

A Newsletter of The Texas Council of Teachers of English Language Arts

An authentic alternative to the research paper

By Brian Bass, Vice-President Elect for Membership and Affiliates

What is a research paper exactly? Is it roughly a 10 – 20 page, typed, double-spaced, non-plagiarized informational piece with a cover page, at least a ten-source bibliography manicured in perfect MLA or APA style, and all dressed up in a shiny report cover? Some have described the research paper more concisely: Torture (and that is what the teachers say). But, year after year many teachers and students plod through this drudgery without reason. There is an alternative: the feature article.

In *Study Driven*, Katie Wood Ray explains that a feature article is not found on the front page of a newspaper. These articles do not relay the news. Ray contends that while the news finds the writer, a writer finds the feature article. Simply stated, a feature article is a high interest piece crafted by an author to inform readers about a topic, and these texts are accessible and universal. Found in magazines and newspapers, feature articles can be how-to pieces, interviews, profiles, and lists. Feature articles may also be a combination of any of these examples.

The feature article is an excellent replacement for the research paper because students who write feature articles do all the tasks a research paper requires, but the young writers do these tasks in a more focused and creative way. Where the research paper is often an ambiguous writing task, a feature article is authentic writing for a specific purpose. A research paper does not look like writing students read. A feature article, however, resembles exactly what they read, and when they write this type of text, they write about what interests them.

As students begin their inquiry into feature articles, students read multiple model texts representative of the genre. Since feature articles cover a wide range of text types, students may be required

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from the blogosphere...

Literacy.Education. Kids. Teachers. Schools. Hope
<http://kylenebeers.com/blog/>

...to the website

Testimony provided to the Senate Committee on Education is available:
<http://www.tctela.org/advocacy/>

Legislative update

By Margaret Hale, SLATE/NCTE Liaison

In early April, the Texas State Senate Committee on Education contacted TCTELA inviting the organization to provide expert testimony regarding the redesign of the English I and English II STAAR end-of-course exams. The hearing was scheduled for April 14, 2014. As the SLATE/NCTE liaison, Margaret Hale worked collaboratively with Tim Martindell, current president of TCTELA to prepare the invited testimony. They first consulted TEA's document titled "Redesign of the English I and English II Assessments." The testimony was structured to match the structure of this letter.

The invited testimony focused on several major issues. First, it addressed the five-hour time limit. Within this section, the testimony noted that while the majority of students may complete the assessment within the five-hour time frame, **completion** does not necessarily equal **success**. The testimony included data TEA gathered from school districts in 2012 regarding completion rates.

Second, the testimony addressed the issue of field test items. It pointed out that while the test design schematics show the inclusion of field test items, the blueprints make no mention of those field test items. Because those field test items are not included in the blueprints, many educators and students may mistakenly assume that the assessment will only include one writing prompt when in actuality each of the two assessments includes two prompts, both of which must be completed.

One important piece of testimony provided was both numerical and anecdotal data from several school districts regarding the number of general education students who were unable to complete the April 2014 English I or II assessment and the number of ELL students who were unable to finish the same assessments.

Margaret Hale delivered the testimony as part of a panel of invited people including two representatives from TEA. The testimony delivered to the Committee generated much discussion among Committee members about the necessity of field test items and the concerns Committee members have about the number of students across the state who were unable to complete the assessment or who were made to finish in a rush, bubbling in answers without reading the actual passages.

Senator Dan Patrick, Chair of the Committee, mentioned that there likely will be a second hearing scheduled to follow up with more information on the writing assessments.

To read the testimony, visit <http://www.tctela.org/advocacy/>. To view the Senate Committee on Education hearing from April 14, 2014, visit <http://www.senate.state.tx.us/75r/senate/commit/c530/c530.htm>.
mhale@uh.edu

Regroup, recharge, and reflect

By P. Tim Martindell, President

The last few years have brought radical change to the school house as we know it. Budgetary and legislative issues promised to “reform” our collective teaching practice with little input from the frontline classroom teacher. As educators I challenge you to take this summer to Regroup, Recharge, and Reflect.

I’m an education blog junkie...I read Diane Ravitch several times a day (www.dianeravitch.net). A recurring argument for the “good old days” keeps surfacing that suggests that to solve the problem of school funding and budget shortfalls, we either go back to the educational practices of days gone by or we hold teachers accountable for student learning and academic growth through sophisticated value-added metrics. Many bloggers readily admit that they have not been in a classroom since the 1970’s, but are quick to question the need for small class sizes, technology, and professional development and are quick to advocate applying outdated business models to education. This illustrates the need for us to regroup and reclaim power in our role as educators of the voting public – our neighbors. TCTELA members can view Dr. Margaret Hale’s testimony given last month to the Texas Senate Education Committee for talking points that may be shared with the public.

