critical Comprehension

One of the main principles of critical literacy, or critical comprehension, is its demand for an honest consideration of explanations and stories that give equal weight to the perspectives of the poor and marginalized. Critical literacy is a term used to describe the way that readers (and viewers) can challenge texts, films, conversations, and pictures that privilege the perspective of the status-quo “winners” in histories and in stories. This dialogue with the text is used to challenge the defenders of the status-quo system who support a history that marginalizes people on the basis of ethnic group, gender, or even philosophy. In the end, the goal of a critical literacy approach is to actively pursue the ideal of “liberty and justice for all.” Practitioners seek to reach this goal by
encouraging free thought and by transforming existing systems to provide access to alternative points of view.

**Skill, Practice, Desire and Controversial Texts as Prerequisites**

There is no guaranteed lesson plan that will result in critical comprehension; rather, teachers should focus both on establishing the classroom conditions for critical work to take place, and on ensuring students are in the correct mindset to perform the work. First, critical literacy requires that a reader or listener be open to understanding the content and perspective presented. Teachers will find that many existing practices can help to reach this first goal. Most texts on reading comprehension cover a range of techniques aimed at helping students achieve a more complete understanding of text—including ways to talk about ideas, graphic organizers, and, for narrative texts, story maps.

Secondly, instead of merely accepting the storyline and automatically adopting the author’s perspective, readers must enter into a kind of challenging dialogue with the text—looking around it and behind it, not for what is in the text but for what is left unsaid. This dialogue, like any good conversation, starts with an acknowledgment of what the author is saying. What are the messages of the text? Who or what is named in the text? Why did the author choose to write about these topics? Who is missing from the text? How does the text portray marginalized people? Who or what style of life looks good or bad? What kind of work does this book do in the world?

Like most patterns of thought, the ability to approach a text as one of many possible perspectives on a topic is not an easy habit to acquire. To effectively integrate this kind of challenging dialogue into a student’s repertoire of skills, the student must practice dialoguing with texts over many months.

To foster this type of critical analysis, teachers must allow students extra time to get acquainted with the story, and then more time to begin challenging the inherent assumptions of the text. In total, the reader must not only be able to summarize and analyze the ideas in the text, but also want to go beyond the simple summary or analysis and challenge the author’s choices and intentions. To be successful, critical literacy has to be interesting and engaging for students so they have the desire to participate.

For example, after reading a description of Andrew Jackson as an advocate for the common man in a social studies textbook, students often find it refreshing to challenge that stance by thinking about his attacks on Native Americans and his advocacy for their removal, culminating in a forced march west in which thousands of natives died. It is also interesting for students to challenge typical depictions of Thomas Jefferson as a promoter of liberty and independence by thinking about the implication of his slave ownership. Students also get interested in rewriting their history textbook when exploring what the chapters in such a book might look like if African Americans, Native Americans, or Mexican Americans were writing the textbook. These new ways of thinking not only make history fascinating and sometimes shocking, but also tap into adolescents’ natural urges to challenge authority, reject the status quo, and make the world a better place.

Finally, although critical perspectives can be taken on just about any text, it’s best to start by encouraging critical literacy with interesting texts that contain some controversial content. In this way, readers will naturally be attracted to the text in question because of its inherent interest. They will also be able to more easily identify the author’s intent; what is favored and marginalized; what other perspectives are available on the topic; and what action to take.

**Approaches to Acquiring the Habit of Critical Comprehension**

Though it is appropriate to suggest ways to get started thinking about how to free up the minds of your students in social studies, it is dangerous to suggest that teaching approaches which are successful in one setting with one teacher will be equally successful in other settings. Any approach described below will be only a starting place to work on critical comprehension.

**Making Challenge a Natural Habit**

Many people naturally acquire skills like critical analysis just by having conversations with people who are proficient at politely challenging the status quo. When this “knowledgeable other” makes critically astute comments over time, listeners may eventually acquire similar patterns of thought. Whether this happens over the dinner table, at cafés, or during long trips in the car, a skilled critical thinker can affect the thought patterns and responses of a willing learner. Similarly, teachers who model critically literate behavior as they teach will effectively set the stage for classes rich in critical thinking.

For example, after reading a text to the class about
how the cold war was a competition between the communist and capitalistic economic systems, a teacher might challenge the ideas in the book by providing a counter-textual argument suggesting that capitalism and communism were only pretexts for first-world nations to dominate developing countries, taking out their raw materials, profiting from their cheap labor, and acquiring a market to sell one’s goods in. If this kind of challenging occurs in a single lesson or a week’s worth of lessons in a classroom, students will probably not integrate critical literacy into their daily skill set. However, if teachers use the skills frequently when responding to daily information, students will learn these techniques naturally.

**Problem-Posing Questions**

As efforts to introduce critical literacy into classes progress, one may wish to provide students with a standard question or list of questions that will help to identify power relations in a text:

1. What or who is favored in this text?
2. What or who is marginalized?
3. What are other perspectives on this topic?
4. What action would you take to create justice?

These questions could be used, for example, when examining the ideas in the movie *300*, an action/adventure film about ancient Greek Spartans who fought to stop an overwhelming Persian army in Thermopylae in 480 B.C., a topic sometimes studied in sixth-grade classrooms. Based on the questions listed above, it appears that proud warriors and the Greeks are favored, whereas making peace, negotiation, and Persians are marginalized. Other perspectives about the Spartans might have depicted the combative and ruthless life of King Leonidas culminating when his family grieves his beheading in a battle after which his head is paraded around on top of a pole. In contrast to the original story, this alternative version of the story foregrounds the disgrace and sadness that surrounds war, thus questioning the idea of war as an effective solution for resolve conflicts between people. Students might also examine the Persian King Xerxes’ perspective as he seeks to avenge what he perceives as the casual assassination of the peace negotiators he sent to the Spartan King Leonidas. To answer question number four, students might contrast the nature of war with the movie’s depiction of war and present their findings to the class and to their families. They might also write a letter to the editor of the local newspaper (or to a blog) concerning the role of the movie in glorifying such a horrible human event.

The questions and resulting discussions can be powerful tools to aid active viewers and readers in comprehending not only the literal meaning of the text, but also in helping them recognize the work that texts do to persuade people to believe in certain ways.

**Multiple Characters in History**

While history textbooks and historical fiction can provide a useful starting point for an understanding of historical events, teachers and students can continue by investigating the perspectives of a range of different kinds of people for any single historical event. Students can be assigned different characters to play, and then small groups can be assigned to assemble data for their characters. Throughout their research, students should prepare some diary entries, a fact sheet, and a reference list of primary and secondary sources. Depending on the age and skill of the students, teachers will have to either provide information for them, give them a list of Web sites, videos, and readings, or let students go to explore the library and Web on their own. In most cases, if teachers allow students to explore the Web, they will have to guide the students on how to search using a search engine like Google, Ask.com, or Yahoo.

After teachers provide some mini-lessons about searching for information, organizing the information, and writing up the different formats of the information, they should meet with the different groups of students to assess their progress and to provide encouragement and guidance. This activity would culminate in a short skit or oral presentation, in which students would dress up as their characters and perform in front of the class.

For example, if a fourth-grade class wants to study the California gold rush, the teacher could allow students to choose from among different perspectives on that time period, each of which would be represented by a distinct character—a Chinese man, a Native American, a Californio woman, a teenage girl from Boston who came by ship, Joaquin Murietta, a shop owner, and a man in search of gold. If the class forms a rubric on what makes a quality assignment for each of the different segments referenced above, they will be much more thoughtful and goal oriented when they do their gold rush character assignments. To wrap things up, do a dress rehearsal in front of the whole class and then invite parents in to see what the class is doing.

The teacher and the students should make com-
ments about each of the different characters during the presentations so that the class begins to see that history can be told from many different perspectives. By having students in each group play the part of the different ethnic groups and genders, while encouraging them to focus on the differences between the characters, students will be more likely to envision history in multi-perspective, complex ways, thus avoiding the linear (and frankly, suspect) single-perspective treatment that social studies texts often present.

**Juxtaposing Different Perspectives with Books during Thematic Literature Studies**

During reading times, students can learn about different perspectives by reading and listening to several different books on one historical topic. Famous historical topics, such as the relationships between native and European populations during colonial America, might be a good way to start such a thematic literature study because of the wealth of literature available on such subjects.

First, when teachers select books to read to the students, the book should be one that describes a story about a historical topic from a distinct perspective. Then teachers should provide book sets of other titles that offer different perspectives about the same historical event. After the teacher has given a book talk on each of the titles and has allowed the students to choose one of the titles to read, the teacher can then rotate to meet with small groups of students, guiding them through the reading of the books and preparing them for student-led discussion groups such as literature circles.

For the first twenty minutes each day, read and comment on the text you’ve chosen to present, modeling what you want students to do when they get into their literature circles. As you’re reading, ask questions that disrupt the author’s perspective and provoke discussion in a student-led discussion group. Most of the time students could meet every other day to discuss interesting issues in their own book, but every week the students from each group should pair up with a buddy and present a summary of their book to help inspire understanding. This summary should be followed with a discussion about the differences between the perspectives presented in their book and the perspectives presented in the books the others are reading. In this way, the students get to talk about each of the different perspectives on a historical event and understand the historical events in complex ways.

For example, Trouble River by Betsy Byars would be a good choice to read aloud. In that book, a boy named Dewey and his grandmother escape attacking natives and float down a raft on the Mississippi. The other titles should have different perspectives on the relationships between Native Americans and European Americans. A book that describes the cooperative yet strained relationship between two boys is Sign of the Beaver by Elizabeth Speare. Another reading group could read a couple of shorter books such as Blue Feather’s Dream by Knight, which describes the natives fears of being pushed out of their homeland. All of these books tell different stories about the relationships between European and Native Americans during colonial times. Taken as a whole, they will give students a sophisticated view of the people’s lives during that period.

**Conclusion**

To prepare students to quickly analyze and evaluate the large amount of information available to them in social studies, teachers should work actively toward helping students develop and hone their critical comprehension skills. If schools only teach the social studies content typically found in standard textbooks, they are leaving students vulnerable to manipulation by texts, movies, or media that may seek to control popular opinion for their own purposes. Schools need to prepare students not just to learn information, but to learn strategies that will help them understand the perspectives behind the way the information is presented and what other perspectives may exist. These tools will not only help close the achievement gap, but they will also be a step in helping all Americans live out the principles of their pledge for “liberty and justice for all.”

**About the Writer**

GLENN L. DEVOOGD serves as a professor at California State University, Fresno, where he teaches courses in literacy development, children’s literature, and research methodology. Dr. DeVoogd co-authored Critical Literacy: Enhancing Student Comprehension of Texts which is published by Scholastic. A graduate of Muskegon High School, Hope College, and Michigan State University, Dr. DeVoogd taught elementary school in East Lansing for sixteen years.

For a list of works cited and resources go to www.randomhouse.com/highschool/RHI.
Suggested Reading...

OPERATION HOMECOMING: Iraq, Afghanistan, and the Home Front, in the Words of U.S. Troops and Their Families
Edited by Andrew Carroll

Encouraged by such authors as Tom Clancy, Mark Bowden, Bobbie Ann Mason, Tobias Wolff, Jeff Shaara, and Marilyn Nelson, American military personnel and their loved ones wrote candidly about what they saw, heard, and felt while in Afghanistan and Iraq, as well as on the home front.

Random House, HC, 978-1-4000-6562-2, 416 pp., $26.95

9 OF 1: A Window to the World
by Oliver Chin
Foreword by Phoebe Gloeckner

In this graphic novel that helps teens make sense of world events, nine fictional high school students reflect on the variety of feelings about the events of September 11.

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A recent class I taught read Barbara Kingsolver’s *The Poisonwood Bible*, in which we came across this passage:

Winning an election—that was Belgium’s idea of fair play, but to people here it was peculiar. To the Congolese (including Anatole himself, he confessed) it seems odd that if one man gets fifty votes and the other gets forty-nine, the first wins altogether and the second one plumb loses. That means almost half the people will be unhappy, and according to Anatole, in a village that’s left halfway unhappy you haven’t heard the end of it. There is sure to be trouble somewhere down the line. (Kingsolver, 1998, p. 265)

The discussion of the passage brought up a recent election we’d had for homeroom representation—you know the kind: a heads-down, hands-up, blind vote between about six candidates, and the winner received maybe two more votes than the first runner-up. That’s democracy in action, right?

Yes and no. The class wasn’t at all certain that the Congolese approach described later in the novel—total consensus, no matter how long it takes to get there—would have worked in our election, though it’s also democratic. The discussion that followed was one of the most engaging we’d had in class; it balanced methods of voting, participating, and making decisions together. It explored democracy.

It’s not every day that a passage of literature has such an immediate effect on the choices we make in school and life. Yet that sort of effect is often exactly what language arts teachers aim to achieve. Using literature, we attempt daily to immerse students in discussions about moral choice, to offer narratives that promote active participation and standing on principle. Ask any student who ever wrote about the themes of *To Kill a Mockingbird* or *The Scarlet Letter*; English classrooms resound with examples of the difference between the bystander and the “upstander.”

Practicing critical literacy and critical thinking of the sort that we, as English teachers, encourage ought to lead students toward reflection on their own choices and the choices of their society. What’s more, it ultimately ought to offer students access to alternate points of view and belief systems, empowering them to evaluate the merits and deficiencies of either system or both. This critical stance should enable students to find new ways to approach a problem and even to initiate new paths of action.

These outcomes are desirable for any teacher. We should also be aware, however, that encouraging this kind of critical questioning can often reveal some of the deep ironies of American schooling: as much as we assert the value of democracy and civic participation, many schools and many teachers shy away from actually including them in policies or classrooms. A new type of election for homeroom representative may be a start but should not be the end of this line of questioning; ultimately, the study of civic participation in literature may demand of us the reevaluation of participation in our schools and even our syllabi. Learning about freedom and voice is not the same as being free or using a voice; our students deserve to participate as well as to read about participation, and a literature class is a natural place for the discussion and choice that participation demands to begin.

**The Ongoing Debate**

To illustrate the disparity between what we typically teach and traditional classroom techniques, here’s an exercise to try on your own or with students: list as many works of fiction as you can that include models of abusive or oppressive governance. Several dystopian novels ought to spring to mind fairly quickly: Lowry’s
American educators have for decades been debating what it means to teach democratically and to teach for democracy; no one has yet perfected the model. At one end of the spectrum reside educators like Joanne Yatvin, the current president of the National Council of Teachers of English, who wrote in 1971 that, in education, “one problem is the philosophical shift in our society to a demand for democratic process where it was never meant to apply and to an exaltation of individuality and personal taste” (p. 1,080); education, in other words, is meant to exist in a non-democratic system. At the other extreme one might find schools that incorporate democracy so fully that students have no required classes, subjects, or assignments, and are given an equal vote in every matter involving school life and policy, from punitive measures to operational and financial allocation. The Sudbury Valley School in Framingham, Massachusetts is a good example: “students initiate all their own activities and create their own environments” so that they “are exposed to the complexities of life in the framework of a participatory democracy.” The Sudbury School remains a radical model despite the fact that educators have been proposing this level of student involvement for decades. In a 1939 article the Journal of Educational Sociology, for instance, New York University professor S. R. Slavson proposed much the same model:

It is necessary. . . that in view of the challenge to democracy, the school become a training ground for democracy. This can best be accomplished through participation on the part of the students, not only in classroom learning, but actually in the conduct of the schools themselves.

(p. 226)

If the nature of the democratic classroom is a recurring theme in discussions about American education, it is also one tied clearly to historical context. Numerous articles on the subject appear in the early forties; more crop up in the early seventies; an entire volume of The English Journal was devoted to the subject in 2005. If critical literacy is a tool our students should use, it’s one that we, as educators, should also value. What is it about war and threats to America that cause us to reflect on the nature of our pedagogy? Is teaching for civic participation more important at some times, for some audiences of students, than at others?

In the end, many of us find ourselves stranded
somewhere in between those who believe that classrooms should include noiseless rows of student desks where pupils do what they’re told and those who advocate systems without structure. We wish to value students’ voices but know that democracy in a classroom means time, noise, and, sometimes, failure. We live within the confines of mandated curricula and high-stakes testing that limits choice for teachers and students. We also know that our schools, if dystopian, are not always tyrannical and do not always perfectly mirror the oppression portrayed in the fiction we assign.

Teachers of literature, I believe, are uniquely suited to teach for, about, and through democratic processes in ways that balance student participation, subject matter, and high standards. That’s because literature itself is well suited to discussions about achieving just such balances.

Text and Context: Literature and Participation in the Classroom

One might argue that the very nature of a literature class promotes the basic freedoms on which democracy relies. Literacy itself is a basic requirement for free and fair elections as are an informed world view and the ability to express opinions. The difference, though, between mere literacy and critical literacy is an important one: a voter who can simply read the ballot cannot replace one who understands the philosophies and histories of the candidates on it.

It is my belief that students learn citizenship—critical participation, one might call it—in multiple ways simultaneously: through what they read, through how they read it, and also through how they discuss and approach that material, as well as the course as a whole, in the classroom. In each of three sections below, I’ll address all three of these aspects of instruction for bodies of literature that might prove useful to classroom teachers concerned about participation and democracy both in theory and practice.

Oppressors and the Oppressed: The Literature of Injustice and Rebellion

The texts often used to teach about democracy and participation are not necessarily texts about democracy and participation; more often, they’re about rebellion, non-conformity, and principled stands against oppression. Acts of revolution are admittedly important in the development of democracy and civil liberties; American history, in particular, is full of revolutionaries, from Pocahontas to Rosa Parks. The dystopian, historical, and other political fiction I’ve listed already in this article is not only commonplace in the classroom, but is also integral to many instructors’ courses.

There’s something incongruous, though, about instructing students to shrug off tyranny. And, too, there’s the question of a work like Dickens’ *A Tale of Two Cities* raises: Is it enough simply to rid a society of tyranny? With what does one replace it, if not just tyranny of a different sort?

The answer, I believe, is pluralism—the structuring of society in such a way that diverse and disparate points of view may be expressed freely and equally. Fortunately, helping students to understand the value of a forum for the expression of diverse opinions does not equate to an enormous leap for English teachers, who generally value discussion and classroom participation in the first place. It’s worth asking, however, how effective our classroom discussions are and how clearly we’re sending the message that a range of viewpoints matters. Think of it this way: in his article “The Art of Teaching Democracy,” Richard Cuoto describes an activity requiring a group of educators simply to illustrate “teaching
democracy.” i.e. to depict an image of the concept of teaching democracy in any manner—abstract or concrete, detailed or general. More than two-thirds of these teachers included some sort of circle in their images of “teaching democracy,” about a third depicted multiple learning environments, and several included numerous bonds or links between the participants. Such symbolic pictures, taken metaphorically or literally as depictions of a classroom, unanimously move away from the notion of a single lecturer depositing vital information into the minds of silent, note-scribbling learners.

That’s not to say that every teacher reading this article should suddenly rush back into his or her room and start hauling desks around into different configurations (though sometimes that’s not a bad approach to improving the quality of discussions). It’s also not to say that lectures are never worthwhile. But to demonstrate real pluralism, one must organize classroom discussions in such a way as to maximize interaction between students and the willingness of those with minority opinions to voice them.

Here’s an example: during a recent class discussion of One Flew Over the Cuckoo’s Nest—a novel the students had already suggested might be compared to other works describing abusive governments—I asked groups of students, working in pairs, to suggest some of the “big questions” posed by the work. Two of these in particular became topics of conversation: the first was, “Are some of the means of control used in the novel actually legitimate and reasonable?” and the second, “Are some of the means of control more effective than others?” The problem with the discussion, I quickly noticed, was that it was being conducted mainly between the two students who posed these questions, while I was serving as moderator—the rest of the class had not yet weighed in.

I decided to reorganize the discussion as a grid activity. The prep was easy. On each of four pieces of paper, one of which I then taped to each wall, I wrote one of the following: “means of control are effective and legitimate,” “means of control are effective and illegitimate,” “means of control are ineffective and legitimate,” “means of control are ineffective and illegitimate.” Then, as I cited (or allowed students to cite, if they wished) scenes and actions from the novel, every participant (to make the exercise even more democratic, I included myself) moved to the quadrant of the room that corresponded to his or her individual feelings about each scene or action. One student, for instance, brought up a scene in which the patients are allowed to vote about watching baseball on television but are defeated because the “Chronics” are included in the vote:

McMurphy is on his feet.

“Well, I’ll be a sonofabitch. You mean to tell me that’s how you’re gonna pull it? Count the votes of those old birds over there too??”

“Didn’t you explain the voting procedure to him Doctor?”

“I’m afraid—a majority is called for, McMurphy. She’s right, she’s right.”

“A majority, Mr. McMurphy; it’s in the ward constitution.”

“And I suppose the way to change the constitution is with a majority vote.”

(Kesey, 1962, pp. 124-125)

The students and I split up, at least one person standing at each wall of the room. Some thought a vote that includes everyone was legitimate, some didn’t. Others thought the vote was effective because no one could argue the point; others disagreed. Other scenes and actions from the novel raised similar debate—the practice of group therapy, for instance, which the narrator describes in this way: “the goal of the Therapeutic Community is a democratic ward, run completely by the patients and their votes” (p. 48). And then, at the suggestion of a student, we used the same categories to discuss aspects of our own political system such as the electoral college.
and nationally televised debates. Finally, we moved on to issues of school governance, such as the way students choose their courses each fall.

The great benefit of an exercise like the grid is that it encourages students to speak out and defend their positions; it also encourages them to think about other possible positions. If no one is standing in one quadrant of the room, students will usually work to figure out what the argument for that position might be. In such an exercise, where various points of view are visually clear before discussion even begins, students become eager to speak and eager to listen. And at the end of such a discussion, I always ask students how the discussion model itself relates to the work we’re studying. Generally, they pretty quickly realize that we’re putting pluralism into practice—that we are, in short, doing what the oppressive systems in our texts refuse to. This technique can be used alongside many novels, including *Fahrenheit 451* and several newer works like *We*, *The Last Town on Earth*, and *American Youth*.

**Decision-Makers: Texts about Choice and Conflict Resolution**

Still, democracy and citizenship are not only about nonconformity and disagreement; civic participation in a democratic society does not require constant revolutionary acts, only a constant willingness to challenge assumptions and engage in decision-making. Take this passage from *Lord of the Flies*, shortly after the boys are stranded on the island:

> The dark boy, Roger, stirred at last and spoke up.  
> “Let’s have a vote.”  
> “Yes!”  
> “Vote for chief!”  
> “Let’s vote—”

This toy of voting was almost as pleasing as the conch. Jack started to protest but the clamor changed from the general wish for a chief to an election by acclaim of Ralph himself. None of the boys could have found good reason for this; what intelligence had been shown was traceable to Piggy while the most obvious leader was Jack. But there was a stillness about Ralph that marked him out: there was his size, and attractive appearance; and most obscurely, yet most powerfully, there was the conch.

(Golding, 1954, p. 22)

A few pages later, Ralph begins to institute laws, the first of which is a fundamental sort of parliamentary procedure in which the speaker must hold a symbolic conch. “We’ll have rules!” Jack shouts in response, “Lots of rules! And when anyone breaks ’em—” (p. 33). Unlike the passage from *One Flew Over the Cuckoo’s Nest* above, there is no pre-existing authority in this group decision; the boys are creating their social order from scratch. Other instances of such group decision-making crop up fairly frequently in high school literature: there’s a vote taken by a group of soldiers in O’Brien’s *Going After Cacciato*, a town meeting in Ibsen’s *An Enemy of the People*, a civic meeting of a gated community in Boyle’s *The Tortilla Curtain*.

Such scenes serve as interesting focal points for a discussion of how and why we read and work as we do in the classroom.

“Imagine,” I say to my classes, “that you enter a three week unit in a literature class with no prescribed syllabus, reading list, assignments, or grading system. Imagine that I left it entirely up to you to tell me what we would read, how we’d study it, and how the grades—if any—would be assigned. What would you do?”

The first responses are predictable: we’d read nothing, or almost nothing, and do nothing. It’s not long, though, before the class agrees that the consequences of such a course might not be worth it. (What if an administrator decided he or she needed to fire me, take over the class, and assign a research paper in light of the failure of the class to produce any work?) The next reaction, generally, is a feeling of unease about how the students would come up with a worthwhile curriculum plan. This is the same reaction described by Jeffrey Wil-
helm (1997), who recreates two students in a discussion about choice in reading:

“Hey, when you go to a restaurant, you can choose a dessert, but only from the desserts they have.” Another student joined in with, “Yeah, if you could choose any dessert in the whole wide world you might never make up your mind. . . .”

(p. 47)

In the end, students often come up with a plan that I put into action—I provide options, and they choose between them. Sometimes this results in group work where each group chooses its own reading, creates assignments and a timetable of when those assignments are due, and constructs a rubric for self-assessment. Sometimes it results in independent reading and work by individual students. Sometimes we enter a class project with elements of student design. Usually, I get where I wanted to go anyway, but with a much higher level of investment from the class.

Again, I often employ such tactics when the work we’ll study includes models of self-governance (or a lack of it) to begin with; thus, the process of the classroom either directly reflects or refutes the processes portrayed in our novel, opening up another dimension for discussion and connection.

Outside Observers: Texts That Examine Democracy from the Outside In

In Veil of Roses, a recent novel that works well with young adult readers (especially with young female readers), author Laura Fitzgerald’s narrator is an Iranian woman residing in the United States on a three-month visa who frequently carries her camera with her:

I snap a picture of our three coffee cups, their round rims on the round table, the lack of hard edges. The rim of Eva’s cardboard cup is splashed with sheer red lipstick; she has made her mark. I take a picture of Eva from the waist down—the thigh-high black boots and the leather miniskirt. Then I take one of my new white running shoes, chaste and cheery.

(p. 133)

A page later, a new acquaintance of the narrator attempts to understand her choice of subject matter:

“You are looking for freedom in all its often overlooked details. You want to document some of the little choices that free people make... you are photographing tiny acts of everyday rebellion.”

