

TEXAS VOICES

A NEWSLETTER OF THE TEXAS COUNCIL OF TEACHERS OF ENGLISH LANGUAGE ARTS

President's corner

By Diane M. Miller, Ph.D., TCTELA President

In the last issue, I wrote about how my service as a board member is a specific tribute to all that TCTELA membership has given me the past two decades. Learning best practices with other teachers? Yes. Absorbing wisdom from nationally known experts? Yes. Celebrating literacy triumphs with autograph-worthy authors? Yes. Camaraderie in the face of the myriad legislative, logistical, and financial challenges facing public education? YES. Y'all are my professional family, and just like my personal family, you push and critique and encourage me in our common pursuits. (Is it okay to use "y'all" in a published piece? I think so, especially one titled *Texas Voices!*) Thank you for continuing to contribute **your** voice to the TCTELA family!

As a family, we are no different than other family units. We get tired...testing season. We wonder if our opinions matter... standardized curriculum. We allow people to get on our last nerves...springtime classroom management. We worry about finances...budget cuts. But amidst all the negatives, Texas ELAR teachers continue to go beyond the limitations and accomplish amazing things with our students. We refuel...student growth. We speak out...re-envisioned standards. We take deep breaths... summer is just around the corner. We analyze and revise approaches...creative solutions.

Why do we continue to do all of this? I think part of the answer resides in the 2019 TCTELA state conference theme. Our vision for ELAR education in our state goes "Beyond Boots, Borders, and Books," and we are committed to serving "The Many Faces of Literacy in Texas."

Membership in TCTELA means that you are not doing this difficult work alone. Surrounding yourself with the voices of others who are also going "beyond" the ease of mediocrity means that mediocre is never the norm. In a book published during my first year of teaching, Randy Bomer (1995, p. 224) argues that teachers should build their own integrity within a "stable membership in some communities' conversations." He continues, "We each know who we are because of the depth and tenure of our dialogue with those who are most important to us. Our learning communities center us in times when we would otherwise lose ourselves" (p. 224).

This summer, consider how you might deepen and extend your participation in the TCTELA learning community. As you engage in professional development and summer school and planning meetings over the next few months, remember the opportunities of professional growth and challenging leadership that exist for you within your TCTELA family, and think about how you would like to contribute to our exciting, ever-important, statewide conversation. Submit a *proposal*, nominate yourself or a colleague for one of the *awards* or for an *office* on our board, join one of our newly restructured *sections*, or share a *teaching idea* or *reflection* in the upcoming issue of *English in Texas*. Above all, begin planning now to join us on the San

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Antonio Riverwalk, January 25-27, 2019. My email address is at the close of this article. Contact me if you have any questions or ideas about ways you can increase your level of involvement with TCTELA.

I would like to close by borrowing a few more words from Bomer's book, *Time for Meaning*. Happy summer, happy learning, happy reflection, TCTELA family!

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We know who we are. We know who we have been. We know who we want to become. Our present moments are precious but unintimidating because we can connect them with many moments from our past and imagine how they will lead to other moments in the future. We have to give generously our concentration to this continuum of ourselves through time, for that's what makes our lives meaningful. We've spent enough time with a diminished sense of our work, funneling unimportant trivia into disinterested ears. Now it's time for authenticity, time for memory, time for craft, time for democracy, time for meaning. (Bomer, 1995, p. 224)

Reference:

Bomer, R. (1995). *Time for meaning*. Portsmouth, NH: Heinemann.



Executive secretary report: A walk down Diagon Alley

By Kim Pinkerton, Executive Secretary

I hope that you enjoyed your tour of the TCTELA vault at Gringotts in our last issue of *Texas Voices*. Shall we continue into that magical world?

It's a great day to be a TCTELA member, and as you step out of Gringotts onto the brick streets of Diagon Alley, take the copy of *The Daily Prophet* that you see at the newsstand because, in it, you will find that TCTELA has some exciting plans that will require us to use some of that magical gold that resides in our vault.

As you open up the tattered pages of the newspaper, you find a beautiful moving image of TCTELA President Diane Miller with an article about PD2Teach, the next big TCTELA venture. "PD2Teach is a project from TCTELA that will support teachers in the implementation of the new ELAR/SLAR TEKS for K-8 beginning in 2019-2020 and continuing with high school TEKS in 2020-2021. PD2Teach is available directly to teachers through an online video platform that will have an accompanying downloadable guide outlining the resources and texts used to forge this exciting path toward the new standards" (*The Daily Prophet*, 2018, p. 1; a.k.a. <http://www.tctela.org/about-community>).

You read on to find out that TCTELA is building PD2Teach from the ground up, and while they have some interested sponsors, it is the membership who will support the project the greatest. As you close the paper and place it on a table at The Leaky Cauldron, you sit down to your Butterbeer to ponder how you can support TCTELA in its efforts to provide Texas literacy teachers with the best resources for teaching with the new standards.

TCTELA members certainly do buy a lot of books, so an easy way to support TCTELA is by using AmazonSmile (smile.amazon.com) for some of your purchases. TCTELA receives a portion of the proceeds from Amazon purchases. As of February 2018, Amazon has given over \$80,000,000 to charities. TCTELA can be one of those with your support.

What about the gift of membership? TCTELA members can purchase memberships for friends and colleagues at <http://www.tctela.org/join-tctela>. What better way to honor teachers on your campus than to bring them into the best literacy organization in Texas? A membership makes the perfect birthday or appreciation gift.

