



NEWSLETTER

SERVING FLORIDA ENGLISH TEACHERS SINCE 1924



Antonia
Lewandowski
staff writer

Is Oprah America's New Reading Teacher?

Recent discussions about James Frey's book *A Million Little Pieces* should grab all Florida teachers. The kids may not be tuning into this discussion, yet it has powerful implications for them, their schoolwork, and how they will interpret the high volume of information we now have and that will continue to grow.

Whether we like it or not, Florida's public schools are focused on the FCAT. Indeed, the exams are based on a broad view of what students should be able to know and do as described in Florida's Sunshine State Standards. To meet the described levels of mastery, language arts teachers are encouraged to focus on informational reading, leaving behind the cherished literature that once dominated the curriculum. Is this good or bad?

Admittedly, many students need practice in decoding, recognizing word families, sight words, and the mechanics of language. Without revisiting or shoring up these foundational skills, students will not be able

continued on page 8...

"Readers must bring critical judgement to bear on what they read."

NCTE Announces Outstanding Nonfiction for Children Award

Children of the Great Depression by Russell Freedman (Clarion Books) has won the 2006 Annual Orbis Pictus Award for Outstanding Nonfiction for Children from the National Council of Teachers of English (NCTE). NCTE, through the Committee on the Orbis Pictus Award for Outstanding Nonfiction for Children, established the annual award to promote and recognize excellence in the writing of nonfiction for children.

Each year, the committee awards one winner and up to five honorable mention books. Judges grade the books

on accuracy, organization, design, and style. In addition, each nomination should be useful in classroom teaching in grades K-8, should encourage thinking and more reading, model exemplary expository writing and research skills, share interesting and timely subject matter, and appeal to a wide range of ages.

Children of the Great Depression shows what it was like to be young during hard times—when obtaining food, work, and schooling

continued on page 7...

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From the Editors

We hope that you enjoy this issue of the *FCTE Newsletter* and that you'll find it full of interesting and relevant news, opinions, and ideas. In addition to our new electronic format, we've made some exciting changes in order to provide members of FCTE with a valuable source of information about English education, FCTE, and NCTE.

We know you'll be inspired by Matt Dicker's article that appears in our **New Teacher Spotlight** and we want to invite you to be the next to appear in that spotlight. If you've taught for less than five years, write to us about your first experiences in the classroom. In addition, look to our new column **Recipes for Classroom Success** for a great lesson on acting. Then, send us your ideas and we'll consider it for our next issue.

Essentially, we want to hear from you. If you know of a great news story from your area that affects English teachers in Florida, if you know of a teacher who deserves recognition, or if you just have comments about this issue, let us know.

We're already preparing a great issue for August, so we hope to hear from you soon. Have a good rest of the year and we'll see you in October at the Fall Conference.

Sincerely,

Chuck and Allen

FCTE Newsletter is published three times a year by the Florida Council of Teachers of English, an affiliate of the National Council of Teachers of English. *FCTE Newsletter* is an exclusive benefit of membership.

Letters, articles, suggestions and story ideas from readers are welcome. The newsletter editor will assume that such letters and articles are offered for publication unless clearly marked otherwise. The editors reserve the right to select and edit articles for purpose and fit. Please send any information or inquiries to 232 Hanging Moss Drive, Oviedo, FL 32765 or by E-mail to glaesec@ocps.net. *FCTE Newsletter* is a member of the NCTE Information Exchange Agreement. Advertising inquiries and requests should be directed to the address above.

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From Haight and Ashbury to Stratford-upon-Avon

Matthew J. Dicker
Cypress Creek High School

The week after I graduated from college, with no job offers or opportunities on the horizon, I jumped into my car and moved out to San Francisco. Having no real ambition, it wasn't a surprise when I found myself sleeping on a friend's couch by night and playing a borrowed guitar on the corner of Haight and Ashbury by day. This wasn't real guitar playing. I've never been musically gifted; it was something more akin to me telling the world that there needed to be more jobs for graduates of Art History programs. The lyrics changed by the hour, but the chorus was usually something like, "I won't be a curator; rather be an exterminator." Not an exact rhyme, I realize, and this might be part of the reason I never achieved the cult status I sought.

When a job parking cars for a country club didn't work out, I moved back to Orlando where I started working as a substitute teacher for a local high school. I'd like to say that my reasons were altruistic, but it had more to do with the cost of living. To be unemployed in San Francisco is to really know poverty, but to be unemployed in Orlando means you can still afford the occasional Starbucks coffee. A friend of mine who worked in the school got me an interview, and the school with its permanent lack of subs told me I could work every day if I wanted to.

The first class that I covered was Life Management Skills, a course

designed to teach things like job skills and how to be a productive member of society. Switching on the light in the classroom that morning, however, I understood that perhaps I was out of touch with the needs of high school students. Back when I was in high school, a class like this might have had vocabulary words like "interview" or "resume," but this class was learning things like "Chlamydia" and "prophylactic." If there's anything you need to know about Chlamydia or prophylactics, you can just ask, I said hoping there would be no questions.

After a month of subbing, a position in the English department came up and I was offered the job. While I wasn't certified, the principal assigned me as the class's permanent substitute while I worked on getting hired full-time, which consisted of taking a test and waiting for the county to process my paperwork, something that amounts to a six month long process for those who did not take the college course *Coping with Bureaucracy I*. I wouldn't be paid as a regular teacher, and I wouldn't receive any benefits, but still I liked consistency and I showed up ready to tackle five classes of sophomore English.

The first day I met my new students, one girl almost incited a

continued on page 6...