(p. 134)

Fiction in which outsiders observe democracy and participation with a fresh perspective can be profitable vehicles for classroom discussion; the passage from Kingsolver’s The Poisonwood Bible at the start of this article is a good example. Others I’ve taught include LeGuin’s The Dispossessed and Allende’s Eva Luna.

Such works get to the heart of an approach involving critical literacy. It’s important, of course, for students to ask critical questions about authorship and readership in any work that’s being used to examine governance—students may develop greater insight if they investigate Huxley’s stance on eugenics or Conrad’s views on British imperialism as opposed to Belgian—but reading a work like Laura Fitzgerald’s makes students into critical questioners by necessity, examining decision-making and citizenship through other lenses even as they read.

We practice participation in our classrooms every day. Sometimes it’s as obvious as an election; sometimes it’s implicit in the way we make an assignment. Helping students to read about participation is a first step in helping them to become active participants in society, but it’s not the only step. Students also need to be critical readers and critical learners. We, their teachers, must in turn, be critical educators. We must question our own pedagogy, our own modeling, and our own motives. In so doing, we do not just instill students with a fervor for a democratic society—we help them to construct one they can actually exist in every day.

About the Writer

BARRY GILMORE teaches English and social studies at Lausanne Collegiate School in Memphis, Tennessee. He is the author of four books for teachers, including the recent publication Is It Done Yet?—Teaching Adolescents the Art of Revision (Heinemann 2007). He also serves as president of the Tennessee Council of Teachers of English.

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Having worked as a librarian for many years in both the public library system and in private and public corporations, I have come to develop simple prompts for young people who are just beginning to encounter and use all of the great—and sometimes not so great—information available to them. Below are some simple steps and questions students may use both in the accessing of information as well as in its evaluation.

**ACCESS**

- Obviously, Web sites provide access to newspaper and magazine content. Identifying desired sites will be easy for most students. What they’ll need to know more specifically is site organization: Are there archives available? Are they free? How far back do they go? How much of today’s news is available to download? How much is available to download full text?

- Students need familiarity with online services—LexisNexis, for instance—which provide more extensive archives and cover thousands of sources. Understanding the concept of groupings of libraries can focus the search better. Beyond LexisNexis, there are services that specialize in particular academic areas.

- The “old reliables,” printed indexes, are still widely used. Ulrich’s Periodicals Directory [http://www.ulrichsweb.com/ulrichsweb] and Full Text Source Online identify online sources for the unknowing searcher. Some sources will only be found in Readers’ Guide [www.hwwilson.com/Databases/Readersg.htm]

- Students should be familiar with a few comprehensive archives, like the New York Public Library newspaper collection, and know how to use them. This is especially useful for ethnic publications and out-of-print publications.

- Some collections are maintained by organizations such as historical societies that are often not open to the public, so special arrangements need to be made for access.

- Access to television news is now easier with services like ShadowTV, in which segments of broadcasts can be viewed on a split screen with accompanying script. (This can also be e-mailed.) The LexisNexis News Library also has a file called “script” that transcribes many major news organization broadcasts.

**EVALUATION**

- Look at several papers and compare their coverage of the same stories. Readers should know that page layout follows a formula, and that content and number of pages is always at least partly driven by advertising. A paper like the New York Times has a standard format. The extreme right column on the front page is considered by the editors to be the “most important” story, and the article on the extreme left is the “second most important.” A tabloid usually showcases one cover story to grab attention. But what is the paper trying to tell? Who is the audience? Are nonstandard words like sez and prez used? What is the print size? How are photos and graphics used to tell the story?

- Watch a television news broadcast with the sound off for a few minutes. How do networks use facial gestures, body language, and the personalities themselves to grab viewer attention?

- Invite speakers from local papers to your school so they can give their versions of what their mission is, and how they evaluate their own and competitors’ work. (Many publications also provide in-house tours.) In learning to evaluate, it’s useful for students to have people who put the paper together to explain their jobs and what they are trying to achieve. Students can then think through the evidence to see if stated goals are achieved, policies followed, and so forth.

- Familiarize students with sources within self-directed media like the Columbia Journalism Review and Editor and Publisher. What do media people say the crucial issues in their field are, and how are they responding to these challenges?

- Consider the impact that “watchdog groups” have. Conservative organizations write about the “liberal media.” CAMERA reports on bias in Middle East coverage. What do these groups say to readers and the publications they criticize? Who sponsors them and what agendas do they have?

Students become critical thinkers when they apply evaluative tools to sources. Teachers and librarians serve as the bridge between the two, showing students first how to get where they need to go, and then how to make sense of what they find.

**About the Writer**

Peter Edelman has worked as a special and public librarian since the early 1980s, with companies including CBS, Rockefeller Foundation, the New York Public Library, and the Daily News. He has research credits or acknowledgments in sixteen books on diverse topics, from art and religion to sports and politics. A resident of Hastings-on-Hudson, Edelman has served on the town’s Library Friends board for five years.
The United States Constitution is taught in elementary school, and reaffirmed in middle and high school social studies classes, but few students understand, nor appreciate how the Constitution applies to their lives. Students are taught that Thomas Jefferson and James Madison fought and won intellectual battles about the importance of free speech in America, but too many students don’t make the connection between free speech principles and the freedom to read. Meanwhile, book banning and book challenges are occurring at epidemic levels in school and public libraries across the country. What must we do to help high school students understand why it is important to defend their right to read books like Maya Angelou’s *I Know Why the Caged Bird Sings*, Mark Twain’s *The Adventures of Huckleberry Finn*, Geoffrey Chaucer’s *Canterbury Tales*, Margaret Atwood’s *The Handmaid’s Tale*, and Ray Bradbury’s *Fahrenheit 451*? How can we communicate to middle school students that they have a right to read Lois Lowry’s *The Giver*, Judy Blume’s *Blubber*, Lois Duncan’s *Killing Mr. Griffin* and Madeleine L’Engle’s *A Wrinkle in Time*. Why is it that teachers and librarians feel so threatened by would-be censors that they elect to play it “safe” and not promote books like Toni Morrison’s *The Bluest Eye*, Robert Cormier’s *Fade*, William Faulkner’s *As I Lay Dying*, and Louise Fitzhugh’s *Harriet the Spy*?

Teachers and librarians must understand that granting students the freedom to read also allows them the freedom to reject a book. It is important to note individual differences, and realize that there are a host of novels that some students are ready to read at 12-years-old, while other students may not be ready to read them until age 14. Emotional readiness and maturity, especially at middle school, is an important factor in selecting books for young adults. At the same time, it is important to introduce students to a variety of genres, and a multitude of literary themes. Most students will innately reject what they aren’t ready for. Such guidance moves young readers toward an understanding of the true meaning of the freedom to read.

Every time an adult listens to a student’s opinion, they have practiced the principles of intellectual freedom. Students have ideas, and they want to express them. They can only grow intellectually if they are provided the forum to speak. It is important to encourage opposing viewpoints in classroom debate so that all students understand that their views count. This is the very basis of the First Amendment, and classrooms and libraries, as institutions of knowledge, must practice these principles by encouraging the exchange of ideas, regardless of what those ideas represent. There is no place for fear of ideas in schools and libraries. Helping patrons and students, young and old, understand this philosophy promotes critical thinking, and reaffirms the intent of this nation’s forefathers when they constructed the Bill of Rights.

The United States Constitution has served this country well. There will always be challenges to its words, and politicians will continue to evaluate its application to some of the social concerns in today’s society. But, students must be taught the freedoms they are guaranteed under the Constitution, and they must understand that those Americans with even the most radical ideas share

“Our Nation’s understanding and appreciation of the First Amendment is not passed along genetically. It must be reaffirmed and defended, over and over. Keep fighting and keep winning.”

—Paul Steinle
the same freedoms. When students fully grasp these principles, they can and will “keep fighting and keep winning” the attack on books in the nation’s schools and libraries.

This guide offers points for discussion and writing opportunities that deal with issues related to book censorship and the freedom to read. In addition, there are suggested activities that encourage students to independently explore some of the free speech questions that may help them as they begin forming their own ideas about the First Amendment and what it means to be truly “free.”

**TEACHING IDEAS**

**THE FIRST AMENDMENT**

*Congress shall make no law respecting an establishment of religion, or prohibiting the free exercise thereof; or abridging the freedom of speech, or of the press; or the right of the people peaceably to assemble, and to petition the Government for a redress of grievances.*

1. One argument used by some people who wish to ban books is that the First Amendment doesn’t specifically address the freedom to read. Read the First Amendment aloud to the class, and ask them to discuss how this amendment applies to their lives. How would our nation be different if we didn’t have free speech? Discuss the significance of free speech amendment in the First Amendment. Engage the class in a discussion about the relationship between free speech and the freedom to read.

2. Discuss the meaning of intellectual freedom and academic freedom. Interview a school curriculum specialist or a college professor and find out some of the academic freedom issues in schools today. How do textbook companies dictate what public schools teach? Debate why many teachers feel it “safer” to teach directly from textbooks?

3. Conduct a classroom discussion about the difference in a book challenge and censorship. How might a book challenge cause school officials to ultimately censor a book? Most school districts have policies that outline the procedures for dealing with challenges. Make available your school dis-

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District's Board Policy Manual to students. Ask them to find out the school district's policy regarding issues related to questionable books and materials. Invite a school board member, or a district official to speak to the class about local challenges.

4 Discuss how censorship is about fear. How does knowledge and reading eliminate fear?

5 Justice William Brennan, a free speech advocate who died in 1997, issued the following statement: “Schools cannot expect their students to learn the lessons of good citizenship when the school authorities themselves disregard the fundamental principles underpinning our constitutional freedoms.” To what fundamental principles is Brennan referring? Ask the class to discuss the relationship between the Constitution and good citizenship. How does freedom require responsibility?

6 Many free speech advocates blame right-wing political and religious groups (such as the Christian Coalition) for the censorship problems in the United States. While this group brings most book challenges, there are challenges brought by the politically left as well. Ask the class to compare and contrast the types of things that these two groups might challenge (e.g. the far right might challenge witchcraft, violence, language, and the left is more likely to be offended by the negative portrayal of an ethnic group, or the omission of information regarding sex and other sensitive topics). Have students read summaries of the books discussed in this guide, and ask them to discuss which group is most likely to challenge these titles.

7 In some states it is a misdemeanor to obliterate or deface a book or a work of art (e.g. drawing clothing on paintings of nudes in art books, or marking out offensive words in novels). Debate whether this is censorship, vandalism, or both. Find out your state laws regarding this issue. Another common tactic among censors is to check a book out of a library and refuse to return it. Discuss the motive behind this scheme. Find out if there are laws in your state that assist libraries in dealing with such acts.

8 In Cedarville, Arkansas, the parents of a fourth grader challenged the school board’s decision to place Harry Potter on a restricted borrowing list. Ask the class to discuss why a restricted borrowing list is considered a form of censorship. How were these parents promoting the principles of intellectual freedom? How do words like “restricted” and “parental permission” only enhance a person's curiosity about a book? Why do some schools succumb to this practice?

9 People challenge and censor books for many different reasons. Among the most common reasons are: sexually explicit scenes, offensive language, unsuited to age group, occult themes or promoting the occult or Satanism, violence, homosexual themes, and promoting a religious viewpoint. Ask students to discuss how these common reasons for challenging a book applies to the titles in this guide.

10 Fantasy and science fiction is often censored on the grounds that the symbolism is “anti-Christian” and “anti-establishment.” Ask students who are fantasy and science fiction fans to identify symbolic elements in some of the books they have read and refer to the Fantasy and Science Fiction Dictionary of Symbolism (www.umich.edu/~umfandsf/symbolismproject/symbolism.html) for an explanation of the symbolism. Prepare an argument that the symbolism in this genre is the element that challenges the reader to think about “difficult choices” one faces in the real world.

11 Ask students to list favorite works of fantasy, beginning with fairy tales that they read when they were younger, and including works of high fantasy like Philip Pullman's His Dark Materials trilogy. Discuss the common elements of the genre. (e.g. good vs. evil, magic, dangerous quests, etc.) Ask students to discuss some of the moral lessons learned in works of fantasy. How does fantasy relate to the real world? Engage the class in a discussion about why fantasy is targeted by censors. What is a good rebuttal to someone who believes that the young shouldn’t read works of fantasy?

12 Golda Meir once said, “One cannot and must not try to erase the past merely because it does not fit the present.” Why must we understand history in order to appreciate the present, and change the future? Discuss the history lessons in Twain's The Adventures of Huckleberry Finn, Stowe's Uncle Tom's Cabin, The Diary of Anne Frank, and Jump Ship to Freedom by James Lincoln Collier and Christopher Collier.

13 It was reported to the American Library Association's Office for Intellectual Freedom that in 1997 a school superintendent in Marysville, California removed The Catcher in the Rye by J. D. Salinger to “get it out of the way so that we didn’t have that polarization over a book.” Discuss how “polarization” can lead to healthy discussion. How does listening to all opinions promote the principles of intellectual freedom?

14 Violence in books and the media has become a concern for parents and school...
officials since the shootings at Columbine High School in Littleton, Colorado. Debate whether the restriction of such books would prevent violent acts in public schools. How can books dealing with violence help adults and teenagers enter into conversation about such tragedies? How is not talking about violence more serious than talking about it?

15 Stage a talk show featuring a parental challenge to one of the books discussed in this guide. The host or hostess of the show should give a brief synopsis of the book and an overview of the challenge. Guests should include: parents who oppose the book, parents who support the book, a school or public library board member, a librarian, and several young adults who have read the book. Ask students in the audience to be prepared with pertinent questions.

16 A Banned Books Week Theme is “Let Freedom Read: Read a Banned Book.” After the class has participated in a thorough discussion about the First Amendment and the freedom to read, ask them to prepare a dramatic interpretation of the Banned Books Week theme. Encourage them to perform for a PTA group, and other classes in their school. In addition, there are suggested activities that encourage students to independently explore some of the free speech questions that may help them as they begin forming their own ideas about the First Amendment and what it means to be truly “free.”

17 There are groups in America that want to use a rating system, similar to that used by the Motion Picture Association of America, on books. Debate the pros and cons of ratings systems on any type of media. How might such ratings on books contribute to censorship?

18 Many school and public libraries label books by reading level to accommodate readers who are participating in computerized reading programs. Some even place books on shelves by levels. Contrast the issues of labeling with the concept of rating systems.

ESSAY TOPICS

1 Ask students to write an interpretation of one of the following quotes:

“Every burned book enlightens the world.”  
—Ralph Waldo Emerson

“The books that the world calls immoral are the books that show the world its own shame.”  
—Oscar Wilde

“Fear of ideas makes us impotent and ineffective.”  
—William O. Douglas

“You have not converted a man because you have silenced him.”  
—John Morley

“Only the suppressed word is dangerous.”  
—Ludwig Byrne

“Free speech is life itself.”  
—Salman Rushdie

2 There are people who believe that The Adventures of Huckleberry Finn isn’t appropriate for middle and high school students, and they challenge it because they feel that it is a racist book. Think about the relationship between Huck Finn and Jim, and write an essay titled “Huck Finn Wasn’t a Racist.”

3 Ask students to research the life and works of Socrates. Then have them write and illustrate a comic book (in the style of a classic comic) that communicates Socrates’ beliefs regarding free speech.

4 Read “Banned Books Week 1997: A Case of Misrepresentation” by Steve McKinzie. Why does he feel that Banned Books Week should be renamed? Write a persuasive essay arguing either side of the issue.

5 I Know Why the Caged Bird Sings by Maya Angelou is one of the most censored books in America. Parents who don’t want their teenagers to read the book object to the realistic images, specifically the rape scene. Literary critics feel that the book is an extremely moral book. Ask students to write an essay defending the novel based on the moral issues and themes in the book.

6 Like many works of fantasy and science fiction, Mary Shelley’s Frankenstein deals with themes of dangerous and destructive knowledge. Think about the technology age that we live in, and write an essay that makes a connection between novels like Frankenstein to the reality of the 21st century. Discuss whether this is what makes censors nervous.

7 Judy Blume has made the following statement regarding book censorship: “It’s not just the books under fire now that worry me. It is the books that will never be written. . . . As always, young readers will be the real losers.” Write a response to Blume’s statement by discussing what young readers would have lost if Lois Lowry had not written The Giver, Louise Fitzhugh had not created Harriet the Spy, and Marion Dane Bauer had not written On My Honor.
Robert Cormier’s books have been under attack by censors for his “negative portrayal of human nature,” and because the endings appear hopeless since the good guys don’t always win. Cormier responded to this criticism by stating that he was simply writing realistically. Read one of Cormier’s works, and write a rebuttal to the censors. What is the responsibility of the writer to present life as it is?

React to the following words of Jamaica Kincaid: “No word can hurt you. . . . No idea can hurt you. Not being able to express an idea or a word will hurt you much more. As much as a bullet.”

Contrast the meaning of intellectual freedom and censorship. Write an essay that explains the thought that intellectual freedom is about respect, and censorship about disrespect.

Encourage students to write an editorial for the local newspaper about Banned Books Week and teenagers’ right to read.

Refer middle school students to www.kidspeakonline.org/iq.html and ask them to take the Censorship IQ test. After they receive their scores, have them administer the test to 10 friends. Ask them to make note of the questions that receive the most right and wrong answers. Based on the results of the test, what do we need to do in schools to help students better understand First Amendment issues?

The Adventures of Huckleberry Finn by Mark Twain was published in 1885, and is one of the most challenged and banned books in the United States. Have students research some of the challenges to Twain’s book, beginning with its ban in 1885 from the Concord Massachusetts Public Library. Ask them to construct a timeline that reveals the various reasons that the book has been challenged from the date of publication to the present. How do the reasons for the challenges reflect society at the time?

Encourage students to visit the web sites and find out the purpose of the following organizations:

- The American Library Association’s Office for Intellectual Freedom . . . . . . . www.ala.org/oif.html
- The Freedom to Read Foundation . . . . . . . www.ftrf.org
- The American Civil Liberties Union . . . . . . . www.aclu.org
- The Freedom Forum . . . . . . . www.freedomforum.org
- The People for the American Way . . . . . . . www.pfaw.org
- The National Coalition Against Censorship . . . . . . . www.ncac.org
- The American Booksellers Foundation for Free Expression . . . . . . . www.abffe.com

Instruct them to pick one of these organizations and produce a video for an advertisement campaign that the organization might run for Banned Books Week.

Students may want to read Judy Blume’s comments about censorship on her website. (www.judyblume.com/censors.html). Encourage them to search the Internet for websites of other favorite writers. How many of the writers refer to censorship on their sites? Some writers have designed their websites to receive email from fans, or a place to post questions. Students may wish to ask pertinent questions regarding book censorship.

Develop a questionnaire based on the policies outlined in The Library Bill of Rights (http://www.ala.org/ala/oif/statementspols/statementsif/librarybillrights.htm). Using the questionnaire, interview several school and public librarians. What can you conclude about local libraries and their commitment to intellectual freedom?

Using a magazine database in your school or public library, locate articles about book challenges in the United States.
States in the past five years. Write a brief description of each case. Group your findings by area of the country. Which region appears to have the most problem with book challenges?

- The American Library Association provides a list of First Amendment Advocates on their website (http://www.ala.org/ala/oif/firstamendment/advocates/advocates.htm). Which of the organizations listed are specifically concerned with book censorship? Prepare a booklet that outlines the mission of each of these groups and place the information in the school library for other students to access. Includes addresses, telephone numbers, and web addresses.

- Ask students to read about Justice Hugo L. Black and Justice William O. Douglas, two former Supreme Court justices who are considered the strongest champions of The Bill of Rights in the history of the Supreme Court. Then have them research the nine current Supreme Court justices and their record on free speech issues.

- Send students to the Thomas Jefferson Center for the Protection of Free Expression (www.tjcenter.org) and ask them to read about the recipients of the Jefferson Muzzles. These people or organizations are named Muzzles because they have forgotten or violated Thomas Jefferson’s belief that “freedom of speech cannot be limited without being lost.” Encourage students to read the newspaper and news magazines and identify people who might be candidates for the Jefferson Muzzles.

- Students with a particular interest in web page design may want to create an informational website that focuses on book censorship and students’ First Amendment rights. Encourage them to provide hyperlinks to pertinent sites on the Internet, and to generate a bulletin board feature where students can log in and express their ideas.

- Censorship in schools is not only restricted to works of fiction or non-fiction in the library, but can also occur more surreptitiously in the form of a silent self-censorship by publishers who prepare textbooks for the classroom. Diane Ravitch in her book The Language Police: How Pressure Groups Restrict What Students Learn (Vintage, 2004) documents the existence of an elaborate and well-established protocol of beneficent censorship and bowdlerization, quietly endorsed and implemented by textbook publishers, states, and the federal government. School boards and bias and sensitivity committees review, abridge, and modify texts to delete potentially offensive words, topics, and imagery. Ask students how this type of censorship differs from the outright banning of books from the library and whether this form of censorship is more or less harmful than other forms.

- The American Library Association provides a list of First Amendment Advocates on their website (http://www.ala.org/ala/oif/firstamendment/advocates/advocates.htm). Which of the current justices is most likely to follow in the footsteps of Justice Black and Douglas?

- States in the past five years. Write a brief description of each case. Group your findings by area of the country. Which region appears to have the most problem with book challenges?

- The American Library Association provides a list of First Amendment Advocates on their website (http://www.ala.org/ala/oif/firstamendment/advocates/advocates.htm). Which of the organizations listed are specifically concerned with book censorship? Prepare a booklet that outlines the mission of each of these groups and place the information in the school library for other students to access. Includes addresses, telephone numbers, and web addresses.

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**About the Writer**

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Suggested Reading...

Books cited in this article include:

**I KNOW WHY THE CAGED BIRD SINGS** by Maya Angelou
- Bantam, TR, 978-0-553-28801-9, 304 pp., $15.00
- Audio Available Read by Maya Angelou
- Random House Audio, Unabridged CD, 978-0-679-45173-0, $22.95

**ADVENTURES OF HUCKLEBERRY FINN** by Mark Twain
- Bantam Classics, MM, 978-0-553-21079-8, 320 pp., $5.95
- Ballantine, TR, March 1997, 978-0-449-91272-0, 448 pp., $14.95
- Children’s Classics, HC, 978-0-517-22999-6, 256 pp., $6.99
- Introduction by George Saunders
- Modern Library, TR, 978-0-375-75737-2, 304 pp., $6.95
- Ballantine, MM, 978-0-8041-1571-1, 384 pp., $4.99

**THE CANTERBURY TALES** by Geoffrey Chaucer
- Bantam Classics, MM, 978-0-553-21082-8, 688 pp., $5.99

**FAHRENHEIT 451** by Ray Bradbury
- Winner of The National Book Foundation Medal for Distinguished Contribution to American Letters
- Del Rey, MM, 978-0-345-34296-6, 208 pp., $6.99
- Ballantine, TR, 980-345-41001-6, 192 pp., $13.95

**A WRINKLE IN TIME** by Madeleine L’Engle
- Laurel Leaf, MM, 978-0-440-99805-1, 240 pp., $6.50
- Audio Available Read by Madeleine L’Engle
- Listening Library, Unabridged CD, 978-0-7393-3178-1, $19.95

**THE BLUEST EYE** by Toni Morrison
- Vintage, TR, 980-0-307-27844-9, 224 pp., $13.00
- Audio Available Read by Toni Morrison and Ruby Dee
- RH Audio, Abridged CD, 978-0-7393-4373-9, $24.95

**THE GOLDEN COMPASS** by Philip Pullman
- Winner 1997: ALA Best Books for Young Adults
- Winner 1997: ALA Notable Children’s Book
- Laurel Leaf, MM, 978-0-440-23013-3, 388 pp., $7.50

**HIS DARK MATERIALS, BOOK I: THE GOLDEN COMPASS** by Philip Pullman
- Read by Philip Pullman and Full Cast
- Listening Library, Unabridged CD, 978-0-8072-0471-9, $29.95

**THE AMBER SPYGLASS** by Philip Pullman
- Winner 2002: ALA Best Books for Young Adults
- Winner 2001: ALA Notable Children’s Book
- Laurel Leaf, MM, 978-0-440-23815-7, 480 pp., $7.50
- Audio Available Read by Full Cast
- Listening Library, Unabridged CD, 978-0-8072-6201-6, $54.00

**UNCLE TOM’S CABIN OR, LIFE AMONG THE LOWLY** by Harriet Beecher Stowe
- Bantam Classics, MM, 978-0-553-21218-1, 544 pp., $5.95
- Introduction by Jane Smiley

**THE DIARY OF A YOUNG GIRL** by Anne Frank
- Translated by B.M. Mooyaart
- Introduction by Eleanor Roosevelt
- Winner: YALSA Best Books for Young Adults
- Bantam, MM, 978-0-553-29698-3, 304 pp., $5.99

**THE DIARY OF A YOUNG GIRL THE DEFINITIVE EDITION** by Anne Frank
- Edited by Otto M. Frank and Mirjam Pressler
- Translated by Susan Massotty
- Bantam, MM, 978-0-553-57712-9, 352 pp., $6.99

**FRANKENSTEIN OR, THE MODERN PROMETHEUS** by Mary Shelley
- Bantam Classics, MM, 978-0-553-21247-1, 256 pp., $4.95
- Introduction by Wendy Steiner
- Modern Library, TR, 978-0-375-75341-1, 352 pp., $7.95

**THE HOUSE OF THE SPIRITS** by Isabel Allende
- Dial Press, TR, 978-0-553-38380-5, 448 pp., $14.00
- Bantam, MM, 978-0-553-27391-5, 448 pp., $7.99

**GO TELL IT ON THE MOUNTAIN** by James Baldwin
- Dial Press, TR, 978-0-385-33457-0, 240 pp., $13.00
- Dell, MM, 978-0-440-33007-3, 272 pp., $7.50

**TARZAN OF THE APES** by Edgar Rice Burroughs
- Afterword by Gore Vidal
- Introduction by James Taliaferro
- Modern Library, TR, 978-0-8129-6706-7, 288 pp., $8.95
Suggested Reading...