Finally, encourage the whole literacy team at your school to attend the 2019 TCTELA Conference. The conference will be held in San Antonio on the beautiful River Walk (<http://www.tctela.org/2019-conference/>). It is the perfect location for reflection about literacy teaching and learning in our diverse and complex state, the perfect location to go "Beyond Boots, Borders, and Books."

As you put down your mug and swipe the remnants of the sweet liquid treat from your lips, you realize that it's not hard to support the important work of PD2Teach. Because The Leaky Cauldron has great cell phone reception, you whip out your phone and buy books, TCTELA memberships, and registrations for the best conference ever. It was that easy.

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AmazonSmile. (n.d.). Supporting Texas Council of Teachers of English Language Arts, Your AmazonSmile impact. Retrieved from smile.amazon.com

Rowling, J.K. (1997). *Harry Potter and the sorcerer's stone*. New York: Scholastic Press.

Texas Council of English Language Arts. (n.d.). About-community: PD2Teach. Retrieved from <http://www.tctela.org/about-community>



Illustration by Jim Kay

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NCTE Annual Convention comes to Houston in 2018

By Tracy Kriese, NCTE Affiliate Liaison

The 2018 National Council of Teachers of English Annual Convention will be held November 15-18 in our very own Houston, Texas, at the George R. Brown Convention Center. This year's convention theme is *Raising Student Voice*.

"It is my hope that we will focus on the ways literacy creates change and the ways in which our students can raise their voices to impact their communities," says 2018 NCTE Annual Convention Program Chair Franki Sibberson. "NCTE members create spaces for students to sound their voices. In 2018, we'll come together in Houston to celebrate our students' voices and the impact they make in the world."

In fact, Friday's general session will feature five students who are raising their voices for causes they believe in: Marley Dias, Sarah Abou Rashed, Zephyr Todd, Olivia Van Ledjte, and Jordan Zimmerman. Convention keynote speakers will

include Chimamanda Ngozi Adichie, author of *Purple Hibiscus*, *Americanah* and the TED Talk "The Danger of a Single Story"; Christopher Emdin, author and creator of the #HipHopEd social media movement; Paul Reynolds, CEO and co-founder of Fablevision; and Peter H. Reynolds, author of *The Dot*, *Ish*, and *Happy Dreamer*. For a complete list of convention speakers and other convention details, see <http://convention.ncte.org/>.

As this academic year comes to a close and budgets are being set for the next one, make plans now to attend #NCTE18. Let administrators know about this wonderful opportunity Texas ELAR educators have to attend a national convention so close to home!

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Photo of the George R. Brown Convention from Wikimedia Commons

Experience NCTE 2018!

by Diane M. Miller, Ph.D., President

Sometimes, those once-in-a-lifetime, mountaintop experiences happen right in your own backyard! In November 2018, Houston-area English language arts and reading teachers will have the opportunity to attend the National Council of Teachers of English Annual Convention without having to book an airline ticket.

That's right. NCTE 2018 will be held at the George R. Brown Convention Center from November 15-18, 2018. Even though we'll be saving on travel expenses, attending a national conference can still be pricey, ranging from the early-bird member price of \$260 to the full non-member price of \$370. Fortunately, I have a money-saving option for you. Kelly Tummy of the Harris County Department of Education and I are co-chairing the Local Arrangements Committee, and we need about 200 local volunteers. If you volunteer for a day (~8 hours), then you will receive a refund of your registration costs.

Attending an NCTE conference just became a lot more plausible, right? Transportation: \$0. Lodging: \$0. Registration: \$0. If you volunteer for a day, the only cost will be that of your substitute teacher in your absence. Interested? Please send an email to me at petersond@uhd.edu before July 31, 2018. By the end of the summer, we'll begin assigning volunteers to specific sub-committees.

The only remaining challenge (besides investing in some

super-comfortable, volunteer-ready shoes) is to convince your principal to get on board and support your attendance. NCTE provides valuable resources for building your case to attend this mountaintop professional development opportunity. Visit <http://convention.ncte.org/2017-convention/whyattend/> for the following items:

- Details about earning participation, professional development, and graduate credits
- A list of benefits for yourself, your team, your students, and your school
- A sample letter template to help you begin this conversation
- Testimonials from teachers who have experienced the value of attending NCTE

Join us in downtown Houston this November! This is a once-in-a-lifetime opportunity to show ~7,000 ELAR teachers that we are #hoUStonstrong and meet your favorite authors in the process.

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Proclamation 2019 update

By Tracy Kriese, NCTE Affiliate Liaison

A list of publishers submitting ELAR instructional materials in response to Proclamation 2019 is now available on the TEA website at www.tea.texas.gov. Hover over the tab labeled Academics, then navigate to Instructional Materials. Click on Proclamations and navigate to Proclamation 2019.

Sample materials from those publishers will be uploaded to the TEA website sometime in May. Review panels will meet this summer to evaluate the materials, and publishers' official bids will be submitted by the end of September. The State Board of Education will take action on those submissions at its November 2018 meeting, and the resulting List of Instructional Materials Adopted Under Proclamation 2019 will be posted on November 30.

The revised ELAR TEKS will be implemented in school year 2019-2020 for grades K-8 and in school year 2020-2021 for English I-IV. TCTELA has made copies of the new TEKS available at <https://www.bulbapp.com/PD2Teach>. Visit that site for easy access to the new standards, and return often for the wealth

of professional development resources being created for TCTELA members through the PD2Teach initiative.

