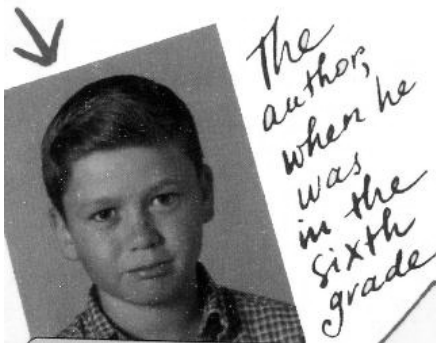




# CONNECTIONS

WINTER 2006 VOLUME 6, ISSUE 3

Jack Gantos  
**hole in my life**



## HOLE IN MY LIFE: BUILDING CRITICAL AND CREATIVE THINKING CURRICULUM 2006 AETA CONFERENCE THEME

### GANTOS ENGAGES READERS WITH WARMTH AND WIT

Mingling at the 2005 NCTE Publishers Gala on Sunday night, feeling shy and wondering how to start a conversation with one of the many well known authors in attendance, we heard, seconds after the dignitaries had been introduced, a commotion over in the corner and a roar of laughter swelling over the murmur of voices.

A quick trip across the room and there, surrounded by laughing, entertained faces stood a diminutive, dark-haired man. Jack Gantos, of course. Telling one of his many wonderful stories, and engaging his audience with his warmth, wit and humility. Gantos is the life of every party, and knows exactly what his audience needs to settle in and feel comfortable.

A popular conference speaker, Jack Gantos comes to us this fall as our guest author, along with our keynote speaker, Dr. Beverly Chin. Make plans to attend! —Wendy Kelleher



### AWARDS AND HONORS

- \* Booklinks' "Few Good Books of 1994" for *Heads or Tails: Stories from Sixth Grade*
- \* School Library Journal Best Book of the Year and a Bulletin Blue Ribbon Book for *Jack's New Power: Stories from a Caribbean Year*
- \* A New York Public Library Book for the Teen Age for *Jack's Black Book*
- \* A National Book Award Finalist, an ALA Notable Children's Book for Young Adults and an NCSS-CBC Notable Children's Trade Book in the Field of Social Studies for *Joey Pigza Swallowed the Key*
- \* A Newbery Honor Book for *Joey Pigza Loses Control*

### MAKE YOUR CONNECTIONS ...

WHAT: FALL AETA CONFERENCE  
WHEN: OCTOBER 6&7, FRIDAY AND SATURDAY  
WHERE: CHANDLER-GILBERT COMMUNITY COLLEGE  
WHO: YOU, THE LANGUAGE ARTS TEACHERS OF ARIZONA

WHY: Facing the challenges of keeping teaching, learning and thinking alive in classrooms across America requires perseverance, creativity, a sense of humor and a voice loud (and united) enough to be heard. If we as teachers are going to help our students make sense of it all, we need to be positive and aggressive, standing together to deal with critical issues in our classrooms. Attending state conferences is one avenue we can take to do just that—CONNECT. We need each other. Register today for AETA's fall conference.

HOW: To register, call Jean Boreen at NAU, Phone number (928) 523-6765 or go online to <http://www.asu.edu/aeta/> and click on Conference

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In the next issue of *Connections*, we'd like to hear more of your "On the lighter side" stories from the classroom. Please send your stories and a picture illustrating the story (or just your smiling face!) Email to [wendy.kelleher@asu.edu](mailto:wendy.kelleher@asu.edu) or [david.pegam@asu.edu](mailto:david.pegam@asu.edu)  
For "In the Trenches" we'd like to hear what you're doing with VISUAL RHETORIC, digital literacy projects, media literacy. Send examples and descriptions to [wendy.kelleher@asu.edu](mailto:wendy.kelleher@asu.edu) or [david.pegam@asu.edu](mailto:david.pegam@asu.edu) THANKS! We all make *Connections* through YOU.



## FROM THE AETA PRESIDENT

### TEACHER AS RESEARCHER

I suspect most English teachers do not regard themselves as researchers. However, if we think about what we tell our students—*you have something to say and a voice to say it with*—it is quite clear that all that it will take for us to participate in the research process is to think critically about our experience and put pen to paper (or fingers to the keyboard). Statistics are **not** required. For good reason, most research dealing with middle and secondary English instruction falls into one of two types—historical studies and qualitative, or ethnographic, research. Historical research is involved with the study of past events. For example, the following might make interesting historical research study:



Lee Brown, AETA President

1. Effects the AIMS testing program on English education in your district—what English teachers did before the test, how the transition went with attention to leadership and staff development activities and what teachers are doing now
2. The history of the Arizona English Teachers Association might not only be informative it might be entertaining
3. Qualitative research, now more frequently referred to as ethnographic research, involves the study of current events rather than past events. It involves the collection of narrative data (non-numerical data) on many variables over an extended period of time in a naturalistic setting. Participant observation is frequently used in qualitative research. Case studies are also used in qualitative research.
4. The history of the development and implementation of a specific innovation in your classroom—*e.g.*, your attempt to replicate Margaret Atwell's student-based language arts program.
5. A case study of the attempt to implement a particular reading that evoked interesting results—we would love to learn about what happened when you taught Gary Soto, Laurie Anderson, Chris Crutcher or whomever...
6. A multi-case study of students who have excelled despite non-facilitating environments.

What we do in our profession is highly idiosyncratic. Many of us like it that way. While most traditional research aims at generalizability by controlling variables, we recognize that much can be learned from the experiences of a single individual, even if that experience can never be replicated. We know that there is great value in reading the accounts of others or else we wouldn't value literature so highly.

—Lee Brown, AETA President [lhbrown@cox.net](mailto:lhbrown@cox.net)

## TEACHERS AS WRITERS CONTEST

This contest is open to all English language arts teachers, from elementary through college, as well as to administrators, curriculum specialists and graduate students. Current membership in AETA is a requirement for entry—please see the website for details.

Entrants may submit one entry in any of the following categories:

- Poetry (120 lines)
- Short story (3,000 words)
- Nonfiction prose (3,000 words)

### AWARDS

3 winners (1 from each category) will be awarded a \$100 cash prize, and an invitation to the AETA Executive Board dinner with guest author, Jack Gantos, and keynote speaker Bev Chin on Friday, October 6, 2006! In addition, 3 honorees will be extended this special invitation.

### SUBMISSIONS

#### E-mail submissions:

Make a cover page with your name, the genre, title and address, then Double space (except poetry) entry.

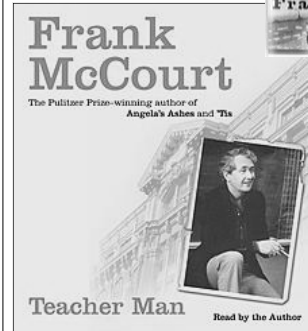
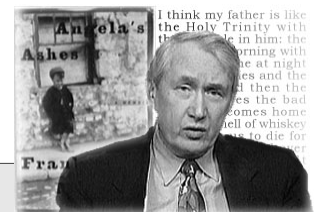
ATTACH as Microsoft Word document.

Write AETA T/WCONTEST in subject line.

Mail-in submissions: Make a cover page with your name, the genre, title and address.