Books cited in this article include:

**THE AWAKENING AND OTHER STORIES** by Kate Chopin
Edited by Nina Baym Introduction by Kaye Gibbons
Modern Library, TR, 978-0-679-78333-8, 448 pp., $7.95
Bantam Classics, MM, 978-0-553-21330-0, 240 pp., $4.95

**THE CHOCOLATE WAR** by Robert Cormier
Audio Available
Listening Library, Unabridged CD, 978-0-7393-5015-7, $26.00

**THE ORIGIN OF SPECIES** by Means of Natural Selection or the Preservation of Favoured Races in the Struggle for Life by Charles Darwin
Bantam Classics, MM, 978-0-553-21463-5, 432 pp., $5.95
Modern Library, TR, 978-0-375-75146-2, 720 pp., $10.95
Gramercy, HC, 978-0-517-12320-1, 544 pp., $7.99

**OLIVER TWIST** by Charles Dickens
Illustrated by George Cruikshank Introduction by Philip Pullman
Modern Library, TR, 978-0-375-75784-6, 480 pp., $6.95
Bantam Classics, MM, 978-0-553-21102-3, 480 pp., $4.95

**SILAS MARNER: THE WEAVER OF RAVELOE**
By George Eliot Introduction by Chris Bohjalian
Modern Library, TR, 978-0-375-75749-5, 240 pp., $6.95
Bantam Classics, MM, 978-0-553-21229-7, 208 pp., $3.95

**INVISIBLE MAN** by Ralph Ellison Preface by Charles Johnson
Winner of the National Book Award
Modern Library, HC, 978-0-679-60139-5, 624 pp., $19.95
Vintage, TR, 978-0-679-73276-1, 608 pp., $13.95

**THE CIDER HOUSE RULES** by John Irving
Ballantine, TR, 978-0-345-41794-7, 576 pp., $14.95

**LADY CHATTERLEY'S LOVER** by D.H. Lawrence
Introduction by Kathryn Harrison
Modern Library, TR, 978-0-375-73800-3, 384 pp., $11.95
Bantam Classics, MM, 978-0-553-21262-4, 400 pp., $4.95

**THE CALL OF THE WILD, WHITE FANG & TO BUILD A FIRE**
by Jack London Introduction by E.L. Doctorow
Modern Library, TR, 978-0-345-75251-3, 288 pp., $7.95

**THE GIVER** by Lois Lowry
Winner 1994: Newbery Medal Winner, ALA Best Books for Young Adults, ALA Notable Children's Book
978-0-440-23768-6, 192 pp., $6.50

**AUTOBIOGRAPHY OF MALCOLM X** by Malcolm X
Ballantine, TR, 978-0-345-37671-8, 544 pp., $15.00
Ballantine, MM, 978-0-345-35068-8, 496 pp., $7.99
Ballantine, HC, 978-0-345-37975-7, 528 pp., $26.95

**ALL QUIET ON THE WESTERN FRONT** by Erich Maria Remarque
Ballantine, TR, 978-0-449-91149-5, 304 pp., $13.95
Ballantine, MM, 978-0-449-21394-0, 304 pp., $6.99

**THE MERCHANT OF VENICE** by William Shakespeare
Edited by David Bevington and David Scott Kastan
Bantam Classics, MM, 978-0-553-21299-0, 272 pp., $4.99

**ONE DAY IN THE LIFE OF IVAN DENISOVICH** by Alexander Solzhenitsyn
Bantam Classics, MM, 978-0-553-24777-0, 176 pp., $5.99

**THE ADVENTURES OF TOM SAWYER** by Mark Twain
Introduction by Frank Conroy
Modern Library, TR, 978-0-375-75681-8, 304 pp., $6.95
Bantam Classics, MM, 978-0-553-21128-3, 224 pp., $5.50
Children's Classics, HC, 978-0-517-20576-1, 224 pp., $5.99
Gramercy, HC, 978-0-517-22787-9, 256 pp., $5.99

**CANDIDE or, Optimism** by Voltaire
Translated by Peter Constantine Introduction by Diane Johnson
Modern Library, TR, 978-0-8129-7201-6, 144 pp., $8.95
Bantam Classics, MM, 978-0-553-21166-5, 128 pp., $4.95

**SLAUGHTERHOUSE-FIVE** by Kurt Vonnegut
Dial Press, TR, 978-0-385-33384-9, 208 pp., $14.00

**LEAVES OF GRASS** The “Death-Bed” Edition by Walt Whitman Introduction by William Carlos Williams
Modern Library, TR, 978-0-679-78342-8, 528 pp., $5.95
The Constitution of the United States of America

by Nancy Schick

In 2005, the United States Congress passed legislation requiring that all educational institutions receiving federal funding must hold an “educational program pertaining to the United States Constitution on September 17 of each year” (Federal Register: May 24, 2005). The stated goal of this legislation is to ensure that “all students be aware of the nature and function of the Constitution.”

This is indeed a noble proposition, one with which government and history teachers throughout the nation agree. But this mandate is a very broad one, and it leaves the specifics of the “educational program” up to districts, schools, and instructors. How do we convey to students the immense power and scope of the Constitution? How do we help them appreciate just how grand an experiment the government established by our Constitution is?

This guide is designed to offer some suggestions for the classroom teacher charged with planning activities for the September Constitution Day or for any occasion when the Constitution has particular relevance in the classroom. It includes several strategies for use in brief lessons and also moves beyond this to more extended activities. Essay prompts, as well as a list of on-line sources, are also provided.

NOTE TO TEACHERS

In his recent book, America’s Constitution, A Biography, Akhil Reed Amar reminds us that “America’s Constitution beckons—a New World Acropolis open to all” (xi). Amar also notes that “most citizens have declined the invitation” (xii). We do not, he argues, really know our Constitution, a document which he calls “one of the most important texts in world history” (xi). Americans do not always understand the issues with which the Founders were forced to grapple, the structure of government they imposed through their work, or the ways in which lawmakers and judges have used the Constitution to shape contemporary society. Students often do not appreciate the simple beauty of this document and the huge impact it has on each of us. Indeed, the intent of Congress’s mandate is to remind educators that “the price of liberty is eternal vigilance” and, at the very least, an annual exercise in passing this reminder to our students each September will help all of us better understand, appreciate, and question who we are as a people. It is hoped that teachers will not stop there but will use the Constitution as a central component of their teaching of history and government.
KEY QUESTIONS

What questions compel us to examine the Constitution for insights into the past and for guidance today? Here are just a few.

- What were the goals of the Founders as stated in their Preamble?
- What issues plagued the Founders, and how did they address those issues?
- What are the guiding principles of the Constitution, and how did the Founders embed these principles in it?
- Why were these principles so important in the 18th century, and why are they important today?
- Why was it necessary for a Bill of Rights to be added to the original document?
- In what ways is the Constitution still a living document that guides our daily life?
- What constitutional issues are the most relevant for today’s students?

FACT SHEET: A QUICK GLANCE AT THE CONSTITUTION

Background to the Constitution:

April 1775  First shots of the American Revolution fired at Lexington and Concord
July 1776  Declaration of Independence issued
November 1777  Articles of Confederation adopted
September 1783  Treaty of Paris signed, ending the American Revolution

Over time, the Articles proved inadequate to meet the needs of the new nation. American suspicion of strong central government was ingrained into the Articles; the new national government was fettered in its ability to raise funds, to conduct trade, to arbitrate disputes between states, and even to amend the Articles themselves.

September 1786  Delegates from five states met in Annapolis, Maryland to discuss trade issues and called for a later meeting in Philadelphia. In 1787, shortly after the Annapolis meeting, a revolt by disgruntled farmers in Massachusetts, Shays’s Rebellion, served as a warning that the national government was becoming increasingly ineffective. Thomas Jefferson did not share the concerns others, including George Washington, had over this, and commented, “A little rebellion now and then is a good thing.”

May 1787  The Constitutional Convention convened in Philadelphia, and the daunting task of creating a new government began.

There was considerable disagreement over the structure of the new government. The delegates struck several compromises, without which they might never have voted to approve the document they had written. These compromises included agreements over the representation of both houses of Congress, the decision to give districts allowing slavery credit for three voters for every five slaves, and agreement not to allow Congress to interfere with the slave trade until 1808.

September 1787  The Constitution was signed and began its arduous journey through the ratification process. The ratification process in New York was aided by the publication of The Federalist, a series of essays written by Alexander Hamilton, John Jay, and James Madison. By 1788, all states
had ratified the Constitution except North Carolina and Rhode Island (both of which would ratify by May 1790).

1791 The Bill of Rights was adopted.

**KEY PRINCIPLES EMBODIED IN THE CONSTITUTION**

- **Republicanism**—representatives elected by, and accountable to, the citizens make the laws
- **Federalism**—the powers of government are divided between the central government and the state governments
- **Separation of Powers**—the powers of government are divided among three equal branches of government: executive, legislative, and judicial
- **Checks and Balances**—powers are granted to each of the three branches to check and restrain the other two
- **Sovereignty of the People**—authority ultimately rests with the people
- **Elasticity**—Congress can make the laws that are “necessary and proper” for the execution of its delegated powers, and when necessary, the Constitution itself can be amended
- **Protection of Individual Liberties**—individuals are guaranteed rights including those related to personal expression, arrest and trial, and privacy

**SECTIONS OF THE CONSTITUTION**

- **Preamble**
- **Article I** Delineates the duties and authority of the legislative branch
- **Article II** Delineates the duties and authority of the executive branch
- **Article III** Delineates the duties and authority of the judicial branch
- **Article IV** Outlines the relationship between the federal government and the states
- **Article V** Outlines the process for amending the Constitution
- **Article VI** Establishes the Constitution as the supreme law of the land
- **Article VII** Describes the ratification process
- **Amendments** (I-XXVII)

**TEACHING IDEAS**

1. Let your students hear the words of the authors of the Constitution. No one can speak more powerfully about the Constitution than those who created it. The words ring much truer when we hear them. Have students read selected excerpts from the Constitution. This activity gives the teacher the option of having the class pause at appropriate places and listen more closely to the text. The Preamble is a perfect choice for this exercise.

Divide students into five groups. Assign each group one of the five actions the Constitution Founders specified as necessary to form a new more perfect government. Ask each group to write a description of what they think is meant by “establish Justice,” or “insure domestic Tranquility.” Have them find a specific reference in the Constitution that does each of these things. Then tell students to take a close look at their history text. They should find a specific example in American history where the government took action to achieve the goal of a more perfect union.
**Teacher’s Guide**

2. Organize a Ben Franklin Day in your class or at your school. Begin by distributing a list of Franklin’s wonderful aphorisms for discussion. Older students might be assigned sections of one of the recent biographies of Franklin. Let Franklin himself speak by using passages from his autobiography or from Poor Richard’s Almanac, or find out how others saw him using books such as Dray’s Stealing God’s Thunder or Brands’ The First American. Assign students topics: Franklin’s background; his contributions to science; his role at the Constitutional Convention; his accomplishments as a diplomat. Make paper “Ben Day” t-shirts. Have a party! Bake and decorate a cake!

3. We can often learn much about ourselves by listening to a visitor’s observations of us. This is especially true for Alexis de Tocqueville’s classic work Democracy in America. In this early 19th century essay collection, de Tocqueville observes dozens of American characteristics, institutions, and quirks. There are many chapters that deal with precisely those values that the Founders wrote into the Constitution. Choose a relatively short example from de Tocqueville’s insightful commentary on American life and liberty. Read aloud with your students. Have them list and comment on those characteristics that are uniquely “American” and which link us to our Constitution. Assign students to find another relevant excerpt from Democracy in America that they can share with the class and analyze in a thoughtful essay. For further study, have students compare de Tocqueville’s vision of America with Bernard Henri-Levy’s in American Vertigo.

4. To what degree is the Constitution a conservative document which attempts to limit the power of the people? This question is often asked, and it is an important one. Have students closely examine the Constitution. Give students a list of phrases from the Constitution which either seem to shield the government from the “power of the people,” or, on the other hand, grant freedoms to the people (for older students, or if you have more time, have students comb the Constitution and generate their own list). On the other hand, the Constitution, largely in the Amendments, ensures a number of personal liberties and confirms that “the enumeration in the Constitution of certain rights shall not be construed to deny or disparage others retained by the people” (Amendment IX).

5. Turn with your students to Article I Section 8. Generate a list of the powers delegated to Congress. Give students a number of recent newsmagazines. For United States History students, assign students to find one or two historical examples of how Congress carried out each of these functions. Ask them to locate several examples of how today’s Congress addresses enumerated functions. Have students make a list of the ways in which the powers given to Congress have affected their lives in the past week. Consider organizing a poster competition in your school on the ways Congress affects the lives of all of us.

6. Article I Section 9 states that “the Writ of Habeas Corpus shall not be suspended, unless when in Cases of Rebellion or Invasion the public safety may require it.” Explain the purpose of a writ of habeas corpus to the students—or, as a homework assignment, require them to find out about habeas corpus. Consider asking an attorney to participate in this discussion with you and your students. Ask students to examine Abraham Lincoln’s suspension of habeas corpus and his justification for it. Bring in newspaper articles about the current concerns some Americans have about the detainment of Iraqi and Afghan prisoners. Examine editorials on this issue. Have students write letters to the editor expressing their views. Expand to the larger question of the limitation of any constitutional right in times of national crisis.

7. The Constitution provides a mechanism for its own alteration: the amendment process. Divide the Constitution into several sections. Require your students to read through the Constitution and locate several places where the original wording of the Constitution has been changed. (For example, there have been significant changes in the text of Article I with reference to the “Three-Fifths Compromise” and the selection of senators by state legislatures.) After students have found these references, ask them to provide the new wording and determine just why the Constitution was altered. What historical (and historic) events provided the catalysts for change?

8. Amendment I reads: “Congress shall make no law respecting an establishment of religion, or prohibiting the free exercise thereof…” Encourage students to discuss what they think this means.
Ask them to find three examples of debate over this amendment. Direct them to *Engel v. Vitale*, *Abington v. Schempp*, and *Everson v. the Board of Education*. If time permits, divide students into six groups. Assign each one of these cases to two groups. Each group is to research: a. the historical context of each decision; b. the arguments made by both sides; c. the Supreme Court's decision and the rationale for this; d. the dissenting opinion. Conduct debates between the two groups assigned to each decision, one taking the affirmative and one the dissenting position of the Court.

Encourage students to examine their school district’s policies that address religious issues. Invite the superintendent and school board members to share their views about school policies on religion.

Have your students read passages of *What's God Got to Do with It?*, a collection of essays by Robert Ingersoll—an outspoken champion of the separation of church and state during the 19th century. Compare the ideas expressed in these essays to the current debate over the place of religion in government, public schools, etc.

9. Amendment IV states that: “The right of the people to be secure in their persons, houses, papers, and effects, against unreasonable searches and seizures, shall not be violated, and no Warrants shall issue, but upon probable cause…”

Ask students if there are any circumstances under which searches can take place without warrants. Distribute statements made by the president and his administration about the need for warrants in times of national crisis. Give students copies of arguments to the contrary. Have each student make two lists: arguments for why warrants are necessary and arguments for why they might not be.

Review with students their school district’s policies on use of school email and internet as well as on issues such as the right of school officials to search student lockers and student automobiles. Examine what restrictions are placed on student use of these technologies. Have students address this prompt: The Fourth Amendment should apply to student use of computer technologies and to student property.

10. Many people believe that one of the most important—if not the most important amendment—is the Fourteenth. This amendment guarantees that “No State shall make or enforce any law which shall abridge the immunities of citizens of the United States; nor shall any State deprive any person of life, liberty, or property without due process of law; nor deny to any person within its jurisdiction the equal protection of the laws.” Americans have debated for many years whether or not the Constitution gives us a “right to privacy.” Frequently, issues of privacy have been argued in the context of the Fourteenth Amendment. Carolyn Kennedy and Ellen Alderman in their book, *The Right to Privacy*, argue that “privacy is under siege.” (New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 1995, xiii) Others assert, as did Robert Bork in his ill-fated quest for a Supreme Court post, that there is no right to privacy in the Constitution.

Distribute to students excerpts from recent Congressional hearings for Supreme Court nominees. Examine testimony offered regarding this right to privacy. Why was this brought up so frequently by members of the Senate Judiciary Committee? What responses did the nominees, John Roberts and Samuel Alito, give?

Assign topics that deal with the right to privacy. Include:
- The *Griswold v. Connecticut* case which struck down a Connecticut law that made it illegal to use contraceptives
- The 1967 Supreme Court decision striking down antimiscegenation laws, laws which forbid interracial marriage
- The 1973 *Roe v. Wade* decision striking down a Texas law that criminalized most abortions
- Debates over whether a state can order that a minor’s parents must be notified before she has an abortion

11. A number of Amendments to the Constitution, specifically Amendments V through VIII, address the rights of the accused. During the 1960’s the debate over the rights of the accused came to a head with the decisions in *Gideon v. Wainwright* (1963), *Escobedo v. Illinois* (1964), and *Miranda v. Arizona* (1966). In his book *Gideon’s Trumpet*, Anthony Lewis calls Gideon’s victory in getting the Court to affirm the right of the poor accused of a crime to legal representation, a “triumph” that showed that “the poorest and least powerful of men… can take his cause to the highest court in the land and bring about a fundamental change
in the law” (New York: Random House, 1964, 218). Chief Justice Earl Warren noted in the Miranda decision that, “The privilege against self-incrimination (is) the mainstay of our adversary system.” Every student who has watched a police show on television is familiar with the process of reading rights to an accused.

Distribute transcripts of portions of the decisions and dissents from these cases. Students should investigate and find the context of each of these cases, the key arguments on each side, and popular reactions to these decisions.

Divide the class into groups of six students. Assign to each member of the group one side of each of the cases. After exploring the assigned case, each student is to share what he has found.

Encourage debate over whether or not our government goes “too far” in protecting the rights of the accused.

Invite a law enforcement official to join in your discussion.

12 Distribute a copy of James Madison’s Federalist 10. In this widely read essay, Madison confronts the problem of faction. He urges ratification of the Constitution and the establishment of the new republican government as the best remedy for the evils of faction.

Ask students to read the entire essay or selected portions from it. Place students in groups and give each group a sheet of butcher paper. On this paper, students are to develop a flow chart tracing the assertions and arguments Madison makes in Federalist 10. For instance, he outlines two options we have when dealing with factions—to eliminate them or to control them. However, as Madison argues, “Faction is to liberty as air is to fire,” so to eliminate factions is to eliminate liberty and therefore impossible in a nation founded on liberty. Then Madison proceeds to examine how to better control the negative effects of faction.

13 The U.S. Constitution, written in 1787, was the first of its kind. Of course, many efforts around the world have been made since then to establish constitutional governments, often using the United States Constitution as a guide. Some have succeeded; some have not. The most notable current example is the recent Iraqi constitution. Go online and download a copy of the new Iraqi constitution for use in the following activities.

With your students—the introduction to the Iraqi constitution. This is somewhat akin to the Preamble to the United States Constitution, albeit a good deal longer. What goals did the Iraqis who wrote this document hope to achieve? Why does the introduction to their Constitution make so much mention of religion, while the Preamble to the U.S. Constitution does not? What indication of American influence do you see in this introduction? What issues seem to be of concern to the Iraqis?

Ask students to work in groups in order to rewrite the Preamble of the U.S. Constitution to more closely resemble the introduction to the Iraqi constitution. For instance, include a discussion of the context in which our constitution was written. Include mention of the specific issues facing the nation in the late 18th century. Address the various groups which needed to come together to form the new American nation. Have them share the resulting document. Have the class vote and select one version to be the class’s choice for a new Preamble. Present this discussion topic: “Would the American people ratify this new constitution based on what they see in the revised Preamble? What parts would they accept or reject? Why?”

14 Many girls and women may look at the Constitution and wonder, “What about me?” The Constitution and the government it established and maintains is charged with governing all of us. However, it is inescapable that the folks who made the rules, that is, those who authored the Constitution, were of one race and one gender. How can teachers charged with helping children celebrate the Constitution make this celebration more meaningful and more inclusive?

One way is to examine the lives of women at the time the Constitution was written. Instead of focusing solely on the male founders ask students to research some of the women who wrote and who spoke out for liberty and the new republic. Introduce students to Mercy Otis Warren and Abigail Adams and Phyllis Wheatley. Examine the notion of “republican motherhood” as a way to prescribe a role for women in the infancy of the republic. Challenge students to compare the roles assigned to women throughout American history—republican motherhood, the cult of domesticity, Rosie the Riveter, and the “soccer mom.”

Introduce students to the Equal Rights Amendment and help them analyze primary sources and video clips tracing the battle over the ERA. Discuss the fears that opponents of the ERA used to garner support for its defeat: unisex bathrooms, the military draft, taking away women’s protected status. Ask the questions: “Do we need an equal rights amendment today? Do you think it would be ratified?”
ESSAY PROMPTS

Although class discussion is invaluable in helping students sort out ideas and examine both the conflict and the consensus that has surrounded the Constitution, it is essential that students use writing to communicate their knowledge and their understanding of the Constitution and its relation to their lives. Here are some suggestions for writing assignments.

1. Select one of the five goals of the Founders as stated in the Preamble to the Constitution. To what extent has the government achieved this goal? Answer using at least three examples from the period 2000-2006.

2. Select the amendment to the Constitution which you feel most affects your daily life. Analyze the impact of this amendment on you.

3. Select one of the Founders whose life illustrates a commitment to the ideals set forth in the Constitution. Analyze the ways in which this person’s life reflects those ideals.

4. For over two hundred years, Americans have debated the question of whether the Constitution should be interpreted loosely, as suggested by the Federalist Party of Alexander Hamilton or strictly, as advocated by the Jeffersonian Republicans. Select two issues, one from the period from 1790 to 1900 and one from the period from 1900 to the present, where this question was central to the discussion and resolution of the issue. Describe the issue and its context, the debate over the interpretation of the Constitution, and the solutions proposed or implemented. What is your position on these issues?

5. In times of national crisis, what limits should be placed on the individual’s freedom of expression and the federal government’s ability to gather information about American citizens and to deny constitutional protections to those accused of terrorism?

6. Over the past several decades, there have been additional amendments to the Constitution proposed but never passed by Congress. Choose two of these proposals. Examine the reasons why they were proposed and the arguments in support of and in opposition to them. Include a discussion of the degree to which you support each proposal.
   - An amendment banning flag-burning
   - An amendment banning same-sex marriage
   - An amendment declaring that life begins at conception

7. What do you view as the three most important responsibilities of citizenship? Construct a plan to better ensure that Americans fulfill these responsibilities.

8. Americans, both private citizens and government officials, continue to debate whether there is a constitutional right to privacy and what the parameters of that right are. Select two issues that illustrate the debate over privacy. Compare and contrast the arguments over these two issues.

9. Examine the most recent presidential State of the Union address. Select two proposals or ideas presented by the president that relate to constitutional issues. Analyze how the Constitution addresses each issue and how the president’s position reflects his view of the way in which the Constitution should be interpreted.
10 Select one example of a conflict between two branches of the federal government. Explain the context and the details of this conflict. Analyze how the Constitution addresses this conflict and assess the way our public officials resolved it. Do you agree with their decision?

11 Select and examine one issue that illustrates conflict between the authority of the federal government and that of the states or conflict between two branches of government. Examples are the use of medical marijuana, the “right-to-die” law in Oregon, or the debate over the use of government wiretaps.

12 Select one issue that affects American youth today and which has constitutional dimensions. Examine the context and the details of this debate, analyzing both sides of the debate. What resolution do you feel is best for you personally and for the nation?

Choose from the following:
- the school’s right to monitor your email and internet use
- the school’s right to dictate and implement a dress code
- your right to refuse to stand and recite the Pledge of Allegiance
- your right to practice your religion as a public school student—through prayer, school clubs, class presentations, etc.
- your right to seek advice and obtain contraceptives from a medical professional without your parents’ consent
- a military recruiter’s right to have access to you and your school records

WEBSITES

www.archives.gov The National Archives
www.billofrightsinstitute.org The Bill of Rights Institute
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www.constitutionday.us The National Constitution Center
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About the Writer

NANCY SCHICK has been a classroom teacher since 1969. She currently teaches Advanced Placement United States History and Advanced Placement European History at Los Alamos High School in Los Alamos, New Mexico, where she has taught for nineteen years. She served four years on the Advanced Placement United States Test Development Committee and is an exam reader for the annual reading of the AP U.S. History exams. She serves as a consultant for the College Board and presents workshops for Advanced Placement teachers throughout the western United States. She is the co-author of the soon-to-be-published Teacher’s Guide for Advanced Placement United States History.

Schick has received three grants from National Endowment for the Humanities, served as the master teacher for a fourth NEH program, Worlds of the Renaissance, was a Fulbright-Hays fellow for summer study and travel in Thailand and Laos, studied in Cambridge, England through a grant from the Gilder Lehrman Institute of American History, and participated in a United States Institute of Peace summer program. She has been recognized four times by the White House as a Presidential Scholar Distinguished Teacher, named by her students who were Presidential Scholars as their most influential teacher. She was selected by the Gilder Lehrman Institute as the New Mexico United States History Teacher of the Year and was the 2005 New Mexico Teacher of the Year.
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From teaching effective communication skills to instilling an understanding of the principles our nation was built upon, there are many ways that you, as a teacher, can help your students prepare for their lives as Americans. So how can you ensure that your students have the right tools to be a full participant in our country? In this section, noted authors, innovative teachers, and talented editors will offer some suggestions.

Jay Heinrichs reclaims five words whose meanings have become distorted over the years and discusses how the techniques they represent can be used to develop more compelling arguments. Arthur Plotnik illustrates how students can spice up critical writing assignments by putting a new spin on classical rhetorical techniques. Judy Turner shows how the groundwork for democratic participation can be created by developing school-wide common reading programs. This section also includes interesting articles on the relationship between science and citizenship, activism in young adult literature, why historical fiction belongs in your classroom, and much more.

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Let’s Make Hypocrites!

Reclaim five misunderstood words to build better citizens.

BY JAY HEINRICHS

As a devoted hypocrite, I’d like to make a pathetic plea for rhetoric. Although I respect your right to be an idiot, I’m counting on your candid attention.