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Bulb, PD2Teach, and the new TEKS

by Shona Rose, Vice President of Membership and Affiliates

The final video for the introduction has been added to our PD2Teach site. Only TCTELA members can see the tile that houses this video. Please see this [YouTube](#) video to show folks how to sign in and navigate the site. It explains the difference between the free individual bulb account that you received at the conference and the login you need to provide to see the membership benefits of PD2Teach with your TCTELA membership.

Should you have questions about your bulb account, please contact bria@bulbapp.com. Should you need help with PD2Teach, please contact shonarose67@gmail.com.

And *don't forget the PD2Teach Challenge!* We want to hear from you!

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from the blogosphere...

Fill your tank with loads of instructional ideas at:

<http://twowritingteachers.org>

<https://www.weareteachers.com>

<https://pernillesripp.com>

<https://www.cultofpedagogy.com>

<https://blog.heinemann.com>

<https://readingbyexample.com>

...to the website

Visit us online at: <http://www.tctela.org>

Section spotlight—Early childhood/elementary: Avoiding the summer slump

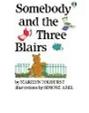
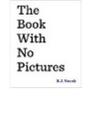
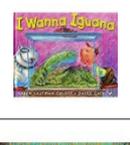
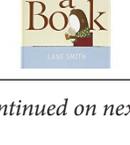
By Amelia Hewitt, Ed.D., Elementary Section Chair



The Early Childhood/Elementary Section members have completed our mission statement.

The mission of the Elementary Section (PK–5) is to promote cross-curricular literacy that encompasses a balanced literacy approach where all contents are integrated. We promote equity for all learners through developmentally appropriate practices that address socio-cultural realities faced by 21st century children. Utilizing the arts as a bridge to literacy for **ALL** learners, experiences should focus on authentic activities that emphasize language arts in a way that promote natural curiosity and creativity.

Looking ahead to summer and avoiding the summer reading slump, consider these are funny stories that motivate your children to want to read. We highly recommend these titles for teachers to add to their libraries and parents to use as read-alouds over the summer. ENJOY!

Independent or Read-Aloud			
	<i>A Big Surprise for a Little Card</i> Charise Mericle Harper & Ann Raff		<i>My Little Sister Ate One Hare</i> Bill Grossman
	<i>Beatrice Doesn't Want To</i> Laura Numeroff		<i>Somebody and the Three Blairs</i> Marilyn Tolhurst
	<i>Dragons Love Tacos</i> Adam Rubin		<i>That is Not a Good Idea</i> Mo Willems
	<i>Earthlets as Explained by Professor Xargle</i> Jeanne Willis		<i>The Book with No Pictures</i> B.J. Novak
	<i>How to Get a Girlfriend</i> Croatia Senior Kindergarten Students of the American International School in Zagreb		<i>Things that are Most in the World</i> Judy Barrett
	<i>I Wanna Iguana</i> Karen Kaufman Orloff		<i>Piggy Pie</i> Margie Palatini
	<i>Interrupting Chicken</i> David Ezra Stein		<i>17 Things I'm Not Allowed to Do Anymore</i> Jenny Offill
	<i>It's a Book</i> Lane Smith		

Continued on next page.

Section spotlight—Early childhood/elementary: Avoiding the summer slump (continued)

Chapter Books			
	<i>Sideways Story from Wayside School</i> Louis Sachar		<i>The Adventures of Nanny Piggins</i> R.A. Spratt
Poetry			
	<i>I'm Just No Good At Rhyming</i> Chris Harris		<i>Shout! Little Poems That Roar</i> Brad Bagert
Further Suggestions			
www.goodreads.com www.mrschureads.com www.readbrightly.com			

Section spotlight—Middle level: Best of picture books for middle level readers

by Donna Brown, Section Chair, TCTELA Middle Level

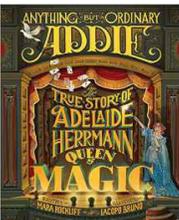
She stood up and spoke about the passion of her middle level readers at the conference in January. She read me *Love* by Matt de la Peña and rekindled the love of reading aloud to students. Pernille Ripp, speaker and author of *Passionate Readers*, caused me to become a seeker of picture books. The next week, I took a trip to my local library and found these two books. These brand new books will fit well into any classroom to inspire fun in reading. Enjoy!



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References:

de la Pena, Matt. (2018). *Love*. New York: G. P. Putnam’s Sons.
Ripp, Pernille. (2018). *Passionate Readers*. New York: Routledge.

Independent or Read-Aloud		
<i>The Marvelous Thing That Came from a Spring: The Accidental Invention of the Toy That Swept the Nation</i>	Written by Gilbert Ford Photography by Greg Endries	
Remember that fun toy—the Slinky? Ever wonder who invented it and how it got so popular? In this literary non-fiction book, middle school readers will love the story of how the slinky came to be. Readers will also love discovering layers of understanding and meaning in the photographed illustrations.		
<i>Anything But Ordinary Addie: The True Story of Adelaide Herrmann Queen of Magic</i>	Written by Mara Rockliff Illustrated by Iacopo Bruno	
Another great literary non-fiction book that challenges thinking and a spirit of invention. Adolescent readers will love the thrill and adventures of Adelaide and learn how she was determined to not be ordinary. Readers can also find links to how she did her most famous magic trick.		