Send two hard copies of the entry, typed, double-spaced (except poetry) w/ cover page attached to both copies. Save on a disk or cd with entry saved as a Microsoft Word document. Send submissions to:

Kelly O'Rourke  
374 E. Corrine Dr.  
cottsdale, AZ 85260  
[Korourke@peoplepc.com](mailto:Korourke@peoplepc.com)



Review of Frank McCourt's newest book, *Teacher Man* on page 5



## AETA TEACHERS: ON THE LIGHTER SIDE



### LOOKING YOUNG NOT ALWAYS A PLUS

Fresh out of college, I was pumped to finally have my own classroom. Upon arrival at Skyline High School, I was worried about all of the important stuff on your first day...where to park...am I too dressed up or do I look like one of the students...do I have to "check in" with anybody...and most importantly, I wonder when I get my first paycheck! As I strolled timidly upon the school grounds, I found my classroom and decided that I would go make some copies of an intro assignment I had planned for the first day. This being the pre-year teacher work days, students were not allowed on campus yet. As I walked to the copy room, trying to remember how to use the copy machine or if it was even going to be like the one I used student teaching, I heard an intimidating voice behind me say, "Can I help you?" This question was asked in such a stern, almost angry way, that it was surely not directed towards me. I kept walking. "Hey you, can I help you with something?" the voice repeated. I looked back, realizing that it was one of our administrators and that I was in trouble. "Did you need something?" the voice said again. I turned to her and replied in a "4th grader just getting caught eating glue" voice, "Umm, just trying to make some copies." After seeing me up close, the administrator's face went blank and she replied, "Oh, I'm sorry Mr. Cooper, I thought you were a student." Needless to say, this was not the last time I got yelled at for being somewhere I was not supposed to be because I was a "student." Looking young may be something that is "prized" when I get a bit older, but for now it seems to get me into a lot of unwanted trouble. Overall, my experience in the Mesa School District and especially at Skyline High School has been AWESOME! The District Office was great to me when I was having problems trying to get here all the way from Iowa, and Skyline has made me feel very welcome. The administrators and staff here could not be better.

—Dustin Cooper, Skyline Basketball, Mesa, Arizona

### LETTUCE PLEASE PAY ATTENTION!

As a student teacher I was plagued by recurring and disturbing dreams. The two that occurred most frequently were the "I thought today was Saturday or Sunday and therefore didn't show up" dream and the "Oh my God! I'm up here naked" dream. Although neither of these dreams ever became reality, there were still things that went wrong. One day I was having trouble keeping my 4th period American Literature class focused. Nothing I did could keep them on task. During the passing period I found out why. I glanced into the mirror I kept hanging on the cabinet door in the classroom to find a large, green, glowing piece of lettuce crammed between my lower front teeth! I was mortified. I felt like I wouldn't be able to face them the next day. I let them know that if they didn't tell me next time I would assign some horrific essay!

—Ann Opseth, English/Reading Teacher, Skyline High School, Mesa, Arizona

### ONCE AN INDIANA GIRL, ALWAYS AN INDIANA GIRL

I've heard it said that, "All you really need to know, you learn in kindergarten." For me, I think I learned it all my first year of teaching. In fact, I think I learned more than the kids did that year. Being a young teacher and an actress, spirit weeks were particularly fun for me. I would go all out. I have an enviable costume box at home. The theme for my most memorable spirit day was "Orange Shirt Day." My school has a very strict dress code. Students, who arrive wearing a non-conforming shirt, are asked to change into one of 40 orange polo shirts we have around for just that purpose. On any given day, it's likely to see 20-30 of these polos in circulation. It has almost become a game for the students to see how many of them could wind up wearing an orange polo. A badge of rebellion, you might say. Rebellion put down, but nonetheless, that orange shirt symbolizes the age old battle for control between adult and adolescent. So on this particular spirit day, students and teachers were encouraged to wear an orange shirt of their own. Now this was great for me. I am a very proud alumnus of Indiana University, and I just so happened to have an orange IU t-shirt. For those not familiar with the Midwestern university, their colors are actually red and white (well, crimson and cream if you're serious about it) but this shirt happened to be orange. I wore my shirt with pride until 5th block. What is it about 5th block classes? Maybe it's the sugar high from lunch, but every year 5th block tends to be my most rambunctious class. We were 10 minutes into class when James in the back of the room asks, "Miss McCawley, do you work weekends at Hooters or something?" I was confused at first, and then quickly turned bright crimson and cream when I looked down to learn how similar the words Hooters and Hoosiers really are.



—Corrine McCawley, Arizona State University

### FORTY-ODD YEARS IN THE TRENCHES (SOME OF THEM VERY ODD, INDEED...)

If I had been a woman who believed in signs, omens, and portents, I'd have walked away from my fourth-grade classroom after the second week and never looked back. If there were ever an inauspicious beginning for a teaching career, it was mine. In the course of two weeks, I lost my voice entirely, a sweet little boy upchucked all over his reading book (provoking fears of a barf-o-rama among the other students), and I learned that my new principal was an officious martinet with a Napoleonic complex. I lasted one semester, and thought it would be my last. Ha! Fate had other things in mind for me. Forty something years later, I approach retirement having taught every grade from fourth through graduate school, wondering where all those years and all those kids have gone. I didn't last long as an elementary teacher; I was young and impatient, and discovered I really didn't much like small children in large groups. The laughter of happy children sort of ticked me off. So, it was on to middle school (then junior high). Whoo-hoo! If I'd had my problems with elementary, I was in no way prepared for middle schoolers. That's the only level I've taught that I'd not go back to under any circumstances; I'd become the best educated bag lady in Cochise County before I'd return to middle school teaching. On to high school. I taught for several years at Linden Unified High School in the Central Valley of California. I enjoyed my high school students, and found that watching them grow through four years of development was profoundly satisfying. Seeing that squeaky-voiced, obnoxious freshman become a tall, polite senior is perhaps one of the reasons teachers stick with high school. (Of course, some of those obnoxious freshmen become even more obnoxious seniors, having had four years to hone their skills, but let's not go there.) After some years of teaching high school in California, we moved our family to Utah. I struggled unsuccessfully to get a public school teaching job, with no luck whatever. I couldn't even get an interview. Thus, I discovered one of the nasty little secrets of the teaching profession: One can become overqualified quickly. I had a graduate degree, many units of graduate study, many years of experience—a school district could hire two new college graduates for what they'd have to pay me. What to do? Well, if I were overqualified for public schools, I was underqualified for college teaching, so I applied at a local college and was hired the next day. True story. I taught at Weber State University in Ogden, Utah, for several years, until my dean gave me the motivation to go back and complete the Ph. D.: He told me he'd fire me if I didn't. I've spent most of the last twenty years in academia, and that has been the most rewarding teaching experience of my life. I've learned three things about the teaching life that I've found can be generalized to most levels of education. A faculty—at any level—consists of a group of highly educated, intelligent adults who cannot be brought to agreement on any single issue, up to and including a mother's day resolution. Punitive and coercive measures do not work well with either faculty or students. The saying, "If you build a better mousetrap, you just make smarter mice," takes over here. They'll both just find more creative ways to subvert the system. Just about the time you think you've got a handle on this teaching business, it's time to retire. Heck. I'm going to miss my captive audience.

—June Harris, newly retired





Wendy Kelleher

## FROM THE EDITOR:

The idea occurred to me every time something really incredible happened in my classroom those first ten years of high school teaching: I'd ask myself, "Why don't you figure out why this happened, conduct a few tests, and then write about this and submit it to *The English Journal* or some other magazine that teachers read?" Sometimes I'd even say it out loud to Christine Avery, the art teacher

whose classroom was next door to mine.

We never thought of ourselves as Researchers. The image of bespectacled scientists in white lab coats carrying giant clipboards and making notations on a chart terrified us. "Research" in our brains, Christine and I, meant "math" Lots of math. Spreadsheets and graphs and mind-numbing numerical calculations and *n*-factors. I barely squeaked by in my Statistics class, and sweating, I vowed never to do more math than necessary to calculate grades and balance my checkbook. The semester I took three math classes (just to get the torture over), honestly, I nearly had a nervous breakdown. If it hadn't been for my son and daughter's patient, "MOM, you CAN do this" I'd have gone over the edge. I knew I'd never be a Researcher simply because I couldn't do the math.

Besides, teaching kept me so busy, I was lucky if I had time to think about the next day's lesson, much LESS time (or energy) to think about conducting experiments in my classroom. I also hated the idea of seeing my students as lab rats—the objects of a "study." It all seemed so impersonal. And finally, I reasoned, how could I ever quantify on a chart or in a set of numbers the wonderful, daily events that kept me in the classroom?

Like the time I got frustrated with my seniors because they didn't seem to be getting the idea of a paragraph in which the ideas flowed logically from thought to thought. They'd turn in "rabbit hunt" paragraphs with ideas jumping all over the page, in no particular order. I sat down one night and wrote a silly skit about a bunch of kids at a party, carrying on a nonsensical conversation with no one really connecting to what the other was saying. My seniors laughed their way through a reader's theatre performance of the skit, then afterward we talked about paragraph structure in our research papers. The students enthusiastically compared paragraphs in their term papers to the conversations in the skit.