NEW TEACHER SPOTLIGHT



Matt Dicker is a first-year teacher at Cypress Creek High School where he teaches ninth grade IB English. Matt's writing has recently appeared in *New York Stories*.

spotlight

Governor Proposes Major Middle and High School Changes

Susan Watt - Staff Writer
Department of Education



Susan Watt works for the Florida Department of Education. She reports on news from the FLDOE that affects Language Arts education in Florida.

On February 14, 2006, Governor Jeb Bush and Lt. Governor Toni Jennings, joined by members of the Florida Legislature and K-12 Public Schools Chancellor Cheri Yecke, announced reform proposals for middle and high schools. Governor Bush introduced the

following recommendations related to middle school and high school reform and reading:

BUILDING A STRONG MIDDLE SCHOOL FOUNDATION

To improve the quality of education for middle school students, Governor Bush and Lt. Governor Jennings recommend:

- Ø Requiring middle school students to earn 12 credits - three credits each for language arts, math, science and social studies - to graduate from middle school or enter high school.

To help all students achieve this requirement, Governor Bush is recommending intensive summer training for struggling students in grades 5 through 9.

- Ø Offering at least one course - such as Algebra - for high school credit at all Florida middle schools. Many students have the ability to excel beyond their grade's current curriculum, and schools should

offer these students additional opportunities.

- Ø Providing middle school students greater exposure to career opportunities. Encouraging career exploration at a younger age provides an important incentive to work hard and strive for greater academic achievement.

HIGH SCHOOL FOR THE 21st CENTURY

Governor Bush and Lt. Governor Jennings are recommending sweeping high school reform, including increased rigor in coursework and promotion and graduation based on proficiency in the classroom. These recommendations include:

- Ø Offering students the opportunity to graduate with a major or minor area of study - just as college students do - in the arts, advanced studies or career preparation, after completing a rigorous core curriculum.

Ø Revising Florida's high school diploma to recognize student performance through Differentiated Levels of Proficiency in specific content areas. Students meeting higher standards in honors courses, such as Advanced Placement and International Baccalaureate programs, deserve special recognition. The high school diploma should reflect these accomplishments.

- Ø Increasing the rigor of Florida's high school require-

Turn to page 5 for a graph depicting the overall credit requirements of the Governor's proposed plan.

Overall Credit Requirements

CORE COURSES FOR ALL STUDENTS
CREDITS: 15

COURSE	CREDITS
English <i>Courses for level 1 & 2 students must focus on reading.</i>	4
Math <i>All students must take and pass Algebra I and Geometry.</i>	4
Science	3
Social Studies	3
PE & Arts (.5 credit each)	1

MAJOR AREAS OF STUDY
STUDENTS CHOOSE ONE
CREDITS: 4

In addition to these areas, local school boards can submit other majors and minors to the State Board of Education for approval.

Humanities (Courses such as English, humanities, music, fine and/or performing arts.)

English (Courses in literature and writing.)

Communications (Courses such as journalism, debate, speech, mass media.)

Math (Math courses such as linear Algebra, abstract algebra, math analysis, analysis of functions, calculus, AICE further mathematics, multivariate calculus, differential

equations, applied mathematics, geometry, analytic geometry, integrated math, advanced topics in mathematics, liberal arts math, probability and statistics, trigonometry, discrete mathematics, etc.)

Advanced Math and Science

History (History courses such as American, African American, Florida, Latin American, Eastern and Western Heritage, American through 1920, Vietnam War, World History, Civil War, etc.)

Social Studies (History courses such as American, African American, Florida, Latin American, Eastern and Western heritage, American through 1920, World, Civil War, etc. Also anthropology, archaeology, economics, geography, political science, comparative governments, sociology, psychology etc.)

The Arts (Performing and fine arts)

Foreign Language

Career Specialization

ELECTIVE OR MINOR REQUIREMENTS
STUDENTS' CHOICE
CREDITS: 5

Students may (1) choose to concentrate three of these credits in one area to obtain a minor and have two additional credits in another area, (2) take five elective credits, or (3) earn a double major and take one elective.

Note: A student may change their major and can transfer the credits to be elective credits or may apply them toward a minor.

"This book is not to be tossed aside lightly. It should be thrown with great force."

-Dorothy Parker

High stakes assessment

High stakes assessments determine the outcome of an important event such as passing a grade/course, graduating from high school, or changing the funding for a school.

...continued from page 3

Shakespeare

"The test of literature is, I suppose, whether we ourselves live more intensely for the reading of it."

-Elizabeth Drew

Disaggregation

All test scores are not just judged by the full school but also by small subgroups of students, such as minority, disabled, or ELL students.

riot while reading my syllabus. "I ain't doin' all this work, b*%#," she said.

Confused, I looked up from the paper from which I was reading and stared at her. Had I forgotten to tell them my name? Was their default name for everyone "b*%#?" And staring at her unforgiving face, I realized she was marking her territory. If she refused to do the work, and I didn't object, more students would take suit and finally I'd be left alone with my syllabus to write my own in-class essays on the importance of a degree in the humanities. I saw the rest of the kids looking at me, silently challenging me. "What are you gonna do now, b*%#?" they were saying.

"Yo, what's your name anyways?" someone asked.

"Call me Mr. Matt," I said, grateful for the subject change.

They looked at each other.

"That's your name?"

"No, but that's what my friends call me and I like consistency." This might have been a suitable explanation if they knew what consistency meant, but I figured there would be time to build vocabulary later. With nothing else to kill fifty-two minutes, I pulled out a guitar that a student had been carrying.