Section spotlight: High school

By Josh Cooper, High School Section Chair

The High School Section has been working hard on a few different projects over the past semester. One of our first tasks was to write a position statement. After a few rounds of revision and feedback from section members our new position statement is:

The High School Section of TCTELA is committed to help teachers grow as educators and adapt to changes in our field. By establishing a forum for dialogue, we will stay attuned to teachers' needs, provide knowledge on best practices—like the workshop approach to reading and writing—and be a resource that provides ideas for implementing these strategies. Ultimately, we will empower teachers as we strive to nurture and encourage authentic readers and writers in the Language Arts classroom.

We have also been hard at work to create reading lists for teacher use in their classrooms. Whether you are looking to connect students to books for independent choice reading, or just looking for some books to recommend to students who love to read, we are trying to provide a list of titles that students will

enjoy and find beneficial to their reading development. We have organized our list into several different categories and several section members have taken on the task of curating these lists.

In the future, look for lists that focus on teacher professional development, relaxing teacher reads, and grade level, AP, and Pre-AP suggestions.

We would also like to take a moment and highlight the work of Karen Otto. As the Department Chair of Carroll High School in Southlake, she works hard to educate her students and support her team of teachers. She also has an article titled “They Can Take It With Them: Fueling Our Fires to Teach for Writing Transfer” being published in the next issue of *English in Texas*.

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Remembering what's important

by Margaret Hale, Past President, Editor, *English in Texas*

Last week someone at work asked me to speak to a reporter from the Houston Chronicle about my thoughts regarding the latest results in reading at grades 4 and 8 on the National Assessment of Educational Progress ([NAEP](#)). It came as no surprise to me that scores are down in Texas. I say this not because I don't think teachers are working hard, but because I think in many cases, teachers are not given the autonomy to teach using best practices for reading instruction.

Many times, my pre-service teachers at the University of Houston who are student teaching report to me that they can't

teach particular lessons they have developed in their cooperating teacher's classroom because they are focusing on test preparation. When I ask them to explain what they mean by test prep, they typically tell me that students are reading passages and answering questions. They know that this practice does not match what I teach them in their methods courses. But I don't believe the fault lies with their cooperating teachers.

Rather, this high-stakes environment in which schools currently live puts pressure on those at the very top, and that pressure consistently trickles down to the classroom teachers. Classroom teachers are pushed to constantly assess their students using a variety of classroom-based assessments (CBAs) and benchmark exams. These exams are designed to see if students are ready for THE TEST. However, if we are continuously testing students, where does the time for teaching go?

This was my point with the reporter from the Houston Chronicle. As ELAR professionals, we know that in order for our students to become better readers, they need to read. Yet time after time, that time for reading and for discussing what we read gets taken away for more testing.

My hope is that more teachers will stand up to the pressure and share with their colleagues, the parents of their students, and their administrators the importance of using best practices in literacy instruction, which include time for reading. If you're interested in reading the article from the Houston Chronicle, you can click [here](#).

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Making the most of it

By Glen Russell, Editor, *English in Texas*

It's that time of year again. Gone is the excitement of the beginning of the year. The well of patience and grace for student shenanigans has mostly dried up. Batteries are on empty for teachers and kids, and it is all too common to let short fuses impact responses. In short, the end of the school year is nigh.

The dregs of the school year can be a tough time. With state testing season, many classrooms find themselves in one of two unenviable spots. Teachers and kids are stressed out as they feel the pressure of the test creeping down on them. Or if testing is complete, they may have mentally checked out, and a productive day of learning feels light years away.

Not every classroom is in this place of struggle, but it isn't rare to find the end of the year to be a challenge. All is not lost. We have hope! With a little bit of intentionality, there are some practical ways to make the most of your final weeks of school. Keep yourself sane with a few simple recommendations.

Read a Book – Part of the stress of this time of year can be the lack of “me time.” With so much going on, the first place that many teachers sacrifice are the things that can feel self-serving or off-task. But self-care is essential to teachers being able to serve their students with clear heads and gentle spirits. Our kids need our grace and kindness at the end of the year as much as ever, so that means we need to take care of our own emotional and mental well-being. And as every English teacher worth their salt knows, there are few better ways to relax than curled up with a new book. Take care of yourself. Read a book. It's for the kids.

Celebrate Each Tiny Victory – It can be easy to be overwhelmed by the frustrations and tiny failures that can mount. A lesson doesn't go right, or a student loses their cool, and next thing you know, the day is derailed. At the end of the school year when stress is high and energy is low, it is all too easy to dwell on the tiny failures. But turning our focus away from the things that don't work to those that do can have just as big an effect on our psyche. Each time that a student's eyes light up during a lesson, a student produces a great sentence in their writing, or a colleague thanks us for the great idea that they successfully tried out in their class, we have a tiny victory to

hold on to. Pat yourself on the back, pour yourself a celebratory beverage at home that night, and be thankful that we work in a field that means so much to so many.

Be in the Moment – Some kid that you have in your class right now is going to one day tell their kids that you were their favorite teacher. Another student is going to go into college and decide they want to teach in large part to your influence. You are going to look back at this class of kids, and you are going to



reminisce on some of the relationships you built, the connections you discovered, and the stories you shared. Enjoy your time with the students you have while you still have them. The privilege to teach children is a great gift, so enjoy the final moments you have with this group. Teaching is never all roses, but you will miss this time when it is gone.

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STEM? STEAM? How about integration for all?