And suddenly, the idea clicked. I remember thinking at the time what a cool (and effective) idea to use a skit to teach a writing concept! Unfortunately, I never took the time to look more deeply into the idea, nor did I ever record what happened when I tried it again the next semester. I've forgotten the details now, seven years later. To my own loss and the loss of other frustrated composition teachers who might have had a terrific idea with which to communicate an important concept for young writers!

Not till I began work on my Master's thesis did I start to seriously reflect upon, then eventually don the strange new hat of Teacher-Researcher. What did I discover? that Teacher-Researchers are plain old, regular teachers like my friend Christine and me, but with an added responsibility—to not only do what we do, but to reflect on what we do and try to make connections to a bigger picture. Ultimately that's the purpose of teacher-research, both quantitative and qualitative: to illuminate and extend our understanding of how and why things work the way they do inside and outside of our classrooms.

Since that time I've entered my classroom a different person. I know I don't have to crunch a bunch of numbers to "conduct research." I just have to pay attention, reflect, and make connections. In the process, I improve my practice and that of my colleagues. A great place to submit such "research" is NCTE's Classnotes. Or Connections!! We'd love to continue hearing your stories, like the ones in our regular feature, In the Trenches, on page 9. Enjoy!

### SEND SUBMISSIONS TO:

Attn: Wendy Kelleher  
ASU Department of English  
PO Box 870302  
Tempe, AZ 85287-0302  
or email to: Wendy.Kelleher@asu.edu



## ARIZONA AUTHOR READINGS AND EVENTS

### MARCH 30, 2006

**"Food Writing: Alimentary, My Dear Watson"** A lecture by Nikki Buchanan, Restaurant Critic, *Phoenix Magazine* | Language & Literature Bldg Rm 316 (LL 316) ASU; 3:15 p.m.



**A Reading by Lois Roma-Deeley** from her book North-Sight: Poems. | Paradise Valley Community College (18401 N 32nd St) Phoenix; 6:15 p.m.

### APRIL 7, 2006

**A Poetry Reading by Cynthia Hogue (*The Incognito Body*) and Sally Ball (*Annus Mirabilis*)** | Changing Hands Bookstore (6428 S McClintock) Tempe; 7:00 p.m.



**The National Writing Project** is the premier effort to improve writing in America. Through its professional development model, NWP builds the leadership, programs, and research needed for teachers to help their students become successful writers and learners.

**Every student** deserves a highly skilled teacher of writing. To that end, each of the 195 NWP sites conducts an annual summer institute, attended by the most experienced teachers in the area. Together, these teachers prepare for leadership roles by demonstrating their most effective practices, studying research, and improving their knowledge of writing by writing themselves.

**After the institute**, writing project teachers conduct project-sponsored programs in their own schools and in neighboring schools and districts, with two purposes: developing teacher knowledge and leadership in their home communities and putting this knowledge and leadership to work to improve student achievement.

### Southern Arizona Writing Project

University of Arizona  
English Department  
PO Box 210067  
Tucson, Arizona 85721-0067  
Phone: 520-621-3436  
Fax: 520-621-5410  
Email: [sawp@email.arizona.edu](mailto:sawp@email.arizona.edu)  
Website: <http://sawp.web.arizona.edu>

### Northern Arizona Writing Project

NAWP  
Northern Arizona University  
Box 6032  
Flagstaff, Arizona 86011  
Phone: 928-523-2557  
Fax: 928-523-1479  
Email: [Erika.Konrad@nau.edu](mailto:Erika.Konrad@nau.edu)  
Website: <http://www.nau.edu/english/nawp>



**DEAR TEACHER: LUNCHTIME BLUES**

I am a new teacher, in my first full year of teaching. I teach high-school English. When I first entered this profession, I was older- 42 - and had a lot of different work experience behind me, including 10 years of working for large banks. I was looking for a more "meaningful" career, one where I could give back to the community and also be challenged intellectually and creatively. So far, I have found that teaching fills all these needs for me. The hardest part this first year hasn't been the lesson planning or grading, although those things have taken a huge toll on my time and family. The most difficult part for me has been lunchtime.

I guess I had this idea that lunch would be spent with my fellow teachers exchanging ideas, discussing classroom strategies and sharing successes and failures. I pictured us supporting each other's efforts in the classroom. I was wrong. While we do share lesson plans, and teachers will always help you when you are in need, I have found that the majority of my colleagues spend their lunch hour complaining about that which should be the most important to us: students.

"Do you have Tom Jones?"

"Yes."

"Does he cause you any problems?"

"You mean, any more so than the rest of these idiots I teach every day?"

"Well, I know that he's cheating on my tests, but I haven't been able to catch him in the act."

"Oh, yes, he was cheating in my class, too. He got Saturday school and was almost expelled when I caught him."

"Great! How did you do it?"

"I set it up so he thought I wasn't in the room, and then I snuck up behind him and caught him with the cheat sheet in his hand!"

"That's fantastic! I wish I could just get him out of my classroom for good."

This is a very typical conversation at my lunch table. I hope it makes your stomach turn, because it certainly does mine. Numbly, I chew on my sandwich, wishing to have the courage to stand up for these students, even though I don't know who they are. These teachers are good human beings. For the most part, I enjoy their company UNTIL the conversation turns to our work. At first I tried interjecting comments of concern - after all, my children go to this school, and some of the students mentioned are their friends. These comments silenced my colleagues for the time being, creating uncomfortable pauses and even chased one of them away from the lunch table for good. Slowly, however, the student bashing returned as I seemed to be the lone dissenting voice. I sought advice from my mentors: don't eat with them. Stand up for the students. Tell them it's hard enough to be a new teacher and you just don't need the negativity. Well, because of the nature of my personality, I chose the cowardly retreat. My colleagues' feelings were hurt that I wasn't eating lunch with them any more, but I didn't have the courage to tell them why. First, I tried eating lunch in the teacher's lounge instead of with my fellow English teachers: same problems there, only on a bigger scale. I don't have a classroom of my own because I am a roving teacher, so eating in my room is out. I don't want to eat in the cafeteria with the students, because I like to give my own children space. Lately, I've been considering the car. Any suggestions?

—Lori Hart

**FRANK MCCOURT'S *Teacher Man*: A MUST READ FOR ALL TEACHERS**

Looking for a teaching gem which will help rejuvenate your enthusiasm for teaching? *Teacher Man* by Frank McCourt is a perfect read. After first hearing McCourt's Irish accent proclaim, "I am a teacher first, and a writer second" last November during his Keynote Address of the 2005 NCTE Convention, I knew this book would be a page-turner.

With the same sarcastic sense of humor he spoke with, the 258 pages of *Teacher Man* proclaim McCourt's development as an educator of 27 years, spanning 5 New York high schools and 1 college. In this third book, the Pulitzer Prize-winning author shares both his triumphs as well as his failed attempts of reaching his students. The realism of McCourt's experiences echoes the connection which he shared at NCTE: "Our work [Teaching] is most profound. There is no occupation that requires more doing."

It is this sense of continuous "doing" which keeps educators in need of a good read and creative ideas. Throughout each of the 18 chapters, you are exposed to alternative, real-world methods of teaching, such as studying the art of writing excuse notes and combining recipes, poetry, and music for memorable lessons. When not re-living McCourt's academic freedoms, he presents valuable lessons in creating a strong sense of community. His use of dialogue throughout the book really makes you feel as if you are sitting right there in his classes.

The joy of this book is that each reader will take a different message from these anecdotes McCourt provides. Be assured, however, that all readers will come away with a reminder for why we teach, a reminder shared by McCourt at NCTE: "The real reward is in your heart when you go home." After this read, the real reward comes from the last page: "I'll try." That is exactly what teachers always do. That same passion for teaching and not always knowing the answer, but being on a continuous quest for knowledge is what makes *Teacher Man* a must read for all educators.

