

NOTES ON AMERICAN LETTERS



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"Literature ranges from simple songs and sayings to elaborate and extended tales of human deeds. The most compelling literature concerns persons whose feelings, thoughts, and actions engage us in the lived time of mortality. Ideas and abstractions, which systematically separate themselves from persons and from time, do not form the essence of literature and do not surpass it."

-Roger Shattuck, *Candor and Perversion*

EDITOR'S CORNER

I'm always attracted to ideas about leadership; as a consequence, James Burns' contrast between two styles of leadership — transactional and transformational — is a favorite of mine and seems obviously applicable today. Burns' ideas arose out of the Roosevelt administration eighty years ago and contrasts with a present transactional leadership style of deal making and top down authority. This transactional approach to leadership is demonstrated by a leader's assertion that, "I am the only one who can fix it." The transformational model doesn't command, but asks its followers to be the ones who will bring about change.

I recently came across Walter Isaacson's article in *The Harvard Business Review* in which he listed 15 qualities of leadership prized by the late entrepreneur Steve Jobs. These ideas seemed sturdy and full of life, but two were particularly strong: Jobs' belief that intuition is more important to leadership than intellect and his belief that play yields more rewards than seeking economic gains.

While I was considering Jobs' ideas on intuitive, creative leadership, I received an email from a former graduate student from Shanghai that seemed a living testimony to these ideas about creativity in leadership. Annie, an English as a second language teacher in China, and her bright, six-year old son Alan came to Wake Forest to study with me because she wanted to deepen her grasp of how students learn English. We met weekly to explore my English methods text *Bridging English* and she attended my Children's Literature class to explore the teaching methods used there. Her email focused nostalgically on ideas we had discussed and her son had experienced while in school here of learning-through-doing and the joy which is essential to deep understanding. After receiving the first issue of *NAL*, Annie wrote in part:

I was absorbed by [NAL] from the moment I started reading Editor's Corner. Thoughtful reading has been what I am interested in, particularly when I returned from Wake Forest and found how dull Alan's Shanghai school teaching is. The focus of teaching Chinese in the class is just on recognizing new words and learning by heart how to write them. Student reading and learning are not inspired, let alone thinking.

The photo Annie attached in her email showed Alan and his friend playing with an old tire with the subject line, "Making a Trap."



For Annie the image of the children at play beautifully illustrated the ideas we discussed and seems in perfect accord with the ideas found in Jobs' list and in Burns' transformational leadership model.

I turn now to the issue at hand. I want to call *NAL* readers' attention to several new columns in this and subsequent quarterly issues. They focus on matters of special interest such as interviews of exceptional teachers, resonance between a poem and a work of art, new and unusual poetry, and more. I hope you will find them engaging and full fruitful ideas for your classrooms.

Joe Milner
Editor

P.S. After reading responses from readers, we are trying to make our journal friendlier to dyslexic readers by using a sans serif font throughout the issue

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SUNDAY AT THE ZOO Tracey Hughes

CONTAINMENT IS CENTRAL TO THE NOTION OF A ZOO. Stuart Dybek's *Sudden Fiction* "Sunday at the Zoo" uses its zoo setting to invite readers to consider the ethical dimensions of containing not just animals but women and ideas as well.

The plot of the story is seemingly simple. A couple's Sunday excursion to the zoo is interrupted by the woman's discomfort with caging animals. When her companion (who the story implies is a man) downplays her concern, she erupts in anger. Racing to a cage containing wolves, the woman thrusts her arms and face through the bars and demands that the animals eat her. While the animals freeze in place, a zoo attendant runs to the cage and wrests her away, kicking her to the ground. As the animals surge forward biting the now empty bars, the woman's companion calls from the crowd, asking that she be let go.

The zoo setting makes the story accessible, putting students on familiar terrain to examine the unfamiliar. Before entering into the story, teachers can introduce students to the idea that zoos raise ethical questions by having them investigate the differing rhetorical messages developed through text and images on websites about zoos, one from the *San Diego Zoo* and another from *PETA Kids*. This activity of comparing and contrasting the websites sets the stage not only for issues the story raises but also for a key method it employs to do so, comparison and contrast.