"You play guitar?" he said.

"Not at all, but I like to pretend I can."

Plucking at the strings I asked the girl who rejected my syllabus if she'd reconsider if we did most of the work in class. She didn't object. Actually she didn't say anything, but I took that as a sign of acquiescence.

At first, the kids eyed me skeptically, not knowing what to make

of the teacher who prefers people to call him by first name. "Respect is something that's earned," I told them. "You don't respect someone because you have to. You respect someone because you want to. I could have you call me General, but that wouldn't mean I had your respect; titles don't mean anything to me." Because I used words like "consequences" and "tardy," the kids saw that I had expectations for them.

"Our old teacher used to just give us credit for doing stuff," someone said.

For a teacher coming in during the middle of a school year, this is always the hardest part: you have to completely bust up the old classroom culture.

"Your old teacher also ran away because you all stole her puppy."

"That wasn't us, it was her other class."

"I don't care. And I don't give 'happy points' just because you did something."

"Why you gotta be so hard?" they whined.

"Why don't you have any pride in your work?" I countered.

That they might actually have some pride in their assignments hadn't occurred to them before.

"Don't you want to be proud of yourself?" I asked.

"It's not gonna matter," said a particularly vocal student in my second period class. "Nobody believes in us anyway. We're all gonna end up working at Taco Bell, so what do we care about Shakespeare?"

"What happens when you don't want to work at Taco Bell anymore?" I asked. "I can't promise you'll ever like Shakespeare, but I can

"That they might actually have some pride in their assignments hadn't occurred to them before."

promise you won't always like making minimum wage."

Expressions changed, the room quieted and I stood wondering if they were going to attack me or praise me.

"I don't want to write another essay," said the pugnacious girl who challenged my syllabus on the first day.

"That's fine. We can just have a discussion about the play as we go along."

And they surprised themselves by the amount of opinions they had regarding *Julius Caesar*, about how politics were corrupt, and how friends should never do that to friends.

As I sat there listening to them apply Shakespearian themes to everyday life, I thought about how interesting it was that my Art History degree couldn't get me a job parking cars at a country club in California, but it could convince teenagers they should want to do more than work at Taco Bell.

Book Review

Phillip Pullman's novel *The Golden Compass* is the first part of the "His dark Materials" trilogy. Written for young adults, the story is based on Milton's *Paradise Lost*, set in a parallel universe that resembles our own. There are some differences: The emotional side of people in heroine Lyra Bellaqua's world exists in animal form as companions that advise their owners, and Oxford College, where Lyra lives, is an eclectic mix of time periods. Our universe and others are connected to Lyra's, and the plot revolves around the attempts to connect these worlds by sacrificing children. Grim as it sounds, there are moments of pure fun, like when Lyra decides to run away from the sinister Miss Coulter. There are great ideas here: a magical tool called the alethiometer, parallel universes, and a beautiful, evil mother; but at times, Pullman writes with a heavy hand. As a result, the conclusion is weak.



Sam Reisner teaches IB-TOK, ESOL, and German. He's fluent in five languages and when he's not reviewing books for FCTE Newsletter, he's learning a new one.

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Awards

presented constant struggles. Freedman also spotlights some of the positive features of life during these times.

This year's Honorable Mention books are *Hitler Youth: Growing Up in Hitler's Shadow* by Susan Campbell Bartoletti (Scholastic); *Genius: A Photobiography of Albert Einstein* by Marfe Ferguson Delano (National Geographic); *ER Vets: Life in an Animal Emergency Room* by Donna Jackson (Houghton Mifflin); *Forbidden Schoolhouse: The True and Dramatic Story of Prudence Crandall and Her Students* by Suzanne Jurmain (Houghton Mifflin); and *Mosquito Bite* by Alexandra Siy and Dennis Kunkel (Charlesbridge Publishing).

NCTE members and the educational community at large may nomi-

nate titles. Any title of nonfiction or informational literature, which has as its central purpose the sharing of information, may be nominated. This includes biography, but excludes textbooks, historical fiction, folklore, or poetry. Books must have been published in the United States during the previous calendar year. For more information about the Orbis Pictus Award for Outstanding Nonfiction for Children, see <http://www.ncte.org/elem/awards/orbispictus/>.

NCTE, with 60,000 individual and institutional members worldwide, is dedicated to improving the teaching and learning of English and the language arts at all levels of education.

reviews

E.L. Konigsberg to Appear at Writers' Festival

Jackie Jones

Douglas Anderson School of the Arts

"Where they have burned books, they will end in burning human beings."

-Heinrich Heine

Summative vs. Formative Assessments

With summative assessments, students are evaluated upon completion of the work and the focus is on the final product. With formative assessments, students are evaluated during the work process and the focus is on improving the process. For example, a summative assessment would be a state achievement test and a formative assessment would be a teacher response to journal entries.

news & views

On April 8 Douglas Anderson School of the Arts will present its 10th Writers' Festival on its campus in Jacksonville from 9 A.M. until 4:30 P.M. The festival will keynote popular young adult writer and two time Newberry Award Winner, Elaine Konigsberg, best known for her books *From the Mixed Up Files of Mrs. Basil E. Frankweiler*, *A View From Saturday* and a host of other well-known young adult books. Sharing the stage with her in the morning will be poet Peter Meinke, author of eight poetry collections and winner of the Flannery O'Connor Award for fiction.