—Sheryl Rinkol, ASU Polytechnic



*Celebrating today's young heroes*

**GLORIA BARRON PRIZE FOR YOUNG HEROES: SEEKING NOMINATIONS FOR THE 2006 AWARDS**

The Gloria Barron Prize honors young people ages 8 to 18 who have shown leadership and courage in public service to people and our planet. Each year, ten national winners each receive \$2,000 to support their service work or higher education. Nomination deadline is April 30. For more information and to nominate — as well as to request or download free heroes educational materials -- visit <http://www.barronprize.org/>

The Gloria Barron Prize for Young Heroes honors outstanding young leaders who have made a significant positive difference to people and our planet. Their leadership and courage make them true heroes — and inspirations to us all. Each year, the Barron Prize selects ten winners nationwide. Half of the winners have focused on helping their communities and fellow beings; half have focused on protecting the health and sustainability of the environment. These young people reflect the great diversity of America. They are female and male, urban and rural, and from many backgrounds. Examples are Michaela, who organized a rodeo for disabled kids; Carter, who led the effort to conserve a local river; Ashley, who created a scholarship fund for African girls; Kyle, who organized a reading mentorship program; Joying, who cleaned up South Carolina's beaches; Ryan, who helped provide clean drinking water to more than 70 African villages; and Barbara, who created a successful oil recycling project in Texas.

The goal of the Barron Prize is to celebrate such heroic young people — and to inspire others to do their part. Like the woman for whom the prize was named — my mother, Gloria Barron — these young people demonstrate the power of one person to make a difference to the world. —T. A. Barron



## SUBMIT YOUR ARTICLES TO THE *ARIZONA ENGLISH BULLETIN*: NOW ACCEPTING ARTICLES FOR FUTURE ISSUES

### THE PLEASURES OF POETRY IN THE ENGLISH/LANGUAGE ARTS CLASSROOM

Many students consider poetry to be impossible to understand, irrelevant to their lives, and a crashing bore. Even teachers are tempted to skip it in the push to cover standards and to prepare for standardized testing. There are, however, teachers who have discovered exciting and innovative ways to teach poetry, ways that incorporate standards into the teaching and learning of poetry. What are you doing that might be of interest to other teachers of literature? Have you been able to interest your students in the pleasures of poetry? What works to make poetry teachable? Let us hear about your teaching techniques.

**Deadline: March 1, 2006**

### TEACHING TECHNIQUES: WHAT WORKS?

We know there are many teachers out there who are using teaching techniques that others would like to know about. What works for you? Are you doing teaching that interests your students and captures their imaginations? This issue is dedicated to the teaching of English/language arts in any area or genre. What works for grammar? Short stories? Novels? Drama? How do you approach the teaching of Shakespeare, poetry, composition—whatever might be included in any classroom for the study of English/language arts?

**Deadline: October 1, 2006**

Mail manuscripts to:  
Dr. Sandra Raymond,  
box 6032/English  
Dept., NAU, Flagstaff,  
Az, 86011-6032

### AEB MANUSCRIPT GUIDELINES

Please submit two (2) copies of your manuscript (typed and double-spaced throughout, including quotations and works cited) and a self-addressed, stamped envelope. The *Arizona English Bulletin* uses the MLA style sheet.

You should include an electronic copy of the manuscript in Microsoft Word. Faxed manuscripts will not be accepted. We can, however, accept manuscripts sent as email attachments in Microsoft Word. Be sure to include the author's name, address, school affiliation, and work and home telephone numbers on a cover page.

Manuscripts will be reviewed and replies sent, usually within 6-8 weeks, but occasionally later, depending on the editor's schedule and responsibilities. Authors of published articles will receive two contributor's copies. Compliance with *Arizona English Bulletin* deadlines is appreciated.



### BOREEN'S BOOKSHELF: *TTFN* AND *CAPT. HOOK*

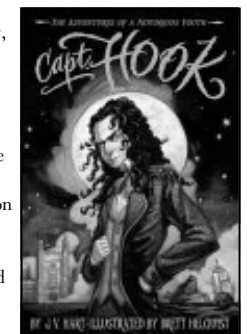
*tfn*. Lauren Myracle. (2006). NY: Amulet Books, Ages 13 – 16, ISBN: 0-8109-5971-2, \$15.95

*tfn* is the sequel to Lauren Myracle's *ttyl*, a favorite book among teenaged girls because the main characters in the book--Angela, Zoe and Maddie—are "developed" through the text messages they send each other at all hours of the day and night. As this book opens, the girls are in their junior year of high school, and still taking the approach that it's the three of them against the world. But the joy of junior year is short-lived when Angela finds out that her father will be moving the family to California. While Angela's troubles initially threaten to overshadow the others, the other girls also find themselves in difficult situations: Maddie finds herself relying on a great deal of bravado in her relationship with Chive, who callously compromises her health and safety through drugs and casual sex. Zoe, always the responsible one in the trio, takes a job and finds herself interested in Doug, who was previously interested in Angela. A chance mention of Doug sends Angela into regret mode that she didn't respond to his interest during their sophomore year, and Zoe realizes that Angela will see Doug's interest in Zoe as a betrayal on Zoe's part! As Zoe tries to keep her new relationship from Angela and Maddie tries to get Zoe to loosen up and enjoy herself a little, Angela finds that being the new girl in a new school is no fun. Through it all, e-mail and instant messaging keep the girls in contact (although one has to wonder how they actually have time to get into their various troubles considering how much time they spend messaging each other). But teen-age girls will easily relate to the main characters and cheer them on as they move towards their happy endings; I say this with authority as my own 14-year-old daughter has read both books and in our conversations about both books, she noted that the IMing seemed very authentic and she enjoyed both books (although she did think that everything worked out too easily for all of the characters). Nevertheless, this book may well pull students who love IMing off the computer and back into a book. And now, for something totally different. . .



*Capt. Hook*. J.V. Hart. Illustrated by Brett Helquist. (2005) NY: Laura Geringer Books, Ages 12 - 16, ISBN: 0-06-000221-2, \$16.89.

When I first picked up this book and read the synopsis on the flap, I couldn't help but think about John Gardner's *Grendel*, the *Beowulf* story from the monster's point of view. When I had my students read both books together, my students ended up cheering for the monster rather than applauding the heroic Dane, mainly because he was more "interesting" than the hero in that particular piece. The same could well be said of this book about the boy who became Peter Pan's nemesis, Captain Hook. James Matthew, the illegitimate son of "Lord B," is sent to Eton for a proper education. Nicknamed King Jas by his friend, Jolly Roger, James draws the ire of Arthur Darling (the future father of the flying Darlings from J. M. Barrie's *Peter Pan*) who determines to put James in his place. But James has a (short) lifetime of hatred working in his favor, and this has toughened him to the point that he is frightening and exciting in his own right; his friends can't help but be pulled into his plans while his enemies find themselves confounded by him again and again. While most of the book characterizes James as out for his own good and rarely a sympathetic character, we do get glimpses of his humanity when he falls for a beautiful and daring princess visiting England under the watchful eye of Queen Victoria and when he runs into Lord B, who refuses to acknowledge James as his own son. James brings the ire of both queen and father down upon himself, and as he makes his escape, happens onto a ship belonging to his father. As he gains the trust of the ship's captain, James learns that his proud and pious father is actually an active slave trader. This revelation inspires James to an ethical practicality from which he cannot escape and he surprises the reader by returning the slavers to their home. It is this "greyness" in his character that allows the reader to appreciate James, even if we're not sure through our reading that we actually like him very much. He is very much the Grendel of young adult literature, and I would guess that that is a complement with which Captain James "Hook" could live.





# AETA: LEGISLATIVE UPDATES

## THE BACKDOOR TO PRIVATIZATION

Ah, yes. You can smell it in the air: It's time to prepare for AIMS. In my recent observations of student teachers, I have witnessed this preparation. Teachers who normally engage their students in thoughtful discussions and cooperative learning techniques are reduced to review basic skills through worksheets and drills. And their students, some half asleep, some slunk down in their seats, are now quite adjusted to this annual Rite of Spring.