Looking at the story through the lens of comparison and contrast yields rich results, making clear that it is not only the animals that are contained in this zoo tale, but the woman and her ideas as well. The narrator's opening observation, "We decided to stop drinking and spend Sunday at the zoo," sets contrast immediately in motion. The adult activity of consuming alcohol is dropped for a family-friendly zoo visit. The couple's response to the zoo is anything but similar. The narrator's bland perception that all is "going nicely" is countered when his companion begins to "work her self up" with the "observation that it was a horrible thing to cage the animals." His matter-of-fact deflating comment in response, "That's not very profound," indicates the emotional gulf between the woman's passionate objection to the animals' "horrible" confinement and his own lack of interest in their plight. This gap only widens as she retaliates by yelling that he is a "cruel bastard," and her use of the gendered "bastard" signals a further divide between them as it suggests his comment demeans her as a woman.

Contrasts between the humans then yield to surprising similarities as the woman runs to the wolves' cage and "bellie[s] over the guardrail." Her act of bellying, a verb associated with approaching a bar for an alcoholic drink, recalls the opening reference to more adult pursuits and signals her re-entry to the realm of complexity rejected by the man. In rushing to the cages, the woman vigorously engages with the issue of confinement, and another surprising similarity reinforces her concern for the animals and distance from her companion as she and the wolves mirror one another in a charged tableau. The woman answers their "bristling" fur by "yelling" an invitation for them to consume her as both are locked in position, the wolves "froze[n]" and the woman "wedge[d]" in the bars.

At this moment of heightened tension when the woman partners with the wolves to make their confinement an issue that cannot be overlooked, the narrator, the man she has left behind, once again attempts to diminish the woman and contain her ideas. He draws attention away from her bold gesture by pausing the action to detail the wolves' backstory, recounting how earlier in the week "a small girl had an arm gnawed off" by the wolves when she, unsuspecting the danger, innocently "reached in to pet them." In telling this tale, he makes a link between the woman and the girl, one that infantilizes the woman and frames her voluntary action as one, like the child's, undertaken in error.

But the more significant similarity between the caged animals and woman continues as a zoo

attendant hurries to the scene. As if he is handling an animal, he grab[s] her" roughly "by the hair and throat, wrestling her back" from the bars. When she forcefully resists, keeping her arms "locked" in place, he tames her by "slapping her face with a thick, purplish slab of meat he must have been feeding to one of his animals." The penile quality of the fleshy piece of meat represents a more violent extension of the narrator's earlier rejection of the validity of the women's protest, and the meat's status as animal feed cements her likeness to the animals that are as contained as she.

The story ends with a concluding comparison and contrast kicker as the guard punctuates his control over the woman with a clear sense of enjoyment, "kicking her down" as he "grinned." The wolves and the narrator respond to this handling in strikingly different fashion. As if released by the spectacle of a fellow creature being tamed, the wolves hurl themselves against the bars, "their teeth breaking on the metal" till their snouts are "bloodied." This full throated and committed protest equals that of the woman's earlier embrace of their bars. It stands in stark contrast to the obligatory protest of the narrator, who voices his ineffectual opposition from the safety of the crowd. In this zoo, male power and authority triumph as both woman and wolves are contained.

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“NOEL”: SATIRE IN MINIATURE
Joan F. Mitchell

“THE AIR WAS THICK WITH THE SCENT OF PINE and furniture polish as a phantom choir sang ‘Noel’ to the strains of a vinyl disc orchestra” (Plemmons, 133). The atmosphere of the orphanage in Michael Plemmons’ *Sudden Fiction* piece “Noel” initially appears festive with a “robust Christmas tree” in the corner “bedecked with candy canes and tinsel tresses,” but the “phantom choir” singing the title song to a “vinyl disc orchestra” is unsettling, something artificial, a second-rate copy of reality (Plemmons, 133). As the scene unfolds, all warm and redemptive Christmas story expectations are upended. This is not an orphanage; it’s a business. This is not adoption; it’s a rental. This is not Christmas; it’s the high season. These are not childless couples; they are clients. These are not children; they are commodities.