By Kelly E. Tummy, President-elect

It seems STEM and STEAM are all the rage these days, along with other acronyms in education like PBL and CBL. To paraphrase the Bard, what's in a name, really? What if all teachers look more to integration across all contents instead of targeting science and math and technology? Teachers should take every opportunity to work with other content teachers to help students make connections among classes. Think about secondary students who change classes a minimum of six times a day on most campuses. Instead of silos, let's try at every juncture, every poem, every speech to create a stronger community of learners. And what if we used ART as a unifying factor to help students use their whole brain all day long?

Art and English language arts use two different sides of the brain. ELA is the more logical left side of the brain, and art appeals to the right side of the brain. Language arts classes, however, can be steeped in right-brain activities to a fault. It's time to develop the whole brain.



Both the Dallas Museum of Art and the Museum of Fine Arts Houston have teacher sites that walk teachers through the integration of the arts in all disciplines. There are also other museums like the Kimbell Art Museum in Ft. Worth and the three presidential libraries in Texas that offer a wealth of resources for teachers. Think! If a high school or middle school class were studying the persuasive language of the “1000 Points of Light” speech made by George H.W. Bush at the 1988 Republican National Convention, teachers could pair this with the plays of light in Rembrandt's works and pull in terms like *chiaroscuro* and *balance*. Words that help left-brained students make more between the two disciplines and see the reading passage differently—with the other side of their brain. Think about studying Goya's prints at the Kimbell in Ft. Worth while examining the word-play of Edgar Allan Poe in almost anything he wrote.

One of the most engaging activities I did with students was when we were examining Steinbeck's *The Pearl*. There was little



engagement in class, and I could tell they were losing interest. I had a field trip scheduled to the Museum of Fine Arts Houston the next week, and as luck would have it, there was a Matisse exhibit of his paper cut-outs. I used this opportunity to connect the cut-outs to what Steinbeck did with the repetition of songs throughout the novelette: the song of the pearl, the song of the family, the song of evil, the song of the undersea, to name a few. Matisse moved to cut-outs in the 1940s; Steinbeck wrote *The Pearl* in 1947—it was a fun way for students not only to make connections but to express themselves in a different way in language arts class. Students created their own paper cut-out of one of the chosen songs, had a repeating motif as a class, and ended up story mapping the plot in a series of artwork.

Find opportunities to let students create in language arts class. Don't worry about PBL or STEM or even STEAM. Make your classroom a place that stimulates both sides of the brain and creates a more rounded, literate, and engaged student.

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References:

Steinbeck, John. (1947). *The pearl*. New York: Viking Press.

Links to Teacher Resources:

[Dallas Museum of Art](#)
[Museum of Fine Arts Houston](#)
[Kimbell Art Museum, Fort Worth](#)
[George W. Bush Presidential Library](#)
[George H.W. Bush Presidential Library](#)
[Lyndon B. Johnson Presidential Library](#)

Notes to a new teacher: Give clarity

By Shona Rose, Vice President of Membership and Affiliates, TCTELA

My Dear,

They are looking to you for approval. I see their eyes and their body language reflect insecurity and desire to please you. You have established yourself as someone important enough to value. This is quite the accomplishment, as most students this age value the opinions of their peers more than adults.

The kids want to know if they are right or wrong. I can see them looking to you for facial or verbal cues to evaluate their performance. When you say, "Good job," keep talking and explain WHY and WHAT part of their ideas are sound or need revision. Here are two examples from class:

For a correct answer: "Freddie, when you connect the terms 'props' and 'theme' with the examples from Indiana Jones and Hook, you give a concrete example that helps demonstrate your understanding of how a playwright applies these terms when he is writing. The example shows your understanding on how the use of props then impacts the audience's understanding of the theme."

For refining an answer that's just not there yet, state why you are sharing the feedback: "I'm sharing the conversation between Jackie and me because it shows my expectations for your answers. I'm looking for depth of thought as opposed to surface observations." Then explain the interaction and the refinement the student made in his thinking. "Jackie and I had a good conversation about how to go deeper. She noticed that dialogue happens on a set, but that's not enough. Why does it matter that dialogue happens on a set in a drama? When I pushed the thinking, Jackie talked about how the set places characters at different heights and varies the distance between the character and the audience. She realized that this placement is purposeful in helping the audience understand

which character or message is important. *That's* the depth of response I'm looking for."

When you leave a group during your monitoring sweeps, share an idea about their progress with that group. Or bring the whole class together if it is something the whole class could benefit from. Share an insight or refinement about their stage in the learning process. (Note: You don't do both each time. These are just options.)

To the group: "Your best idea so far..." To the whole class: "Listen to this group's idea. It's the best one I've heard so far. How can you use it to develop your ideas and extend your conversations?"

To the group: "I'm looking forward to how you will solve..." To the whole class: "I have heard three groups with a common dilemma. /Share the dilemma./ Do any groups have an idea that would help correct this struggle?"

To the group: "When you said _____, that was insightful/just what I was looking for because..." To the whole class: "Class, listen to what this group just said. I want you to explain how their idea is insightful or spot on for my expectations."

To the group or individual: "That might be an idea you want to bring forward to the whole class when we debrief." Or "Would you mind sharing this idea with the whole class?"

To the group: "I like what you are doing here (asking questions, returning to the text, etc.) to clarify your

confusion about _____." To the whole class: "This group has found an effective strategy to clarify confusion. Please listen to their thinking process."



With Love,
Your TCTELA Advocate
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Meditations on teacher self-care

By Stephen Winton, Recording Secretary

Since I found Marcus Aurelius's *Meditations*, I've kept a copy handy every day of my teaching life. Marcus's stoic philosophy has comforted me on more than one day when things fell apart.