February is known as Black History Month, but here in Arizona it can also be known as AIMS Preparation Month. I can't make a case against the legitimacy of AIMS that has not already been made. In colleges of education and English departments, it is often discussed ad nauseum. Occasionally, though, such discussions will produce nuggets of ingenuity. For instance, Arizona State University professor, Lynn G. Nelson, commonly states, "You can pass the AIMS test and still go to hell."

I don't have Dr. Nelson's wit, but what I do have is knowledge of what I call "America's Backdoor to Privatization in Education." When I left the secondary classroom in 2001, I immediately took a position with Evans Newton, Inc. (ENI), an educational consulting company in Scottsdale. The No Child Left Behind Act was music to ENI's ears. The company specialized in curriculum alignment and creating a standards-based education for school districts around the country.

My job with the company was to write lesson plans and practice tests. Indeed, I was required to study state tests and structure the practice tests to emulate the. It was a fun job, at first. But soon the idea that I was making so much money (nearly twice my salary as a teacher) to write educational products went sour on me. I didn't quite know why until the company also turned me into a consultant. I would take the tests and lesson plans to school districts in New Orleans, Columbus, and Gary, Indiana, and present them to teachers who were just beginning to use them.

The outcry was astounding. Most of the districts ENI worked with were struggling, both financially and educationally, but the one thing they did not want is an outsider, dressed in a nice suit, telling them to teach to the test. They knew what was going on. What standards-based education has done, ever so slightly, is create what many conservatives have wanted all along: Privatized Education. While knowing that a complete overhaul of the educational system was not realistic, these same conservatives turned to standards and tests. As result, as I saw, there's now a lot of money to be made both in textbook publishing (Holt, for one, produces "aligned" texts for California and Texas) and, as in ENI's case, curriculum alignment and development.

The fact that test writers and consultants are making more money than most teachers is alarming, as well as absurd. I left ENI in 2003, and at that time they had not yet signed any agreements with Arizona school districts, but they were close to reaching a deal with Tuba City schools. Who knows what the future holds, but what is apparent is that we're heading further down the road toward privatization. As educational and publishing companies gain greater financial footing, they'll have more clout in Washington and state capitols around the country. Who will win? Parents and teachers screaming bloody murder about testing, or those who stand to gain financially from them? —

David Pegram, Arizona State University



### Call for Reporters ...

CONNECTIONS is looking for an AETA member who would like to write a quarterly column focusing on legislative issues in education. If this is YOU, CONTACT WENDY KELLEHER OR DAVID PEGRAM  
wendy.kelleher@asu.edu or  
david.pegram@asu.edu



*In the past three months, the Arizona Department of Education has distributed the following press releases, related to teachers in the English classroom.*

## January 9, 2006: HORNE CORRECTS GOVERNOR'S ASSERTION THAT ARIZONA HAS "NO STATEWIDE SYSTEM FOR PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT" FOR TEACHERS

Arizona Superintendent of Public Instruction Tom Horne today said Governor Janet Napolitano is incorrect in claiming in her State of the State address that Arizona does not have a statewide system for teacher professional development.

"The Arizona Department of Education is the hub of the statewide system for professional development for Arizona teachers and every division in the Department has a professional development component. One unit alone had 24 academies serving more than 2000 teachers, and that's just the tip of the iceberg," Horne said. "In addition, for the first time ever, professional development is available to teachers online 24 hours a day, seven days a week."

Among the professional development resources available through the Arizona Department of Education are: curriculum development, including cross-curricular connections, curriculum mapping and instructional quality; mathematics; reading; science; social studies; writing; assessment, including reading assessment, data-driven instructional decision making, and services dealing with cultural family and school safety issues.

Also, the Department offers training in Best Practices; effective Structured English Immersion strategies; education leadership and its role in student achievement, Arizona High School Renewal Summits, which align to the research of Breaking Ranks II; AIMS Intervention/Dropout Prevention strategies; implementation strategies to develop Rigorous Curriculum, including Advanced Placement, Gifted Programs, and International Baccalaureate programs, and Arizona academic standards.

In addition, the Arizona Department of Education holds Professional Development Leadership Academies - a three-year training program for local schools in developing and implementing professional training systems within districts. The Department also has ongoing Career and Technical Education conferences where CTE teachers keep up with the latest technology and training.

"The people who work hard to ensure these programs are successful are to be commended for their dedication to ensuring Arizona's public school teachers have access to the finest professional development services available," Horne added. "Their efforts are praiseworthy and, most importantly, effective."

## EDUCATION DAY AT THE CAPITOL 2006

"AEA... CREATING ARIZONA'S FUTURE"

### WHERE

Arizona Capitol  
1700 West Washington  
Senate Lawn

### WHEN

Wednesday  
March 8, 2006  
8:00 a.m. until Mid Afternoon

### WHAT TO EXPECT

Morning briefings on AEA's Legislative Agenda by AEA Government Relations Staff and AEA President, Meetings with Legislators, Luncheon with Your Legislative Delegation - Featured Speaker, Governor Napolitano, Senate and House Education Committee Hearings

### HOW TO PARTICIPATE

AEA Local Associations are organizing teams to attend.



Join Arizona Education Association:

[Active](#) and [retired](#) teachers, [support professionals](#), and [college students](#) can join AEA. Teachers teaching full-time in Arizona's classrooms value membership for...

1. A say in district, state legislative and congressional decisions that affect you.
2. A chance to work together to make every Arizona school a great school.
3. Training and opportunities to develop leadership skills.
4. Professional protection through liability insurance and assistance if you have trouble on the job.
5. Discounts on financial services, insurance, product discounts, and other ways to stretch your paycheck.

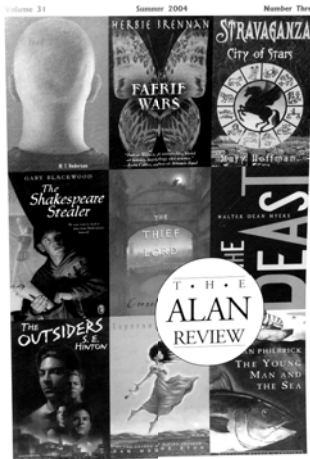
To join, go to <http://www.arizonaaea.org/members.php>



## MAKING CONNECTIONS WITH NCTE, ALAN & CCCC

### ALAN: THE ASSEMBLY ON LITERATURE FOR ADOLESCENTS

Founded in November 1973, ALAN is made up of teachers, authors, librarians, publishers, teacher educators and their students, and others who are particularly interested in the area of young adult literature. ALAN is self-governing, holds its annual meetings and creates its program during the NCTE Annual Convention in November.



Assembly on Literature for Adolescents of the National Council of Teachers of English

*The ALAN Review*, published 3X each year (fall, winter, and spring) with a current circulation of 2,500. The ALAN Review contains articles on YA literature and its teaching, interviews with authors, reports on publishing trends, a section of 32 reviews of new books for adolescents, extensive bibliographies, and ALAN memberships.

ALAN's lively two-day program at NCTE's Annual Convention features speakers who are well-known teachers and writers. Also on the program are panels, group discussions, and coffees. In addition, the popular ALAN breakfast offers a speaker who is a major author of adolescent literature.

Each year, ALAN recognizes an outstanding individual in the field of adolescent Literature with its prestigious ALAN Award and another individual who has given extraordinary service to ALAN with the Hipple Award. Members are invited to nominate any scholar, YA author, librarian, teacher, or publishing professional who meets the criteria for each award.

TO JOIN, EMAIL  
JEAN.BOREEN@NAU.EDU WHO  
IS OFFERING A FREE BOOK TO  
NEW MEMBERS

Membership is open to anyone interested in literature for adolescents. Members of ALAN need not be members of NCTE.

Membership includes a subscription to *The ALAN Review*, and individual members have voting privileges.

INDIVIDUAL (\$20/YEAR)

INSTITUTIONAL (\$30/YEAR)

STUDENT (\$10.00/YEAR)

# NCTE

National Council of Teachers of English

The Professional Home of the English Language Arts Community

With resources on early literacy, writing, reading instruction, ESL, and preparing your students for standardized tests without "teaching to the test," The National Council of Teachers of English has the solutions you need to support you in your classroom, career, and community.