Other authors confirmed at this date are poet and former senior editor for Crown David Groff, Iowa Short Fiction Award Winner Sohrab Fracis, novelist and poet, Carl Horner (Director of Creative Writ-

ing, Flagler College), and Jacksonville writer and teacher Dorothy Fletcher.

The Festival, open to the all Florida teachers and students, provides opportunities for attendees to select workshops from among a wide selection of topics, covering craft in fiction, poetry, screenwriting, songwriting, broadcast journalism, and creative non-fiction in a writing saturated full day of hands-on workshops intended to help practicing writers hone in on skills and celebrate the craft of writing. It is the only workshop of its kind in the state.

Registration for educators and students is only \$25. Contact Jackie Jones at jonesj5@educationcentral.org for further information.

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OPRAH

to access the complex vocabulary and syntax of literature. Reading is not simply the ability to manipulate these skills; it includes the ability to comprehend and make sound judgments about what others say in print.

How does all this fit in with James Frey and his memoir now outed as a fictionalized work? When Oprah first touted the book, she cited its powerful emotional effect. Certainly good writing moves the heart as well as the mind. And yet, readers must also bring critical judgment to bear on what they read. When media's coverage of Frey's invented experiences grew loud enough, Oprah apologized to her viewers, underlining the issue of truth in a follow up interview with Frey. Millions of viewers received an ob-

ject lesson in distinguishing between a work's reliability and its commercial presentation.

Not surprisingly, the book's sales went up. Oprah's continued involvement with the book illustrated what reading expert Kyleene Beers calls the 'read and tease' approach. Read a page or a chapter, then stop at an intriguing point, and let the momen-

"Read and tease gives students a portal, a window on a work identified as valuable."

tum for curiosity build. Students may clamor for more read-and-listen time or they may be primed to seek

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Why Bother?

Wendy M. Hauver – Staff Writer
Seven Springs Middle School

The evil Keeper-of-the-Time lurks there in the darkness, red eyes unblinking and merciless. It opens its mouth and begins to bawl at me in shrill decibels. I whack the little demon and scoff at its impertinence. Who does it think it is, reminding me of my responsibilities? I know my responsibilities. I know that in less than two hours I will be standing before 32 sets of equally merciless eyes. So...why bother?

Listing the atrocities of trying to teach in today's society is easy. I could start from the top – the government – and assert how the government is oppressing teachers and hindering our ability to do our jobs by insisting that there is no room for creativity or "literature" in the classroom, that all of our students should be reading technical manuals and taking practice tests. Working my way down, I could address low pay, lack of parental support, and the fact that the kids today "just aren't the same", as factors for just not getting out of bed in the morning.

I could mention the fact that whenever I go out in public and people learn that I am a teacher, I swear it's like I told them I was a doctor and asked for them to share their list of current ailments. Of course, "the public" is very supportive, singing praise with famous hits like, "I don't know how you do it," and the ever-popular, "They don't pay you people enough." I've found that

following up that tune with, "So, you're in support of paying more taxes so I can get a raise?" tends to send people scurrying off in the other direction mumbling something about leaving their toaster on.

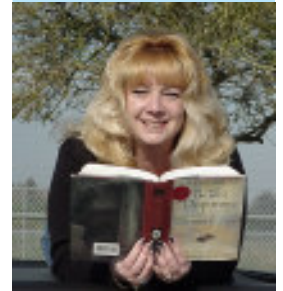
Yet, morning after morning, I find myself crawling out of bed. Sometimes, I am really crawling. I have MS, and if you know anything about the disease, it's unsympathetic when you're trying to muster up the energy to face another day. The fatigue, alone, could give one enough reason to stay under the

"...the reason Amy hasn't been working up to her potential is because the neighbor who is sexually abusing her wasn't arrested until yesterday."

covers and hide. Why do I do it? What's wrong with me? My dad knew I was going to be a teacher when I was about six. That's when he set up my 'classroom' in the basement. I had desks and a chalk board (did I forget to list that I'm allergic to chalk?); my bunnies and dolls always did their homework and never talked back, and they never burst into tears because they found out the night before that their daddy was moving out. None of them ever brought guns to school, and they never said my class was stupid.

I smack the demon on the head, silencing its nagging screeches and tell myself, tongue-in-cheek, "I teach, therefore I am." If I stay in bed a few minutes longer, I might be late for my conference this morning, and I won't know that the reason Amy hasn't been working up to

continued on page 14...



Wendy Hauver teaches seventh grade language arts in Pasco County.

The Genesis of a Novel

Novelist Beth Weaver discusses the inspiration

and creation of her novel *Rooster*

Beth N. Weaver



Beth N. Weaver

Hardback
Winslow Press,
2001

Paperback
Marshall
Cavendish,
2005

authors

When I first started writing *Rooster* there wasn't even a character named Rooster. It wasn't a novel, either, but a short story about a poor family from the Sixties who fought to save their orange grove during a freeze. When I realized that what they were really trying to save was their way of life I knew I had a bigger story. I also realized that I had at the same time created an essential question: How can one remain true to one's authentic character in the midst of societal change?

I decided to write from the point of view of the daydreaming daughter Kady who hated living on the orange grove until she was faced with losing it. I wanted her character to evolve from someone with shallow values to someone who gains a strong sense of self by being made to make tough decisions. I also wanted to show how she was far more connected to her natural world than she realized.

To make her need to escape her life understandable I saddled her with hard chores, barely literate parents, a senile grandmother, annoying siblings, a pig, next door neighbors who run a junkyard on their property, plus a boy she loves but doesn't realize she loves because his life is one of hardship, too. Underlying it all was the harshness and beauty of the landscape. To add comic relief I invented the character of Rooster. He was supposed to be a kind of human fly she was always swatting.