Those words—hypocrite, pathetic, rhetoric, idiot, and candid—would say something very different to someone born two hundred years ago than they do to us today (assuming the words make sense to you at all). If we want to get young people fully engaged in the issues that face this country, we need to rescue these five terms and to restore them to their former glory.

I learned the stories of these words while researching my book on rhetoric, Thank You for Arguing. My newfound understanding changed the way I teach writing. Instead of stressing self-expression, I now reveal to students the magic and power of sympathetic expression.

Before we get to that subject, however, I suppose I should lead you through the sordid tales of these words and their origins. Early in American history, these five terms broke loose from their etymological moorings and wound up saying almost the opposite of what they originally meant.

Hypocrite now means an individual who says one thing but does the opposite. The ancient Greeks, who came up with the word, used it instead to refer to the person who delivered a speech.

What could have a more pathetic meaning than pathetic? This word has made a strange odyssey from its original intent: the skillful use of an audience’s emotions through rhetoric.

Rhetoric, for its part, now rarely shows up without “empty,” implied or otherwise, in front of it. In our common usage, it means useless or manipulative talk. Back before the nineteenth century, however, rhetoric had a much grander sense: It was one of the original liberal arts, the art of persuasion.

Idiot took on its current, mentally handicapped designation only after we forgot the nature of its use by the Greeks: An idiotes was an individualist who had no use for society.

Finally, there’s candid, close cousin to the word candidate. Both of these words (as well as the word candy) derive from the Latin word candere, meaning “white and glistening” or “pure.” Candidates in ancient Rome would wrap their sweet selves in white togas when they gave orations. It made them seem pure, if not glistening.

Let’s look at each term in greater detail and see how each might be used in your teaching.

Hypocrite To dig beneath this word for its original meaning, we need an extra word: crisis. Krisis in ancient Greek referred to an audience’s decision. A crisis, in other words, was the act of coming to a consensus. Funny, isn’t it, that crisis now means something more disastrous? So hypocrisy—the hypo-crisis—is what comes before the audience’s decision. There we have it: A hypocrite is someone who delivers a speech, an individual who acts before the crisis.

We consider hypocrites to be liars. That’s because those who are absorbed in self-expression—sticking to their guns, marching to the beat of a different drummer—rarely manage to persuade an audience. To do that, a speaker needs to stand in the audience’s shoes, to make the audience believe that the speaker is one of them and is capable of leading them. A good hypocrite may have to swallow some of her own opinions to gain the audience’s trust and approval. Is this fakery? Well, yes, I suppose it is. Call it benign fakery, much like leaving out of a résumé the time the student cut class to see a movie. Good hypocrisy leads to decisions. Self-expression rarely does.

EXERCISE: Have Student A interview Student B about what she believes or values-global warming, Harry Pot-
ter, tacos, whatever. Which of these things does Student A disagree with the most or value the least? Suppose they choose NASCAR as their subject. Have Student A express intense interest in the sport. ("Tell me more about positive tire camber!") Challenge him to use what he has learned to talk her into something else. ("Have they tried alternative fuels in those cars? What if NASCAR helped solve global warming!") Let other students suggest tactics. That’s hypocrisy at its best.

Pathetic  When students write essays or speak to a class, we normally expect them to stick to logical argument. The philosopher Aristotle might not have approved. For informal arguments, he would have added emotion, or pathos, to grease the argumentative wheels. You can certainly persuade someone with logic alone, but it’s hard to get someone out of his chair actually to do something without making him desire to act. Pathos is where desire enters the situation.

Pathos lies at the roots of several English words, including pathetic, sympathy, and, interestingly, pathology. (Some Greeks believed that emotions came from pain or from the absence of pain. And a fun bunch they were, too.)

Persuasive pathos requires sympathy. You cannot manipulate someone’s emotions without first understanding him or her. Out of the worst motives, therefore, rhetoric forces people to think beyond themselves. What a great art!

EXERCISE: Have your students write a short persuasive essay, employing a device that the great Roman orator Marcus Tullius Cicero recommended: Get a little emotional at the end. Urge your students to keep a particular person or group of people in mind as they write. What emotion will be most persuasive?

Rhetoric  The ancients considered rhetoric the essential skill of leadership, a type of knowledge so important that they placed it at the center of higher education. Rhetoric taught students how to speak and write persuasively, how to produce something to say on every occasion, and how to make people like them when they spoke.

Aristotle defined rhetoric as the art of “finding the available means of persuasion.” Notice that he didn’t define it as “the art of winning an argument in three seconds” or “the art of having your way.” With rhetoric, you don’t so much think up your argument as gather it; you pluck it from cultural traditions and from the audience’s beliefs and opinions. This highly social attitude, this ability to find inspiration outside oneself, is different from our own culture’s approach, isn’t it? That is exactly why we need to teach rhetoric at all levels.

Our republic depends on it.

EXERCISE: I’m offering speakerphone conferences with classes that use Thank You for Arguing. Students go nuts over discussions of rhetoric.
You can almost see the light bulbs go on over their heads. For the first time in their lives, they understand that words aren’t just for self-expression. Words can actually do things. They can make other people do things. How cool is that?

Author’s note: If you have adopted my book and are interested in setting up a conference call, please email me at figaro@wildblue.net.

Idiot

Aristotle said, “He who is unable to live in society, or who has no need because he is sufficient unto himself, must be either a beast or a god.” I doubt that Aristotle would find us very godlike. Would he consider us beastly? No matter how individualistic we try to be, though, humans remain a tribal species. It’s in our genes. When we don’t work in common as a society—when we lose our faith in the possibility of consensus—we form tribes.

That’s another bonus word, by the way. Tribes (pronounced TREE-bays in Latin) were family-based factions in ancient Rome. Tribal factions destroyed the Roman Republic and gave rise to a charming, charismatic dictator named Julius Caesar. If your students think ancient Rome has nothing to do with modern America, have them read an article written by Bill Bishop that appeared in the Austin American-Statesman on April 4, 2004. Bishop reported that the number of “landslide counties” (counties in which more than sixty percent of residents voted for one party in presidential elections) had doubled since 1976. A majority of Americans now occupy these ideological bubbles.

Idiots form tribes. That’s exactly what we’re doing. So what is the cure for national idiocy? A public willing to be candid (which just happens to be our next word).

EXERCISE: Have your students debate this question: When does individualism turn into idiocy?

Candid

Candid once meant being open to possibilities. Now it means being closed to all but your own truth: saying what’s on your mind and ignoring what’s on everyone else’s mind. Getting your facts straight is important in any argument, of course. Deliberative rhetoric (the kind that leads to consensual deci-

Thank You for Arguing: What Aristotle, Lincoln, and Homer Simpson Can Teach Us About The Art of Persuasion

by Jay Heinrichs

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sions) nevertheless works best in the future tense, because decisions lie in the future. The problem with facts is that they'll take you only so far into the future.

Universal truths, which we call “values,” also have a problem with deliberative argument. A permanent “truth” might not fit the circumstances of the moment. Conditions change. When your horse collapses in midstream, for example, it might be a very good idea to change horses. A candid student, in the original sense of the word, is open to the possibility that he or she just may be wrong.

**EXERCISE:** Have two volunteers argue about a choice: where to go on a class field trip, what to eat for lunch, whatever. Before they begin, though, have the volunteers leave the room for a moment. While they're away, tell your class to write down the verb tenses the volunteer students use in their arguments. Deliberative argument, which was Aristotle’s favorite rhetoric, uses the future tense. It’s the language of politics and choices. When does the students’ debate get a little uncomfortable? What verb tense is being used at that point? Now have the students evaluate the websites and web-posted videos of the presidential candidates. Which candidate most often employs the future tense? Does one party use the future tense more than the other? What tenses do attack ads use most frequently?

Bright students love to learn what etymology reveals about our society. Such knowledge improves their writing, and they enjoy the added benefit of annoying their parents by replying “Thank you” every time a parent says that the student’s room looks pathetic. In addition, teaching students to express themselves more outwardly promises a still grander payoff: They become full participants in our republic.

As an example, here’s a bonus exercise: the *ethopoeia*. This technique has been entertaining students for some 2,500 years, and it works in this way: Participants play the roles of prominent people, plucking characters out of different eras as they debate each other. For example, one student prettending to be Achilles debates another student who is playing Julius Caesar. I’d like to see a student playing Eleanor Roosevelt as she debates the role of workers' unions with a student who has assumed the persona of Ronald Reagan. Alternatively, we could stick to the present: Have a virtual Osama Bin Laden argue with Quentin Tarantino about violence in the media.

Exercises like the *ethopoeia* get participants used to talking on their feet and to delivering orations without notes while learning to enjoy debate. These exercises focus not on self-expression but on expressing the audience’s beliefs and desires—endowing their purposes, as Shakespeare put it, with words that make them known. Students become *hypocrites* who employ their *pathetic rhetoric* in the *candid* pursuit of consensus.

In other words, they move beyond being *idiots*. They become good citizens.

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**About the Writer**

**JAY HEINRICHS** is the author of *Thank You for Arguing: What Aristotle, Lincoln and Homer Simpson Can Teach Us About the Art of Persuasion*. A magazine executive consultant, he frequently lectures on rhetoric to high school and college classes.

**SPECIAL NOTE:** The author is available for speakerphone conferences with classes that adopt *Thank You for Arguing*. He can be reached at email: Figaro@wildblue.net. And check out his fun website, Figarospeech.com or www.thankyoufroarguing.com for video demonstrations, author information, and more.
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Introduction by Jeff Shaara
A Pulitzer prize-winning classic, Shaara’s The Killer Angels is widely considered one of the greatest novels ever written on the Civil War.

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As students wrestle with the sweaty, two-ton mystery of putting words together, shouts for cogency and critical thinking are sure to drop them to their knees. Pile on the notion of writing-as-citizenship, and down goes a shoulder. Now holler for civility, and wham—flat on the mat.

Yet, when it comes to writing, civility is the move that gets the crowd into the game. Writing is, after all, the effort to share one’s observations, anxieties, and imaginings with an audience, a community, a society. It’s a way to channel self-absorption into social interaction. “I write because I want to end my loneliness,” says novelist Jonathan Safran Foer. Without communication, however, nothing is shared or ended; and when writing flouts certain conventions of language, form, and integrity—conventions a society has worked out for its benefit—communication goes splat against the wall.

Think of today’s marketplace of expression: papered to the rafters; blog-jammed, MySpaced, and YouTubed; mobbed by a pandemonium of pundits and pontificators elbowing in from every print and digital corner of the world. Here is democracy’s cacophony, and those preparing to rise above its rant, hype, propaganda, and demagoguery—to be heard, understood, and valued—need a civil way with sentences as well as the facility of presenting ideas that hold up to scrutiny. Enter critical thinking.

A HARD SELL

“Critical thinking” is one of those terms that draw a few students to debate club and send the rest running for a sugar hit. It’s a hard sell unless young writers can view it as a perk of freedom, as the clear-headedness that allows for self-determination and a share of clout in the crowd — even if its demands are so daunting one feels woozy just listing a few: premises laid out neatly; arguments clear, rational, and pointed; biases purged or bared; discourse relating to the audience without pandering to it.

In writing, critical thinking is a form of civility. It honors the reader’s investment; it enriches the corpus of expression; and it sounds as if it’s about as much fun as a hair shirt under a hoodie.

Never mind that the product can be stimulating and enlightening. Critical thinking goes against conversational patterns, the daily drool of catch phrases and clichés. Instead, applied to public expression in a free society, critical thinking bids one to say clearly and precisely what one means, arbitrating between feelings, beliefs, facts, and judgments — because no dictator is providing the service.

WHERE THE FUN IS

Not all student essays will call for gear-grinding critical thought. (Heaven help us!) Nor, as educators well know, must assignments in critical writing be joylessly spartan. Every teacher these days can target themes that excite young ganglia. Even the most inane areas of pop culture invite thoughtful critical approaches. At this writing, and on the basis of my own lame understanding of teen passions, I am thinking of something like the following:

Theme: Honesty on the show American Idol
Premise: Honesty rewards true merit.
Argument: The show is dishonest. So-and-so deserved to win because . . . .

Suddenly the abstractions that define critical thinking grow faces: maybe the iconic mugs of Simon, Paula, and Randy, but faces now seen in a fresh, analytic light. (Ideally, such analyses will be informed by research into the show’s origins, personalities, mandates, methods, critical reception, and the like.)
“THEY WANT TO PLEASE SOCIETY, THOUGH THEY SAY THEY DON’T. THEY WANT TO BE WORTHY, IF WE COULD JUST TELL THEM WHAT WORTH IS.”

— High school guidance counselor Jack Levy, of his students in the novel Terrorist, by John Updike

NOW COMES RHETORIC

O.K.—the student has applied critical thinking to the theme paper, has worked up a sober draft with the t crossed in every thus and therefore. Now comes an opportunity to imbue argument with personality—to experience, stumblingly, the fun of styling prose.

One path to style bears an unlikely sign: rhetoric. Writing guides tend to duck this term, owing to its association with political claptrap or with your grandfather’s fire-breathing English instructors. Some educators may feel that the emotional nuances of “style” compromise critical thinking. In its best contemporary sense, however, rhetorical style is the art of persuasive language (apart from argument), of tellin’ it real, with felicitous words and style and grace. Its highest purpose? To lend appeal to argument, exposition, or story by delighting the aesthetic sense. Its value to society (including teachers)? Communication that not only is less painful than gallstones but that also sometimes rocks.

I hear Aristotle’s teeth gnashing, but as I see it, he might have titled his Rhetoric something a little more fun, something like, oh, Spunk & Bite (spunk for integrity of argument, bite for power of language). Where’s the fun for students in all this? It’s in discovering how time-honored rhetorical methods and devices—especially figures of speech, or tropes—are up-to-date friends from everyday expression, and how they give bite to critical writing.

The point is not to pummel students with rhetorical terms, which few writers have at hand, but to let them know that argument can be enlivened by this cool thing called rhetoric, by an established set of devices available for emphasis as needed.

The punchy presence of such devices can be revealed using almost any patch of schoolyard gab:

“Omigod [invocation], that big mouth [synecdoche] be goin’ for class president like Spidey chasin’ Sandman [allusion, simile, hyperbole]. Me vote for him? Yeah, right [antiphrasis]. Like I’m totally [intensifier] charmed [sarcasm] because he rocks [anthimeria] that hoodie and got bling [neologism] in his grill [metaphor]. Student body gonna jump out its skin [personification] before he gets elected.”

Critical writing also draws power from the figurative:

The time for setting the nation’s voting age at 16 has landed like intelligent life from the stars [simile, hyperbole]. Can we blindly ignore it [epiplexis]? At the heart [personification] of Generation Y are roughly 10 million American citizens who are 16- to 17-year-olds, their very number a silent cry [oxymoron] for representation. While most nations have been less than progressive [litotes] in fostering this suffrage, perceptive legislators [comprobatio] see the idea taking root [metaphor]: The 16-and-overs have the vote in Nicaragua; they have the vote in Cuba; they have the vote in Brazil [gradatio]; and they will have it [asphalia] in Austria, where studies show [apomnemonysis] 16- and 17-year-olds to be as interested in politics as other age groups and to possess “an open and critical attitude.”

RHETORIC AND CLARITY

Eeveryone roots for clarity in writing: clarity as a gift to the reader, as good manners, as a lever to advance one’s meanings. But somehow, possibly from misuse of Strunk and White’s The Elements of Style, clarity has acquired
a doctrine of dry-mouthed austerity. “Use figures of speech sparingly,” warned E. B. White, who never met a figure of speech he didn’t use robustly. The message some students get is, avoid devices like metaphor, hyperbole, and personification in prose—as if they taint clarity by departing from the literal.

Certainly, figurative language can serve to deceive (think of war euphemisms like collateral damage). When students use figurative language uncritically, voilà: a teaching opportunity. When honestly employed, however, figures of speech intensify both clarity and truth. How? By sparking those non-literal areas of the brain that help interpret the universe. Poetry relies on such ignition. Prose, too, can be illuminated by figurative language. Lively, risk-taking prose, ablaze with attitude, signals an enthusiasm for one’s assertions that can be contagious to the modern reader and (if truth-driven) healthy as well.

BREACHING THE PEACE

The idea of teaching citizenship through critical writing may recall the old notion of “deportment,” that report-card code for classroom conformity. Critical writing is not about sitting still in received knowledge; it is more the honing of nonconforming ideas into convincing, if sometimes annoying, assertions. When students learn to present even the most rebellious, antagonistic messages with solid argument and stylistic force, are they pains in society’s rear... or incipient Paines (as in Thomas), rearing up in all the fury of conviction?

Young writers must have the right to express, without fear of being branded, a society’s ugliest behavior and to shape any imaginations into art. “If they start censoring themselves, then the muse just shuts up,” says Amherst College’s playwright in residence. To paraphrase a San Diego writing teacher, students need to vent the dark, embarrassing, disturbing places in their heads, because that’s where powerful writing lives.

About the Writer

ARTHUR PLOTNIK’s acclaimed Spunk & Bite: A Writer’s Guide to Bold, Contemporary Style (Random House Reference) hit the shelves this May in a paperback edition that includes a teacher’s guide containing thirty prose-enlivening exercises for students.

The Elements of Editing, one of his seven books and a Book-of-the-Month Club featured selection, presented an editor’s guide to critical analysis of manuscripts and has been widely adopted. A graduate of the Iowa Writers Workshop, he edited the American Libraries magazine of the American Library Association and is a contributing editor to The Writer magazine.
Why is an understanding of the sciences integral to citizenship?

DAN GOLEMAN: The scientific method offers students a rigorous model for how to think about problems in life—not just logical, but systematic in asking questions, gathering information, and finding ways to evaluate answers. Sound decision-making lies at the heart of good citizenship.

IAN AYRES: In today’s world citizens need to at least be knowledgeable consumers of statistics in order to be able to evaluate critically what politicians and pundits are claiming. If it’s all fuzzy math to you, you’ll never be able to know whether letting teachers carry guns is likely to increase or decrease the chance of a Virginia Tech massacre or the extent to which carbon emissions contribute to global warming. There’s an important difference between truth and what Stephen Colbert calls “truthiness.”

DAVID P. BARASH: Science has come so far that it is difficult to find areas in which it is NOT integral to public policy and decision-making. Just consider global warming, environmental and resource matters of all sorts, debates over cloning and abortion and, of course, issues of weapons of mass destruction. Evolution—my special concern and interest—has not only been actively debated in the public sphere when it comes to matters of educational policy (for example, controversies over “intelligent design”), but it also has direct implications for questions of animal rights, human rights, racism and other misuses of evolutionary biology, including even questions of consciousness and implications of recent advances in genomics. Don’t misunderstand: it isn’t necessary for everyone to become a scientist in order to be a responsible citizen, but it is highly desirable—moreso than ever before—for people to nurture a reasonable familiarity with basic principles and ways of scientific thought. The good news is that achieving basic scientific literacy needn’t be a chore; in fact, it’s great fun!
What are ways in which teachers can help to make cross-disciplinary links between science and fields important to building citizenship, such as the Language Arts and Social Studies?

IAN AYRES: Teachers should get students involved in collecting data about the world. A couple of years ago, two economists responded to want ads in the Boston Globe and Chicago Tribune by sending back résumés that were identical except for the name of the applicant. At random, some employers received résumés with African American-sounding names and others received résumés with Caucasian-sounding names. The simple test was just to look at the response rate (applicants with African American-sounding names had a lot fewer responses). The point about this study is that any high school or college student could have done it—with just a little help from a teacher. There’s all kinds of questions about how people behave and how they feel that are critically important for policy making. The best way to help students see the links between social science and the real world is to have students go out and do some real-world testing.

DAVID SLOAN WILSON: Before Darwin, the biological sciences consisted of many isolated disciplines that were difficult to cross. After Darwin, these disciplines became easy to cross because all of them could be understood in terms of a common set of ideas. That is why he referred to his theory as “one long argument.” Only recently has evolutionary theory expanded beyond the biological sciences to include human-related disciplines such as psychology, anthropology, economics, political science, social studies, and even art and literature. Scientists who approach these subjects from an evolutionary perspective find it easy to cross disciplinary boundaries. The whole point of my book is to accomplish the same transformation for the general public.

DAVID P. BARASH: In the case of our book, Madame Bovary’s Ovaries: A Darwinian Look at Literature, Nellie Barash and I took some of the most beloved works of literature and showed how they can be appreciated afresh by seeing them through an evolutionary lens. It turns out that literature and evolution, which may seem to be far removed from each other, are actually closely connected in that even a superficial familiarity with the latter can open up new realms of appreciation when it comes to the former. Evolution is too important, and too much fun, to be left to the evolutionists! It applies with great force to pretty much anything people do or have done, definitely including their imaginative storytelling.

DAN GOLEMAN: The fundamental building blocks of good citizenship are personal skills like self-awareness and self-discipline, empathy and cooperation. These human abilities allow an individual to act as a good citizen. At the neural level, these emotional and social intelligence skills become ingrained in the brain circuitry of students: the circuits for self-reflection and managing emotions well, for understanding others and getting along, are all taking shape into a person’s early twenties. The school years are a major window on this development, and every sustained encounter adds to the neural development, for better or worse. Any time a teacher interacts with a student, all the other students in the room take away a model, for better or worse.
In addition, the content of a course like Language Arts or Social Studies can itself aid in healthy maturation for good citizenship by embodying lessons—stories of exemplary people, for example—that reinforce these human skills by offering a positive model for behavior. There are off-the-shelf lesson plans in Language Arts and Social Studies (and even math, for that matter) that are designed precisely to have this impact on students’ citizenship abilities. They are part of the movement in “social/emotional learning.”

**What does the debate over evolution and intelligent design say to you about the current state of affairs in education? Please weigh in on these debates.**

**DAVID SLOAN WILSON:** There is very little scientific substance to the intelligent design debate, as the trial in Dover, Pennsylvania made clear. The key to increasing acceptance of evolution is to focus on implications in addition to facts. A threatening idea is like any other kind of threat: the first impulse is to run away or stamp it out. Make the same idea alluring and the first impulse is to embrace it. In the college courses that I teach, I show how evolutionary theory provides a powerful tool for understanding and improving the world without threatening basic values. Students respond by becoming enthusiastic about evolutionary theory and losing interest in non-explanatory theories such as creationism and intelligent design. I am confident that evolutionary theory can become rapidly accepted by the general public, once we focus on implications in addition to facts.

**DAVID P. BARASH:** Sadly, it says that we—evolutionists in particular and educators in general—have our work cut out for us! The good news, however, is that (although it may sound like a cliché) we have logic and truth on our side. Not only that, but the realities of evolution are great fun to explore, and, moreover, they don’t require deep mathematical or technical sophistication. Plain old-fashioned intellectual honesty and curiosity are more than enough. Edmund Burke once noted that the only thing needed for the triumph of evil is for good people to do nothing. Whereas the promoters of intelligent design aren’t necessarily evil, they are certainly naïve, ignorant and often intellectually dishonest, and whereas evolutionists aren’t necessarily paragons of goodness and decency, there can be no doubt that they have wisdom and scientific validity on their side. I suspect that—at last—there is a new wind blowing in America, not only when it comes to the periodic swinging of the political pendulum, but also regarding respect for intellectual and scientific integrity. Our job as educators is to make science not only palatable but to share its thrills and delights.
What does science offer us in terms of understanding human relations and even politics?

IAN AYRES: Justice Oliver Wendell Holmes, Jr., said the life of the law has been experience. He meant that if you want to know what the law really is you need to know how judges are going to decide real cases. The empirical approach is uncovering the hidden levers of human behavior—in politics and society more generally. Want to know whether prison hardens or rehabilitates prisoners? For centuries, politicians have argued back and forth on this one. But theory can’t tell you the answer. Instead a quasi-randomized experiment of real prisoners shows that both sides in the debate are wrong. Prison doesn’t really increase or decrease the chance that released inmates will go out and commit another crime. Prisoners who at random were assigned to “hanging” judges had the same recidivism rate as those assigned to bleeding-heart judges. Want to know the impact of term limits or campaign contribution limits on how legislators vote? You better run a statistical test. Want to know whether Justice Alito is more likely to drift to the right or to the left in his future Supreme Court decisions? Statistically studying what causes ideological drift in the past is a good place to start. Justice Holmes was dead-on when he said “the man of the future is the man of statistics.” I would simply extend this to include women.

DAVID SLOAN WILSON: It is interesting that theories in the human-related sciences, such as rational choice theory or general learning theory, were never envisioned as alternatives to evolutionary theory. Few rational choice theorists are young earth creationists. When pressed to explain why people are designed to maximize their own utilities, most would probably cheerfully speculate that the ability evolved by genetic evolution. In this fashion, they rely upon evolution to explain their own assumptions, but then proceed without much knowledge about evolution. In retrospect, it is obvious that a sophisticated knowledge of genetic and cultural evolutionary processes is required to understand human relations and, yes—even politics.

Considering your research, speaking engagements, and your own reading, if you could offer one piece of advice or information to today’s teachers, what would that be?

DAVID SLOAN WILSON: Here is a passage from the end of Evolution for Everyone: “I sometimes wonder what it must have been like to be present during the early days of Darwin’s theory, when the idea was so new and so much remained to be discovered. Then I realize that I am present during the early days of Darwin’s theory. The intellectual events taking place right now are as foundational as 100 and 150 years ago. How amazing that virtually anyone can partake in the excitement, as an observer or participant, as I hope you have seen on the basis of this book.” My advice for today’s teachers to learn about these developments, not only from my book but from many other wonderful and accessible books on evolution as a theory that can explain the human condition in addition to the rest of the natural world.