Resources, Strategies, Lesson Plans, and Membership information available online at [www.ncte.org](http://www.ncte.org) or call (877) 369-6283.

## Calling all Comp/Rhet professionals



CCCC  
NCTE

### It's time to join CCCC!!

When you join the Conference on College Composition and Communication (CCCC), you will be connected to current trends in scholarship and research, developments in teaching, national trends in higher education, and much more. Membership includes a subscription—and online access—to *College Composition and Communication*, a quarterly journal featuring research and scholarship in composition studies to support those who teach writing at the college level. You'll also have the opportunity to submit publication and conference proposals and get involved in national leadership and service to our profession.

Join online at [www.ncte.org](http://www.ncte.org).

## IN THE TRENCHES: TEACHER-RESEARCHERS AT WORK



## UNCOVERING STUDENTS' LEARNING STYLES

I researched learning styles during my tutor training workshops offered every month. I read online about these styles and how they can affect the student and the teacher. I remember one session with a developmental

writing student who was trying to create a descriptive essay. She mentioned to me that she was a visual learner. I grabbed a textbook that had tips on writing this essay. In the book, there was a sample outline of a descriptive essay. I also explain that the essay is like a sandwich. The buns are the introduction and the conclusion, while the lettuce, tomato, meat and other condiments are the paragraphs that support the thesis statement. She was excited and photocopied the pages from the textbook. I was glad to assist her after she told me about her learning style. I would recommend to all teachers to tap into the students' learning styles. It will make teaching and learning so much easier in the classroom and learning center.

—Eileen Bellamy  
Pima Community College West Campus Learning Center  
Tucson, AZ  
Reading, Writing, ESL and Literature Tutor

## GETTING INSIDE THE CHARACTER'S HEAD

Something innovative that I am trying is the "Getting inside the character's head" activity. I basically am using a hand drawn head, and the students have to write in quotations, pictures, or images that they correlate with that character. It gives them something new and creative to do instead of a worksheet. So far, so good. It's basically a brainstorm of sorts, where the students have a lot of flexibility for what they remember from the text. The goal is to use a variety of sources, (quotes, pic, etc). The kids really get into it :)

—Paige Seifrid, English Teacher, Basha High School  
(480) 224-2266

## MENTOR AUTHORS DRIVING FORCE

The use of mentor authors in the classroom has become a powerful new force driving my teaching. My students have the power of choice: Mitch can spend his time soaking up Steven Ambrose, ReiAnne can let Lurlene McDaniel help her deal with her grief over her mother's death and Eduardo can meet Gary Soto, an author he appreciates for their common bond of the Spanish language. At the same time, I am able to craft lesson that will allow these students to learn from their mentors to improve their own writing. Our class has come alive with the words of great writers and is buzzing with students challenging themselves to write like the great ones—I've never had a better time as an English teacher! —Kelly O'Rourke, Cave Creek High School

## ESSAYS ABOUT ESSAYS- A NEW PEER REVIEW ACTIVITY IN MY ENG 101 CLASSES

I have initiated a new peer review activity in my ENG 101 courses this semester which seems to work pretty well. I ask students to bring in a rough draft of an essay assignment—called the E-0—to class on a scheduled day. They "swap" papers with another student—let's call the members in each of these "couples" Student A and Student B. Here is what happens: Student A reads Student B's paper and then writes a brief evaluative essay, completed in class, which is given (along with B's original E-0 paper) to Student B.

In like fashion, Student B reads Student A's paper and then writes a brief evaluative essay, completed in class, which is given (along with A's original E-0 paper) to Student A.

After the students read the evaluative essay written about their E-0 drafts (potentially confusing, isn't it?), the evaluative papers are turned in to me and I later give each evaluative essay a grade. I also collect and scan all the E-0 rough drafts and make some further recommendations.

During the previous class, the students had received some training about this activity—I sketched out some guidelines (a rubric, if you will) they could follow as they read (and later wrote) about each others' papers. The rubric briefly highlighted issues/concerns to assess—text flow, adherence to the E-0 prompt, and major syntactical issues like fragments or run-ons. I also encouraged them to provide positive feedback about the papers they read. (Sometimes they [we] become too focused on what is wrong.)

The exercise seems to be quite successful. I have tried it in two separate 101 sections. The student evaluative papers have been kind, and thoughtful, and laced with healthy and usually accurate recommendations. A few follow here:

- "Better transitions would help"
- "Further paragraph development needed for clarity"
- "Try to vary your sentence beginnings"
- "Maybe use commas after long intro phrases"
- "Keep an eye on that pronoun agreement!"

These are the kinds of issues I hope students learn to recognize in their own papers! I would also say the students are quite kind to each other and genuinely wish to be helpful. I am pleased they are using the "vocabulary" of writing in their evaluative pieces. I still have plenty of fine tuning to do on this activity, but the students seem quite engaged and I believe it is helpful to them—both as writers and readers and writers. Now it is my turn to look at those E-0 rough drafts!

—Jeff Ross, Central Arizona College-Superstition Mountain Campus



## AETA MEMBERSHIP APPLICATION

(Annual membership is from fall to fall of each year. Back issues of publications will be provided, as available.)

One-year individual membership (within U.S.) • School year 20__ to 20__	\$45
One-year individual membership (outside U.S.) • School year 20__ to 20__	\$75
One-year emeritus/student membership • School year 20__ to 20__	\$20

Name: \_\_\_\_\_

School Affiliation: \_\_\_\_\_

Mailing Address: \_\_\_\_\_

Phone (H): \_\_\_\_\_ Phone (W): \_\_\_\_\_

Email: \_\_\_\_\_ FAX: \_\_\_\_\_

Area of Interest (circle one):      K-6                      4-8                      9-12                      Post-secondary

### FOR MEMBERSHIP INFORMATION, CONTACT:

Jean Boreen      Box 6032      English Department      NAU  
 Flagstaff, AZ, 86011-6032  
 928.523.6765      Jean.Boreen@NAU.EDU

## ARE YOU A MEMBER OF AETA?

### WHAT IS AETA?

The Arizona English Teachers Association serves as a professional network of English language arts educators across Arizona. It is the state affiliate of the national network, the National Council of Teachers of English. The primary function of AETA is to foster policies, standards, and goals of NCTE among Arizona's educators of communication skills, language arts, and English from kindergarten through college/university levels. To this aim, it is AETA's goal to serve these teachers by narrowing the national focus to the needs, interests, and goals of Arizona teachers and students.

All AETA business, functions, and special events exist to enhance the quality of English language arts teaching in Arizona by:

- disseminating information pertinent to local issues, concerns, and successes;
- encouraging professional activity among teachers in all regions of the state;
- generating interest in students' and teachers' special achievements; and
- organizing statewide and regional "outreach" activities and inservice opportunities.

### BENEFITS OF AETA MEMBERSHIP

Active membership in professional organizations empowers educators.

It is a means for getting voices heard and for sharing the fun and frustrations of teaching. In an effort to address the needs of the diverse population that AETA serves, the following are provided as benefits of membership:

- four issues of *Connections*, the AETA newsletter, an informal publication of news, events, and information of concern to Arizona teachers;
- two issues of the *Arizona English Bulletin*, the professional journal of AETA which provides professional reading on a variety of themes, from both theoretical and practical points of view;
- opportunity to attend state and regional inservice activities, including "outreach" mini-conferences, professional presentations, and the annual statewide conference;
- contact with teachers with special areas of interest and expertise through a professional network; and
- liaison efforts with the Arizona state legislature and Department of Education

**Active membership in professional organizations empowers educators.**

—from *Arizona English Bulletin*, Summer 2004



## AUTHORS IN THE GREATER PHOENIX AREA

### DAVID CLEMENT-DAVIS: FANTASY AUTHOR STILL A KID AT HEART

When asked why he writes for teenagers, fantasy author David Clement-Davis responded with a joke that made light of his own kid-like qualities. His response reflected his demeanor; both down-to-earth and charming. Clement-Davis spoke to ASU students about such lofty subjects as the history of Scotland, the British poets Yeats and Keats, and the current political climate in a discussion that was neither pretentious nor preachy. Furthermore, he provided insight into his own writing process, including a discussion on the role of the editor in the finishing of a book.