A bit of background: Marcus Aurelius, Roman Emperor from 161-180 CE, wrote notes to himself during his military campaigns, reflecting on how to deal with the stress of the world (McLynn, 2009, p. xi). Though composed as a private journal, a millennia and a half later his *Meditations* were first published, providing comfort and counsel to generations of readers.



Here are a couple of quotes and thoughts on applications to education:

“Begin each day by telling yourself: Today I shall be meeting with interference, ingratitude, disloyalty, ill-will, and selfishness—all of them due to the offenders’ ignorance of good or evil” (2005, p.11).

Today, educators who follow best-practice instruction sometimes meet resistance from those pushing a program, workbook, or test-prep packet. Few interactions frustrate like being told to do something counter to one’s professional expertise about how students best learn. In applying Marcus’s advice, we might take a deep breath and remember the humanity of those who come from a different place on instructional beliefs.

“If you are distressed by anything external, the pain is not due to the thing itself but your own estimate of it; and this you have the power to revoke at any moment” (p. 102).

As educators, obstacles outside our control often seem insurmountable. Our students face poverty. Our government issues testing mandates. Our schools are underfunded. Our lives outside of education offer challenges that sap our energy. Marcus argues our greatest ally against external threats is mindfulness,

focusing our thinking on the good we do today matters.

This is not just wishful thinking; research backs up the power of positive presuppositions. John Hattie in *Visible Learning: A Synthesis of over 800 Meta-Analyses Relating to Achievement* (2009) tracks the effect sizes of various factors on student achievement;

a .4 effect size represents a year’s worth of growth (p. 16). The most influential factor from the 2017 updated list, with an effect size of 1.62, is teacher estimates of student achievement, or simply, what teachers believe students can accomplish in their classrooms (Killian). A confirmation of Marcus’s theory of mindfulness 1800 years later, Hattie’s research shows that if we change the way we think, we change the reality of teaching and learning.

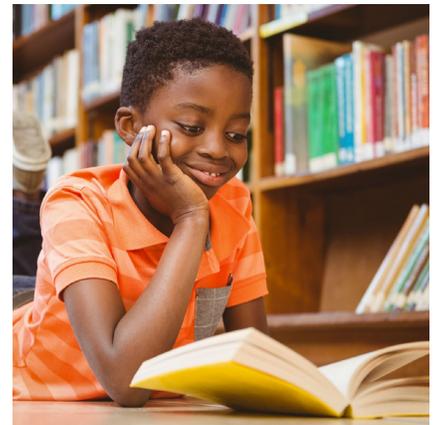
Since Marcus wrote *Meditations* as daily reflections, one can open the book to a random page and find kernels of wisdom. The book is available online (<http://classics.mit.edu/Antoninus/meditations.html>). Type Marcus Aurelius into BrainyQuote or Goodreads and you will get the highlights. Like many ELA folks, I prefer a copy I can hold in my hands, my favorite being the Maxwell Staniforth translation.

Marcus Aurelius argues that by accepting what the universe brings and trying to do the good we can today, we find peace. I have come to accept that the shadow of *No Child Left Behind* may not be lifted by the end of my career. I accept that those who believe joyful and meaningful reading and writing best lead to student achievement may long fight an uphill battle. Yet the good we do today matters...to the children whose faces light up reading a book, to like-minded colleagues with whom we reflect and learn. So when life seems dark, consider finding solace in Marcus’s words of wisdom which resonate through the centuries.

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Summer reading

By Eve Zehavi, Co-editor, *English in Texas*

As the end of the school year approaches, we are faced with the perennial decision regarding summer reading. There are differing thoughts on the practice. Some believe it is good to allow students to struggle on their own with a difficult literary text without the expectations and pressures of the classroom. Others advocate for nonfiction reads that not only develop vocabulary, but expand a student's knowledge of the world. Then there are those of the mind that *any* reading is good reading. In the end, wherever you fall on the summer reading spectrum, ultimately we assign reading over the summer because we know empirically and anecdotally that students experience reading loss over the summer.

So I am wondering...Do we as educators experience this phenomenon? I know I look forward to the summer months in part because I'm excited by the prospect of having time for leisure reading. I could say that time away from work related reading is rejuvenating, but as I think back on the year with TCTELA, it was when I was learning from and with my peers, that I felt energized and excited about teaching. So, this summer I am going to try my own summer reading program. While you probably



won't find me curled up with the latest research-based tome on best practices in language arts, I have decided to find an engaging way to stay connected. Rather than choosing one fiction, one non-fiction, and one required text (a common theme among many summer reading lists), I'm going to read an ELA-related blog that speaks to me, check out a couple of ELA apps, and, well, yes, read a trashy novel. But whether your idea of a light summer read is Steven

King's *Cujo*, or Debbie Macomber's *Cedar Cove*, make some time this summer to connect to something that will invigorate your practice for the next school year.

For a list of general education blogs try: <https://teach.com/what/teachers-know/teach100/>. If children's literature and YA is your thing, check out <http://kidlitosphere.org/bloggers/>, or learn from English teachers in the trenches at https://blog.feedspot.com/english_teacher_blogs/. To find suggestions for apps, look to <https://www.pinterest.com/twahlert/language-arts-apps/>.