DAN GOLEMAN: Tune in to your students’ world—their feelings, their way of understanding, their concerns. This will let you teach and interact with them in a way that will resonate and engage—a direct antidote to the pulls in their lives to disengage from learning. Remember the distinction between an “I-You” communication and an “I-It”; in the “You,” the speaker attunes to how the listener reacts, and adjusts what she says and does accordingly; this establishes an emotional link between teacher and student. In the “It,” the speaker treats the listener as an object, communicating in a bullet-like, automatic way that leaves students cold. Creating a relaxed, connected warmth in the classroom sets the neural stage for students to learn at their best.
The military experience of the United States is not merely a diminishing presence in education—it may be fading from the curriculum altogether. Educators at all levels often downplay this integral part of U.S. history for a variety of reasons. For example, they may dismiss war as primitive and irrational and the study of war as immoral, appealing to what literary critic Edmund Wilson called “patriotic gore” and philosopher J. Glenn Gray described as “lust of the eye.” Or they may simply view teaching war as legitimating xenophobia and male privilege and distorting the U.S.’s history by focusing affirmatively on its violent aspects.

To take such positions, though, is to ignore a strong pragmatic reason for including military history in the curriculum. Given that students are naturally attracted to the history of war and warfare for its action and narrative, and that we are in a time when apathy and alienation are of increasing concern to educators at all levels, a subject that engages interest should by no means be dismissed out of hand. In pedagogic terms, the spirited discussions that can develop around themes from the Civil War, World War II, or the Vietnam War facilitate the teacher’s functioning as “guide on the side.” And while interest in war is in no way gender-specific, disengaged boys, a growing concern in secondary education, are more likely to be drawn into participation by the chance to study that subject than by most other elements of the curriculum.

Beyond its appeal in the classroom, it should be made clear to students that war has indeed played a central role in the development of societies and in the formation and survival of states. It was certainly a part of prehistoric cultures and remains a dominant form of interaction among peoples and governments to this day. Consider, for instance, the role that war has played in intellectual life. Science, mathematics, philosophy—all have been shaped, at times defined, by their relationships to conflict. To deny this is not merely to rewrite history, but to reject it in favor of a version that, although kinder and gentler, is also totally imaginary—a corruption of education’s ethical and intellectual aspects alike. Military history, in other words, offers a viable perspective on the human condition, meriting consideration alongside cultural, religious, gender, and economic history. And it serves to remind us all of our personal stake in the survival of the United States.

In order to cultivate the citizenship and community so essential to the nation’s well-being, it is imperative that one include an understanding of the United States’ military experience as well as its wars. At the basic level, this involves awareness of the unique, complex relationship of government, people, and armed forces under the U.S. Constitution, as well as a true grasp of the balance of powers, which is vital in a military context. The balance of powers has helped Congress to maintain civilian control of the military, has endowed the commander-in-chief with the powers to make war effectively, and has
enabled the judicial system to step in if need be. Such a system is not self-sustaining; it requires the steady input of citizens who understand the relationship between United States military history and its civic institutions.

To understand this relationship is to understand that citizenship in a democracy is predicated on the general concept of a synergy of rights and responsibilities. Presenting military service as one of the focal points of citizenship in a democracy can help to bridge the enduringly vexing gap between the respective claims of individuals and communities. In war—the ultimate test of civic order—neither individual nor community is likely to survive without the other. And in an era of massive cross-cultural migration, the importance of service in arms is a time-tested, time-honored means of bonding newer citizens with older ones.

We must also remind ourselves that the United States was founded on a strong classical heritage. In Greco-Roman culture, which formed the root of our present-day system of government, voluntary military service was understood as an essential aspect of citizenship—a key distinction between the citizen and the subject, with subjects serving under compulsion. In the U.S. form, service can be direct and voluntary, or structured through administrative systems like selective service. The fundamental link between service and citizenship nevertheless remains constant: a free people securing its rights by accepting the responsibility to defend those rights in arms.

The study of military history further contributes to citizenship by providing intellectual and informational matrices for addressing questions of national interest and security, questions essential to a citizenry. War is not going to vanish from the world in any calculable time frame, nor can the U.S. avoid conflict by sealing itself off politically or psychologically. Students correspondingly need to understand the causes and conduct of past wars—why the U.S. has asserted itself in arms, and how it has reacted.

At a different level, the inclusion of military history in the secondary curriculum also fosters links with life outside school in the form of media and entertainment. Series with military themes, like HBO’s *Band of Brothers* and the History Channel’s *Mail Call*, populate programming on television. Books and magazines on military subjects top the list of history publications marketed to the general public, and the majority of these are written in a dramatic, narrative form designed to engage readers. That is a quality not to be ignored—one that may even lure otherwise reluctant students into the terra incognita of a Borders or a Barnes & Noble as they seek to follow up issues raised in class. Such integration is valuable—one might say essential—to a democracy that cannot afford to see its educational systems become inward-looking.

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*In January 2001, Osprey Publishing issued the first volume of *Essential Histories*. Written by established historians and incorporating state-of-the-art maps and graphics, the books are aesthetically pleasing and limited to 96 pages (although multi-volume works on the Civil War and the two world wars are also available in larger bindings). They are a time-effective read that can be integrated into general courses without over-balancing their syllabi. Series editor Robert O’Neill, former professor of the history of war at Oxford University, writes, “Study them and gain a deeper understanding of war and a stronger basis for thinking about peace.”*
Military history makes one final and important contribution in the classroom: it facilitates perspective. Fostering a complete and humble view of the United States’ role in the world properly contextualizes the student’s understanding not just of U.S. history, but also of its contemporary battles and wars.

It seems clear that the political and social systems of the U.S. depend fundamentally on an informed, committed citizen body—more so now, in an age of global immigration, than ever before. The kind of civic identity that creates and sustains community requires cultivation. Cultivation begins with history, and history begins in the classroom.

The core value of Essential Histories is that each volume contextualizes the war it analyzes. The texts address the diplomacy that antedates campaigns and battles and the politics that accompany them. Douglas Meed’s The Mexican War presents a clash between systems so different that their only common trait was courage. Charles Robinson’s The Plains Wars 1757–1900 is a tour de force analyzing the struggle for control of the Great Plains, from the first Spanish penetrations to the aftermath of Wounded Knee. In The Wars of the Barbary Pirates, Gregory Fremont-Barnes presents U.S. reaction to the seizure of its ships and men by highlighting the new nation’s connections with Old Europe. On more familiar ground, Daniel Marston’s The American Revolution, 1776–1783 covers the operational side of the American Revolution in a way nicely complementing a course taught from a social/cultural perspective. Marston’s The French-Indian War 1754–1760 illuminates the complex interaction of European, Euro-American, and Native American cultural-political systems. Andrew Wiest’s The Vietnam War, 1965–1975 devotes no less attention to the multifaceted protest movement in the U.S. than to the air and ground wars in Indochina. The series volumes also incorporate wider cultural and social elements.

The current capstone of Osprey’s contribution to the study of U.S. wars is Rolling Thunder in a Gentle Land, edited by Andrew Wiest and developed from his Vietnam War volume in the Essential Histories series. It includes fifteen chapters that, in three hundred pages, combine to provide the best overview of the war in print. Each chapter addresses an essential aspect of the war, and each is written by an acknowledged expert in that subject area. Able to stand as a main text, with collateral reading assigned to supplement it, Rolling Thunder in a Gentle Land conveys strategy and tactics, the Vietnamese civilian experience, the role of U.S. media and public opinion, and the experience of the South Vietnamese armed forces—all reinforced by Osprey’s outstanding maps and graphics.

About the Writer
DENNIS SHOWALTER is Professor of History at Colorado College and Past President of the Society for Military History. As Joint Editor of War in History, he specializes in comparative military history. His recent monographs include The Wars of Frederick the Great (London: Longman, 1996); Tannenberg: Clash of Empires (Washington, D.C.: Brassey’s, 2004), and Patton and Rommel: Men of War in the Twentieth Century (New York: Berkeley, 2005).
An Interview With
Master Illustrator, Sam Fink

On April 23, 2007, Brad Miner, author and editor-in-chief of American Compass, sat down to interview Sam Fink, ninety-year-old master calligrapher and artist. Sam has taken on no less a task than to recreate some of our civilization’s most important documents. Last year, The Constitution of the United States was published by Welcome Books. The Gettysburg Address and The Book of Exodus were released this fall.

MINER: Sam, to begin, please tell us about how you work.

FINK: When I was in my prime, I would work as though it was my job. This was my self-inflicted job, and I did it for love. The work was my friend, and it kept me going. Before I retired, I worked as an art director for Young & Rubicam, a great advertising agency when it was in its heyday. I had a grand life, so the work that I did in the last thirty years is really an extension of my earlier work. Things are different today. Art directors now come to work without a pencil and paper, and they work from a computer. The man who hired me sixty-five years ago said, “I want to see how you think with a pencil,” and that led to all of what I’ve been doing.

MINER: Thinking about that time in your life when you were working in a pretty high-powered agency with very specific commercial ends in mind, how has it affected the way you now create the work that you do?

FINK: I was already thinking about it then. I had a window shade, which I pulled down, drew a little face of Abe Lincoln, and then I copied the whole Gettysburg Address on the window shade. Pull it down, you could read the whole thing. Let it up, you could only read the bottom half.

MINER: How did you develop the talent that you now have?

FINK: My father—a great, great father—used to watch me copy drawings out of the sports section. So I had a little ability, manual dexterity. He was the art
director of a photo engraving shop where he lettered—they used airbrush—and they cut out things. He said, “I think I can get you a job as a messenger boy in the afternoon, and the rest of the day you’ll come to work with me. You’ll get a desk in front of where I am, and I will teach you what I know so that you will be able to earn a livelihood.” After two years, he said, “You have enough talent to go out and search the world for a job.” Well, as a messenger, I delivered proofs to advertising agencies. I saw these men and women sitting in their offices with the slanted table, big pencils, and chalk. I thought, “That would be a nice way to make a living.” So, to enhance my drawing, I enrolled at the National Academy of Design in the evening, then later to the Art Students League. During that time, I also took a course at Columbia University in English composition. I thought those would increase my luck to get a job. I had little experience, but I was determined. The one gift, I think, that I’ve been given was determination. When I made up my mind, that’s what I wanted to do—nobody’s going to stop me.

MINER: Let’s talk now about the Gettysburg Address and about the last founder, as he’s sometimes known, Abraham Lincoln. What originally drew you, as an illustrator, to that particular speech that was given on November 19, 1863?

FINK: The speech is so simple and dramatic, sentence by sentence. And so important that 270 words spoken more than one hundred years ago resonate today with such urgency and strength. There are thousands of stories of how this man put this cluster of words together. The theories didn’t matter to me. The idea of using the talent that I had gotten—what would I do? The thought came, “Why don’t you take phrase by phrase (I did this after the Constitution) and see if you can illustrate each phrase. ‘Four score and seven years ago’ is what he said, not ‘eighty-seven years.’ Poetry. How am I going to illustrate that phrase?” I asked myself—and then thought about the book of Exodus. I remembered Moses saying, “My brother Aaron is four score and three years old.” “That’s it!” I said to myself, “I’ll have a Bible on Lincoln’s head!” That got me off to the races.

MINER: By my count, you were born in 1916, about fifty years after the end of civil war, and fifty years before the Vietnam War began. You were in your twenties during World War II. I believe you’ve lived in all or part of ten decades and through the administration of sixteen American presidents, not one of them as great as Lincoln. I’m sure that there will be some students interested in your advice to them about either art or Americanism?

FINK: We take for granted our country. In my history, I had two sets of grandparents. One from Russia. One from Poland. They escaped oppression. They came here penniless in the mid-1880s. No money. Nothing. Each found a home. They raised six children in one family. Seven in another. My parents were born in America, and I went to school here. I had one grandmother who was illiterate. I have a son now who has a PhD in Jewish history. I have cousins who built businesses. I thought, “It could only happen here.” We have had ups and downs. Weak presidents, assassinated presidents, presidents who were shot at and missed. We’re a young country and still growing. I came in today on the subway from Queens. I came early enough to see people going to work. Every denomination. There were Koreans, Japanese, Italians, Greeks. All kinds. They’re still flocking here. This is the place. Never take it for granted. There will never be an-
other Lincoln, but there will be a guy who will come out of the woodwork somewhere who has courage, and he will be able to spread the word. These things are right here. Right in front of us.

MINER: Sam, I would like to talk a little about The Book of Exodus and how it first began to take shape in your mind.

FINK: I belong to a conservative congregation. One day the rabbi, for his sermon, talked about five books of Moses that were given to a young boy years ago as a gift for his bar mitzvah. This rabbi had, years later, found that same book at a used bookstore. It hurt him. Next to it was another book that came from Yemen. It was written by a man who copied the entire five books of Moses by hand. It took him a lifetime. The rabbi bought it, and it became one of his treasures. In certain times, it was a task that was put before a man to copy the entire five books by hand. I was in my eighties when I heard that sermon, and I thought, “That’s a nice task. I ought to do that.” I have a son who is a scholar living in Israel. I decided to make the paintings for my son and his sons and their sons.

I sat and thought about illustration. I thought, “The books should not be illustrated. They should not be made hard and fast that you could see Cecil B. DeMille taking the Red Sea apart. What can I do?” It took a couple weeks, and I said, “I got the answer. The sky. The beautiful sky.” It’s never the same, as the interpretations of Exodus are never the same. The sky could be forever—infinite and filled with variety. I counted out the chapters—forty chapters. If I painted forty skies and hid the words in the clouds, both in English and in Hebrew, that would be a fun task to see if I could do it. Slowly and slowly, day by day, doing my work, I looked at the sky outside my house—night skies, dusk, dawn, electrical storms, the whole works. I concentrated, and when I finished, I felt like I had done something worthy. My mother lived in a home right in Great Neck. I used to see her every day. One day I sat by her bedside, and I had a little book of Psalms. I don’t remember the number of this particular psalm, but having finished the work, sitting at my mother’s bedside, the psalm said, “The power of God is in the sky.” I don’t consider myself a religious man in terms of going to church or synagogue. I go just to go, to belong. But this was sort of miraculous for me.
MINER: There must have been some process, in order to make this book, to get all the paintings together again.

FINK: Yes. That was fun. I called my son and said, “Will you lend them back to me?” He said, “Of course.” So, I flew over to Jerusalem two years ago, just about at this very time. I took them all. When I got here, I took them to Lena at Welcome [Books], and it was thrilling for me. It’s very personal. I believe when a person in my craft, or any craft, or any world, gets into something with all their heart, they become bigger than they actually are. When I look at what I’ve done—what’s in the works now—I cannot believe that I did it. There was a fire in me that didn’t let me sleep at night. I’d get up at night and go to where I worked, and I’d look at it and say, “I’ve got to change this. I’ve got to get a little more color in there. I’ve got to do something.” I was driven. When I finished, I wasn’t exhausted. I was just pleased that I had cut a deal. Nobody made me. Along the way, I got discouraged, but the other side of me said, “Get back to work, you lazy bum.”

MINER: I know that in Judaism, one speaks of a mitzvah, which is either one of the laws, or commandments, or a good deed done in fulfillment of one of those laws or commandments. Do you see The Book of Exodus as your mitzvah?

FINK: Yes. The Book of Exodus is the escape from slavery. That’s the main tenet of the book. Today, people around the world are enslaved. There are people in America who are enslaved. I read somewhere recently that the majority of people who work for a living are slaves. They dislike what they’re doing, and they can’t wait to reach the age of retirement. So, for me, the freedom is in the work, to love the work. To this day, I love work, I enjoy it—and I’m free.

About The Writer/Illustrator

SAM FINK is an original. A multitalented artist of inimitable range, he first learned to hand-letter from his father. For two decades he worked as an art director at Young & Rubicam. For the last twenty-plus years, Fink has been inscribing and illustrating great words, creating vibrantly illustrated texts of American history.
Historical novels teach psychology, geography, history, and English literacy, all in one addictively entertaining package. But getting today’s students into the habit of reading can be tricky—especially when the pages of a novel have to compete with technological advances such as iPhones, MP3 players, PlayStation, and DVDs. After six years of teaching tenth graders, I discovered that the most powerful tool in creating a culture of reading was my classroom library, which began as a collection of books that I had personally read and enjoyed. Each month I would put aside money for books that students requested, and over time my library grew from a collection of a hundred books to nearly seven hundred. Occasionally, a book or two would go missing, but the important thing was that books were being taken home, read, dog-eared, devoured—and English was becoming an exciting subject rather than a purgatory of grammar worksheets.

For many of my tenth graders, it was historical novels that had them coming to me even after the school day had ended. They wanted to ask if Henry VIII had really sent Anne Boleyn to the chopping block after failing to give him a son; if three hundred Greeks had really slayed eighteen thousand Persian warriors before being killed themselves, as depicted in Steven Pressfield’s *Gates of Fire*. I wondered: if their reading at home sparked such enthusiasm, why not extend it to the curriculum as well? Here, then, are a few ideas that have worked in my classroom, or in those I saw firsthand.

**GEOGRAPHY** Historical fiction authors all use geography to place their novels on the world stage. James Michener’s historical fiction does a superb job of evoking a sense of place in time. As a semester project, ask students to do extended research on a particular region or country. They will then have three responsibilities: First, read the James Michener novel that addresses their region (such as *The Source* for Israel, *The Covenant* for South Africa, and *Utah* for the forty-fifth state). Second, give a short presentation to the class, describing the ten most interesting facts, ideas, or events they came across (a large-scale, detailed map or diorama of the novel would greatly enhance this talk, and you may want to make this a requirement). Third, and most difficult, write a ten-page “missing chapter,” where the characters in the novel interact during an event that Michener did not cover—the beauty of this project is that the students must first learn their country’s history before they can spot what is missing.

**WORLD HISTORY** From Lisa See’s look at the lives of nineteenth-century Chinese women in her novel *Snow Flower and the Secret Fan*, to my own novel *Nefertiti*, about the Egyptian queen who was nearly erased from history, historical fiction authors have crossed the globe in their books. I have seen historical fiction used in the classroom to spark debates about politics, religion, and power. There are as many lesson plans for teaching historical fiction in the world history classroom as there are history books. If a teacher decides to assign a novel about ancient Egypt, for example, students can explore the Egyptians’ beliefs about the afterlife and the cosmos. As an enrichment exercise, the teacher may want to team up with a biology class to look more closely at DNA testing,
organ storage, and mumification. And what about having a physics or mathematics teacher talk about tomb and pyramid construction? This type of team-teaching can work wonders in helping students see how history is cross-curricular.

**EUROPEAN HISTORY** For a European history unit, what about taking on the Napoleonic Wars by using Bernard Cornwell’s *Richard Sharpe* series? If your class has twenty-four students or fewer, then the prolific Cornwell can keep them supplied with a different novel apiece. Each student can briefly tell the story of his or her particular novel in the series, proceeding in chronological order from *Sharpe's Tiger* (Seringapatam, India, 1799) to *Sharpe's Ransom* (Peninsular Campaign, 1813). As a geographical addition, how about a large-scale mural or map where students come together and retrace the flow of assaults, voyages, and battles from the entire series?

**ENGLISH LITERATURE** From the time I adapted historical fiction into my curriculum, I saw a significant change in the way my students began approaching their history classes. Teachers started asking me what I had done to create such avid history learners when history wasn’t the subject I was teaching. And that is the brilliance of well-written fiction. Teachers who assign historical novels are allowing students to engage not just with literature, but with history, geography, and often science as well. There are dozens of creative units for historical fiction. After reading a novel, why not ask your students to draw a comparison of what is historically accurate with what represents artistic license? Students can then adapt this information into an author’s “afterword” for the book. In another writing exercise, a teacher might ask the students to rewrite a scene from the point of view of a minor character. And if the novel is set overseas, why not have the students create a glossary of the foreign words that the author has used?

If students present their work, expect and encourage vigorous debate. After all, that’s what we’re here for. Oh, and to get paid to read and talk about the books we love. Not a bad deal at all.

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**About the Writer**


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**Nefertiti**: A Novel by Michelle Moran

Love, betrayal, political unrest, plague, and religious conflict—*Nefertiti* brings ancient Egypt to life in vivid detail. Fast-paced and historically accurate, it is the dramatic story of two unforgettable women living through a remarkable period in history.

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- Random House, TR, 978-0-8129-7615-1, 384 pp., $14.95
- Random House, HC, 978-0-375-50671-0, 384 pp., $25.95
- Random House Audio, Unabridged CD, 978-0-7393-2135-5, $39.95
- Teacher’s Guide Available

**THE GATES OF ROME:** EMPEROR: BOOK 1 by Conn Iggulden

This is Book one in a series of four which Booklist magazine hailed as a “…highly (and authentically) detailed, fast-paced, and elaborately plotted saga based on the life of the greatest Roman of them all, Julius Caesar.”


**GENGHIS:** BIRTH OF AN EMPIRE by Conn Iggulden

“Iggulden turns to another of history’s great conquerors, Genghis Khan, for a new series of brilliantly imagined and addictive historical fiction. . . . [He] weaves a spellbinding story of an exotic and unforgiving land and the enigmatic young man . . . who sets out to tame it. This is historical fiction of the first order.”

—Publishers Weekly (starred review)

- Delacorte, HC, 978-0-385-33951-3, 400 pp., $25.00
- Dell, MM, 978-0-440-24390-8, 592 pp., $6.99

**THE WALKING DRUM** by Louis L’Amour

L’Amour has been best known for his ability to capture the spirit and drama of the authentic American West. Now he guides his readers to an even more distant frontier—the enthralling lands of the 12th century.

- Bantam, MM, 978-0-553-28040-1, 480 pp., $5.99

**LAY THAT TRUMPET IN OUR HANDS** by Susan Carol McCarthy

- Winner, 2003 Chautauqua South Fiction Award

Inspired by real events, this is a wise and luminous story about a northern family, a southern town, and the senseless murder that sparks an extraordinary act of courage.

- Bantam, TR, 978-0-553-38103-0, 288 pp., $14.00
- Teacher’s Guide Available

**THE LAST TOWN ON EARTH** by Thomas Mullen

Winner 2007: James Fenimore Cooper Prize for Historical Fiction

Set against the backdrop of one of the most virulent epidemics that America ever experienced—the 1918 flu epidemic—Thomas Mullen’s powerful, sweeping first novel is a tale of morality in a time of upheaval.

- Random House, TR, 978-0-8129-7592-5, 432 pp., $13.95
- Random House, HC, 978-1-4000-6520-2, 416 pp., $23.95
- Teacher’s Guide Available

**CHESAPEAKE** by James A. Michener

Michener, one of America’s best-loved novelists, brings history to life with this 400-year saga of America’s great bay and its Eastern Shore. Following Edmund Steed and his remarkable family, who parallel the settling and forming of the nation, Chesapeake sweeps readers from the unspoiled world of the Native Americans to the voyages of Captain John Smith, the Revolutionary War, and right up to modern times.

- Random House, TR, 978-0-8129-7043-2, 888 pp., $15.95
- Fawcett, MM, 978-0-449-21158-8, 1,024 pp., $8.99

**THE SEEKER:** A Novel by Sudhir Kakar

Set against the backdrop of India’s struggle for independence, this poignant historical novel re-creates the extraordinary true-life relationship between an upper-class British woman and Mahatma Gandhi.

- Do not order before 1/15/2008.
- Trumpeter, TR, 978-1-59030-525-6, 272 pp., $12.95

Men make history, and not the other way around. In periods where there is no leadership, society stands still. Progress occurs when courageous, skillful leaders seize the opportunity to change things for the better.

—Harry S. Truman
Without words, without writing and without books there would be no history, there could be no concept of humanity. —Hermann Hesse
Y oung Adult literature is experiencing an upswing in popularity among readers and publishers these days. Authors like Stephenie Meyer, Christopher Paolini, and J. K. Rowling are blazing a hot path for the genre, and as the field expands, interesting questions are being raised about YA's role in the culture and in the marketplace. While the main goal in publishing YA books will always be to entertain, is it possible to aim toward a higher purpose as well? One of the questions that I'm particularly interested in is whether YA books are an appropriate vehicle to promote activism among younger readers.

Since Young Adult books span the gap between childhood and adulthood, it seems like the perfect genre in which to focus on elevating minds. But activism in fiction is a tricky subject. No one likes being preached to, and we all know that a book can be easily closed and set aside, never to be opened again. Still, as China Miéville, author of the New York Times bestseller *Un Lun Dun* (Del Rey, 2007), put it to me: “If people are concerned about so-called ‘activism’ in writing, they might remember that all fiction, whether it knows it or not, comes with agenda.”

Although I couldn’t agree more with this statement, I know that many people see fiction as just another form of entertainment. In their eyes, nonfiction is the natural arena for promoting activism—recent nonfiction titles like Al Gore’s *An Inconvenient Truth* and Bill Clinton’s *Giving: How Each of Us Can Change the World* certainly add to that conviction. *Giving* also highlights the work of one Dr. Paul Farmer whose work providing medical care to the world’s poor is unprecedented and inspirational. Paul Farmer’s full story is covered in the bestselling and widely college-adopted book *Mountains Beyond Mountains*. But it’s possible to have your cake and eat it too, in my opinion, and there are numerous examples of fiction titles whose stories have managed to transcend their time, make a dent in popular culture, and help to create a new language of activism among readers—books like *Fahrenheit 451*, *Brave New World*, *The Grapes of Wrath*, and even *Huckleberry Finn* are some of the more classic examples. These are books that manage both to entertain and aim their readers toward a higher purpose. In my opinion, that’s the best of both worlds.

And indeed, there’s a surprising amount of activism in Young Adult literature. According to my quick review of Wikipedia, the 1950s presented the advent of YA literature—or, as it was known back then, “teen literature”—with the publication of *Lord of the Flies* and *Catcher in the Rye*. These are not light books, and there are clear messages presented within the pages of both of these fine novels. Fast forward to the present, and you’ll not just run past Judy Blume’s books, but also books on rape, incest, drug use, physical abuse—the list of difficult subjects seems endless. Surely, these books are making a positive difference in young people’s lives.

While China Miéville’s first foray into the Young Adult market doesn’t address such disturbing subjects as those listed above, as his editor, I was very interested in seeing how he weaved his messages into *Un Lun Dun*. I’m well aware that he’s a socialist—in fact, he ran for the British Parliament a few years back. (While he didn’t win, he did get declared “the sexiest man in British politics” by the Guardian, a compliment that China attributes to a lack of any serious competition.) When China writes his adult fiction, his politics are always teetering at the edges of his story, motivating both characters and plotlines. But *Un Lun Dun* seemed much more subtle—and that, to me, is the best way to handle things in the YA field.