I like to spend time with my writing mentor, Margaret Hale, whose dissertation will focus on the need for language arts teachers to be readers themselves. Many of us chose the field of English education because of our love of writing and literature, yet I wonder how often we turn to this passion as a means of recharging our teacher souls. As an English language arts teacher, I love nothing more than spending a weekend spellbound within the pages of a book. Every issue of *Texas Voices* offers suggestions for reading intended to revitalize our teaching practice and refresh our teacher spirits. My recent reads include: Diane Ravitch’s *Reign of Error: The Hoax of the Privatization Movement and the Danger to America’s Public Schools*; Rick Steves’ *Barcelona*; Dr. Joyce Armstrong Carroll’s book, *Ratiocination: Weaving the Threads of Grammar, Revision, and Editing*, and for fun Armistead Maupin’s *The Days of Anna Madrigal* – the final book in the *Tales of the City* series.

Keeping a journal had always been an area where my intentions were good, but my realities were often disappointing. My friend, Gretchen Bernabei, freed me from the conventions of the “Dear Diary” by encouraging me to bring material to my journal rather than use my journal strictly as a place to write. The result – more than a decade’s worth of my thoughts and reflections connected to artifacts that range in form from a note scribbled with a highlighter on a Sonic bag to annotated journal articles downloaded from the Internet. As a teacher, the greatest changes I have made to my practice come through deliberate, focused reflection.

My charge to you this summer is threefold: Regroup – we are teachers and the prevailing data indicates that we have a need to educate our neighbors; Recharge – we owe ourselves and our students a rekindled love of reading and writing that only comes through reading and writing; and, Reflect – we value critical thinking and must garner the support of the like-minded. ptmwriter@aol.com



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TCTELA - Texas Council of Teachers
of English Language Arts

TCTELA Board of Directors

President

Tim Martindell, Fort Bend ISD
281-435-4354 ptmwriter@aol.com

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Cindy Bengé, Aldine ISD
281-468-4259 cbenge@aldine.k12.tx.us

Past President

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972-348-1756 kay.shurtleff@gmail.com

Executive Secretary

Katrina Gonzales, Schleicher County ISD
325-853-2514 katrina.gonzales@scisd.net

Recording Secretary

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VP for Membership and Affiliates

Kim Pinkerton, University of Houston-Downtown
713-221-2778 pinkertonk@uhd.edu

VP-Elect for Membership and Affiliates

Brian Bass, Lake Travis ISD
512-533-6100 bassb@ltsidschools.org

Electronic Communications Manager

Lisa Thibodeaux, Plano ISD
469-951-2192 lisa.thibodeaux@pisd.edu

SLATE/NCTE Representative

Margaret Hale, University of Houston
713-614-8218 grithale@aol.com

Editor, Texas Voices

Jennifer Engle, San Angelo ISD
214-906-2059 jennifer.enge@saisd.org

Editors, English in Texas

Gwynne Ash, Texas State University
512-245-8068 gwynne@txstate.edu

Jane Saunders, Texas State University
512-245-1604 janesaunders@txstate.edu

Lori Assaf, Texas State University

512-245-9163 lassaf@txstate.edu

Carol Delaney, Texas State University

512-245-2044 cdelaney@txstate.edu

Valerie Taylor, Eanes ISD

512-288-3247 vfstaylor@sbcglobal.net

Executive Director

Amy Blakely
800-694-8680 fax: 888-595-7276
amyblakely@ventureall.com

TCTELA

919 Congress Avenue #1400

Austin, Texas 78701

Phone: 512-617-3200

Fax: 888-595-7276

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**THE NORMAN MAILER
WRITING AWARD
FOR MIDDLE SCHOOL
AND HIGH SCHOOL
TEACHERS**

**WIN \$5,000 cash
prize and attend the
Norman Mailer Center's
Annual Gala in
New York City**

Entry Deadline

July 23, 2014, Noon CST.

No late entries will be accepted.

Enter Online

[https://center.uoregon.edu/NCTE/
FORMS/CFP/cfp_login.php?form
id=2121893](https://center.uoregon.edu/NCTE/FORMS/CFP/cfp_login.php?formid=2121893)

The Norman Mailer Center and the National Council of Teachers of English are pleased to invite submissions for the 2014 Norman Mailer Writing Award for Middle and High School Teachers. Full- and part-time middle school and high school teachers are eligible to enter the competition.

The competition is limited to works of creative nonfiction.

From five finalists, one winner will be selected to receive a \$5,000 cash prize along with travel* and lodging to attend the Norman Mailer Center's Annual Gala in New York City during the Fall of 2014.

SUBMISSION GUIDELINES

- › Limit one entry per person.
- › Maximum 20 single-spaced pages in a plain easily readable font, such as Arial or Times New Roman, in 11 or 12 points.
- › Entry may be part of a larger piece.
- › Previously published writing may be submitted if the writing was published within the last 12 months.
- › Entries accepted online only from March 1 – July 23, 2014, Noon CST.
- › Late entries will not be considered.
- › The competition is limited to works of creative nonfiction.

JUDGING CRITERIA

Submissions will be read by a national panel of teachers and will be judged by how well they achieve several qualities including the artful treatment of subject matter; originality; quality of insight, image, voice, and style; artful arrangement of elements and materials; and overall aesthetic, emotional or intellectual effect. Stories that receive high ratings from the national judges will be submitted to a distinguished panel of authors selected by the Norman Mailer Center, who will choose the winning entry.