I then wrote a scene about how

Kady's mother refused to eat hearts of palm (a Southern tradition) because the tree dies when you cut out its heart and Maddy Palmer could not bear a single tree dying at her expense. It was meant to be a funny but revealing scene for Kady whose mother treated her harshly. But how could she be heartless if she loved palm trees so much that she couldn't eat hearts of palm? It also turned out to be a revealing scene for me because a tree cannot survive without a 'heart.'

I decided to carry this concept a step further through the character of Rooster. I remembered a tree from my childhood that had been struck by lightning and its lower trunk was gutted. Yet it struggled to grow anyway. What if Rooster were to hide inside such a tree and become its 'heart? What if in doing so this wacky kid could somehow bring Kady in touch with startling truths about survival?

In order for Rooster to hide inside a tree I decided to make him fragile. So I gave him a traumatic past. I remembered seeing rafts no

"When I realized that what they were really trying to save was their way of life, I knew I had a bigger story."

bigger than bed mattresses drifting onshore on beaches following the Communist takeover of Cuba. Refugees had fled to America on any vessel they could piece together. I decided

to have Rooster become one of these Cuban refugees. I chose not to make him an ordinary kid, but one who had been brain-damaged at birth. As a small child he'd witnessed horrifying events he couldn't verbalize,

"When he arrived in America he hid inside the hollow tree to escape the scariness of the world."

but felt deeply.

When he arrived in America he hid inside the hollow tree to escape the scariness of the world. The tree became a kind of Giving Tree, sheltering him from the storms of life. I placed the tree near the coop where Kady fed her family's chickens. She began to notice that every time she fed the chickens, she heard a shriek of laughter coming from the tree.

She decided to draw the boy out 'just to see what the goofy kid looked like.' So she put chicken feed in his hands, then gave him the title of O Mighty Protector of the Chickens as a joke. Rooster took it seriously and began to reconnect with life by nurturing the chickens.

Kady meanwhile, began to disconnect from life by getting involved with a rich, handsome guy named Jon who introduced her to drugs. So while her head was up in the clouds, Rooster was putting down roots.

I brought their worlds crashing together as Rooster suffered an accident that was partly Kady's fault. While he fought for his life in the hospital, his beloved tree was cut down. Kady started to face her life instead of run from it.

In the final scene, when Rooster climbed inside what was now a hollowed stump, the tree no longer sheltered him. Instead, it was the place that once sheltered

him. There he shielded his pet goose from the cold that threatened to destroy Kady's family's orange grove. Kady saw his hair spilling over the rim of the stump and mistook it for new shoots of growth. In a brief moment, she saw him as the Giving Tree. Witnessing this transformation, she gained the strength to face whatever lay ahead.

I learned a lot about life from spending my early childhood outdoors. My father-engineer from Baltimore-came to work at the Martin-Marietta plant in Orlando in the late fifties

when I was a baby. There were no central air conditioners back then and it was usually cooler outside than inside. There weren't many people living around us, either. Without realizing it, I became very connected to my natural world.

There were bamboo thickets, woods with swinging vines, huge flowers, sprawling oaks you could climb all the way to the sky (or at least to your roof), cool, inviting lakes and oranges you could eat off the trees.

There were also snakes, cockroaches, mosquitoes, sandspurs, and, in the summertime, air so thick you could barely breathe. I learned that the coral snake that looked like a beautiful necklace was deadly poisonous and that the tranquil lakes could transform into cauldrons of boiling water under the power of a thunderstorm. When I was four, two fishermen drowned in our lake during a sudden storm on the day I got my

"I brought their worlds crashing together..."

first rabbit's foot. I learned on that day that if you didn't respect Mother Nature she could kill you, rabbit's foot or not. She could kill

"Not all who wander are lost."

-J.R.R. Tolkien

H o l i s t i c E v a l u a t i o n

Holistic evaluations are assessments that focus on overall quality of the work and not just the correctness of a single answer. Holistic tests are generally considered more comprehensive than multiple choice tests and better measure deep understanding. In assessments of writing, holistic evaluation is a "general impression" of the entire piece.

a u t h o r s

"When I'm near the end of a book, I need to sleep in the same room with it."

-Joan Didion

Performance Assessment

A performance assessment required students to perform a task instead of simply answering a question with given set of answers. The task may be writing an essay or solving an open-ended math problem.

you anyway, but at least if you understood her ways, your odds were much better.

The hollow tree I remembered from my childhood wasn't nearly as massive as the one in my novel. It was barely big enough to squeeze inside, which I did once and ended up with a mass of cobwebs in my hair and a skink slithering over my feet. But I loved the ideas of being able to climb inside a tree. I wondered how it could keep growing at all with a hollow trunk.

Then came Hurricane Donna in 1960 and brought it crashing down. I remember seeing its silvery green leaves on the ground along with a nest of baby squirrels. They were so tiny their eyes were still shut. We took them to a neighbor's house and put them in an incubator, but they died one by one. In the back of my mind I was thinking about those squirrels when I came up with the idea of Rooster hiding inside that tree. I didn't want him to suffer the same fate, though. I wanted the tree to have nurtured him long enough to make him strong.

Seasons in the Sixties were measured by the orange trees. They were everywhere. I remember staring out car windows and watching the geometric patterns they made as you drove down a road. The fragrant blossoms signaled spring, followed by tiny green balls that swelled with the summer rains, turned orange in the cool fall nights and sweetened in the winter chill. Then, just before the blossoms came forth again, the cloyingly sweet smell of oranges cooking at the processing plant would permeate the en-

tire region. You couldn't go anywhere without breathing in the scent of those oranges.