Plemmons’ “Noel” is a modern, Swiftian satire in miniature. Whereas Jonathan Swift critiqued British policies toward the impoverished Irish by suggesting that the poor sell their children as a culinary delicacy for the wealthy, Plemmons critiques modern society’s consumerism and exploitation of children through his depiction of a child rental business at Christmas. Like Swift’s *Modest Proposal*, there is an inherent logic at the core of the “Kristmas Kid” business: orphans and childless couples are a perfect match during a family-centric holiday like Christmas. In many ways, it is the ideal business model, except that human beings are both the clients and the inventory. Plemmons’ satire hinges upon the depiction of human agency and emotion squelched by the language and transaction of business. The horror of renting children is glossed with familiar terms of rental agreements and insurance deposits. Although the narrator is ostensibly detached and objective, the narrator’s omniscience reveals the contrast between the characters’ inner thoughts and the external proceedings. The only character that does not appear to suffer any internal conflict is the business manager herself, Mrs. Overton. All of the other characters, with varying levels of power and agency, do participate in the system; however, we are left to consider how their complicity in such an inhumane practice reflects our own. Good satire serves as a mirror for ourselves and our society, and “Noel” is an excellent introduction to satire for high school English students. Along with the modern accessibility of content and context, brevity lends it power from the initial reading through interpretation.

Although the title “Noel” may immediately conjure familiar sights and sounds of Christmas, encouraging students to journal about Christmas memories prior to reading makes the dissonance of the story even more glaring. Reflecting on these personal connections from the outset is important because *Sudden Fiction* stories prioritize a reader response approach, a “personal, unmediated, felt encounter with the text” (Milner, 123). If students have been trained to approach fiction from a “school” perspective (i.e., searching for literary devices or trying to figure out the “correct” interpretation), the powerful experience of reading “Noel” will be diluted and reduced to another mechanical exercise. Instead, students listen to an oral reading of the jarring story and then write one word that describes their initial reaction. For their second reading, students may read the story individually and choose what they perceive to be the most important word or phrase from the story. This is a simple yet powerful activity that encourages students to find the words in the story that may have shaped their initial reactions or words that changed their impressions from the first to the second reading. At this point they may be prepared to share their words or phrases with a small group (or “interpretive community”) in order to “shape their personal responses into textual interpretation” (Milner, 137) and to begin fleshing out why they responded the way they did to the story.

Employing imaginative activities at this stage will allow students to reflect upon the author’s craft (the how behind the why of their reaction) in a nonthreatening way by becoming authors themselves. Potential writing activities may include the following:

- Create an ad for a “Kristmas Kid” that Mrs. Overton published in the Sunday newspaper the week before Christmas
- Craft a musical composition such as a Christmas hymn or carol that captures that mood of this scene at the orphanage

- Write a letter from one of the children in the orphanage to Santa
- Write an entry in Mrs. Hathaway's diary
- Rewrite the final scene from the perspective of the two pre-teen boys that were left behind

By writing an advertisement for the business, students are practicing their own form of satire, crafting a marketing tactic that will best "sell" human beings. The other activities encourage students to imaginatively expand upon the thoughts, desires, and motivations of several of the characters whose emotions are only subtly evident in the story. Writing from different perspectives challenges students to reflect upon and interrogate the role of a detached narrator in the story.