Authors retain copyright of their work.

One winner and four finalists will be notified in September. Results will be posted on the NCTE website.

*Funding for travel to the awards ceremony for the award winner is limited to coach airfare within the continental United States, Alaska, and Hawaii. Outside of the US, a \$500 USD payment toward travel will be allowed. Hotel/lodging at the awards event will be covered.

Financial Update

By Katrina Gonzales, Executive Secretary

Following our recent conference titled “Lead the Way”, Alana Morris handed the reins of Executive Secretary of your organization to me. I find it apropos that this occurred after the conference highlighted those amongst us who lead us and guide us. Alana epitomizes the quintessential leader for us all as TCTELA members and board members. She has encouraged great numbers of our membership in various endeavors.

I am fortunate to follow Alana Morris in this position. I have watched her first as a member and then as a board member. I hope to serve TCTELA as enthusiastically and as loyally as she has done over many years with our organization.

While Alana titled her column “Gringott’s Vault”, alluding to the Harry Potter series, for now I will simply title mine “Financial Update.” I would love your help, the TCTELA members, in naming this column. What other literary allusions to banking and finance might be appropriate and catchy? Email me your suggestions at the address found at the bottom of this column.

The numbers you see on the spreadsheet reflect TCTELA’s financial situation as of February. Our fiscal year begins on July 1st and ends on June 30th. While we have some post-conference monies still out and a few other items that will be paid, our financial outlook for the end of our fiscal year appears to be healthy and right on target.

TCTELA continues to have two primary pathways of generating revenue: our membership fees and our conference. Please encourage colleagues to join our organization and to attend our conference. Our full conference package of \$285 (paid before 12/19/14) includes two luncheons and all other conference events. Conference attendees definitely benefit from all we are able to offer at that price. In addition to the conference, two award-winning publications, *English in Texas*

and *Texas Voices*, sustain our members. Nonetheless, in order to offer quality conferences and stellar publications, we must continue to grow our membership and to encourage conference attendance. Your work in this area is invaluable to us. Help us get the word out that TCTELA remains a resource that English language arts teachers in Texas cannot do without! katgnmom@gmail.com

	Year to Date 2/28/14	Approved Budget 2013-2014
Income		
Administrative	\$21,376.32	\$25,420.00
Conference	\$156,990.00	\$155,600.00
Publications	-	\$1,150.00
Scholarship	-	\$0.00
Total Income	\$178,366.32	\$182,170.00
Expenses		
Administrative	\$56,036.40	\$92,196.12
Conference	\$78,492.86	\$60,550.00
Publications	\$16,032.54	\$28,000.00
Scholarship	\$609.90	\$750.00
Total Expenses	\$151,171.70	\$181,496.12
Net Gain (Loss)	\$27,194.62	\$673.88

CALL FOR SUBMISSIONS

Publication: *English in Texas* Volume 45.1 (Fall/Winter 2015)

Theme: Critical Pedagogy

Call for Professional Submissions (Deadline: September 1st, 2014):

Critical literacy is the ability to actively read texts in a manner that promotes a deep understanding of power, inequality, and injustice in human relationships. It is a stance that encourages individuals to question the attitudes, values, and beliefs that are reflected in written texts. We encourage you to think about your choices of texts or media for the classroom. Do they support the dominant literacy canon and reinforce mainstream cultural norms? If so, have you addressed such biases within your own classroom? Have you modeled and encouraged connections that resonate with students’ lives (text-to-self) or helped them make text-to-text or text-to-world connections about societal issues such as prejudices toward race, gender, culture, or socioeconomic status? Have you used literacy in your classroom to critically examine unequal power relations in society (e.g., racial profiling, a lack of parity in pay among women and men, civil rights for all citizens, regardless of sexual orientation)? Have you encouraged your students to become more aware of the hidden messages communicated within texts and media that privilege some and oppress others?

Students, even young children, are capable of recognizing injustice. For teachers of elementary grades, have you used picture books or read current events to your students in order to help them problematize socially significant issues that are reflected in those texts? Have you engaged your students in group projects or book discussions that encouraged critically examining social justice within your classroom or in your students’ lives as a starting point for understanding critical literacy (bullying, classroom rules, fairness, gender issues, etc.)?

Share with us your classroom practices that address social inequities perpetrated through texts or media. Help our readers visualize instruction that includes the non-neutrality of texts/media based on race, class, gender and political persuasions.

Call for Student Submissions (Deadline: October 15th, 2014):

We invite students to share personal experiences with texts or media that support dominant ideologies. What are your thoughts about teaching students to become more aware of the hidden messages within texts and media?

NTCTELA

North Texas Council of Teachers of English Language Arts

2013 Conference

Engaging Students in Authentic Literacy



Debra Pickering

Nationally known expert in education and co-author, with Robert Marzano, of numerous educational books including *Classroom Instruction that Works*, *Classroom Management that Works*, and *Building Academic Vocabulary*



Peter Johnston

Teacher, researcher, and author of the bestselling *Choice Words*, *Opening Minds*, and (most recently) *Knowing Literacy*.