Then came the Big Freeze of Sixty-Two that killed most of the orange trees. Grove after grove was sold to real estate developers. Before long, subdivisions began springing up. Most of the new houses were cubes of concrete blocks, with flat roofs paved with pebbles. They were painted pastel colors and reminded me of blocks of sherbet. They looked glaringly out of place on the flat stretches of bulldozed earth.

Maybe that's why I gravitated to my Girl Scout leader's house—an old, wooden house set up on concrete blocks on the edge of a lake. Its ramshackle appearance amidst a lush

Florida landscape intrigued me. It had screen doors and high ceilings that made it seem part of the outdoors. The leader's numerous children often skinny-dipped,

which shocked the girls in my troop and there were huge palmetto bugs scurrying across the wooden floors, along with piles of clutter everywhere you turned. But my leader proved to be a truly gifted teacher and much of my knowledge of native Florida is drawn from my years in her troop.

It was her house that became the setting for Rooster. It is long gone now,

having given way to a subdivision. Yet when I drive past where it once stood, I see a few familiar landmarks and remember it as the place that once nurtured me.

"How can one remain true to one's authentic character in the midst of societal change?"

- YALSA Best Books For Young Adults
- ALA (American Library Association) Top Ten First Novel For Youth
- Amazon Editor's Choice: Top Ten Teen Novels 2001
- Children's Choice Literature 2001

Recipes for Classroom Success

*Pulling the Trigger: Using a Basic Acting Exercise
to Understand Tone*

Allen J. Gorney

"The pen is mightier than the sword, but no one is worthy to pull it from the stone."

-James Bauerle

Grade level: 9-11

Skill: Understanding Tone, Understanding Character, Interpreting Drama

SSS: LA.E.2.4.2, TH.A.1.4.1

Objective: To quickly identify the tone or tones clearly present or hidden in a character's line of dialogue by first beginning with the character's appropriate emotional state.

Steps:

1. Pick a line of dialogue from one character, preferably a line with multiple sentences. Select a volunteer with the class to be the actor.
2. Have the students identify the character's obvious emotion in the line or lines.
3. Have the students select a "trigger" word or phrase and have the actor deliver the line by inserting the trigger after each punctuation mark, for example "you jerk."
4. Have the students pick a contradictory trigger to illustrate Stella's conflicting emotions in the scene, for example "I love you."

Example with first trigger:

Stella: I hope you're pleased with your doings. [you jerk]. I never had so much trouble swallowing food in my life, [you jerk] looking at that girls face and the empty chair! [you jerk] (Stella to Stanley in Scene 8 of Tennessee Williams's A Streetcar Named Desire)

Example with contradictory trigger:

Stella: I hope you're pleased with your doings. [I love you, you jerk!]. I never had so much trouble swallowing food in my life, [I love you, you jerk] looking at that girls face and the empty chair! [I love you, you jerk]

Assessment Questions:

1. How does the trigger heighten the emotion of the scene?
2. Why does the character feel this way in this moment?
3. Identify the tone of the line.

*We're looking for your "recipe for classroom success." Please send an original lesson idea to Allen Gorney at gorneya@ocps.net. Be sure to include the following information: **grade and skill level, corresponding Sunshine State Standard, objective, steps and assessment.***

Increasing the rigor of the lesson:

Discuss how the actor plays against the obvious emotion of the scene, also known as "playing against the grain of the scene." Clearly, Stella is angry, but what if the actress takes great efforts to mask Stella's emotion in the scene? Doing so strengthens the tension in the scene and reveals the deep subtext of the line. Actors who can do this are infinitely more successful in the character's portrayal, and charisma is often readily apparent.

classroom

"No tears in the writer, no tears in the reader."

-Robert Lee Frost

Criterion Referenced Tests

Assessments that have one, fixed performance standard for all students and student groups.

...continued from page 8

OPRAH

out the work themselves. Either way is fine. Read and tease gives students a portal, a window on a work identified as valuable. In a world characterized by podcasting, instant messaging, infomercials, and the continuous reworking of trivial news, all of us, students included, need to distinguish truth from falsity, cleverness from accuracy,

the valuable from the merely slick. Reading to students from engaging items in newspapers, periodicals, and even trade journals sharpens listening skills, comprehension, and background knowledge.

Further, reading from complex, longer works allows students to engage broad themes that make these works important to our culture. At a time when informational reading has the upper hand, works of literature offer the imagined real. Students need to know the cues and conventions for distinguishing one from the other. They need to enjoy discuss-

ing and discerning the intention of the author. We can do this, even in a climate of test readiness.

CONGRATULATIONS!

TO FORMER FCTE PRESIDENT

JAN GRAHAM

LEON COUNTY TEACHER OF THE YEAR

...continued from page 9

WHY BOTHER?

her potential is because the neighbor who is sexually abusing her wasn't arrested until yesterday. If I don't go to school today, there will be no one there to slip Jason the two bucks his mom 'forgot' to give him for lunch, and he might go hungry. If I don't get into the shower right now, my students will never learn how to use transitions, and they'll all fail the FCAT and only be 'successful completers,' and not graduates.