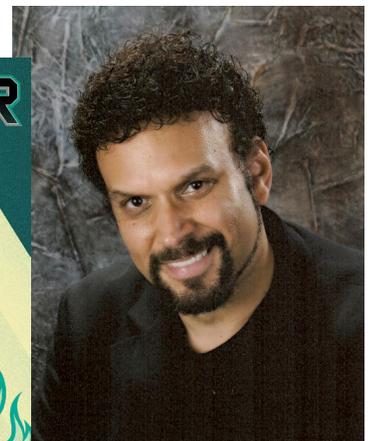
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Arc of a Scythe Series: Thunderhead

By Kelly E. Tummy, President-elect

If you need a summer read, look no further than Neal Shusterman's Arc of a Scythe series with book two, *Thunderhead*, arriving this past January. In this three-book series, Shusterman crafts one of the most compelling narratives in young adult literature to date. The setting is the not too distant future where mankind has mastered death--no one dies unless they are gleaned by a Scythe. And while this may seem a far-fetched tale, Shusterman builds his narrative using much of what we accept as normal in today's society. Remember this about Shusterman: no detail is superfluous; no dialogue is unnecessary. Pay attention to each character, each action, and especially each detail. He will circle back to it and use it to draw you further and further into this world. While some people say they tire of dystopian literature, or that dystopian literature doesn't appeal to them, this dystopia rings so true at points, you are pretty sure you are reading about current society. While book three is still months (probably a year) away, summer is the perfect opportunity to start this series and read and reread.

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Author, Neal Shusterman

***A Novel Approach* takes on the battle between whole class novels and choice**

By Amanda Palmer, Vice President-Elect for Membership and Affiliates

*Two houses, both alike in dignity,
In fair Verona, where we lay our scene,
From ancient grudge break to new mutiny
Where civil blood make civil hands unclean.*

– William Shakespeare, *Romeo and Juliet*

Kate Roberts isn't one to shy away from a difficult issue or touchy subject. This is amply apparent in her most recent book, *A Novel Approach* (2018) released in April. Secondary English over the last five years has begun to look a bit like the Socs and Greasers, or the Jets and Sharks, or the Montagues and Capulets, except the warring factions are known as Choice and Whole Class Novels. Roberts offers a peace treaty in *A Novel Approach*, postulating that choice reading and whole class novels can successfully coexist in the same learning environment.

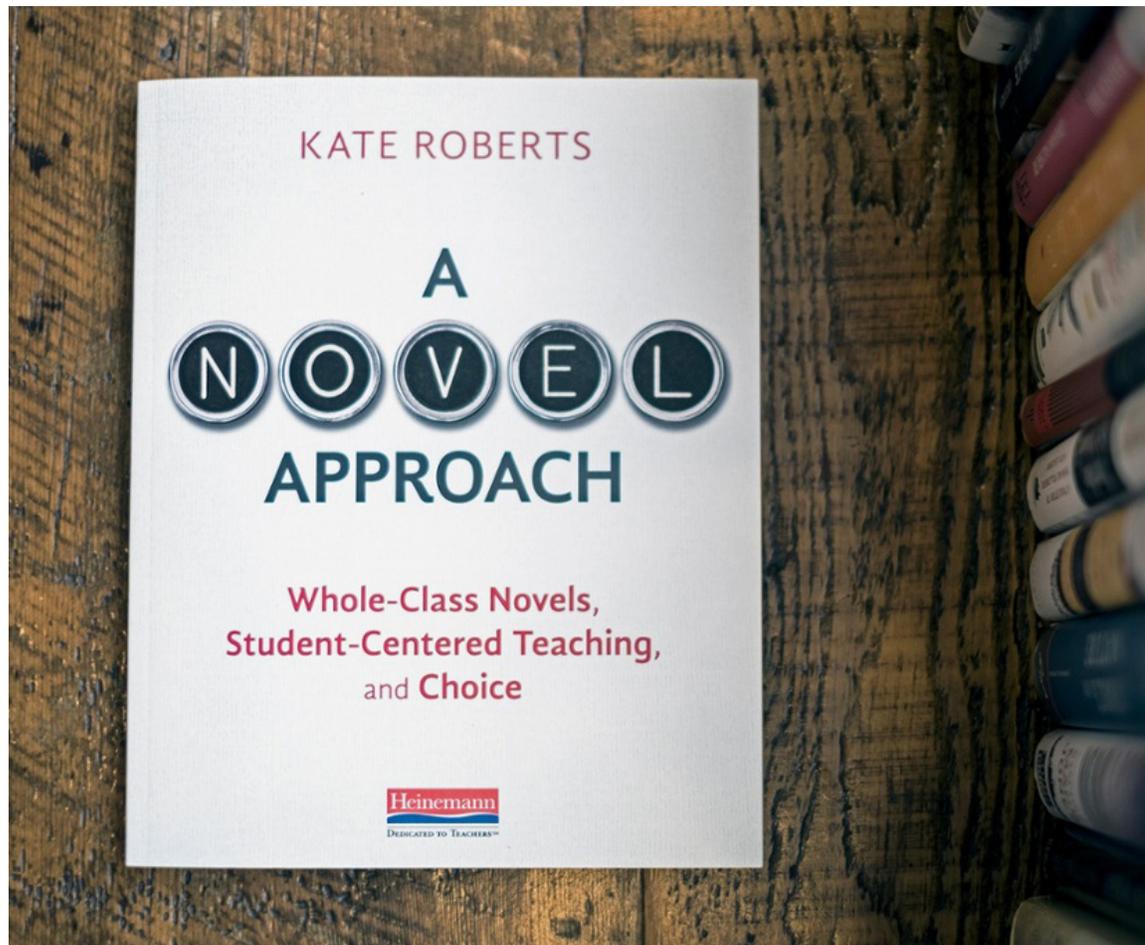
Roberts opens the text diving straight into the debate at hand, hilariously quoting Shakespeare in the process. She shares her personal background that many can relate to in their teaching careers. Having taught with both the whole class novel structure and the reading workshop structure, Roberts realized both have opportunities for improvement. The entire text is a look at how these two structures can “join forces in the best interests of kids and our profession” (4). She does this explicitly throughout the text offering sample lesson plans and clear strategies for instruction. *A Novel Approach* offers what educators crave—abundant

opportunities for application established on sound theory.