Terry Thompson

Full-time literacy coach, consultant, and author of *Adventures in Graphica: Using Comics and Graphic Novels to Teach Comprehension*



Kylene Beers

Experts on reading skills, engagement, and literary analysis and national consultants and co-authors and editors of *Book by Book* (Heinemann, 2011) and *Adolescent Literacy: Turning Promise into Practice* (Heinemann, 2007, with Linda Rief)



Bob Probst



Ann Marie Corgill

Classroom teacher, champion of the writing and reading workshop, and author of *Of Primary Importance: What's Essential in Teaching Young Writers*

**iPad
Giveaway!**
Register early.
Limited seating available.

Friday, June 14, 2013
Hurst Convention Center
8:00 am - 3:30 pm
Cost: \$75.00
Register at: <http://ntctela.ning.com>

For Pre-K – 12 educators, principals, assistant principals, literacy coaches, district administrators, and anyone interested in exploring the relationship between student engagement and critical literacy



An Invitation to
ASU and Region 15's
12th Annual Literacy Conference.



Come join
us on
June 9th
for



"The Book Whisperer" and
"Professor Nana" as they engage
and expand our thinking on what
"wild" and "naked" reading can do
for our students and our teaching.

June 10th, we continue our jour-
ney as Donalyn and Teri will ex-
pand our teacher toolkits in these
essential components of reading
instruction:

- **nonfiction reading
- **reading workshop foundations
- **read-alouds and their importance
- **using picture books in all class
rooms

This entire 2 day safari will
address all grade levels, K-12.

NAKED READING



IN THE WILD!!

JUNE 9 & 10, 2014
(9:00 A.M. – 4:00 P.M.)

LOCATION:
STEPHENS CENTRAL LIBRARY (JUNE 9)
EDUCATION SERVICE CENTER REGION 15
(JUNE 10)

SPONSORED BY:
ANGELO STATE UNIVERSITY AND
EDUCATION SERVICE CENTER REGION 15



Conference Fee: \$30 per person -before May 20th
\$40 per person—late registration
ASU students - \$15:00

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COL·LAB·O·RA·TION USING YOUR RESOURCES

Come share and learn best practices and approaches for the demands of a 21st century classroom in an unconference format. Topics can include: formative assessment, intervention strategies, sample lessons, classroom management techniques, benchmarking resources, and much more.

For more information visit <http://cvte.wikispaces.com/5th+Annual+Summer+Conference>

Featuring guest speaker Dr. Carl Dethloff,
Assistant Superintendent of San Angelo ISD

JULY 21, 2014

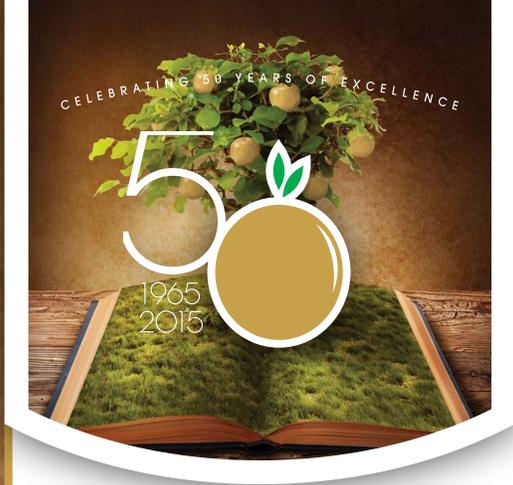
9:00 A.M. - 4:00P.M.

ESC REGION 15

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For PreK-12 educators, principals, assistant principals, and instructional specialists



2015 PRESENTATION PROPOSAL FORM

The 2015 conference committee reviews each presentation proposal form against the rubric found on tctela.org. Please take the time to review the rubric and complete the form. Incomplete information will either disqualify your proposal or delay notification. TCTELA communicates to the primary presenter as a representative of the proposal team. The primary presenter is required to communicate with the additional speakers and respond to TCTELA requests.

PRESENTER(S) INFORMATION

Print clearly, check all that apply, and provide information for all presenters if this is a joint presentation. Attach another sheet if necessary. Your program confirmation will be sent via email. Please make sure your email address is correct. Presenter experience is for information only and is not scored on the rubric.

- First-time presenter
 Previous presenter at TCTELA Conference (most recent years ____, ____, ____)
 Previous presenter at a national conference [list organization(s)]

Primary Contact Title/Position School District Campus

Mailing Address City, State Zip

Work Telephone Home Telephone Email Address

ADDITIONAL SPEAKERS

Additional Speaker Title/Position School District Campus

PRESENTER NOTES

Please initial each statement to indicate your agreement.

- It is the obligation of each presenter to register for the conference and incur hotel and travel expenses.
 A screen will be provided. All other AV equipment is the responsibility of the presenter.
 Presenter(s) must be a current member of TCTELA. Membership in NCTE does not qualify.
 Proposals presentations must be postmarked on or before June 13, 2014.
 Incomplete proposals will not be considered.
 Presenters and their representatives are prohibited from advertising and/or selling products or services before, during, or after concurrent session presentations. Presenters who wish to do so must purchase an exhibitor booth.
 Wireless Internet will be available for the 2015 conference. However, speakers should not rely on wireless connection to conduct their presentation.
 Presenters are welcome to email handouts to TCTELA for Web posting by December 1, 2014.