Once students have responded personally, tested their ideas in an interpretive community, and written imaginatively, they may be prepared to "recognize, appreciate, and finally internalize dimensions of the unique experience of reading literature" (Milner, 143). In this "formal analysis" phase, we attempt to merge students' personal and communal responses to the text with the literary context in which those reactions exist. Students can engage in discussions about the author's craft that inspired their responses. The business-laden language that creates so much dissonance when applied to children as objects for sale can be contrasted with the subtle hints of human emotion that are sprinkled throughout the text: the nervous girls waiting as each sales pitch is given, the squeak of joy when Melinda is chosen, the first-time clients who are "uneasy" and "unable to meet the children's eyes" (Plemmons, 134), and the guilt and dejection of the pre-teen boys who were not chosen. Mrs. Overton's reflection that "business was good" despite her "irregular inventory" this year stands in stark contrast to the "peculiar nasal sound" of one of the boys who was not chosen (Plemmons, 134). Any overt display of emotion is unacceptable in this business environment, evidenced by the narrator's dismissal of the boy's muffled lament as a "congested sentiment perhaps" and Mrs. Hathaway's response: "Quiet, child." Ask students to create a two-columned list of the business lingo and the language of human emotion. What effect does this contrast have on how we read the story? Who deserves our pity? Who deserves our blame? To make this discussion more concrete for students, ask them to place each of the characters on a continuum from pity to blame. This activity never fails to provoke a class debate because students become attached to their decisions and feel prepared to defend their interpretations. Should we pity the childless couples? Mrs. Hathaway? Is Mrs. Overton solely to blame? The act of debating pushes students toward their own critical interpretation of the purpose of the story. What is Plemmons critiquing about people and society in "Noel"? Students may focus on dehumanization or exploitation of children or holiday consumerism or artificial human connection or other potential critiques, but their discussion will be bolstered with textual evidence derived from the previous activities.

After students have explored societal critiques using this short, powerful piece of fiction, they are primed to discuss the genre of satire and prepared to engage with longer, "classic" pieces such as Swift's *A Modest Proposal*. Students may use the interior of a Venn diagram to indicate the points of convergence between the two pieces such as the use of shocking, exaggerated scenarios to critique inhumane practices and the exterior to compare and contrast the differences in form (brief narrative vs. problem-solution essay) and context (modern day United States vs. Great Britain/Ireland of the 1700s). This comparison provokes the following questions: (1) What makes satire an effective tool of societal critique? (2) What truths make it impossible to dismiss the extreme exaggeration as ridiculous? (3) Which of the two forms of satire (narrative vs. essay) was more effective and why? (4) If you were going to satirize one aspect of the society in which you live, what would it be and what form would your hyperbole take?

Entertaining these questions about the purpose and form of satire with nuance and depth is possible because students first whet their appetites with "Noel," a "sudden" story that demands their reaction. From that initial, personal response, students share in community, extend with imagination, explore the author's craft, and debate their interpretations. This miniature satire opens the

door for students to be thoughtful, critical consumers of satirical classics such as *A Modest Proposal* and current satirical news outlets like *The Onion*. In a world in which the line between reality and satire grows hazier each day, the need for our students to recognize the truth behind the hyperbole has never been greater.

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EXPLORING WHITMAN'S POETRY USING THE CAPER STAR METHOD

Katie Ellis

IN COLLEGE, I HAD THE PRIVILEGE of taking several classes from Dr. William Engel who taught me a method of poetry analysis that I have continued to use in my own classroom. This method, whimsically dubbed the "Caper Star," involves a very simple approach to assessing the basics of a poem, and the steps are easily communicable to high school and even middle school students. While going through these basics, however, something remarkable happens; the inner workings of the poem emerge in ways that I have never experienced through other approaches of "close reading." Walt Whitman's provocative little poem, "A Noiseless Patient Spider," provides fertile ground on which to demonstrate the power of the Caper Star. (Whitman: www.poetryfoundation.org/poems-and-poets/poems/detail/45473)

As Engel explains in his article, "Updating Classical Mnemonics for the Modern Classroom: 'The Caper Star Method,'" this method is designed to encourage "spirited leaps of imagination" in the "gathering of information that can help students make connections they might not otherwise consider" (176). Engel justifies the process with an explanation of how the five steps relate to "the most fundamental and time-honored categories of thought." As he explains, the five steps (which I will enumerate shortly) correspond to:

- (1) the rational process of cause and effect [...];
- (2) the often irrational nature of human interactions [...];
- (3) taking stock of the extent to which language is a medium for conveying both sense and transmitting the values of a given culture;
- (4) the various faces of interrogation [...];
- and (5) the self-conscious reflection on one's own point of view [...]. (176)

While I was never aware of these connections as a student, they make perfect sense to me as I think about how this method has been effective in my own teaching. Adding to the compelling idea of these categories of thought is the spatial element of working one's way around the points of a star. This kind of mapping allows students to think of the poem in new ways while working kinetically with the text. Finally, the name itself evokes physical movement, and I (as Engel did before me) encourage my students to think of capers as a dance through the poem. As I enumerate the points of the star, I will briefly illustrate how each point might apply to Whitman's "A Noiseless Patient Spider."