It might sound cliché, but I teach because I really do think that I can make a difference. I'm not so unrealistic as to think that I can 'save them all'...but I am realistic enough to know that if I can help one of them make it through another day unscathed, with maybe just a little bit more knowledge to go on, I've done my job. I don't need my students' scores measured to tell me whether or not I'm a successful teacher. I have those few students who show up at my door every now and then to tell me how much they miss me now that they're in high school. I have the assistant manager at Kash and Karry who always comes 'down from the cage,' to carry my groceries out because I taught him how to fill out a job application when he was 14. I go home at night with a clear conscience, knowing that I earned more than my paycheck will ever reflect, and I fall asleep hoping that tomorrow will be the same.

Frequently Asked Questions about Assessment

"The important thing is not to stop questioning."

-Albert Einstein

What makes an assessment "high-stakes"?

A single test determines the outcome of an important event such as passing a grade/course, graduating from high school, or changing the funding for a school.

Are high stakes assessments required by law?

Yes. No Child Left Behind mandates that every state test children in reading or language arts and math every year between grades 3 and 8 and once between grades 10 and 12. Beginning in the 2005-2006 school year, science assessments also become mandatory. Federal law does not mandate the testing of any other subjects (including writing); however, states can assess these other subjects at their own discretion.

What is AYP and how does it relate to assessments?

AYP stands for adequate yearly progress. All students in a school must make a certain (state determined) progress each year for the school to make AYP. Progress is determined by performance on the high-stakes assessments. If the school does not make AYP, they may suffer serious sanctions including the complete restructuring of the school. The progress students make each year must be such that all students (including all disaggregated subgroups) will be proficient, as measured by the state assessments, by the 2013-2014 school year.

After consulting state and local leaders, the U.S. Department of Education issued a letter in July, 2002 clarifying the definition of adequate yearly progress, a provision of the No Child Left Behind Act.

What is disaggregation and why is it important?

All test scores are not just judged by the full school but also by small subgroups of students. The subgroups represent minorities, learning disabilities, socioeconomic status, English language learners, etc. All subgroups must make AYP for the whole school to make AYP.

Norm Referenced Tests

Assessments that measure each child's performance against the performance of other test takers so that the standard is the median performance of all test takers. Thus, half the population is expected to perform below average while the other half is expected to perform above average.

assessment

FCTE Membership Application

The membership year is from October 1, 2005 to September 30, 2006.

DR MR MS MRS

Last Name _____ First Name _____

Home Address _____

City _____ State _____ Zip _____ - _____

Home Phone () _____ Home FAX () _____

Email _____

Email address will not be disclosed to anyone but FCTE.

School Name _____ County _____

School Address _____

City _____ State _____ Zip _____ - _____

School Phone () _____ School FAX () _____

Public Private Other _____

I would like to be the SITE REPRESENTATIVE for this school

Please send FCTE correspondence to my Home School

MEMBERSHIP INFORMATION

- New Member \$20.00
- Renewal \$20.00
- 2 Year Renewal \$35.00
- Retired \$10.00
- 2 Year Retired Renewal..... \$17.50
- Student (One Year)..... \$10.00

Signature of Sponsoring Professor _____

Return this form with your check or money order (made payable to FCTE) to:

Paula Clements
4912 Toni Avenue
Lakeland, FL 33813
paula.clements@polk-fl.net

Since FCTE will be sending its newsletter via email, it is necessary for you to submit your email address if you wish to receive *FCTE Newsletter*. We will also send the "FCTE Newsbox," which you may opt out of via email.

AFFILIATION

- Administration
- Elementary
- Middle/Junior High
- High School
- Community College
- Four Year College
- University
- Student
- Retiree
- Other _____

ARE YOU

- A member of NCTE?
- Willing to become involved in FCTE?
- A member of a local council?
local council name _____
- A local council officer?
Title _____

Saving Students with Literature and Laughter

FCTE Program Proposal Form
2006 Conference for Professional Development
October 12-14, 2006
Renaissance Orlando Hotel, Orlando

- Presenters for accepted sessions will be notified by e-mail by August 1, 2006.
- All presenters are expected to pay the conference registration fee.
- Proposal deadline: May 15, 2006

Presenter(s) Name _____

Institution Affiliation/Location _____

Home Address _____

City _____ State _____ Zip _____

Home Phone _____ Work/Cell Phone _____

E-mail _____ Fax (_____) _____

Proposed Presentation: (Presentations are scheduled for 60 minutes.)

Title _____

Please attach the following: (1) brief description of your presentation to be printed in the program; (2) a more specific description for selection committee review—explaining the presentation in more depth, how you will present it, how it reflects the theme “Saving Our Students with Literature and Laughter”; (3) any other information pertinent to selection of your presentation (optional); (4) your credentials.

Target Audience: ___Elementary ___Middle ___High School ___College/Univ ___All Levels

Request for an overhead projector: ___Yes ___No (Please note that overhead projectors cost FCTE approximately \$50 a day. Please do not ask for one unless you intend to use it. Presenters must provide their own equipment other than an overhead projector. If you plan to bring other equipment, please list so that a room with appropriate outlets can be arranged.)

If selected, would you be willing to give your presentation twice during the conference? ___Yes ___No

Do you want to be considered for the Jean Stallings Memorial Grant? ___Yes ___No

Mail this form to:

Dr. Joan F. Kaywell, 2006 Program Chair
University of South Florida, EDU 162.
Tampa, FL 33620
Kaywell@tempest.coedu.usf.edu
813-974-3516
Additional information can be found @ www.fccte.org

2006 Nomination Form
FCTE Teacher of the Year – FCTE Beginning Teacher of the Year –
FCTE Honor Award Recipient – FCTE Nancy McGee Scholarship Award

*Directions: The following will serve as the form for all of the above nominations.
Please check the appropriate box beside the award for which you are nominating someone.*

_____ FCTE Honor Award: FCTE member who has given notable service to advance the teaching of the language arts. Criteria: FCTE member for minimum of ten years, evidence of leadership within the profession, attendance at FCTE/ NCTE conferences, respected by peers.