SESSION TITLE As you wish it to appear in the program. (Do not use abbreviations.)

SESSION ABSTRACT Please limit to 50 words or less. This abstract will be listed in the program book.

SUPPORTING THEORY/PRACTICE/RESEARCH RESOURCES AND/OR TRADE BOOKS/TOPICS OF EMPHASIS

With each resource, please identify how it relates to the proposed topic. Research and trade book information is offered to our bookstore vendors at the conference.

INTENDED AUDIENCE

Pre-Kindergarten Elementary (K-5) Middle School (6-8) High School College
 General (proposals of interest at all instructional levels)
 Other _____

TYPE OF PRESENTATION

1 hour concurrent session
 PechaKucha (see www.pecha-kucha.org/what)

ORGANIZATION OF PRESENTATION

Interactive Lecture Student Models Bring Your Own Laptop
 Panel PechaKucha

Explain how the session is organized and what, if any, materials are provided to attendees: _____

AUDIO VISUAL EQUIPMENT

I would like to order a laptop/LCD projector system. I agree to pay for the equipment rental before the conference. (\$300)
 I will need an overhead projector and screen.

****Please note, TCTELA will provide a screen. Speakers are required to bring their own laptop, laptop speakers, and LCD projector.**

TOPIC(S) OF EMPHASIS Check all that apply.

Multicultural Issues ELL/Bilingual Education Technology
 College Readiness Emergent Literacy Pre-AP®/AP®/Honors
 New to the Profession Gifted and Talented* Literature/Poetry
 Reading Comprehension Writing Other _____

*For Gifted and Talented and Pre-AP®/AP®/Honors, please a copy of your resume.

Note: Presenters will be notified of the status of the proposal by November 1, 2014. All program participants must pay the conference registration fee (and membership fee if nonmember) in order to present at the TCTELA Annual Conference. Incomplete proposals will not be considered.

The deadline for proposals is June 13, 2014. Return completed application to: TCTELA, 919 Congress Avenue # 1400, Austin, TX 78701, or complete online at www.tctela.org. TCTELA members submitting online are able to track their presentation proposal form.

Taking the Lead on PD

By Kimberly Craig, Recording Secretary

PD, professional development, staff development, in-service. It is called different things in different districts, but the majority of Texas teachers are responsible for continuing their learning according to certification requirements. The difficult part is that each district creates their own professional development with, sometimes, their own set of priorities. Teachers can thus be frustrated when it comes to hearing the word professional development. On *Learning Forward's Blog PD Watch*, housed on *Education Week's* site, Tracy Crow discussed this situation and gave guidelines to overcome this frustration in her article "*A Letter to Frustrated Educators*."

TCTELA supports the ongoing professional development required of each teacher. As a leading voice in the field of ELAR, TCTELA's goals encourage teachers to seek out best practices and research-based instructional practices, which are obtained through current, quality professional development. One goal of TCTELA is to offer research-based professional development for every ELA professional throughout the state, which is accomplished through the annual conference such as this year's held in Corpus Christi and appropriately themed "Lead the Way."

Tracy Crow challenged teachers to take the lead on their own PD. Crow offers five tips for teachers to take the lead as they approach

upcoming professional development: Be engaged; be vulnerable; be compassionate; be different; and be bold. These steps will help overcome the monotony of an all-day training, or the large amount of new material to be learned at the death of another tree, or the know-it-all presenter who rattles all day about content teachers already know.

What may be most interesting in the blog post are the pointers that help teachers take control of the PD in which they do not always have a choice. The pointer "Be bold" encourages teachers to know themselves as learners and to stand up for what they need to the people in control of the professional development. Teachers may not have control, but they may be able to influence what training is offered. The tip "Be vulnerable" emboldens teachers to collaborate with others to change the culture in which they may be stuck. Learning from one another has a reciprocal effect—each learns from the other.

As teachers approach upcoming learning in whatever form their district requires, they should take the lead to have a positive, professional, and personal plan that helps them become the professional they are. kimberly.craig@ccisd.us

TCTELA affiliate corner: Professional development year-round

By Kim Pinkerton, Vice President for Membership & Affiliates

Interested in Being Part of Professional Development Year-Round?

Did you know that TCTELA has affiliate groups all over the state of Texas? Each year these English Language Arts educators gather together for presentations, professional meetings, and some serious scholarly socializing. The best part is that it all takes place just outside your door. If the annual TCTELA conference is not enough and you find yourself needing more opportunities to expand your professional growth, then consider becoming a part of one of these dynamic groups:

Local TCTELA Affiliates:

- San Antonio Area Council of Teachers of English: Jenny Guerrero, President (vguer@satx.rr.com)
- West Houston Area Council of Teachers of English: Kristen Stapp, President (kristen.stapp@fortbendisd.com)
- Central Texas Council of Teachers of English: Cheryl Scullin, President, (CScullin@eanesisd.net)
- Concho Valley Teachers of English: Jennifer Engle, President (jennifer.engle@saisd.org)
- North Harris County Council of Teachers of English: Arcelia Leon, President (aleon@aldine.k12.tx.us)
- North Texas Council of Teachers of English Language Arts Lisa Thibodeaux, President (lisa.thibodeaux@pisd.edu)

Becoming an affiliate member is easy. The National Council of Teachers of English offers a *form online* that can be used for any

affiliate. If you need information from the affiliate to fill out the form such as membership dues and the affiliate mailing address, simply contact the leader for the affiliate in your area. Complete the form, write the check, and put it in the mail.