The first step is, perhaps strangely, often the hardest to communicate to high school students. Engel always described it as a checklist of action, but I have had more success asking students to think of it as a detailed summary of what the speaker is doing in each line. Students are tempted, when I call it a checklist of action, to just list action verbs. They also have trouble not "rewriting" the poem in "their own words." One struggle that I have had as a teacher is letting go of the expectation that all students will (or should) approach a given task the way that I would, and Caper Stars have been a good way for me to learn to let go some of the control. That is to say, this step can be as effective if it is a literal checklist or if it is a narrative summary. I tend towards the narrative summary in my own capers. Whitman's poem shows the importance of starting with this step first (another tendency that I have found I need to steer students away from is tackling the Caper Star in a random order): in summarizing the action of this particular poem, a student must notice the physical movement of the spider and understand the meaning of that movement (that it is an essential and life-sustaining one). The mirroring movement of the soul character in the second stanza necessarily takes on heavier import.

The second point on the star is characters, their connections to each other, and (perhaps) to the audience. One pitfall I have had to work against is the overzealous personifier, the student who wants to make every noun a character. I don't think any of us would argue that personified objects don't function as characters in poetry, but it is possible to get carried away on this step. In Whitman's poem, the characters appear straightforward: the speaker is observing a spider. Again, this poem

highlights the importance of this step, however, because once you start to think about how the speaker and the spider are relating to each other, you must examine the soul as the spider's parallel. This examination will start to raise the questions at the center of this poem: what is the relationship between self and soul? Self and nature? Self and others?

The third step is where I generally have the most fun, and where the imaginative leaps and creativity start to become palpable. Exploring the significance of a few key words in a sentence or two is a lot more fun for us, however, than it is for the students we teach. To help the kids understand what I mean by key words, I usually ask them to look for words that seem to have more than one meaning or function within the poem and start from there. I hesitate to say key words and phrases because that leads kids to decide that "A noiseless patient spider" is the key phrase they are going to investigate. Obviously, that is an important phrase in Whitman's poem, but the point of the Caper Star is to revel in the minutia of each point and then step back to look at the poem (or even the stanza or line) as a whole. One of my favorite words in this poem is "ductile," used to describe the "anchor" the soul hopes will find purchase in the second stanza. The definition of the word itself is of course relevant, but so are words that suggest themselves because of the sound: words like "duct" which lead to "conduct" or "conduce," all of which can add shades to our understanding of what this "anchor" must do.

Step four is deceptively challenging. It seems simple enough: what questions does the poem raise? One challenge is avoiding the temptation to simply ask questions about the poem. I often find myself repeating to students giving in to this temptation, "what does it make you wonder about?" The key is to start with the smaller, more immediate questions the poem is raising, and then to keep pushing outward to more general or universal questions it touches on. A localized question has already come up: "What is the relationship between the speaker and the soul?" A larger question might be "Is connection between one soul and another (or one soul and nature) necessary sustenance for a person?" That can get teenagers talking. One thing I love about this point in the caper is that it really demonstrates to students how poetry is more than a bunch of words that sound nice; it is a medium for raising important questions about the world.

The fifth and final step seems to be the most accessible, but it can be challenging especially for younger students. The central question here is how does the poem relate to you and how do you relate to the poem? Ideally, students have developed an opinion about a poem by the time they have gotten to this step; with Whitman's poem, it is easy to see how a teenager could identify with the speaker and write a few sentences about it. More often than not, however, I have to push students to take this step seriously, which is why introducing the method to students using an easily relatable poem is so important.

As a student, I always took a narrative approach to Caper Stars. My pages filled with writing, and it always seemed to work out that I had exactly the right amount of room; this is not the only approach to a successful caper. I have come to recognize the open-endedness of capers to be one of their strongest assets as teaching tools. In preparing for an assignment in which I demonstrated the caper method in grad school, I emailed Professor Engel to get his permission to use a method that he is the author of. He wrote back, "In a way, of course, you are "the author" because anyone using let alone implementing and teaching how to use, caper stars creates something new every time!"