Traveling through the United States to promote his newest book, *The Telling Pool*, Clement-Davis stayed in Arizona for almost a week and spoke at several valley schools and book stores. Despite his busy schedule, he found time to speak personally with ASU students, including Elle Wolterbeck, Wendy Keller and myself. Among other things, we talked about exciting places to travel (he recommends Vietnam), the benefits of living in London (even though it rains too much, the city is always busy), and what it is like to speak to seventh graders (crazy).

—April Brannon, Arizona State University



The author with Elle Wolterbeck and April Brannon

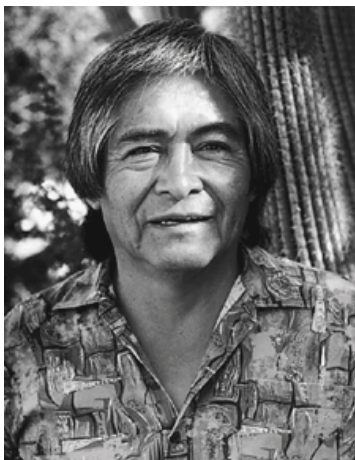


### ART SPIEGELMAN: WHAT DO YOU ASK YOUR FAVORITE CELEBRITY?

For some people, Brad Pitt, Britney Spears, or Howard Stern come to mind when celebrity is mentioned. For a graduate student focusing on contemporary American fiction and the evolution of the graphic novel, Art Spiegelman is much more appropriate. On February 2, 2006, Spiegelman visited the Tempe area to present his views on comics, graphic novels, and the progression of visual narrative. The following afternoon, a few students had the opportunity to further discuss these ideas with Spiegelman in a question and answer session.

Spiegelman stated that it has taken a “long time for there to be enough graphic novels to give a voice to the format”. Although there is a distinct difference between the narratives of graphic novels in comparison to comics, Spiegelman does not disregard the history of the recently researched visual narrative. In his lecture, he paid homage to many different comic strips from early US and European history. In his mind, the image “trumps the word card all of the time”.

Many of the audience in Spiegelman’s lecture were already familiar with his works including the Maus series, as well as *In the Shadow of No Towers*. However, and fortunately, Spiegelman’s lecture opened the eyes of many new readers and artists. Beyond the themes of superheroes and aliens taking over a futuristic world, Spiegelman’s works, as well as other authors, deal with plots relating to realistic events such as the Holocaust. His pieces are a great example of a growing visually centered realm of literature. Spiegelman himself does not, however, claim to be a pioneer of any kind. Rather, he simply states, “uncannily, the world has seemed to simply catch up”. —Kristen M. Dittmar, Arizona State University



### SIMON ORTIZ: LANGUAGE IS A GIFT

Hearing the Acoma language come from the voice of Simon Ortiz awakened my senses when I went to hear his presentation on the ASU campus in February. Ortiz originally comes from the Pueblo of Acoma in New Mexico. Standing in front of a packed auditorium, he introduced himself in his native language and the sound and rhythm of it soothed me.

It is a gentle language, “a social language,” Ortiz said. He spoke about “community” and its importance to indigenous people. However, he went beyond his native community and spoke about “us” as a global community. I was impressed with his use of language—in his mother tongue and in English—and the way he eloquently explained his view of continuance and “foreverness” that goes along with being human, living in a community, and speaking language.

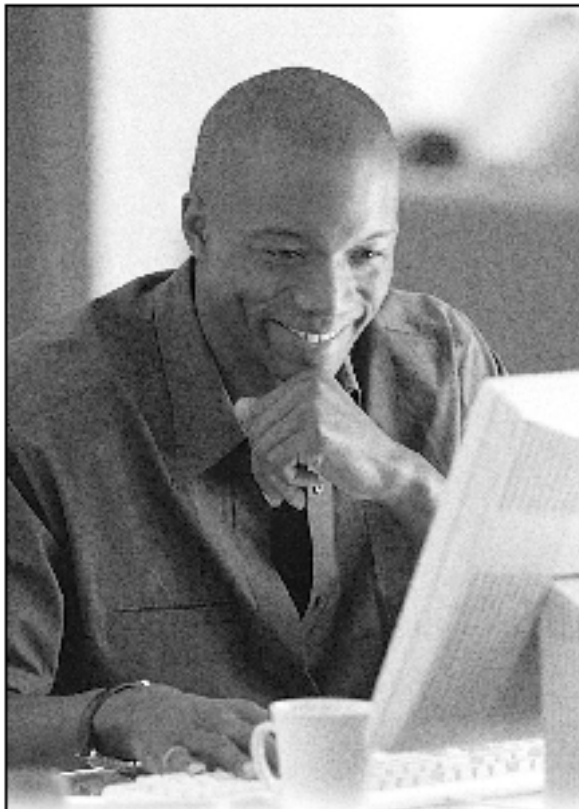
He spoke with reverence toward language, used words carefully and thoughtfully. I think people often forget that language is a gift; too many see it only as grammar and correct spelling. Simon Ortiz—poet, short story writer, essayist, activist, and professor—reminded us about the beauty of language and how it connects us all.

—Marlinda Kaulaity, Arizona State University

**"Making Language familiar and accessible to others, bringing it within their grasp and comprehension, is what a writer, teacher, and storyteller does or tries to do. I've been trying for over thirty years."**  
- Simon J. Ortiz *Woven Stone*

**"As an Aacqumeh hahtrudzai and a writer, I believe that being real in a real world is loving and respecting myself. This I believe has always been the true and real vision of Indigenous People of the Americas: to love, respect, and be responsible to ourselves and others, and to behold with passion and awe the wonders and bounty and beauty of creation and the world around us"**

-Simon Ortiz *Woven Stone*



## Write for NCTE

Share your knowledge and experience while you continue your professional development—as an author for NCTE Publications. For information on submitting a manuscript to one of NCTE's 12 professional journals, or to receive a copy of our book submission guidelines, visit [www.ncte.org/pubs/publish](http://www.ncte.org/pubs/publish)

## AETA 2006 CONFERENCE: CALL FOR PROPOSALS

Join guest author Jack Gantos and keynote speaker Beverly Chin in presenting at the 2006 AETA Conference. Share your instructional methods, current research, and ideas with your colleagues throughout the state. Workshops are 50 minutes.

Presenters with a similar theme are welcome to combine their program to make a single session.

Proposed title of the workshop: \_\_\_\_\_

Presenter(s): \_\_\_\_\_

Email: \_\_\_\_\_

School Address: \_\_\_\_\_

Description of workshop: \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

## DEADLINE: MAY 1, 2006

Level

- \_\_\_ Elementary
- \_\_\_ Junior/Middle School
- \_\_\_ High School
- \_\_\_ College/University

Strand

- \_\_\_ Composition
- \_\_\_ Literature
- \_\_\_ Standards/Assessment
- \_\_\_ Technology

A-V/Technology Needs

- \_\_\_ Computer
- \_\_\_ Overhead projector
- \_\_\_ Screen
- \_\_\_ Other

Send Proposals to: Jean Boreen

Box 6032, English Department, NAU  
Flagstaff, AZ, 86011-6032  
928.523.6765  
Jean.Boreen@NAU.EDU



Dr. Alleen Nilsen, Arizona State University, and doctoral student, Marlinda White-Kaulaity. Look for Marlinda's article in an upcoming issue of *Adolescent and Adult Literacy*.



## READING AND WRITING ACROSS THE CONTINUUM OF EDUCATION: 2006 PINAL COUNTY ENGLISH TEACHERS CONFERENCE APRIL 8, 2006

Plan now to attend the 2006 Pinal County English Teachers Conference at the beautiful **CENTRAL ARIZONA COLLEGE SUPERSTITION MOUNTAIN CAMPUS**. All English and Language Arts teachers are invited to participate in this interactive gathering, to be held on **SATURDAY, APRIL 8TH**. The purpose of the conference is to draw together educators from around the county, from all levels of teaching, in order to discuss common issues and possibilities in the teaching of English along the continuum of education.