Already an Affiliate Member or Leader?

TCTELA would love to hear from you. Because we value your ideas, your input about affiliate meetings at the TCTELA annual conference is needed, and you can share those on a very short survey at <https://www.surveymonkey.com/s/7KV7PMM>.

If you have lost your affiliate contact information, did you know that you can find it on the TCTELA website at <http://www.tctela.org/affiliates/>? In addition, you can always contact the TCTELA Vice President for Membership & Affiliates, *Kim Pinkerton*, with your questions or concerns. TCTELA wants to make your experience as an affiliate member as beneficial as possible.

If you are an affiliate leader, please send your leadership updates and upcoming event information to Kim. TCTELA wants to keep our website as current as possible, and sharing leadership contact information and affiliate event information is of great importance.

Interested in Starting a New Affiliate in Texas?

If you are interested in starting an affiliate in your area, the National Council of Teachers of English has an application form available on their website <http://www.ncte.org/affiliates/form/ncte>. You can also contact Kim for additional assistance with your affiliate-related questions and needs. pinkertonk@uhd.edu

Share Your Passions

By Craig McKinney, AVID Coordinator, Shepton High School, Plano ISD

Some people read for pleasure in their spare time. Unfortunately, according to an article I read yesterday in the *New York Times* by op-ed columnist Frank Bruni (“Read, Kids, Read,” May 12, 2014), those of us who read daily for fun are part of a dwindling breed. The number of teens and adults who read daily for pleasure has shown a marked decline in recent years, but I’d venture to guess that a higher percentage of educators would classify themselves as readers than the general population.

The problem with pleasure reading for teachers is that sticky issue of “spare time.” With a to-do list that never ends and around-the-clock work demands for some of us who occasionally burn the midnight oil grading papers and forego weekend fun to read students’ essays, not all of us have the time (or the remaining energy) to read a book just for the enjoyment.

But summer is right around the corner.

I cannot wait to dive into that pile of books that has been growing on my bedside table. With a classic or two to reread and a bunch of new works to discover, I have enough reading to keep me happy and entertained through the hot summer months and beyond.

In the article I mentioned earlier, Bruni also discusses the research that indicates that there is a link between reading and intelligence, that reading increases empathy, and that reading develops skills—like the ability to concentrate—that will serve people well in academic settings and in the workplace. Recreational reading seems like something that would benefit our college-bound students. This is why it is worrisome when we see that students typically are not reading anymore.

French philosopher Jean Jacques Rousseau wrote about education in his book *Emile*. In part of the book, he addressed the topic of motivating students to learn. Reading, he said, is not something that adults should force upon young people. Instead, adults should read in front of children and allow them to see the pleasure and usefulness of reading. The children will ask for help when they are ready to learn to read, Rousseau claimed.

This Montessori-esque approach to reading instruction may be a bit idealistic in dealing with teenagers, but I do think this has some relevance to the way we approach lifelong learning with our students.

Many of the young people we teach may not have a lot of role models of lifelong learning in their lives outside of school. They may not know that educated people read things they are not assigned to read. It may not occur to them that people in the real world also attend lectures, visit art museums, enjoy cultural events, and explore topics of interest of them.

Like the parents in Rousseau’s *Emile*, we have an opportunity to model for students our intellectual passions. Talk about the pile of books you are excited to tackle this summer and even about some books you enjoyed when you were your students’ age. If you learned something fascinating about caterpillars at last night’s meeting of the local lepidopterists society, share that with your students. Tell them how great it was to watch the simulcast of the Dallas Opera’s *Carmen* for free from the lawn at Klyde Warren Park or how thrilled you are that Dallas Shakespeare is departing from the norm and performing Moliere’s *Tartuffe* this summer. Mention something you learned from the docent-guided tour you enjoyed at the Kimbell Art Museum or a funny anecdote author Larry McMurtry shared in his talk you heard at the DMA. Explain the research you are doing on native plants and xeriscaping to convert your water-hogging yard to an environmentally-friendly, water-wise landscape. Celebrate your successes—and laugh at your failures—in teaching yourself carpentry or cake decorating. As you are anticipating a trip to an interesting destination, discuss the types of reading you are doing to make sure you get the most out of your travels.

By sharing your intellectual passions with your students, you are modeling the traits of lifelong learning. As all teachers know, you can lead your students to learning, but you cannot make them learn. Some of them, however, with you as a role model, will decide to pick up that book, attend that lecture, or visit that museum. And that is the beginning of their journey in a life filled with wonderful learning adventures. craig.mckinney@pisd.edu

An authentic alternative to the research paper

continued from page 1

to focus on one type. While students review the articles, they share their observations with their classmates. These discussions provide the framework for how they will create their articles. At this time, students are tasked with the assignment to create a feature article similar to the models by a given due date.