Two of China’s main messages revolve around environmentalism and that eternal mainstay of fantasy fiction, “the Chosen One.” In *Un Lun Dun*, a girl named Zanna is prophesied to save both London and its shadowy, through-the-looking-glass twin city of UnLondon from a dark Smog that is slowly trying to take over. When I asked China about the Smog and its obvious relationship to pollution in our own real world, he admitted to me that he only created the Smog because he thought it would be “a cool monster.” Any environmental message was strictly secondary to his desire to write a good story with a scary threat. That sounded good to me, and I can’t
help thinking that young adult readers, who are undoubtedly smarter than we give them credit for, would quickly pick up on whether a book was trying to force-feed them an environmental message. When message gets in the way of story, it's a surefire recipe for disaster.

But on the subject of the Chosen One, China had a real agenda. He himself admits to being “kind of a side-kick” during his youth, and it was very important for him to send the message to young readers that there’s no need to feel helpless if they’re not the typical alpha, always waiting for a savior, but rather that it’s possible to test fate and make decisions for yourself regardless of whether you’re more like Robin than Batman. In Un Lun Dun, the Chosen One doesn’t have all the answers; for once, the prophesies turn out to be wrong—and in the end it’s the sidekick that saves the day! This seems like an essential lesson to teach young readers: that of independence and self determination no matter your assumed lot in life. It’s the kind of message that shouldn’t wait until adulthood.

My favorite moment in the book comes well into the story, in chapter thirty-six, when the sidekick, Deeba, is safely back in London where she could easily forget about the problems over in UnLondon. She isn’t the Chosen One—she’s just someone—and no one is counting on her to help:

“It’ll be fine, Deeba thought. You saw how Brokkenbroll and Jones and the binja got on. But she was never a hundred percent convinced.

Besides . . . she found herself starting to think. She got ashamed of herself then. Because the thought that had been creeping out was Besides, even if something terrible does happen, you don’t need to know about it.

How many of us have had that thought before? I know I have. But Deeba fights the impulse to ignore someone else’s problems (otherwise the book would only be 141 pages long), and she makes up her mind to get back to UnLondon and do her best to help. It’s a moving piece of narrative and a wonderful message to send to readers—not just young ones, but adults as well.

That’s activism in the strictest, most important sense, and we can only hope to see more of that kind of message in the future.

About the Writer
CHRIS SCHLUEP is an editor at the Random House Publishing Group.

What is Un Lun Dun?

It is London through the looking glass, an urban Wonderland of strange delights where all the lost and broken things of London end up . . . and some of its lost and broken people, too—including Brokkenbroll, boss of the broken umbrellas; Obaday Fing, a tailor whose head is an enormous pin-cushion, and an empty milk carton called Curdle. Un Lun Dun is a place where words are alive, a jungle lurks behind the door of an ordinary house, carnivorous giraffes stalk the streets, and a dark cloud dreams of burning the world. It is a city awaiting its hero, whose coming was prophesied long ago, set down for all time in the pages of a talking book.

When twelve-year-old Zanna and her friend Deeba find a secret entrance leading out of London and into this strange city, it seems that the ancient prophecy is coming true at last. But then things begin to go shockingly wrong.

“Miéville’s fantastical city is vivid and splendidly crafted. Who would have thought a milk carton could make such an endearing pet? Or that words, or utterlings, could have a life and form of their own? Fans . . . Norton Juster’s The Phantom Tollbooth will love this novel. The story is exceptional and the action moves along at a quick pace.” —School Library Journal

Visit www.unlundun.com to view some of China Miéville’s illustrations from the world of Un Lun Dun.

UN LUN DUN
by China Miéville
Del Rey, HC, 978-0-345-49516-7, 448 pp., $17.95
Do not order paperback before 1/29/2008
Del Rey, TR, 978-0-345-45844-5, 496 pp., $10.95
Books cited in this article include:

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*Here, from Bill Clinton, is a call to action. Giving is an inspiring look at how each of us can change the world. First, it reveals the extraordinary and innovative efforts now being made by companies and organizations—and by individuals—to solve problems and save lives both “down the street and around the world.” Then it urges us to seek out what each of us, “regardless of income, available time, age, and skills,” can do to help, to give people a chance to live out their dreams.*

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*Afterword by Alfred Kazin*


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In October 2003, I attended a language arts conference session about the novel *Lay that Trumpet in Our Hands*. Intrigued by author Susan Carol McCarthy’s tale of the personal events that led up to the writing of *Trumpet*, I ordered and read the book. Immediately, my obligation to teach my students how life was in central Florida in the twentieth century, especially the life of African Americans subjugated to Jim Crow laws, became apparent.

As a public charter school of choice, Terrace Community Middle School accepts all students by way of a lottery system. Consequently, our student population mirrors the great diversity found in the Tampa Bay population. Because these students live, learn, and grow within the confines of our community, they are not necessarily exposed to the tribulation wrought by the Deep South’s segregated past. *Trumpet* throws all those who read it smack-dab in the face of Jim-Crow Florida.

Literacy and social literacy are important to me. Beyond nurturing literate learners, I work to empower them to literally change our world for the better. While I find it important that learners gain facts, become adept interpreters and analyzers of concepts and theories, and become functional practitioners of technical skills, I believe they will find it difficult to effect change in the world unless they feel it is their right to do so. I felt very strongly that *Trumpet* would accomplish all these goals.

At the end of the 2005–2006 school year, I pitched *Trumpet* as the all-school read and the culminating “Avenging Social Injustice” symposium to our literacy coordinator. The book would be read in social studies classes with support from language arts. In preparation for the symposium, students would research famous African American Floridians; life in Florida in the 1950s; and a present-day, global-scale social injustice of their own choosing—writing a report and presenting posters regarding their research findings. The literacy coordinator agreed.

In February 2007, the whole student population began their *Trumpet* journey. As my eighth-grade students read and discussed the book, I realized that many of the people mentioned in this work of historical fiction were beyond most students’ frames of reference. To familiarize them with these figures, I assigned extra credit research projects on the lives of some of them: Harry T. Moore, Thurgood Marshall, Fuller Warren, and Lake County Sheriff Willis McCall, to name just a few. As the extra credit facts came in, students wrote what they found to be interesting on full-size, “crime-scene” silhouettes—representing the individuals in the book—that had been cut out and mounted on the hallway walls of the social studies wing.

From the crime-scene forms, curious students learned about the triumphs and tragedies that took place in mid-twentieth-century Florida. They learned how Mr. Moore, the first Florida state secretary of the NAACP, fought for equal pay for African American school teachers, and how Mr. Marshall became the first African American Supreme Court justice. On the other end of the spectrum, they learned that *Trumpet*-era Florida governor Fuller Warren was an admitted clansman, and of horrific hate crimes committed by Lake County Sheriff Willis McCall. The crime-scene project was a hit. “I never knew Florida was so prejudiced,” a student commented during one *Trumpet* discussion.

In addition to reading the book, we watched a video about the lives and untimely deaths of Harry T. and Harriette Moore, and we read newspaper articles from the period on that subject, following those stories all the way up to the November 2006 discovery of Harry Moore’s briefcase in an abandoned barn. One day, a student came into my classroom and excitedly told me that the Harry Moore case was mentioned on a news show he overheard the prior evening. And a sixth-grade social studies teacher forwarded to me an e-mail in which a parent thanked him for assigning...
Trumpet. The mother later explained to this teacher that her son lives and breathes sports; trying to get him to read is a constant struggle. But not so with Trumpet. Passing through Lake County on their way to a sports event, Mom and son actually discussed the book! (Lake County figures heavily in the novel.)

To further bring life to this project, I decided to contact author Susan Carol McCarthy and invite her to the symposium. Not only was the author willing to attend, but she also suggested inviting Evangeline Moore, Harry Moore’s surviving daughter. My principal agreed to invite both women—and both women agreed to attend.

When Ms. Moore arrived at the airport, what struck me immediately was how her countenance is so similar to what I imagine was also her father’s—quiet, serious, unwavering, dignified. While my colleague Kristine Bennett and I waited with Ms. Moore for Ms. McCarthy's plane to arrive, we couldn’t help noticing the large package she held securely in her lap. During our conversations, it came out that the package contained the remnants of her father’s briefcase—she didn’t want to risk checking it in baggage.

The next day went exactly as planned. Two eighth-grade students sang “The Ballad of Harry T. Moore,” a song adaptation of a 1952 poem by Langston Hughes. Four students then took turns reading the poem “For My People,” by Alice Walker. With dignity and the wisdom of her years, Ms. Moore spoke first, recounting her life with her parents and the realities of growing up black in Jim-Crow Florida. The students had the chance to view her father's satchel as she read from some of the letters that were recovered from it. She poignantly recounted that Christmas break in 1951, when her sister and her aunt and uncle picked her up from the train station and brought her not home, but to the hospital where her mom lay dying. Her dad was already dead. But, at twenty-one years of age, she refused to believe it until the funeral director allowed her to touch his face—that face that looked so much like hers. Her mom died nine days later because the bomb, placed beneath the Moore’s bedroom window, ruptured a hole in her stomach when it detonated. “Her intestines were black and blue,” Moore said. “I have never been the same and I never will be the same,” Moore replied in answer to a student question about the death of her parents.

Next, Ms. McCarthy shared with students the events behind the writing of Trumpet. The book contains only three fictionalized parts, she explained. The protagonist, Reesa, existed in the mind of a wistful baby sister (the author herself) in an oligarchy of older brothers. The Marvin Cully character and his parents are fictional, but based on the actual events of a central Florida lynching, as well as McCarthy’s interactions with employees in the author’s family citrus business. Finally, Florida residents and Florida towns were given fictional names.

Ms. McCarthy affected my students more than I ever could by validating facts from the book: the wounding of a family member, the dynamite blasts, the characters and locations in the book, and the heroic exploits of a humble, honest father. It was the real deal—and it allowed my students to experience the world of Trumpet and Jim-Crow Florida in a way that transcended the here-and-now of the symposium and followed them all the way home and into their lives.
The author ended the keynote address by presenting information about hate crimes in present-day Florida and how, in recent years, Florida has ranked second in the nation in the number of active hate groups. She explained to students that while Evangeline may have been the beginning of the Trumpet story, and her own book was the middle, they would write the end. In her sprightly way, she implored the students to continue making a difference using what they had learned about our collective past to change our collective future. A seventh-grade student ended the event by presenting an excerpt from Nobel Laureate Elie Wiesel’s speech “The Perils of Indifference.”

Later in the day, students had a chance to get their personal copy of Trumpet signed by the two women, who took time to speak to every student who asked for their autographs. But before the day culminated in hugs and tears of good-bye, Susan McCarthy addressed the faculty at a luncheon, held in honor of the author and Ms. Moore, telling us how important teachers are to the lives of students. She explained to us that she was never a stellar student, but one teacher in grade school told her she could write. That was all it took.

It’s a fundamental truism: our youth are our future. My school reinforced this concept with our work on Trumpet. However, on a number of occasions, I fielded such questions from students as, “Why do you always say that it is up to us?” and “What can we do?” As educators, we must provide them with opportunities not just to read about the world around them, but to breathe in that world and experience it firsthand, so that they become aware that it truly is within the realm of possibility to make changes for the better.

The impact of Trumpet continues to resonate within my school: during the 2007–2008 year, I am spearheading the civil rights team, a new student group in which students will dedicate themselves to working toward social justice and actively preventing racial harassment of any kind in our school community. It’s truly amazing how reading and literacy not only make us better as individuals, but can also activate us—especially our young—to effect greater change.

**Helpful Hints for a Successful All-School Read**

1. Form a leadership team. The team should always include a school administrator, a representative from each subject area, a school finance manager, and a school operations administrator (i.e., someone who has control of the school bell system, the ebb and flow of daily traffic, and other logistical matters). To be most effective, each point below should be a team collaboration.

2. Select your age-appropriate book one year in advance of the students’ reading of the book. This will give you enough time to plan fundraisers to offset any potential costs (speakers’ fees, materials and supplies for activities, and so forth).

3. Select your book based on an overall theme: women’s studies, science, Native Americans, civil rights, or apartheid, to name a few. It is imperative that you and the team are passionate about the theme and book selection.

4. Develop an activity that encourages all faculty and staff to read the book in advance of the students. Group presentations at a faculty/staff meeting or cyber–book clubs work well.

5. Create student discussion and comprehension questions for the book, along with culminating, displayable projects for each grade level.

6. Always develop a symposium or celebration based on the book.

7. If inviting the author or other guest speakers, do so at least six months in advance of their appearance. Invitations directly from students—supervised by a teacher—work wondrously.

8. If you want media coverage of the culminating event, disseminate a press release at least one month in advance of the event.

9. Try to schedule the symposium or celebration for a half-day on your school calendar. Full-day events are possible but extremely difficult to pull off flawlessly.

**About the Writer**

JUDITH TURNER is Lead Teacher and Social Studies Subject Area Leader at Terrace Community Middle School in Tampa, Florida, where she teaches 8th Grade U.S. History. In addition, she has been a Language Arts Subject Area Leader/teacher, Ancient History teacher and Geography teacher. Ms. Turner has a B.A. in Literature and Language from the University of Wisconsin – Green Bay, and a Masters in Educational Leadership and Policy Studies from the University of South Florida, Tampa, Florida. She is a lifelong advocate for social justice through reading and writing literacy.
GOD GREW TIRED OF US: A Memoir by John Bul Dau and Michael Sweeney

One of the uprooted youngsters known as the Lost Boys of Sudan, John Bul Dau was twelve years old when civil war ravaged his village. His searing account of hardship, famine, and war ultimately testifies to human resilience and kindness.

National Geographic, HC, 978-1-4262-0114-1, 304 pp., $26.00
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INTO THE FOREST: A Novel by Jean Hegland

Into the Forest follows two young sisters struggling to make sense of their world when their near-future society collapses. In their isolation, they find that the basic necessities of survival must be cherished, and that they must find ways to sustain their emotional lives through individual sources of inspiration.

Dial Press, TR, 978-0-553-37961-7, 256pp, $15.00

MOUNTAINS BEYOND MOUNTAINS by Tracy Kidder

Selected as a Common Reading title by over 40 Colleges and Universities • ALA Notable Book • A New York Times Notable book

This book is being widely used in freshman seminars at colleges across the United States, and it will likely stir debates on such wide-ranging issues as the politics of health care, the role of government funding, and ethics. Highly recommended.—Choice (American Library Association)

Teacher’s Guide Available
Random House, HC, 978-1-4000-6605-6, 240 pp., $21.95

AMERICAN YOUTH by Phil LaMarche

American Youth is the tale of a teenager in southern New England who is confronted by a terrible moral dilemma following a firearms accident in his home. A classic portrait of a young man struggling with the idea of identity and responsibility in an America ill at ease with itself.

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Teacher’s Guide Available
Random House, TR, 978-0-8129-7178-1, 336 pp., $14.95

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This is a deeply moving recasting of one of the most controversial characters in American literature, Huckleberry Finn’s Jim.

Teacher’s Guide Available
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Three Rivers Press, TR, 978-1-4000-8311-4, 368 pp., $14.00
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Once your students have the proper skills for American citizenship, how should they use them? In this section, you’ll find articles about ways you can help instill a sense of efficacy and civic responsibility in your students.

Bill Strickland talks about ways that you can help create the environment necessary for students to feel enabled to pursue and achieve their goals. Sonia Nazario, author of *Enrique’s Journey*, discusses the immigration issues facing the United States. Nathaniel Tripp and the editors of *The Green Book* discuss sensible ways to become better stewards of the environment. You’ll also find information on: how to vote; how effective classroom management sets students up for success; and more.
It was a winter morning in 1996, and I was standing center stage in the pit of an old, wood-paneled lecture hall at Harvard University. Rows of wooden seats loomed above me in curving tiers. In those seats, with their expectant gazes bearing down on me, sat sixty or seventy razor-sharp young men and women—graduate students at the Harvard Business School—waiting to see what I had to offer. As a result of my work with inner-city kids and adults at the Manchester Bidwell Center in Pittsburgh, I had been asked to serve as an HBS case study, to share a little hard-earned business savvy from the other side of the tracks.

To tell the truth, I wasn’t so sure that they could get what I had to offer. After all, I don’t run an airline or an entertainment empire. If you wanted to be technical about it, you could say I’m not a businessman at all. As the founder and CEO of Manchester Bidwell, a community arts education and job training center in Pittsburgh, I had been asked to serve as an HBS case study, to share a little hard-earned business savvy from the other side of the tracks.

As a guy who never forgot where he came from—and who knows firsthand how the realities of race and circumstance, of poverty and lowered expectations, can crush human dreams—I was certainly amazed when Jim Heskitt at Harvard got interested in our work. He was intrigued with the news of our success and with the unconventional methods we use, and he thought his students might learn something from the way I operate. The truth is, I never set out to be a corporate executive or to run any kind of operation at all. When I started out, all I wanted was to give some kids a chance to work with clay.

I was nineteen-years-old in 1968, when I founded the Manchester Craftsmen’s Guild, the tiny neighborhood arts center that grew into Manchester Bidwell. Our first home was a derelict row house on Buena Vista Street in Manchester. My plan was to use the space as a studio where I could teach neighborhood kids to make bowls and pots. I was a neophyte potter myself at the time, and making pottery was one of the great joys of my life. I liked the way the wet clay felt in my hands. Working with clay calmed me and excited me all at the same time. There was a sense of control, but also one of rich possibility. And there was a deep sense of accomplishment and pride once you developed some skill at it. The magic I felt when I first
laid my hands on wet clay gave me the belief that I could do something interesting with my life. It opened up doors to meaning and possibility that showed me, for the first time, that I had talents and capabilities no one had seen before, and that I had never dreamed of. I’m convinced that those insights not only gave me visions of my future, but literally saved my life.

Thirty-four years later, the center and I are both still growing, but in a much larger and more sophisticated facility. Today, Manchester Bidwell comprises three separate buildings, covering 163,000 square feet, with 150 people on staff and as many as 1,100 students passing through our doors each year. Running such a complex organization requires a pretty high level of organizational expertise, and today I feel very comfortable wearing the hat of CEO. But I’ll never forget that Manchester Bidwell wasn’t crafted out of corporate vision or business savvy. It happened because a clueless nineteen-year-old trusted his unspoken intuition that the human spirit is remarkably resilient, and that even in damaged and disadvantaged lives, and in circumstances where the odds seem hopelessly stacked against you, there is endless potential waiting to be freed. What I wanted those Harvard grad students to understand—what I want everyone to embrace—are the simple principles that have guided my life and enabled my success: that students have the potential to make their dreams come true; and that one of the greatest obstacles blocking them from realizing that potential is that they believe, or are told, that the things they want most passionately are impractical, unrealistic, or somehow beyond their reach.

Harnessing these passions and interests in a warm, nurturing environment is key to helping students discover their potential. People, after all, are a function of their environment. Put bars on the window and they’ll act like prisoners. Give them sunshine and fresh-cut flowers and respect, and they’ll act like the citizens we expect them to be. Why fresh-cut flowers? Because it sends the message that life is happening at Manchester Bidwell, and that we care enough about each other to make the extra effort to bring the best of the outside inside our walls. (They also look really nice.) This philosophy extends to the food we serve in our cafeteria. We don’t do fast food; we serve real food with real ingredients. We want our students to be able to use their minds to the best of their abilities, and providing the proper fuel is the way to make this happen. The way that we have been able to do these things is by partnering with community businesses and entrepreneurs. Once you begin with one of these folks, you create a domino effect, with other folks also wanting to participate, or showing more willingness to when asked. They realize that their businesses are not separate from the community, but actually dependent upon them. Reaching young people is the key to making the future of their communities, and consequently their businesses, brighter. They realize the stake they have in a community’s greatest resource: its young.

All of us—no matter who our parents are, where we live, how much education we have, or what kinds of connections, abilities, and opportunities life may have offered us—have the potential to shape our lives in ways that will bring us the meaning, purpose, and success we long for. And you, as teachers, are in an especially privileged position in that respect. That’s the essential lesson of my life: that we all can achieve the “impossible” in our lives. I want people everywhere to rethink their assumptions about what is and isn’t possible in their lives, and to convince themselves that they not only have the right, but also the responsibility—and the capacity—to dream big, and to make those dreams come true.

MAKE THE IMPOSSIBLE POSSIBLE
One Man’s Crusade to Inspire Others to Dream Bigger and Achieve the Extraordinary
by Bill Strickland
Currency, HC, 978-0-385-52054-6, 240 pp., $23.95

About the Writer
BILL STRICKLAND is CEO of Manchester Bidwell, a community arts education and training center. At Manchester Craftsmen’s Guild, he offers programs in ceramics, photography, and painting to hundreds of kids a year, ninety percent of whom get high school diplomas and enroll in college. As a result of his work, Strickland has received a MacArthur Foundation “genius” grant, has been profiled three times in the Harvard Business Review, has lectured at Harvard Graduate School of Education, and has served on the board of the National Endowment for the Arts. He lives in Pittsburgh, Pennsylvania.
Wonderful things happen when teachers use citizenship activities to improve their students’ literacy. By *citizenship activities*, I mean embedding academic standards in creative lessons and projects that teach young people their privileges, obligations, and responsibilities as members of a democratic nation. In this approach to teaching, academic skills are presented as the means to an end, and not as the ends in themselves.

Even as standardized test scores rise, and reading and math levels increase, a disquieting voice within our collective national heart is telling us that the changes we want must go deeper than this. We know we must spend less time teaching performance for the sake of performance and a lot more time helping our children understand what they’re living for.

As I write about in *White’s Rules*, at West Valley Leadership Academy, I teach my students that the real purpose of learning history, science, economics, and government is not to memorize facts, but to familiarize themselves with the timeless problems civilizations always face. Once they understand the problems, they can try to figure out ways to solve them.

The challenge in working to improve students’ literacy skills is not that they don’t have the ability to read and write effectively, but that they frequently don’t care enough to make the effort. A telling statistic is that when school recesses each day in the United States, the average student goes home and reads for only eight minutes and sits in front of the television for four hours. (“How Children Spend Their Time,” Hofferth and Sandburg, University of Michigan; “TV and the Family,” American Academy of Pediatrics). Sporadic attendance and half-hearted effort in class negate the best teachers’ efforts to improve student performance. To counter this trend, I offer some examples from my own experience of how citizenship activities can boost awareness of a problem and spur students to dig for truth, improving their writing in the process.

As a teaching principal at a small elementary school, I taught social studies to students in third through sixth grade. Each day we started by skimming the *Christian Science Monitor*, a newspaper we chose because of its international scope. For a couple of weeks, I had tried in vain to interest my class in the growing conflict in central Africa. I was looking for a way to breathe some life and interest into my lessons. And then one day, an African family from Burundi arrived on our campus doorstep. They had just escaped the same civil war we’d studied and were feeling homesick and alone.

A simple class interview of the Burundian mother provided the spark I’d been looking for and led me to ask, “What can we do to help?” First, we were motivated to read and research everything we could find on that part of the world and the history of the conflict. When the students wanted to learn more, the mother then expanded her talk to teach us about her country’s language and foods. (The kids were thrilled to eat “real African food”!)

Finally, we were moved to declare a “peace offensive” against the nation of Burundi, on behalf of its people. We drafted an official proclamation—signed by students, teachers, parents, and board members—declaring our school’s intent to send letters to the Burundian president, along with toys and clothing to the children. We even offered to help them negotiate peace among the many warring factions. Imagine our surprise when we arrived at school one morning to find a personal fax from the Burundian president, thanking us for our resolution and asking for our help! This peace offensive went on to become a national story, and the same newspaper we originally read to learn about the conflict ended up publishing a feature about our response. Significantly, that year’s pre- and post-standardized test scores showed an average growth of more than two years per child, in all subjects, within an eight-month period.

A short time later, I moved to my present position at a small alternative school, teaching the most high-risk junior
high and high school students in Los Angeles. But since that incident opened my eyes years ago to the potential for using citizenship activities to improve my students’ literacy skills, I’ve never been without three things: my class set of newspapers to begin each day; heightened student interest in our lessons; and striking academic growth.

Below is a short list of some other citizenship activity projects my students have learned from and enjoyed.

- A study of the **PLIGHT OF THIRD-WORLD CHILDREN** led my students to “adopt”—with their own money—one child each from Central America, Africa, and Asia. We write them regularly and track their countries’ progress in the paper and on the Internet. At the other end of the spectrum, we have a pen pal in the Texas prison system. In prison for the sixth and final time, abandoned by all his family, this man will die of old age in his cell. “I’ve so ruined and wasted my life,” he wrote to us years ago, “would you mind if I wrote to the kids sometimes and encouraged them not to waste their lives like I have wasted mine?” Both sets of pen pals continue to teach my students valuable lessons.

- Our school’s ongoing personal **RELATIONSHIP WITH A HOLOCAUST SURVIVOR** led a neo-Nazi gang member to write a letter, telling this woman how sorry he was for his past hateful behavior toward Jews and vowing to stop it. This letter, along with letters from many of my other students, were included in a book the survivor later wrote. She said, “Of all the thousands of letters I’ve received over the years, your students’ were the most heartfelt.” My students also learned that one of their classmates had a mother who’d survived the Cambodian genocide. The students did more research and writing, and then prepared a “day of forgiveness and healing” for our entire community, inviting both local citizens and members of some rival gangs. Both genocide survivors spoke, and the effect of their stories on those who attended was overwhelmingly positive.

- While reading and discussing **OP-ED ESSAYS** in the newspaper, two students decided to write essays about their own feelings and submit them to an online newspaper. One girl wrote about escaping a crystal meth addiction as well as dealing with the stereotype of being a “better Asian American” student. Another student wrote about the difficulty of trying to be a good teenager and a good Muslim in the United States. Both girls received dozens of positive responses to their articles. Suddenly, everyone in my class wanted to write opinion essays!

- **LEARNING ABOUT THE PROBLEMS THAT CONFRONT OUR CITY’S FUTURE** resulted in a large-scale research project that called for determining the most pressing problems that face Los Angeles. Students brainstormed solutions, packaged them in a professional format, and presented them to the mayor, whose personal assistant later came and spoke at our school, inviting us to attend and participate in a special City Hall meeting.