<http://dommy.com/alan/pix/supes.jpg>

### PROPOSED ACTIVITIES:

8 am to 9 am: Continental breakfast

Welcome by Dean Salmon, CAC Superstition Mountain Campus

Keynote address by Dr. Jeff Ross, Professor of English

9 to 10:15: Interactive panel presentations from member of various teaching levels:

1. Plagiarism and the internet
2. Standards and expectations
3. Reading and writing across the continuum of education
4. Reading and writing in the occupations

10:15 to 10:30:

BREAK

10:30 to 11:45:

Interactive panel presentations

11:45 to 1:00:

lunch; door prize drawings; live music

1:00 to 2:00:

Visiting author session

2:00:

Closing by John Paddison, Professor of English

### FOR A REGISTRATION FORM, CONTACT

Jeff Ross at 480-677-7719 or EMAIL: [slipdoc@cox.net](mailto:slipdoc@cox.net)

John Paddison: 480-677-7725 or EMAIL: [John\\_Paddison@centralaz.edu](mailto:John_Paddison@centralaz.edu)

To find the campus, go to

<http://www.centralaz.edu/portal/page?>

[\\_pageid=193,271979&\\_dad=portal&\\_schema=PORTAL](http://www.centralaz.edu/portal/page?_pageid=193,271979&_dad=portal&_schema=PORTAL)

## INNOVATIVE APPROACHES: LIVING WITH E.L. KONIGSBERG

I often tell people I find my best lessons in the copy machine at school. Teachers have great lessons to share and an idea swap is one of the more popular parts of any conference. Between my gleanings in the copy room and the wealth of resources on the Internet, I could easily fill a whole year with fascinating lesson plans. But the reading I have done on using mentor authors in the classroom has energized me more than a whole year's worth of satisfaction guaranteed lesson plans. This simple concept is flexible enough to be used at any level and can educate the teacher as well as the students year after year.

I had read several articles talking about genre studies and year-long immersions, but, to be honest, they seemed too regimented. I couldn't imagine my 90 students getting motivated by the same idea for any length of time. I'm not sure where I first heard the concept of mentor authors, but my professional reading one summer consisted of looking for resources on the subject. I started with a small book by Katie Wood Ray, *What You Know by Heart*, and realized how simple it would be to launch a new "curricula" for my class—one that is driven by student choice, literature-centered, hands on, and analytical.

The nature of my job share position is such that I mainly teach reading during the 1st semester. It was a natural move at the beginning of the school year to ask my students which authors were their favorites. After a few weeks of sharing authors and titles, of writing Reader's Notebook entries and engaging in the first round of Literature Circles, I told them we would be choosing "mentor authors" to study for the whole school year. I announced that I would be "living" with E.L. Konigsberg—reading and re-reading her works, selecting passages and observations to share, and finally trying to imitate her style.

My first goal was to have students analyze what it was about their favorite author that was so appealing. In other words, to help them verbalize why they were so taken with a particular author. I wanted to help students move from saying they liked an author because he was funny, to being able to identify the stylistic elements that made the author's work humorous.

I typically begin the school year with a read-aloud. This year, I used the opportunity to start off with a book by my current Mentor Author, Sharon Creech. This afforded many opportunities to discuss the 6 Traits of writing, and the voice of the writer in particular. Also, during the first weeks of school, I assigned a Reader's Notebook entry in which I asked students why they chose the book they were reading at that time, which was not necessarily a favorite book or one by a favorite author. Some of the responses were predictably vague, such as "because it was the next one in the series" or "he's really funny."

By the 2nd quarter, I asked the students to select a mentor author, a writer whose books they would commit to read, re-read and analyze during the school year. In response to an assignment asking students to write about their selection, more students were able to give a specific reason why they liked their author, "he always leaves you at an interesting point in the book at the end of each chapter," and "he is humorous, and just thinks of funny things to do with his characters [sic]." I was

pleased these students were beginning to move deeper into their analyses of their mentor authors.

Most of our book talks, mini-lessons, Reader's Notebook work and classroom sharing circles now centered on our mentor authors. During book talks, students would try to "sell" their authors' books; there were mini-lessons, genre, characterization and cliffhangers; homework was to bring in passages that demonstrated good show-not-tell writing or demonstrated excellent sentence fluency. I would demonstrate using *The Outcasts of 19 Schuyler Place*, and they would respond the next day with samples from Lemony Snicket, J.K. Rowling, C.S. Lewis, Christopher Paolini, Jean Craighead George and Steven Ambrose (non-fiction choices have worked brilliantly, with only occasional need for modification). We were learning from the best and every student was apprenticing at the feet of their chosen master.

As part of the final exam for 1st semester, students were asked to write about in depth about their mentor authors. They were encouraged to consider writing style, characterization, theme and the 6 traits as they discussed what made their mentor author such an inspirational writer. The students were very successful at this assignment, and were becoming more competent at finding passages that exemplified good word choice or a unique writing style. For the first time, students addressed the writing style of their authors and included (gasp) passages supporting their statements.

As 2nd semester arrived and my focus switched to writing, our lessons moved towards applying what they had observed as readers to their writing. We wrote letters to our authors telling them why we were fans and asking for advice on our writing (this also satisfied the business letter requirement). I have often asked students to write poems or paragraphs based on ones we studied in class. The natural progression is then to have students emulate their mentor authors' styles. To prepare for that I had students select examples of fluent sentences. As a writing exercise I handed students a paragraph of character description by Louisa May Alcott. Student copied the style and structure of the writing but made it their own by substituting their own character for Jo March. Students were proud of how wonderful their writing sounded by modeling it on a great writer. I then encouraged students to put that paragraph into the original stories they were working on. Then they followed suit by finding passages from their authors to imitate.

We used 6 Traits rubrics to rate the professional and student writers. I am convinced that what they learn from analyzing, discussing, and writing about what works in their authors' writing style will lead to them putting those lessons into action in their own writing.

Many of the fabulous lessons I have collected over the years can be integrated into this approach. With my guidance students are learning from professional, published authors and I get to spend the year with the likes of Chris Crutcher. Isn't that every English teacher's dream?

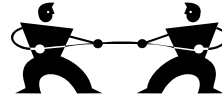
—Kelly O'Rourke, Care Creek High School

"STUDENTS WERE PROUD OF HOW WONDERFUL THEIR WRITING SOUNDED BY MODELING IT ON A GREAT WRITER."

## INTERNET CONNECTIONS



Following are some Web links to help you connect — with other teachers, students, and the larger education community.



**U of Montana Department of English, Beverly Chin:**

<http://www.umt.edu/english/faculty/chin.htm>, Dr. Chin's background, vitae, and teaching philosophy

**Virginia Polytechnic Institute and State University, A Conversation with Beverly**

**Chin:** <http://scholar.lib.vt.edu/ejournals/old-WILLA/fall00/williams.html>

An interview about mentoring and leadership done by Lee Williams of Slippery Rock University

**Amazon.com** for all of Beverly Chin's books

**The Teachers Corner.Net:** <http://www.theteacherscorner.net/seasonal/back-to-school/>

Great source of lesson plans for Jack Gantos's books

**Author of the Month, featuring Jack Gantos:**

[http://www.mhhe.com/socscience/education/kidlit/aom/current\\_aom.htm](http://www.mhhe.com/socscience/education/kidlit/aom/current_aom.htm)

Short biography of Jack Gantos, ideas for lessons, list of awards he's won, fun booklist.

**Litplans.com website:** <http://www.litplans.com/author.htm?a=Gantos>

Lesson Plans, Teacher's Guides, Novel Unit Plans, Study Guides and more! Wow!

**Ridgewood High School Homepage:**

<http://www.ridgenet.org/page.php?page=mlombardo-jackgantos>

Fantastic website with a narrative about one of Jack's visits to a local school. Lots of great pictures

**MYSPACE.COM:** <http://www.myspace.com/>

To browse around the site, simply click on the Browse menu at the top of the home page. The search tool can be used to narrow a search of My Space users. Enter your town's postal code. This will display all users within that area and within a five-mile radius around that town's zip code.

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