Perhaps the most enjoyable element of this text is the structure. This book was crafted with a busy reader in mind. From the Table of Contents on, readers are given direction to help digest the text in the manner that best suits their needs. The chapters are chunked with chapters 1-5 identified as “Plan,” then chapters 6-8 address “Teach with the Whole Class Novel,” with the final two chapters looking at “Teach with Book Clubs” and “Unit Culmination.” The last three sections include unit timing, communicating that teachers should see this as a unit to be

repeated with different texts and skills. Additionally, Heinemann offers access to multiple videos per chapter to see Robert's suggestions in action. This multi-modal approach allows for a deeper understanding of the ideas presented with the time (or lack thereof) that teachers possess.

A Novel Approach dives deep into this topic. Readers will find those nagging questions concerning both structures addressed with sensible and relatively easy-to-implement solutions that benefit both new and seasoned classroom teachers. Roberts



manages all of this while maintaining a conversational voice that makes it that much easier to keep picking up the text and marking ideas for the year to come.

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Reference:

Roberts, Kate. (2018). *A novel approach: Whole-class novels, student-centered teaching, and choice*. Portsmouth, NH: Heinemann.

CALL FOR SUBMISSIONS

Review the submission guidelines at <http://www.tctela.org/english-in-texas>

***English in Texas*, Vol. 48.2 (FALL/WINTER 2018)**

Theme: Teachers Speaker

Manuscript Deadline: September 1, 2018

Column Deadline: September 15, 2018

Call for Submissions: The Fall/Winter issue of *English in Texas* will take a different structure than issues in the past. The issue encourages teacher input on the challenges, celebrations, concerns, and successes of day-to-day life interacting with students in the classroom, specifically related to the application of the new ELAR standards. The editors of *English in Texas* request submissions of shorter, classroom-focused pieces, especially from current classroom teachers, with emphasis put on readability, practicality, and ease of application.

We live in an age when teacher voices exist in a discouraging contradiction. Voices from the classroom are being silenced through censorship, public teacher shaming and invalidation, misaligned priorities, political interests, and the ubiquity of heavy-handed standardization of curriculum and assessment. Yet concurrently, as the state of Texas implements new state standards, teacher input is perhaps more important than ever.

This adoption of the new Texas English Language Arts and Reading standards in particular presents a unique challenge and opportunity for Texas educators. Training will be offered to teachers from the state, region, and district levels as well as professional organizations like TCTELA, but when the rubber meets the road, the onus of responsibility for implementing the new standards will fall on classroom teachers. It is imperative that as teachers begin preparing for this major shift, they have places to turn to that offer support, ideas, sympathy, and resources to help them with the transition.

What are you doing in preparation for the upcoming standards? What are your concerns related to the implementation of the new ELAR standards? What classroom practices will you be relying on to help students achieve success? What restrictive forces act as barriers to you as you prepare for the transition? How do you prioritize your work as a teacher with so many competing forces demanding your time and energy? What do teachers, administrators, university faculty, state employees, and other interested parties need to know about your classroom, your kids, and your context?

We encourage you to make your voice heard in this timely and important issue of *English in Texas*. Our goal is to compile an issue that will leave teachers inspired and will be passed from classroom to classroom on campus. Please refer to the *English in Texas* manuscript submission guidelines. Do not hesitate to contact the editorial team at EnglishinTexas@uh.edu should you have any questions.

Furthermore, we invite interested individuals to submit ideas for our Fall/Winter columns, "Putting It All Together" and "The Tech-Savvy Teacher." The below descriptions detail each column as well as provide information for contacting the column editor regarding your column idea. Please query the column editor **BEFORE** submitting your full column.

The columns to be published in the Fall/Winter Issues:

Putting It All Together: This column focuses on opportunities teachers provide to integrate reading, writing, listening and speaking. What are some successes you've had in integrating reading, writing, listening and speaking? What resources have you consulted? How do your students respond to integrated lessons as opposed to isolated lessons? To submit a column for publication consideration, please contact the editorial team at EnglishinTexas@uh.edu.

The Tech-Savvy Teacher: This column focuses on ways to incorporate technology into your daily teaching. What are some technology tools you've found useful? How do these tools inform your instruction? How do students respond to these tools? What is required to use these tools? To submit a column for publication consideration, please contact the editorial team at EnglishinTexas@uh.edu.

New Teacher Voices: This column provides a space for teachers with 3 or fewer years of classroom experience to have a voice. Share with other young teachers and remind veterans what it is like at the beginning of a teaching career. What are some of your great successes? What lessons have you learned from your failures? What is the best advice you have received? What resources do you count on to get you through? To submit a column for publication consideration, please contact the editorial team at EnglishinTexas@uh.edu.