- In **STUDYING THE PROBLEMS OF SUBSTANCE ADDICTION AND HOMELESSNESS**, as well as in struggling with their own addiction problems, my students have developed a long-term relationship with a local homeless mission. We have alternated as speakers and group leaders at each other’s facilities, and two girls in my class personally helped a homeless woman in our neighborhood get off dangerous streets and enroll in the mission’s counseling program. As our school’s reputation has grown, we’ve been guest speakers for community and law enforcement meetings, where each student has had the thrill of delivering a short, prepared speech before a large, formal audience. We are also working with an eighteen-year-old former gang member, who recently became a quadriplegic as the result of a serious beating. This young man hopes to become a motivational speaker to prevent other children from joining gangs, and my students take turns in helping him prepare for this work. Improved public speaking has been an important result of these efforts.

These stories and many others are contained in *White’s Rules*, as is a step-by-step description of how to implement them. Educators using my approach generally can expect four immediate results:

1. Students will become motivated and genuinely excited about what they’re learning.
2. Teachers will find a renewed sense of purpose and interest in the lessons they’re presenting.
3. Strictly as a side effect, reading and writing abilities will soar.
4. The learning environment will improve, as moral and social behavior problems virtually disappear.

Beyond that, educators who adopt this approach will be able to do the one thing that’s more thrilling than reading about someone else’s successes: they will experience and increase their own successes, inside the classroom and beyond.

**About the Writer**

**PAUL D. WHITE** walked away from a successful construction business to find a career that let him give back to the world. He remains a friend and mentor to students he has turned around over the past four decades.
AMERICAN CHICA: Two Worlds, One Childhood by Marie Arana
• Winner: 2001 National Book Award for Non-fiction
• Library Journal Best Books of 2001, Non-fiction
• Winner: YALSA Best Books for Young Adults
• National Book Award Nominee - Non-Fiction
• Library Journal Best Books of 2001 - Non-Fiction

Written in the tradition of Hunger of Memory by Richard Rodriguez, this is an informative and resonant portrait of a child coming to terms with her bicultural identity.
Dial Press, TR, 978-0-385-31963-8, 320 pp., $14.00

TROPICAL FISH: Tales From Entebbe by Doreen Baingana
• Winner of the Commonwealth Writers’ Prize for Best First Book in the Africa region
• Winner of the Association of Writers and Writing Programs (AWP) Award Series in Short Fiction
• Winner of the Washington Writing Prize for Short Fiction
• Finalist for the Caine Prize in African Writing

Set mostly in pastoral Entebbe with stops in the cities Kampala and Los Angeles, Tropical Fish depicts the reality of life for Christine Mugisha and her family after Idi Amin’s dictatorship.
Harlem Moon, TR, 978-0-7679-2510-5, 208 pp., $10.95

COOL SALSA: Bilingual Poems on Growing Up Latino in the United States by Lori Carlson
With an Introduction by Oscar Hijuelos. Here is a collection of thirty-six poems, in English and Spanish, which capture the sights, sounds, and smells of Latino culture in America.
“Excellent enrichment. . . . Whether discussing the immigrant’s frustration at not being able to speak English...the familiar adolescent desire to belong, or celebrating the simply joys of life, these fine poems are incisive and photographic in their depiction of a moment.” —School Library Journal (starred review)

The Guardians by Ana Castillo
From an American Book Award-winning author comes a suspenseful, moving new novel about a sensuous, smart, and fiercely independent woman. Eking out a living as a teacher’s aide in a small New Mexican border town, Tía Regina is also raising her teenage nephew, Gabo, a hardworking boy who has entered the country illegally and aspires to the priesthood.
“A nuanced, vibrant look at the American experience through Mexican-American eyes.” —Kirkus Reviews
Random House, HC, 978-1-4000-6500-4, 224 pp., $24.95

9 of 1: A Window to the World by Oliver Chin Foreword by Phoebe Gloeckner
In this graphic novel that helps teens make sense of world events, nine fictional high school students reflect the variety of feelings about the events of September 11.
Frog, Ltd., TR, 978-1-58394-072-3, 112 pp., $12.95

God Grew Tired of Us: A Memoir by John Bul Dau with Michael Sweeney
One of the uprooted youngsters known as the Lost Boys of Sudan, John Bul Dau was 12 years old when civil war ravaged his village. John’s memoir of his Dinka childhood shows African life and values at their best, while his searing account of hardship, famine, and war also testifies to human resilience and kindness. In an era of cultural clashes, his often humorous stories of adapting to a new life in the United States offer proof that we can bridge our differences peacefully.
National Geographic, HC, 978-1-4262-0114-1, 304 pp., $26.00
Paperback forthcoming January 2008. Do not paperback order before 1/22/08.
National Geographic, TR, 978-1-4262-0212-4, 304pp., $14.95

Burnt Bread and Chutney: Growing Up Between Cultures – A Memoir of an Indian Jewish Childhood by Carmit Delman
Winner - School Library Journal Adult Books for Young Adults
“Her memoir captures the textures of a life spent straddling the traditions and cultures of Western India and the United States” —Library Journal
One World, TR, 978-0-345-44594-0, 304 pp., $13.95
**Funny in Farsi:** A Memoir of Growing Up Iranian in America  
by Firoozeh Dumas  
*One Book. Community Read ’08 for Dayton, Ohio*

*Funny in Farsi* chronicles the American journey of Dumas’s wonderfully engaging family. Above all, this is an unforgettable story of identity, discovery, and the power of family love.

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— *San Francisco Chronicle*

Random House, TR, 978-0-8129-6837-8, 224 pp., $12.95

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**Veil of Roses** by Laura Fitzgerald

This compelling debut follows one spirited young woman from the confines of Iran to the intoxicating freedom of America—where she discovers not only an enticing new country but the roots of her own independence.

Bantam, TR, 978-0-553-38388-1, 320 pp., $12.00

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**Gifted** by Nikita Lalwani

In her stunningly eloquent debut novel, Nikita Lalwani pits a parent’s dream against a child’s. Deftly pondering the complexities and consequences that accompany the best intentions, *Gifted* explores just how far one person will push another, and how much can be endured, in the name of love.

Random House, HC, 978-1-4000-6648-3, 288 pp., $23.95

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**Polite Lies:** On Being a Woman Caught Between Cultures  
by Kyoko Mori

In this powerful and exquisitely crafted book, notable author Kyoko Mori delves into her dual heritage with a rare honesty—both graceful and stirring.

“Mori’s exquisite language leads readers to an understanding of a civilization as highly developed as ours but one that has developed much differently in the area of human relations.”
— *Booklist*

Ballantine, TR, 978-0-449-00428-9, 272 pp., $13.95

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**Enrique’s Journey** by Sonia Nazario

In this astonishing true story, award-winning journalist Sonia Nazario recounts the unforgettable odyssey of a Honduran boy who braves unimaginable hardship and peril to reach his mother in the United States.

Random House, TR, 978-0-8129-7178-1, 336 pp., $14.95  
Teacher’s Guide Available

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**Hindi-Bindi Club** by Monica Pradhan

An elegant tapestry of East and West, peppered with food and ceremony, wisdom and color, this luminous novel breathes new life into timeless themes.

Bantam, TR, 978-0-553-38452-9, 448 pp., $12.00  
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**My Jim** by Nancy Rawles  
Winner 2006: ALA Alex Award  
Winner 2006: New York Public Library Books for the Teen Age

“Even young adults unfamiliar with Huckleberry Finn’s companion will find Rawles’s tale moving and real. The author creates a heartbreaking world where farewells to husbands, wives, and children are common.”
— *School Library Journal*

Three Rivers Press, TR, 978-1-4000-5401-5, 192 pp., $12.95  
Teacher’s Guide Available

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**How I Learned English**  
55 Accomplished Latinos Recall Lessons in Language and Life  
Edited by Tom Miller

All over the world there are people struggling to master the quirks and challenges of English. In today’s America, many millions of them are Latino—and in this eloquent collection, nearly 60 of the best known contribute fascinating, revealing, often touching essays on the very personal process each went through to achieve this common end.

National Geographic, TR, 978-1-4262-0097-7, 288 pp., $16.95

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**Teacher’s Guide Available**
A Life Worth Fighting For

How Enrique’s Journey Teaches Students to Be Grateful Citizens

by Sonia Nazario

Students who read Enrique’s Journey come away with one overriding reaction: it makes them grateful. Grateful for the sheer luck that they were born in the United States. Grateful that being born here brought with it incredible economic and democratic opportunities. Grateful that they didn’t have to go through the searing hardships that drive millions of mothers and children north out of Central America and Mexico. Grateful that they didn’t have to make the desperate and dangerous journey so many children have to make through Mexico alone, gripping the tops of freight trains, to reunify with their mothers in the United States.

The lesson of the book, students have said, is simple but powerful: what they have is so extraordinary that others are willing to die to obtain it, so valuable it is worth fighting for and protecting.

For me, that lesson began one morning in my kitchen in Los Angeles. I had asked my housecleaner an innocent, off-the-cuff question: “Do you plan on having more children?”

Always chatty, she suddenly went silent. She started sobbing. She told me about four children she had left behind in Guatemala. Her husband had left her, and she simply couldn’t feed them more than once or twice a day. They would beg her for food. Many nights they went to bed without dinner. “Sleep face down, so your stomach won’t growl so much,” she would say, gently coaxing them to turn over. Finally, she made the only choice she felt she could: she left her two sons and two daughters with their grandmother and came to work in El Norte.

Her youngest daughter was one year old, still breastfeeding, when she walked away. She hadn’t seen her children in twelve years. She had left her children out of love, for the children’s sake, and sent money home so they could eat and study past the third grade.

Still, her answer stunned me. How could a mother walk away from her children, travel two thousand miles, not knowing when or if she would see them again? What kind of desperation drives a mother to leave her children?

Her choice seemed a horrible one, one I wouldn’t wish on any parent. But soon I learned it is an unbelievably common choice—with more family disintegration in Latin America, more single moms are finding themselves facing her dilemma. In fact, these women are transforming the face of who comes to America. If illegal immigration was once overwhelmingly male, they are changing that—millions of women, often single mothers, come to the United States from Mexico and Central America and leave their children behind. Throughout the United States, they have become our neighbors, the people who clean our offices and homes, who care for our children. In Los Angeles, one study showed, four out of every five live-in nannies have a child who still lives in their home country.

The women explain that they left their children with one promise: I’ll come back or send for you quickly—one or two years, max. But life in America turns out harder than they imagined. Despite sleeping in converted garages or crowded apartments and working two jobs, saving to go home or to pay a smuggler to bring their children to the United States is very difficult. Typically, the separations stretch into five or ten years—or more.

These children become desperate to be with their
mothers. They get an idea: the only way I’ll see my mother is if I go find her myself. Each year, a small army of children—nearly a hundred thousand—head north alone, without either parent, from Central America and Mexico into the United States. Some come to work, but most are coming to reunify with a parent, usually a mother.

In Enrique’s Journey, we learn of a boy whose mother left him when he was five to work in the U.S. At first, he was bewildered by her absence, constantly asking for her, begging, “When is she coming for me?” He was devastated without her, and he transitioned from a lonely boy into a troubled teen. He idealized her, convincing himself that if he had his mom, all else that’s wrong in his life would be all right.

After eleven years apart, Enrique eventually set off to find her, to see if she really still loved him. He left with little more than a tiny scrap of paper, with her phone number in North Carolina scrawled on it. He didn’t really know where North Carolina was. But he headed north.

Penniless, he traveled the only way he could through Mexico—clinging for dear life to the tops and sides of freight trains. Thousands of children ride through Mexico to find their mothers this way each year—some of them as young as seven years old. It is an incredible adventure. But it is also a harrowing one, and dangerous beyond belief. Enrique risked his life to try to make it to his mother in North Carolina. Despite the danger, Enrique and children like him come armed with their faith, a resolve not to return to Central America defeated, and a deep desire to be at their mother’s sides.

Most children who embark upon this journey don’t make it through Mexico. Some are killed along the way—torn apart by train wheels. They are hunted down like animals all along the way by bandits, gangsters, and corrupt cops. Enrique and other migrants call Mexico’s southernmost state, Chiapas, La Bestia. “The Beast.”

In southern Mexico, gangsters control the tops of the trains—it is their turf, and there are usually ten or twenty on a train. They carry machetes, knives, wooden bats—even guns—and are, more often than not, hopped up on crack cocaine. A pack of gangsters goes from car to car, and on each car, they surround the migrants aboard. “Your money or your life,” they say. They strip off the migrants’ clothes and steal the few coins the migrants carry. Often, they beat them. Sometimes, they toss someone off the train, feeding the poor soul to the churning

One migrant watches as another leaps from freight car to freight car during a train’s brief stop in Mapastepec.

In this astonishing true story, award-winning journalist Sonia Nazario recounts the unforgettable odyssey of a Honduran boy who braves unimaginable hardship and peril to reach his mother in the United States. Nazario’s expert reporting allows students to encounter each setback alongside Enrique, and the result is as suspenseful and harrowing as it is informative. Enrique’s Journey is a timely account of one anguish family’s experience with an issue of international scope and urgency—illegal immigration—but it is also a timeless, mythic story of a dangerous journey undertaken to make a broken family whole. The newspaper series upon which this book is based won the Pulitzer Prize for feature writing, the George Polk Award for International Reporting, and the Grand Prize of the Robert F. Kennedy Journalism Awards. Includes new epilogue by the author; photos; and maps.

Los Angeles Times photographs by Don Bartletti.
wheels. The migrants call it El Tren de la Muerte. “The
Train of Death.”

One night, Enrique was sitting on top of a tanker car when six men crept up the ladders. They grabbed him and slammed his face down. He was nearly beaten to death, but managed to escape. And this was just the beginning of many challenges he faced in his eight attempts to get through Mexico.

Those who read Enrique’s Journey are stunned by how viciously the boy was preyed upon all along the way. But they are equally moved by how he is visited by so many acts of kindness along the rails.

Chiapas is the heart of darkness. Migrant children emerge from that state robbed and beaten, afraid that anyone who approaches them wants to do them harm. But in south central Mexico, in the state of Veracruz, the people restored Enrique’s faith in humanity. In small towns along the tracks, villagers ran out of their homes with small bundles in their arms.

Sometimes twenty or thirty people would stream out of their houses. They would wave, smile, and shout. Then, they would throw the bundles, filled with food, to the migrants as they rolled by on the freight trains. Bread, or tortillas, or whatever fruit was in season. Bottles of water. If they didn’t have that, they would come out and say a silent prayer along the tracks.

The people who live along the rails are among Mexico’s poorest—they barely have enough to eat. But having themselves seen suffering up close, they give some of what they have to strangers from other countries. They know this is the Christian thing to do. One woman in Veracruz, more than one hundred years old, said that in harder times she had been reduced to eating the bark of a plantain tree. She would force her knotted hands to prepare little bags of beans and tortillas so her seventy-year-old daughter could run to the tracks and give. The old woman said, “If I have one tortilla, I give half away. I know God will bring me more.” Often, migrants who haven’t eaten in days sob when a bundle lands in their arms.

Enrique’s story is ultimately about a desperate longing for something better. About being willing to die to for it. About a level of determination that is inspiring to students—and to all who read his story.

Students in high schools from across the United States have written to me to say that they normally have trouble reading, but that they devoured my book. They have also sent Enrique mountains of letters.

In some of these letters students talk about projects that have started after reading the book. Students at schools where the overwhelming majority are poor and qualify for free lunches have written about their fundraisers to support people who help migrants along the rails in Mexico. Upper classmen at La Jolla Country Day School—a school located in a very high income section of San Diego County—have established a microloan program to help women in Olopa, Guatemala expand their coffee business, create jobs, and help these women become more self-sufficient so they don’t have to leave their kids. The project has just started, and already students have raised $1,800 (you find out more on their website: http://pci.kintera.org/faf/home/). Other students have launched creative activities to help build awareness. At the University of San Diego, college students worked with a local high school to create huge pop-up books with scenes from Enrique’s Journey.

All of these students felt the message of the book was so important that they needed to take action, to share this immigrant story. To share their gratefulness. I am always amazed by what students take away from the book, what they do with it. I hope that you have had—or will have—a similar experience.

**About the Writer**

SONIA NAZARIO, author of Enrique’s Journey, is a projects’ reporter for the Los Angeles Times, has spent more than two decades reporting and writing about social issues, earning her dozens of national awards. The newspaper series upon which this book is based won the Pulitzer Prize for feature writing, the George Polk Award for International Reporting, and the Grand Prize of the Robert F. Kennedy Journalism Awards. For more information, visit www.enriquesjourney.com.
One Language, Many Tales to Tell

HOW I LEARNED ENGLISH
55 Accomplished Latinos Recall Lessons in Language and Life
Edited by Tom Miller

All over the world there are people struggling to master the quirks and challenges of English. In today's America, many millions of them are Latino—and in this eloquent collection, nearly 60 Latino politicians, entertainers, athletes, and authors contribute fascinating, revealing, often touching essays on the very personal process each went through to achieve this common end. Their successes are inspiring. Their pieces, engaging and entertaining all, express the whole range of emotions that learning any new language entails.

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What have your experiences teaching, lecturing, and working with young people taught you?
I have learned that, although I am a good teacher, I am a much better student, and I was blessed to learn valuable lessons from my students on a daily basis. They taught me the importance of teaching to a student—and not to a test.

Writing played a central role in your work with students. What struck you the most while reading their words?
I was humbled by their honesty, their courage, and their ability to allow a piece of paper to bear witness to their lives.

How important do you think expression is for young citizens?
I believe that everyone has a story, and it is important that we encourage all students to tell theirs.

Your work with students also involved role-playing games and other exercises. What was the goal of these activities?
Since kids learn in a myriad of ways and have different learning modalities, my lesson plans had to be creative to reflect that diversity. Whether my students were auditory, visual, or kinesthetic learners, I tried to engage them at their level.

Why do you think these activities should be encouraged and implemented in the classroom?
Since there is no one-size-fits-all strategy that will engage all students, I found it important to diversify all of my lessons.

How do these activities help to prepare students for interactions in their communities outside the classroom, if at all?
I taught my students how to be critical thinkers and problem solvers—intellectual traits they will use to attain success for the rest of their lives.

In general, how do you feel young people handle or will handle the responsibilities of becoming better citizens?
I empowered my students to become socially conscious of the world around them; thus they continually fight for equality for all the world’s citizens.

Do you think they’re up to it?
I believe that all students, when asked to be accountable for their actions and to be socially aware citizens, will become agents for change.

What advice would you give to new teachers?
Since I believe teaching is one of the noblest professions, I would encourage young teachers to follow their calling and bring their passion with them into the classroom!

Now that you have also worked outside of the classroom with young people, what advice do you think this perspective could offer the more experienced and still-teaching educator?
Believe in each and every one of your students and never give up on them!

Where do you see your work taking you in the future?
I believe that education is the greatest equalizer; thus I will continue to fight to equalize the playing field in an educational atmosphere that is not always level!

About the Writer
ERIN GRUWELL, the Freedom Writers, and her nonprofit organization, The Freedom Writers Foundation, have received many awards, including the prestigious Spirit of Anne Frank Award, and have appeared on The Oprah Winfrey Show, Primetime, Good Morning America, and The View, to name a few. Gruwell is also a charismatic motivational speaker who spreads her dynamic message to students, teachers, and business people around the world. She lives in southern California.
For many of my generation, the environmental movement had its beginnings in the summer of 1969, when we saw the first photographs of the earth taken by men standing on the moon. We saw our beautiful home as never before, and the image was galvanizing. Of course, there had been an awareness of the fragility of our planet’s environmental systems before that on the part of a growing body of scientists and writers. Rachel Carson’s landmark book *Silent Spring*, which condemned the harm to the earth caused by the chemical industry, had come out in 1962, and organizations such as the Sierra Club, under the leadership of David Brower, were already assuming the role of environmental activist, filing lawsuits and taking political action. But it was the Apollo mission photographs that really turned the tide, changing the way people thought about our planet in much the same way as the discovery that our world was not flat, or that it was not the center of the universe after all. The following year, in April 1970, we celebrated the first Earth Day, and within just a few more years, nearly all the important environmental legislation and regulatory bodies we have today, such as the Clean Water Act and the Environmental Protection Agency, were in place.

In many ways, we had it easy. At a time when the nation was deeply divided by the war in Vietnam, the environmental movement was a focused way of getting people united and giving them hope. In addition, the problems were relatively simple both to identify and remedy: water polluted by sewage, air fouled by soot and smoke, highways and streets littered with refuse. A great deal has been accomplished since then; yet we are also now beginning to sense that many of these improvements may have been merely cosmetic. The deeper problems, such as global warming and resource depletion, will take much greater effort to remedy, especially now that we’ve become even more dependent upon cheap energy and food. Yet I think the biggest challenge facing young people today is apathy, not just on their own part, but among older generations as well. Perhaps one reason for this is the constant bombardment of negative news by a 24-7 news media. Within this context, world problems—especially environmental ones—can seem insurmountable. Opinions are polarized and facts are distorted by both sides. It seems easier just to change channels or visit another Web site.

But for those who are informed and concerned enough to take action, it is important—and easy—to take the first steps. We all might begin by looking at our own lifestyle. Do you and your students turn off the computer when you are finished with it, or do you let it slide into “hibernation”? Do you recycle? Do you use recycled paper? If you can answer a few simple questions such as these with environmentally friendly responses, then the next step is to “go public.” Many campus and community organizations invite concerned individuals to participate in conservation commissions, watershed associations, or recreation clubs. Other groups promote recycling or transportation alternatives. As René Jules Dubos said in 1980: Think globally and act locally. That’s the way change is brought about. But community involvement takes courage. And more than that, it takes some skills that are not often taught and can be hard to learn. Among them are the skills of communication and negotiation, interpersonal skills which won’t be found on the Internet, but which can be practiced in the classroom or neighborhood.

As is so often the case, even these lessons can be found in nature. Ask young people to think of the “balance of nature” depicted in illustrations of food chains or water cycles. Discuss the notion that if you break this chain with pollution or by taking too much of one part out, nature will go “out of balance,” and all the other parts will suffer the consequences. People’s needs must be balanced, too. We all need safe and plentiful food, for example, but careless agriculture can pollute water. We need energy, but what are the long-term costs? All too often, a discussion of these issues can result in a confrontation and the kind of deepening divide which politicians and the popular media love to exploit.

But differences can be overcome by discovering common problems and interests, and agreeing upon solutions: We may decide that it’s worth it to pay a little more for food that is grown responsibly. A community organization may want to buy a piece of land between a farm and a waterway to absorb stray waste. A local
corporation might start using compact fluorescent light bulbs, which, although expensive to buy, in the long term will save them money and protect the environment. Admittedly, arguing even these simple points can be frustrating. However, there is nothing more thrilling than success when it comes, although it may be a long and rocky road before getting there.

I'd like to offer two bits of advice that might help people of any age get down that road. The first is to think back to the original Greek roots of the word *ecology*. This is a wonderful word, which I prefer to *environmentalism* because it hasn’t become so politicized. (And why? Who on earth could see themselves as opposed to the environment?) Today, *ecology* refers to understanding the complex interrelationships—the balance—between living things and systems. But the word is derived from *oikos*, which meant “house.” To the Greeks, *ecology* just meant good housekeeping, and was very closely related to economics. It should be. They’re really almost the same thing today, too. That planet we saw in the stunning 1969 photographs is our house. We should all start by keeping a clean house, and then we should balance our books and think of other “hidden” costs, such as long-term harm to the planet or society.

The second thing we all need to do is set aside some time to get away from the computer screen, turn off the cell phone, and get outside. Take your students to the wildest place you can find nearby, but also encourage them to go alone. It may only be a park, or even a vacant lot, but once they get there they should just stand still and listen. Encourage them to look up at the sky; to get down on hands and knees and see what is happening down there; to feel the air, to breathe it in and smell it; to study nature and devour every bit of information; but also to leave room for the spiritual messages which abound. One has to be cautious when talking about “spiritual messages” so as not to place religion or mysticism above science. Scientists do speak in these terms, so don’t be scared to do so. The more scientists know, the more questions they have. Life is an incredibly intricate mosaic, and its patterns have an intrinsic beauty which we love because we are a part of it. This is what scientist E. O. Wilson termed “biophilia.”

In the end, the biggest threat to our environment, our “ecology,” is not really pollution or resource depletion. The biggest threats are greed, ignorance, and indifference. One needs to be armed with considerable courage, as well as the facts, to overcome these threats. I hope that these suggestions will help you to initiate change within your local environment—a change which will ultimately impact the global environment, our shared world in which we all live, for the better. And considering that the more we look at life on this planet, the closer to its “spirituality” we become, perhaps that’s where the courage to take action will come from in the end.

About The Writer

NATHANIEL TRIPP’s Vietnam memoir, Father, Soldier, Son, was a New York Times Notable Book of the Year. He has also written children’s books and produced films and television shows about nature and science. Shortly after returning from Vietnam, he produced the first “public service” television advertisements about the environment for the Sierra Club and the National Audubon Society.
Help Shape the Future of the World

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The Everyday Guide to Saving the Planet One Simple Step at a Time
*By Elizabeth Rogers and Thomas M. Kostigen*

“It’s exciting to have a book like this where you can flip through and see what you can do, what you can do instead of what you should have done...”
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Perfect for younger readers. With wit and authority, authors Elizabeth Rogers and Thomas Kostigen provide hundreds of everyday environmental solutions, pinpointing the tiniest adjustments that have the biggest impact on the health of our great green globe. With celebrity contributions from Justin Timberlake, Tiki Barber, Tyra Banks, Owen Wilson, Dale Earnhardt, Jr., Ellen DeGeneres, Will Ferrell, and many others. For more details, visit [http://www.readthegreenbook.com/](http://www.readthegreenbook.com/)


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100 Everyday Ways You Can Contribute to a Healthier Planet
*By Kim McKay and Jenny Bonnin*

Global warming, climate change, toxic waste, and more; it sometimes seems the environmental challenges we face are just too huge for individual actions to matter, but they’re not—and here’s the proof. *True Green* is based on the practical experience of Clean Up the World, a grassroots environmental movement that has inspired more than 40 million volunteers in over 100 countries to take action since 1993.