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THREE APPROACHES TO TEACHING POETRY

Melanie Huynh-Duc

TEACHING POETRY CAN SOMETIMES BE MET WITH RESISTANCE in the English classroom. Poetry has a reputation of being difficult to interpret, and therefore students often approach it with apprehension or tepid pursuit.

However, there are ways to demystify poetry in order to make it accessible to all readers – including those who are reluctant, younger, or less sophisticated. Here are three approaches to instructing poetry that will build students' confidence, engage their attention, and inspire their creativity.

FOUND POETRY

Death of a Soul

Man? Woman? Somebody? Nobody?
A man inside or not a man inside?
Buried in a chest
The need of love
The need of relief
Imagine a life alone.
Watching iron bones break
Changed somebody.
Colored, mistreated, sold, broke.
Reduced to wildness
Bloody, crooked, evil world.
Feeling nothing but
sickness in the soul.
Slowly a mind left.
Not tougher, not stronger, not grateful,
Nothing.

Eleventh grade students created the above poem using the ninth chapter of Toni Morrison's neo-slave narrative, *Beloved*. Students were instructed to compress Morrison's prose into a poem that exemplified the theme of slavery's deconstruction of identity.

"Found Poetry" is the concept of taking an existing prose text and selecting words and phrases to distill it into a poem. It appeals to students who are resistant to poetry because of its collaborative and formulaic approach to creating it. The following is a process teachers can adapt in their classrooms to have their students create their own "Found" poems:

- 1- Select a prose text that is appropriate for close examination in your classroom. For younger students, it might be a compelling news article; for advanced literature students, it may be an excerpt from a novel or play of current study.
- 2- Then, in recommended groups of four, the students must convert the prose piece into poetry by reducing and altering the text.
- 3- Using highlighters, students should go through collaboratively and select 60-100 words or phrases. You might consider giving them a specific theme to explore so their decision-making has focus. In determining which words and phrases are the most powerful, the students also decide which words are unnecessary and expendable.
- 4- From the words they have chosen, you might have them reduce even further. Once they have selected approximately 30-40 words, then the students work together to build a poem.

- a. One approach to “Found” poetry is by making students keep the words and phrases in the same order as they were found in the original prose piece.
 - b. Or, to give the students more autonomy, you may encourage them to move the words and phrases, around, inverting the original author’s syntax, compressing phrases, transforming words, and allowing for repetition – especially in order to create a refrain.
 - c. There should also be a limit to how many additional words can be used. Often just two or three outside words are permissible to assist the poem’s “flow.”
- 5- Finally, there are various ways for students to complete their product. You can have them manually cut out the words from the original document and glue them onto a different piece of paper (similar to the concept of “magnetic poetry”). Another option is to have students hand-write or type their new poem, giving specific parts additional emphasis through symbolic colors, fonts, sizing, and even placement (as found in concrete poetry).

This process often underscores the thematic significance of the original prose piece, eliminating specifics from the text (such as characters’ names) and focusing on the essential mood, thus allowing it to appeal to a broader audience. Through this process of compression, conversion, and design, the once-specific prose piece will be rendered into a universal, concise, and meaningful poem.

GRAPHIC REPRESENTATION

Students generally enjoy “Found” poetry because they themselves become the creators; however, another way for students to embrace their creative side while studying a canonical poem can be through art. Drawing one’s interpretation can be applied to many poems, but Robert Frost’s “The Lockless Door” is one suggested text that is appropriate for students of all levels (Frost: www.poetry-archive.com/f/the_lockless_door.html).

First, the students read the five-stanza poem silently to themselves. Then, they are instructed to draw their interpretation of the poem on a piece of paper, which often yields individual pictures of the door, the terrified narrator, the obscure knocker, and the open window.