During the topic selection stage, students choose a topic that interests them. Once they have chosen a topic, they establish their areas to research. For example, if the feature article is about a Hall-of-Fame quarterback, their areas of research might be “Bio,” “Statistics,” and “Achievements.” These research areas will later become subheadings in their article. After they have chosen a topic, students learn about citing sources and plagiarizing. Once research has been collected, students will draft their articles. These articles will resemble research papers at this stage, but after the second

or third draft, students will begin to shape their texts into feature articles. At this stage, students learn about text features such as text boxes, columns, font size, font style, graphics, themes, and color choices. The final published piece looks nothing like a research paper . . . but essentially it is.

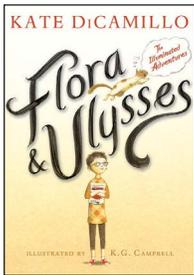
Feature articles generate student engagement; whereas, research papers often elicit the flight or fight response. Even though many teachers and students dread research paper season, there has been little change. The research paper task assigned without purpose, without models, and without interest will produce purposeless, disengaged writing. When young writers are given writing tasks that are authentic and meaningful like the feature article, these writers create remarkable texts even without a shiny report cover.

bassb@ltidschools.org

Summer Reads

“Holy bagumba,” Flora & Ulysses to the rescue!

By Kim Pinkerton, Vice President for Membership & Affiliates



Kate DiCamillo has, once again, captured the coveted John Newbery Medal for her 2013 children’s novel, *Flora & Ulysses: The Illuminated Adventures*. As the winner of two previous medals, the first for *Because of Winn-Dixie* (2001 Honor Book) and then *The Tale of Despereaux: Being the Story of a Mouse, a Princess, Some Soup, and a Spool of Thread* (2004 Medal Winner), DiCamillo’s

latest win shows that her powerful voice as an expert storyteller will not be silenced.

Flora & Ulysses: The Illuminated Adventures carries readers into a world where squirrels can become super heroes and where an inimitable little girl can unravel the illusion of normalcy. It is a beautiful synthesis, reminiscent of the fantastical adventure and heart-warming lead characters found in *Despereaux* and *Winn-Dixie*. DiCamillo’s newest contribution is destined to be among the favorites of young children...and adults too.

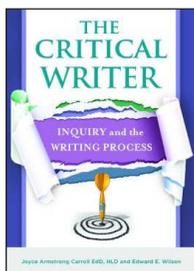
Flora Belle Buckman is an avid comic book reader and lover of Alfred T. Slipper, a.k.a. Incandesto, the crime-fighting pillar of light. She reveres super heroes, is a natural-born cynic, and desperately wants her mother to love people for who they are, even if they are not normal. Flora wants to be loved for who she is. When a vacuum cleaner launches an attack on an unassuming squirrel, the encounter transforms that tiny creature into the biggest of heroes. Flora gets the chance to live the greatest tale of her life.

Because of Ulysses (a crusading squirrel that can type), Flora learns that giant donuts can make squirrels fly, that horsehair sofas can heal wounds, that holding hands and gaudy pillars of light can cure blindness, and that poetry can prevent murder. When Flora breaks her vow to never hope, things really begin to change.

Join the dynamic duo of Flora and Ulysses and their wacky partners. Discover that wonderful things can be born of terrible things...some, most, or all of which are true. Learn how love can heal the wounded. And, dare to be different. Most importantly, read *Flora & Ulysses: The Illuminated Adventures*. pinkertonk@uhd.edu

Promoting authentic inquiry in high school classrooms

By Cindy Benge, President-Elect



In the push for more and more standardized assessment, community colleges are more concerned than ever about students being prepared to conduct research. Despite the fact that a year-long inquiry process is written into the TEKS curriculum, teachers are forced to succumb to the pressures of “the test” and put off engaging students in the research process until the last four or five weeks of the school year.

More disturbingly, instead of encouraging students to select a topic for which they are passionate and encouraging them to immerse themselves in that topic over an extended period of time, in order to save time, many teachers use a worksheet approach which includes a blank for a thesis statement and several blanks for quotes that they have found to support their thesis statement.

Some have come to refer to this research-teaching method as the “cable news” approach to research. This approach allows the writer to form an opinion prior to collecting data and then find data (i.e., “quotes”) that support that opinion or hypothesis. Writers who follow this approach do not bother themselves to search for all of the information about a topic; they need only worry themselves with information that will support their belief system, so they need not revise their hypothesis at any time during the “process.”

In their new book, *The Critical Writer: Inquiry and the Writing Process*, Joyce Armstrong Carroll and Edward Wilson utilize their Carroll/Wilson Inquiry Schemata to map out a coherent and logical pathway that leads the students from reflecting on previous knowledge through immersion, data gathering and the writing process. The model, which is also included in their text *Acts of Teaching*, is a classic take on the inquiry process and reminds educators that, although writers formulate a working thesis midway through the inquiry process, the thesis statement should be constructed near the end of the process, after the writer has fully immersed him or herself in the chosen topic, and has had time to weigh all of the information gathered.