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By Nathaniel Tripp; Foreword by Howard Dean

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By Colin Tudge
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In a literal sense, humans and rivers are inextricably connected: we carry the same pesticides and heavy metals, antibiotics and estrogen in our bloodstreams. Nathaniel Tripp, currently a member of the Connecticut River Joint Commission, draws on his extensive experience with rivers to outline some of the most disturbing environmental developments of the present age, arguing for a long-term, large-scale and comprehensive approach to environmental planning and globalism. A multi-faceted and compelling call for awareness and activism.
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Try to buy recycled paper and avoid paper that contains chlorine. Post-consumer recycled paper (which is paper that is used and then tossed, as opposed to pre-consumer recycled paper, which is made out of scraps and trimmings) requires 44 percent less energy to produce, reducing greenhouse gas emissions by 37 percent and producing 48 percent less solid waste. If we reduced paper use of all kinds by half, we'd clear space currently occupied by more than one thousand landfills.

A Tip from THE GREEN BOOK

PAPER NAPKINS
Try to use fewer paper napkins. Each American consumes an average of 2,200 two-ply napkins per year, of just over 6 napkins per day. If each person used just 1 fewer napkin per day, it would save about 150 million of them from the trash—enough to provide a napkin to every person who eats a hot dog on July 4.

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A Tip from THE GREEN BOOK
The environment and global warming are on people's minds like never before. Students especially are thinking more and more about the effects of climate change. And they are worried, very worried. In fact, according to a survey by BrainPOP, an education and information provider, school kids worry more about global warming than terrorism, the war in Iraq, or cancer. Yet, many students may not know that they themselves have the power to help fight global warming. It doesn't take much—just a few simple steps that can add up to big change.

In our book, *The Green Book: The Everyday Guide to Saving the Planet, One Simple Step at a Time*, we provide hundreds of easy solutions for students (and teachers) to undertake. Celebrities weigh in too, explaining what they do to be more environmentally friendly.

“There are two activities in my personal life that give me limitless amounts of joy. They are, quite simply, driving my electric car and making a trip to the hazardous waste facility,” says Will Ferrell in *The Green Book*. Sure it’s funny. But his point of being environmentally conscious is dead serious: “It’s funny how these small things, these actions, add up to be big things,” Will says.

For example, one simple solution to global warming is walking. Only 31 percent of school kids who live less than one mile from school walk there. In fact, half of all students go to school by car. If just 6 percent of those students who go by car walked, it would save 1.5 million drop-offs and pickups—and sixty thousand gallons of gasoline—a day.

Another small thing that adds up to a big thing is using both sides of plain paper and recycling it. Paper is the biggest form of waste that comes from schools. Every ton, or 220,000 sheets, of paper that is recycled saves approximately seventeen trees. The average school tosses thirty-eight tons of paper per year, or more than 8 million sheets!

Trees, of course, are important to global warming because trees absorb carbon and produce the oxygen we breathe from it. Too much carbon in the air is a bad thing. Here’s why: One of the main elements that traps more heat within the earth’s atmosphere is carbon—specifically in the form of carbon dioxide. Global warming occurs when the sun’s rays hit the earth and don’t bounce back into space as they are supposed to; those rays get trapped in our atmosphere by things like carbon.

Pop star Justin Timberlake is so concerned about carbon emissions from his tour that he is looking for ways to offset his energy use. “I hadn’t really thought about how much you emit on tour, how much all those trucks emit. In your mind, you simply don’t think about all that pollution. So here I am goin’ on tour, and I’m thinking carbon offsetting is going to make a huge dent in my footprint,” says Justin.

Teachers can do their part, too, to stem energy consumption, and therefore carbon emissions, by recycling. Schools use more than $6 billion annually in energy, with 25 percent, or about $1.5 billion, wasted because of energy inefficiency. This equates to enough money to hire about thirty thousand new middle school teachers. By recycling 90 percent of the waste that would otherwise go to a landfill, a single elementary school could save $6,000 per year in landfill disposal costs.

Recycling also helps save carbon from being released into the atmosphere. Carbon is released as energy is used. Therefore, because it takes less energy to produce new products from recycled materials, less carbon is released into the air. Every 10 aluminum or steel cans recycled saves 4 pounds of carbon, and every 10 glass bottles recycled saves 3 pounds of carbon. But paper recycling can create the biggest savings. Almost half of all
school waste comes from paper: writing paper, drawing paper, copy paper, tests, exams—paper and more paper. A lot of it is recycled, but a lot of it isn’t. More than half of it, in fact, is just thrown out with the garbage.

Keeping classroom temperatures moderate is another way to help conserve energy and emissions. There’s an added benefit too: Temperatures between sixty-nine and seventy-three degrees improve the learning environment. In classrooms kept at controlled temperatures, students have scored higher on tests and exams than they did at much colder or warmer temperatures, according to various research studies. Every degree of temperature saved also means a cost savings per schoolroom of 2 percent on utility bills.

Working together, students and teachers can connect the dots from their school. For instance, they can seek out a food donation program. Even if just every chartered school (there are 3,600 of them) participated in a donation program for an entire school year, the savings could feed one meal to more than two million starving people. This keeps all that food waste out of landfills, which are also major causes of pollution.

The Green Book provides hundreds of other accessible and easy-to-understand choices like these that can lead to a healthier and more environmentally friendly life. At the same time these choices can help stop global warming.

More education and awareness combined with simple shifts in habits may just help take some of the worry out of students’ minds and replace it with positive change they can act upon to make a difference in the world. And you, as teachers, can help to lead this change.

A mind may be a terrible thing to waste, but waste is a terrific thing to mind.

About the Writers
ELIZABETH ROGERS has worked with the National Resources Defense Council and she has created and produced MTV’s eco-friendly show Trippin. She is currently an environmental consultant.

THOMAS M. KOSTIGEN has written about personal, business, and social issues such as global warming and the environment for almost two decades. He currently pens the “Ethics Monitor” column for Dow Jones MarketWatch, and his work regularly appears in publications around the world.

“The Green Book
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With wit and authority, authors Elizabeth Rogers and Thomas Kostigen provide hundreds of everyday environmental solutions, pinpointing the tiniest adjustments that have the biggest impact upon the health of our great green globe. Perfect for younger readers. With celebrity contributions from: Justin Timberlake, Tiki Barber, Tyra Banks, Owen Wilson, Dale Earnhardt, Jr., Ellen DeGeneres, Will Ferrell, and many others. For more details, visit www.readthegreenbook.com/

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by Chad Pregracke and Jeff Barrow

Chad Pregracke was a high school student when he first glimpsed the trash that littered the bottom of the Mississippi, a shocking sight that launched him on a quest to clean up the river. This memoir of his successful grassroots campaign to clean up the rest of America’s rivers is an inspiring affirmation that one person can make a difference.

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Many of the key attributes of citizenship—volunteerism, teamwork, advocacy, and community building—are integral to success in Dungeons & Dragons®. Below, we detail how D&D works to develop these key attributes of citizenship in real life.

WHAT A TYPICAL GAME LOOKS LIKE. A typical D&D game includes four to six players gathered around a table. All but one of them role-play specific characters that they’ve created: Tauroc Wintervein the barbarian, Akamai the wizard, or Vevailus the dwarf, for example. The other player, at the head of the table, is the Dungeon Master—the one who’s responsible for portraying all the antagonists and the minor characters, and who sets up the scenario. In the example above, the Dungeon Master described the situation and played the role of the mayor. Later on in the game, the Dungeon Master will play the role of those goblins that are wrecking the dam. The Dungeon Master also drew the map of the valley, figured out why the goblins are wrecking the dam, and otherwise invented the scenario.

The players tell the Dungeon Master what their characters are doing or attempting to do, such as, “I’m heading up the path,” or, “I buy some rope in town before we leave.” When the outcome of an attempt is uncertain—“I try to climb up the cliff,” or, “I draw my sword and try to scare the goblin”—then some rolling of the dice and a little arithmetic determine whether the character’s attempt succeeds or fails. And those successes and failures lead to more decisions, and so on, until the scenario reaches a climax just like a novel would.

And then it’s on to the next adventure. This week it might be goblins threatening a frontier village. Next week it might be a spy mission into the castle of a ruthless tyrant, and the week after that the characters might be defending a city from a fire-breathing dragon. The Dungeon Master never runs out of new role-playing scenarios to test the players.

VOLUNTEERISM. One of the best citizenship lessons that D&D teaches is the need for competent people to volunteer—to offer their talents for the good of the community. Many a D&D plot hinges on the characters being asked to deal with a crisis, even though it’s not their job and they won’t necessarily get rewarded for doing so. If the players at the table don’t act, there’s no guarantee that anyone else will.

In the medieval-themed world of the D&D game, authority figures such as lords and soldiers are often few and far between. If something needs doing, then it’s up to the
players’ characters to get it done. D&D adventures draw from the same source as countless folktales and works of fantasy literature that involve rescuing innocent hostages, slaying marauding dragons, and otherwise volunteering for difficult, dangerous duty. In a D&D adventure, it’s rarely your job to save the village, rescue the prisoner, or slay the dragon. You volunteer out of a sense of obligation to the community—an exercise in citizenship, in other words.

**TEAMWORK** There’s a fundamental truth at the heart of the D&D game: you can’t play it alone. It takes a team of heroes—some athletic, some smart, some persuasive—to overcome the challenges of an adventure. The players don’t need to be as athletic, smart, or persuasive as the characters they’re role-playing. But they do need to realize what their best attributes are, and they need to rely on the people at the table who have the attributes they lack.

Perhaps D&D’s best teamwork lesson lies in the interaction between the Dungeon Master and the rest of the players. The Dungeon Master is in charge of all the “bad guys” and is the person who’s inventing obstacles that the rest of the players have to deal with. Yet D&D is fundamentally a cooperative game. The Dungeon Master’s job is really to “let the players win . . . but just barely. . . .” More than any other game, D&D teaches players that the adversary (the DM) isn’t really the enemy; the DM is just someone who has a different perspective and a different role within the game. The Dungeon Master functions as the game’s “loyal opposition,” to put it in political terms.

**PUBLIC SPEAKING AND ADVOCACY** In many D&D scenarios, the path to success isn’t always clear. Should the characters rush up to the mountain before the goblins wreck the dam, or should they stock up on provisions first? Can they negotiate with the goblin chieftain, or should they force the goblins away at the point of a sword?

Even introverted players find themselves drawn into debates—and it’s a safe environment to do so, because they’re surrounded by real-life friends, and they have the “cover” of the fictitious characters they’re role-playing. A player who’s nearly silent in real life can, in the guise of the wizard he’s portraying, make a convincing argument that the goblin chieftain should leave the dam alone.

D&D can be a tonic for players reluctant about public speaking because they get lots of practice and an excuse—the notion that it’s not really them doing the speaking—to experiment. Eventually, those introverted players become aware that they’re as capable of voicing and defending an opinion as the next person. It turns out that talking to a goblin chieftain is good practice for speaking at a city council meeting or some other real-life citizenship opportunity.

**COMMUNITY BUILDING** D&D also encourages community-building efforts—again, by using a fictitious community as a stand-in for the communities of the real world. The Dungeon Master can invent crisis after crisis facing that frontier village, and the rest of the players at the table rise to the challenge. Over time, they’ll see that community prosper through the heroes’ efforts. Every time they come back to the frontier, they’ll think, “That town over there? It was just a little village last year, when we had to save it from the goblin tribe.”

One of the driving forces behind the D&D game is its ability to draw forth empathy—and empathy for imaginary characters, no less. Players get drawn into the game and worry about the plight of the villagers. Their brows furrow with consternation as the mayor describes the desperate situation. Later, they all sit up tall in their chairs when the Dungeon Master describes how the mayor throws a parade in their honor. D&D players go on one “help-those-who-need-help” adventure after another. And when your chosen hobby draws forth so much empathy, it’s a short step to that empathy driving real-world actions, too.

**PUTTING D&D TO WORK FOR YOU** Wizards of the Coast, the world’s leading developer and publisher of role-playing games, offers a number of downloadable resources for educators interested in D&D, including:

- How to Host a D&D Adventure
- How D&D Taught Me to Use the Library
- D&D Parents Guide

To add D&D to your curriculum, check out: www.wizards.com/library.
In 1990, several members of the recording industry got together to protest a wave of attacks on their freedom of speech in the form of music censorship. Outraged, they created an organization called “Rock the Vote,” and launched its first high-profile campaign titled, “Censorship is UnAmerican.” While the group was born in protest of music censorship, it quickly grew to represent America’s young voters, particularly those who were being increasingly ignored by the political establishment. Its unique position in pop culture made it a perfect advocacy group for a generation that had for years been overlooked as apathetic and uninformed. Since then, Rock the Vote has grown to be one of the leading organizations for youth empowerment, registering millions of young voters, building awareness for youth issues, standing at the forefront of innovative technologies, and helping youth utilize their political voice.

Today, Rock the Vote stands aside a new generation of voters. Unlike their predecessors, today’s youth (known as the Millennial Generation) find it important to stay abreast of current affairs, are likely to volunteer in their community, and have rejected precedent by reversing a trend of declining voter turnout among their age group. In 2004, the percentage of young people going to the polls increased three times as much as the overall electorate, resulting in the highest turnout of voters aged 18–29 since the twenty-sixth Amendment lowered the voting age to 18 in 1971! We have to give credit where credit is due: educators play a huge role in young people’s lives, especially in their development as active and engaged citizens. It is in the classroom that they learn about their country, their democracy, and the role that they will play in this country’s future.

That’s why we’re asking for your help. In keeping with our mission, we have set a goal of registering two million young voters for the 2008 election cycle. That’s no easy task, and we can’t do it alone. We plan on using social networking sites like Facebook.com and popular web services like Google to do it, but we know that these things simply don’t compare to the influence that a role model or an educator can have on young people. We need your help and your expertise.

Encourage your students to take an interest in the 2008 election. Some of your students might be old enough to vote already: make sure they register (we make is easy: read about our new online voter registration tool on the opposite side of this page. It makes a great addition to any school, class, or personal website or blog)! If they aren’t old enough to vote, there are still plenty of things you can do to make sure that they’re ready and excited to go the polls when they turn 18. We’ve compiled a list of tips, tools, and websites to help you engage your students in the political process. Be creative! A lot of your students are probably on Facebook: ask them to take a look at some of the candidates’ profiles, and friend one. Turn YouTube into a homework assignment: have your students look at some of the clips from the recent CNN/YouTube debates. The internet-intensive nature of the ’08 campaigns is making politics uniquely accessible to this generation of young people. Use it to your advantage!

As educators, you have a tremendous influence on this country’s future. You are teaching the next generation of citizens, and your ability to instill a sense of civic duty in your students can strengthen our democracy and our country as a whole unlike anything else. Empower your students to use their political voice, to make a difference in the world, and to get out there and vote.
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Last Night I Dreamed of Peace
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The first overnight visitor to Henry’s hermitage at Walden Pond was his friend Ellery Channing. Seeing the house for the first time, Ellery said, “Why it’s a wooden inkstand.” By which he meant, of course, that Henry’s house was a writer’s house. Made by and for a writer. Ellery also commented that the house was so small that by standing on a chair you could reach into the attic, and by lowering a broom handle you could touch the bottom of the cellar. Ellery later wrote, “It had no lock to the door, no curtain to the window, and belonged to nature nearly as much as to man.”

In early November, when Ellery came to visit, the leaves had already gone from gold to brown. “I brought you one of your mother’s boiled apple puddings,” Ellery said with a grin, taking a seat outside in the warm rays of the sun.

When Henry spoke, Ellery listened. It was his habit to wait a few moments after Henry had stopped talking, just to make sure he was not about to start up again. This was both polite and practical. Ellery found what Henry had to say worth remembering.

On this particular fall day, Henry pleased Ellery with a homespun little rhyme—

I seek the present time,
No other chime
Life in to-day—
Not to sail another way,—
To Paris or to Rome,
Or farther still from home . . .

“Oh, very, very nice, Henry. But what of the book you’re writing?”

“No other chime”
“See for yourself,” Henry teased, in return. Then he pursed his lips.

“You know why Americans are so fat? They drink too much water.”

It was late at night on the Italian Riviera, and I was eating with two local entrepreneurs, Gianni and Carlo, in the beautiful seaside town of Sestri Levanti. Gianni took up the subject of water after a couple of hours and too much wine. “I went to America last month, everybody is with a bottle of water. And”—he leaned significantly across the table—“everybody is fat.”

This launched an argument that took us through another bottle or two of (non-fattening) wine. You could hardly call it high discourse, and I doubt that Gianni even believed what he said. But he was following the age-old European custom that turns argument into a bonding experience.

If it weren’t for the wine, I would have shrunk in embarrassment. Here in the States, only the rude and the insane disagree in private conversation. But then, our aversion to argument is part of our tradition, right? Not if you go back before the mid-nineteenth century. Europeans who visited the States early in our history commented on how argumentative we were. What happened?

What happened was that we lost the ability to argue.

Excerpted from Thank You For Arguing by Jay Heinrichs Copyright © 2007 by Jay Heinrichs. Excerpted by permission of Three Rivers Press, a division of Random House, Inc. All rights reserved. No part of this excerpt may be reproduced or reprinted without permission in writing from the publisher.
The boy does not understand.

His mother is not talking to him. She will not even look at him. Enrique has no hint of what she is going to do. Lourdes knows. She understands, as only a mother can, the terror she is about to inflict, the ache Enrique will feel, and finally the emptiness.

What will become of him? Already he will not let anyone else feed or bathe him. He loves her deeply, as only a son can. With Lourdes, he is a chatterbox. “Mira, mami. Look, Mom,” he pleads, over and over, pursing his lips. With Lourdes, he is a chatterbox. “Mira, mami. Look, Mom,” he says softly, asking her questions about everything he sees. Without her, he is so shy it is crushing.

Slowly, she walks out onto the porch. Enrique clings to her pant leg. Beside her, he is tiny. Lourdes loves him so much she cannot bring herself to say a word. She cannot carry his picture. It would melt her resolve. She cannot hug him. He is five years old.

They live on the outskirts of Tegucigalpa, in Honduras. She can barely afford food for him and his sister, Belky, who is seven. She’s never been able to buy them a toy or a birthday cake. Lourdes, twenty-four, scrubs other people’s laundry in a muddy river. She goes door to door, selling tortillas, used clothes, and plants.

She fills a wooden box with gum and crackers and cigarettes, and she finds a spot where she can squat on a dusty sidewalk next to the downtown Pizza Hut and sell the items to passersby. The store is Enrique’s playground. They have a bleak future. He and Belky are not likely to finish grade school. Lourdes cannot afford uniforms or pencils. Her husband is gone. A good job is out of the question. Lourdes knows of only one place that offers hope. As a seven-year-old child, delivering tortillas her mother made to wealthy homes, she glimpsed this place on other people’s television screens. The flickering images were a far cry from Lourdes’s childhood home: a two-room shack made of wooden slats, its flimsy tin roof weighted down with rocks, the only bathroom a clump of bushes outside. On television, she saw New York City’s spectacular skyline, Las Vegas’s shimmering lights, Disneyland’s magic castle.

As soon as we left, Martyrs’ Square Mama began craning her neck toward the rearview mirror. Stopping at the next traffic light, she whispered a prayer to herself. A car stopped so close beside us I could have touched the driver’s cheek. Four men dressed in dark safari suits sat looking at us. At first I didn’t recognize them, then I remembered. I remembered so suddenly I felt my heart jump. They were the same Revolutionary Committee men who had come a week before and taken Ustath Rashid.

Mama looked ahead, her back a few centimeters away from the backrest, her fists tight around the steering wheel. She released one hand, brought it to my knee and sternly whispered, “Face forward.”

When the traffic light turned green, the car beside us didn’t move. Everyone knows you mustn’t overtake a Revolutionary Committee car, and if you have to, then you must do it discreetly, without showing any pleasure in it. A few cars, unaware of who was parked beside us, began to sound their horns. Mama drove off slowly, looking more at the rearview mirror than the road ahead. Then she said, “They are following us; don’t look back.” I stared at my bare knees and said the same prayer over and over. I felt the sweat gather between my palms and the wax-paper wrapping of the sesame sticks. It wasn’t until we were almost home that Mama said, “OK, they are gone,” then mumbled to herself, “Nothing better to do than give us an escort, the rotten rats.”

My heart eased and my back grew taller. The prayer left my lips. The innocent, Sheikh Mustafa, the imam of our local mosque, had told me, have no cause to fear; only the guilty live in fear.
The iron wheel began to spin, slowly at first, then faster and faster. The room grew darker.

“

You’re turning off the electricity,” Deeba said, but then she was silent, as she and Zanna looked up and realized that the lamplight shining through the windows from outside was also dimming.

As the light lessened, so did the sound.

Deeba and Zanna stared at each other in wonder.

Zanna spun the handle as if it were oiled. The noise of cars and vans and motorbikes outside grew tinny, like a recording, or as if it came from a television in the next room. The sound of the vehicles faded with the glow of the main road.

Zanna was turning of the traffic. The spigot turned off all the cars, and turned off the lamps.

It was turning off London.

The glow from outside went from the dim of the streetlights, down to darkness, then slowly back up to something luminous but odd. The last of the car engines sound very far away, and then was gone. At last the wheel slowed and stopped.

Deeba stood, frozen, her hands to her mouth, in the strange not-dark. Zanna blinked several times, as if waking. The two looked at each other, and around at the room, all different in the bizarre light, full of impossible shadows.

Quick! Undo it!” Deeba said at last. She grabbed the wheel and tried to turn it backwards. It was wedged stubbornly, as if it hadn’t moved for years. “Help!” she said, and Zanna added her strength to Deeba’s, and with a burst of effort they made the metal move.

But the wheel just spun free. It wasn’t catching on anything. It whirred heavily around, but the light didn’t change, and the noise of traffic didn’t return.

London didn’t come back on.

Do not set foot in my office. That’s Dad’s rule. But the phone’d rung twenty-five times. Normal people give up after ten or eleven, unless it’s a matter of life or death. Don’t they? Dad’s got an answering machine like James Garner’s in The Rockford Files with big reels of tape. But he’s stopped leaving it switched on recently. Thirty rings, the phone got to. Julia couldn’t hear it up in her converted attic ‘cause “Don’t You Want Me?” by Human League was thumping out dead loud. Forty rings, Mum couldn’t hear ‘cause the washing machine was on berserk cycle and she was hoovering the living room. Fifty rings. That’s just not normal. S’pose Dad’d been mangled by a juggernaut on the M5 and the police only had this office number ‘cause all his other I.D.’d got incinerated? We could lose our final chance to see our charred father in the terminal ward.

So I went in, thinking of a bride going into Bluebeard’s chamber after being told not to. (Bluebeard, mind, was waiting for that to happen.) Dad’s office smells of pound notes, papery but metallic too. The blinds were down so it felt like evening, not ten in the morning. There’s a serious clock on the wall, exactly the same make as the serious clocks on the walls at school. There’s a photo of Dad shaking hands with Craig Salt when Dad got regional sales director for Greenland. (Greenland the supermarket chain, not Greenland the country.) Dad’s IBM computer sits on the steel desk. Thousands of pounds, IBMs cost. The office phone’s red like a nuclear hotline and it’s got buttons you push, not the dial you get on normal phones. So anyway, I took a deep breath, picked up the receiver, and said our number. I can say that without stammering, at least. Usually.

But the person on the other end didn’t answer. “Hello?” I said. “Hello?”
Because Pop Eye was the only white for miles around, little kids stared at him until their ice blocks melted over their black hands. Older kids sucked in their breath and knocked on his door to ask to do their “school project” on him. When the door opened some just froze and stared. I knew an older girl who was invited in; not everyone was. She said there were books everywhere. She asked him to talk about his life. She sat in a chair next to a glass of water he had poured for her, pencil in hand, notebook open. He said: “My dear, there has been a great deal of it. I expect more of the same.” She wrote this down. She showed her teacher, who praised her initiative. She even brought it over to our house to show me and my mum, which is how I know about it.

It wasn’t just for the fact he was the last white man that made Pop Eye what he was to us—a source of mystery mainly, but also confirmation of something else we held to be true.

We had grown up believing white to be the color of all the important things, like ice cream, aspirin, ribbon, the moon, the stars. White stars and a full moon were more important when my grandfather grew up than they are now that we have generators.

When our ancestors saw the first white they thought they were looking at ghosts or maybe some people who had just fallen into bad luck.

20 May 1968
We say farewell to our patients today. They have recovered enough to return to their combat units. Instead of being joyful and happy, we are all sad, both physicians and patients. After over a month at the clinic, they have become like friends and family. It’s wrenching to see them leave. . . .

31 May 1968
Today we had a major base evacuation to evade the enemy’s mopping-up sweeps operation. The whole clinic was moved, an infinitely exhausting undertaking. It’s heart-wrenching to see the wounded patients with beads of sweat running on their pale faces, struggling to walk step by step across narrow passes and up steep slopes. If someday we find ourselves living in the fragrant flowers of socialism, we should remember this scene forever, remember the sacrifice of the people who shed blood for the common cause. . . .

4 June 1968
. . . Rain falls without respite. Rain deepens my sadness, its chill making me yearn for the warmth of a family reunion. If only I had wings to fly back to our beautiful house on Lo Duc Street, to eat with Dad, Mom, and my siblings, one simple meal with watercress and a full moon were more important when my grandfather grew up than they are now that we have generators.

20 July 1968
The days are hectic with so much work piling up, critical injuries, lack of staff personnel; everybody in the clinic works very hard. My responsibilities are heavier than ever; each day I work from dawn till late at night. The volume of work is huge, but there are not enough people. I alone am responsible for managing the clinic, treating the injured, teaching the class. More than ever, I feel I am giving all my strength and skills to the revolution. The wounded soldier whose eyes I thought could not be saved is now recovering. The soldier whose arm was severely inflamed has healed. Many broken arms have also healed. . . .
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