In small groups, the students find confidence to share their work, and then they are encouraged to bring their various interpretations to the class. Usually, one brave student will volunteer to draw his or her image on the board. From the teacher’s probing, he or she must support the artistic decisions with textual evidence, perhaps taking additional suggestions from classmates to enhance or improve the drawing. As discussion evolves, delving into the nuances of the poem, other students volunteer to contribute, and sometimes, students can be encouraged to perform their interpretations (jumping out of a pretend-window), which further elicits discussion.

Such a process engenders whole-class discussion about the implications of Frost’s chosen words, the action of the poem, and the attitude of the speaker. It makes for an engaging, buoyant lesson that motivates students to explore the profundity of a poem without intimidation.

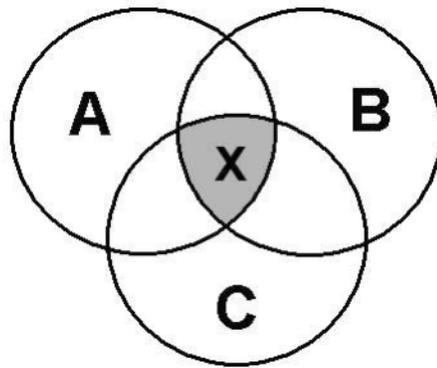
SYNTHESIS RATHER THAN ANALYSIS

Poetry study usually consists of the close study of one poem; however, an alternative method of poetry pedagogy involves a thematic look at three poems simultaneously. By examining what three poems have in common, a different picture emerges that often promotes greater student engagement than perhaps just the discussion of one poem by itself. To start, select three poems that you wish to study as a unit. For this example, consider the following love poems: “For Anne Gregory” (Yeats: allpoetry.com/For-Anne-Gregory), “Sonnet 116” (Shakespeare: allpoetry.com/Sonnet-116:--*Let-me-not-to-the-marriage-of-true-minds...-*), and “The Farmer’s Wife” (Sexton: allpoetry.com/The-Farmer's-Wife). Have volunteers read them to the class prior to the activity. As much as possible, poetry should be read aloud so students hear each poem’s cadence, music, and rhythm. Then, provide each poem with a label: A (Yeats), B (Shakespeare), and C (Sexton). The following are potential whole-class or small-group discussion questions for consideration:

- Which narrators are similar in the way they depict love relationships between men and women (A, B, or C)?
- Which aspects of love are agreed upon by all three narrators? (X)
- Which narrators appear to have a more realistic view of love? Which have more idealized views?
- How do the lovers differ from one another in terms of how they each approach their beloved?
- Which view of love appeals most to you, and why?
- Which of the two other narrators (A or B) would C choose for her husband? Why?
- Which poem would you send to someone you loved? Why?

Teachers with ample resources and time to devote to this process might consider a visual approach to reveal the poems' similarities and differences. Students could develop individual paintings or works of art based on one or more of the questions above, so that following their completion, the art could be hung around the room in gallery style. Then, the students could subsequently discuss the relationship between their inspired artwork and the original poems themselves.

For a more didactic approach, a graphic organizer such as a Venn Diagram would allow the students to explore what is common to the poems when studied in pairs (A and B together; B and C together; and A and C together) and what is central to all (X).



Whichever process is chosen, the methodology of synthesis rather than analysis allows students to get to the heart of each poem without exhausting them over each poem's minute details.

Poetry need no longer be a source of struggle for students and, consequently, their teachers. Through creative, hands-on lessons such as "Found" poetry, drawing to understand poetry, and synthesis vs. analysis, earnest discourse is inspired in the classroom, and the study of poetry can become more enjoyable and meaningful.

AS (INTER)NATIONAL DEBATE SWIRLS around immigration and its implications, teachers must be prepared to foster productive discussion and confront difficult and potentially divisive questions in their classrooms. *Brooklyn* (2015), a film adaptation of the novel by the same name, provides a vehicle for such discussions, following young Irish immigrant Ellis Lacey's vacillation between her homeland of Ireland and her adopted home, America, as she learns to define love, home, and—finally—herself.

The opening glimpses of Ellis' life in 1950's Ireland reveal all the trappings of the stereotypical small-town experience, from the lack of entertainment for the teenage crowd to the town gossip and bully, Ms. Kelly. However, Ellis soon reveals that she plans to escape this trap by leaving for Brooklyn, where a local priest (Father Flood) has managed to procure her a job and a room at a boarding house.