_____ FCTE Teacher of the Year: FCTE member considered an outstanding classroom teacher of English. Criteria: FCTE member, minimum of five years experience in Florida, currently full-time teacher of English in a Florida school, demonstration of excellence in teaching.

_____ FCTE Beginning Teacher of the Year: FCTE member considered an outstanding classroom teacher of English. Criteria: FCTE member, has completed at least one year of teaching but not more than five, currently full-time teacher of English in a Florida school, demonstration of excellence in teaching.

_____ Nancy McGee Scholarship Award: Pre-service teacher may receive up to \$250 to attend Fall Conference. Both nominating professor and student will be asked to write answers to specific questions.

Nominations must be postmarked by May 30, 2006.
Send by e-mail to diane.bondurant@polk-fl.net
or by U. S. Mail to Diane Bondurant, 2601 Thornhill Rd., Auburndale, FL 33823

Name of Nominee: _____
Nominee's Home Mailing Address: _____
_____ Zip _____
Nominee's Home Phone _____ School Phone _____
Nominee's School Name/Address: _____
_____ Zip _____
Name of Person Nominating: _____
Your Address: _____
Your Home Phone _____ School Phone _____
Your Relationship to the Nominee (administrator, colleague, etc.): _____

Florida Council of Teachers of English 2006 Writing Awards

Instructions and Guidelines for Teachers and Student Writers

1. Any Florida teacher of English may sponsor a **MAXIMUM** of **FIVE** student nominees.
2. Any Florida student (grades 6 - 12) may submit up to three entries in up to three of the five categories: (1) Poetry; (2) Fiction (1500 word max.); (3) Drama; (4) Non-fiction/Personal Narrative (1500 word max); (5) Non-fiction/Other Essays (literary analysis, character sketch, etc-1500 word max).
3. A single selection (one poem, one piece of fiction, one work of drama, or one work of non-fiction) constitutes an entry.
4. The student's name, teacher's name, school, or district **MUST NOT** appear on any page of the entry. This information must be on the entry form **ONLY**. Title pages should **NOT** be submitted.
5. All entries must be submitted in electronic form and must be accompanied by an entry form.
6. Term paper/research papers will **NOT** be accepted. Critical analyses which reference published works are acceptable.
7. Students or teachers must keep copies of entries.

If you have not completed these steps, the entry will be DISQUALIFIED.

The entry form can be accessed online at www.fcte.org. Once completed, the entry form and the student work should be attached as **TWO SEPARATE ATTACHMENTS** to one email addressed to wood@coe.ufl.edu. Understand that in submitting the work, you are verifying that it is the authentic, original work of the student. You will receive an acknowledgement via email once your

NEW For the
2006 Young
Writing Awards
competition, all
submissions must be
made on-line.

Submit entries via email to:

Dr. Susan Wood
Writing Awards Co-Chair
wood@coe.fsu.edu

Entries not received by midnight Monday, May 15, 2006 will not be accepted.

Winners receive a certificate of merit, recognition at the FCTE Fall Conference, a \$100.00 cash award, and copies of the 2006 Student Writing Anthology.

"Those who educate children well are more to be honored than parents, for these gave only life, those the art of living well."

-Aristotle

"Most of all, perhaps, we need an intimate knowledge of the past. Not that the past has anything magical about it, but we cannot study the future."

-C.S. Lewis

awards



FCTE

www.fcte.org

ANNUAL

CALENDAR

2006

Beginning Teacher of the Year and English Teacher of the Year

September
NCTE Achievement Awards in Writing - Coordinators submit the names of judges, winners and teachers to *Florida English Journal* by 9.30

October
FCTE Membership Renewal by 10.1
FCTE Fall Conference
Fall Board Meeting at FCTE Conference

November
Florida English Journal fall issue mailed

December
FCTE Newsletter deadline for post conference issue - 12.1
All treasurer requests should reach treasurer before 12.10 for end of fiscal year

The FCTE fiscal year coincides with the normal calendar year: January 1-December 31; The membership year is from October 1-September 30.

January
Winter Board Meeting
FCTE Newsletter mailed

February
FCTE Newsletter deadline for spring issue - 2.1
Florida English Journal deadline for submissions for spring issue - 2.28

March
FCTE Newsletter spring issue mailed, includes items for:
*Beginning Teacher of the Year
*English Teacher of the Year
*Writing Awards Competition
*FCTE Honor Award

April
N/A

May
Spring Board Meeting
Florida English Journal spring issue mailed

DEADLINE OF 5.31
*Writing Awards
NOMINATIONS FOR:
*Beginning Teacher of the Year
*English Teacher of the Year
*FCTE Honor Award
*Nancy McGee Scholarship applications mailed to English teacher

preparation programs throughout Florida

June
FCTE Beginning Teacher of the Year and Teacher of the Year materials mailed to FCTE board members for judging

July
FCTE Newsletter deadline for pre-conference issue - 7.1
NCTE Literary Magazine Contest deadline - 7.1

August
FCTE Newsletter pre-conference issue mailed
Announcement of finalists for

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First Vice-President
Diane Bondurant

Second Vice-President
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Recording Secretary
Leslie D. Jones

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Darian Walker

NCTE Promising Young Writers Program
Dr. Susan Wood