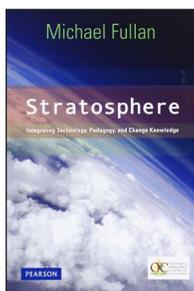
Carroll and Wilson have once again produced an excellent resource for teachers, a resource that not only provides teachers with sound theory and pedagogy, but also examples that teachers of all ages will be able to apply to their teaching of research. Readers of this book will come to understand the impact that true inquiry can have on the literacy development and critical thinking of their students, and they will rethink how they are teaching students to conduct research in their classrooms. This valuable resource is definitely worth a look.

cindy.benge@aldine.k12.tx.us

Summer Reads

The push for “real change”

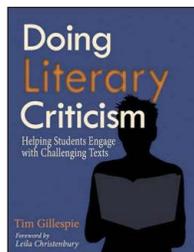
By Valerie Taylor, Co-Editor, *English in Texas*



Many may know Michael Fullan as the expert on change, and in one of his newest books, *Stratosphere: Integrating Technology, Pedagogy, and Change Knowledge*, he certainly builds on that idea. A most striking element of this book is the “real change” that Fullan recommends for schools—building a place where students do “things that are meaningful in the world, projects that focus on solving a problem, engaging in teamwork, and operating under conditions that encourage risk-taking” (24). Fullan emphasizes creativity and collaboration as necessities for schools that embrace this change. These schools will need to redefine curriculum and work to achieve high levels of knowledge in the three areas Fullan identifies in his subtitle: technology, pedagogy and change. Fullan argues that teachers must rethink how innovations in technology can be harnessed through pedagogy to create this “real change” in schools instead of letting the technology just be added on to existing pedagogy or used to “hide” weaknesses in pedagogy. Technology tools are, according to the author, just tools used to implement exemplary pedagogy of rich learning tasks of 21st century skills in a community of learners who are global critical thinkers collaborating to change the world. This quick (78 pages) but thought-provoking read is well worth the time, especially if schools are looking to make these kinds of “real change.” vfstaylor@sbcglobal.net

Who’s afraid of literary criticism?

By Gwynne Ellen Ash, Co-Editor *English in Texas*

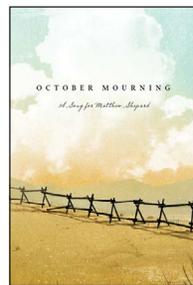


Although the Big Bad Wolf of the Common Core State Standards (CCSS), and their close reading obsession, has not blown through Texas with the powerful breath that has overtaken the rest of the country, many secondary English teachers recognize that teaching students to read complex text requires critical approaches in addition to reader response, especially if they are to prepare students for college-level tasks. However, there are not many resources available to guide high school teachers’ introduction of techniques of literary criticism.

NCTE National High School Teacher of Excellence Tim Gillespie’s *Doing Literary Criticism: Helping Students Engage with Challenging Texts* (2010, Stenhouse), however, gives a straightforward, easy-to-use overview of eleven different perspectives on literary criticism, beginning with reader response, and ranging through formalist perspectives (those most aligned with the currently revived close readings), to feminist, to archetypal, to historical, and beyond.

Poems convey tragedy in a powerful way

By Valerie Taylor, Co-Editor, *English in Texas*



October Mourning: A Song for Matthew Shepard, Lesléa Newman’s response to the tragic events that ended Matthew Shepard’s life in 1998, proves to be a powerful book. A collection of poems, a verse novel of sorts, tells this tragic story through a variety of points of view including people and inanimate objects, allowing readers to experience the fear and sadness and betrayal of the victim; the insensitivity and hatred of perpetrators; the outrage and disbelief of the family and the community; and the violation of the place. At the end of the book, Newman adds an explanation of the various verse forms she employs in the book. Newman includes as well an introduction and an afterword in which she explains her own connection to the tragedy and why she felt compelled to write this story, this collection. Her numerous notes at the end of the book also help explain her inspiration for many of the poems. Reading the book reminds people of their own and others’ humanity and helps them to consider how actions and lack of actions affect themselves, affect others, and affect the world around them. vfstaylor@sbcglobal.net

Gillespie argues that literary criticism, regardless of its perspective, is the practice of, “interpreting, analyzing, and evaluating literature” (p. 4). His book’s purpose is to help focus the possible lenses that teachers and students might use for these practices. He argues that students learn best by doing, that they should be exposed to multiple possible perspectives, and that criticism should not be taught in such a way that it, “smother[s] the pleasure of reading” (p. 7).

Each chapter presents pros and cons for each perspective on criticism, texts that might serve as good examples for that particular lens, and classroom activities and discussions that can support the students’ interpretation, analysis, and evaluation. The text also comes with a CD-ROM that includes additional information for each chapter, as well as an additional chapter on postmodern perspectives on literary criticism.

So for those looking for a read this summer to help guide instruction in perspectives on literary interpretation, Gillespie’s *Doing Literary Criticism: Helping Students Engage with Challenging Texts* could be the perfect answer. gwynne@txstate.edu



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