As her journey begins, it seems as though Ellis' naïveté will quickly be her undoing, as she takes the wrong bunk on the boat, gets sea-sick because she eats before a storm, and looks hopelessly ill just before arrival at Ellis Island—a huge red flag for immigration officials. However, her naïveté does her one favor in that it attracts the attention of her bunk-mate (a fellow Irish-American), who helps Ellis ready herself for America with a little rouge and confidence.

At first, given the demanding new boss and (initially) pathetic dance turnout, it seems as though Ellis' life in Brooklyn won't actually be a drastic change from the small-town life. Then, Tony enters the picture. Ellis' relationship with this Italian-American plumber is a commentary on a plethora of social issues, ranging from the more obvious xenophobia and sexism to the more subtle racism and classism. In one of the more comic scenes, Ellis has dinner with Tony's family for the first time, and his little brother (Frankie) announces at the table that their family "[doesn't] like Irish people." While the scene is intended to provide some comic relief, it also hints at a darker history of very real ethnic tensions fueled by immigrant competition in American cities.

As in any good love story, there is, of course, a tragedy that threatens to tear the lovers asunder. As Ellis is called back to Ireland, she becomes increasingly torn between her American and Irish lives. Here, the film's commentary on women's issues comes to the forefront. When Tony asks Ellis to marry him before she goes home, Ellis' hesitation is obvious as she asks, "You don't trust me to come back? ...Would a promise not be the same?" He then pressures her, saying, "If you can promise, you can easily do this," and assures her that "[they] don't have to tell anyone." At this point, the viewer can't help but wonder to what extent Ellis' agreement is her own decision and not simply the "option" forced on her by societal expectations.

These pressures don't end once Ellis makes it home to Ireland. In fact, it seems as though everyone from her mother, to her best friend, to her sister's former boss is expecting something of her. The mounting burden of her familial obligations and new pressure to marry a local bachelor (a "good catch for someone") reach a pinnacle when she receives her second proposal in as many months. Meanwhile, Tony's letters, piling up in her drawer, remind her of her obligations in America. In one particularly moving scene, the amount of effort poured into these simple letters is revealed, as Tony is forced to turn to his eight-year-old brother for help with writing to Ellis because the eight-year-old has had the most education of anyone in his family.

Of course, no secret can stay a secret for long in a small town, and it is the bully, Ms. Kelly, who first learns of Ellis' marriage. As she threatens Ellis with this knowledge, Ms. Kelly unwittingly reminds Ellis of why she was so happy in America and unintentionally gives her just the push she needs to regain control of her life and her decisions.

Due to its thematic content, mild language, and brief sexual content, this film would be best suited for a high school audience.

SUGGESTED TEXT PAIRINGS

- Brooklyn* by Colm Tóibín
- Lady Windemere's Fan* by Oscar Wilde
- A Portrait of the Artist as a Young Man* by James Joyce
- Americanah* by Chimamanda Ngozi Adichie
- How the Garcia Girls Lost Their Accents* by Julia Alvarez
- The House on Mango Street* by Sandra Cisneros
- A Tree Grows in Brooklyn* by Betty Smith

DISCUSSION QUESTIONS FOR CLASSROOM ANALYSIS

1. Discuss the relationships Ellis has with her mother and her sister. How might the story have been different if there was more honesty amongst these women from the outset?
2. How do Ellis' initial expectations of America compare/contrast with the realities she faces?
3. How did the methods of communication make things easier or more challenging for Ellis than they might have been in today's world of texting, social media, etc.?
4. How does Tony's family compare/contrast with Ellis' family?
5. How does Ellis experience racial divisions between both "native" and immigrant Americans and within differing immigrant groups?
6. How does Ellis experience classism in Ireland? How does she experience classism in America?
7. Can one person "learn" to love another, or is love an instantaneous reaction?
8. Why do you think Ellis decided to keep her marriage to Tony a secret initially? Do you agree with her decision?
9. Do you think Ellis' sense of familial responsibility changes over the course of the film?
10. How do Ellis' perceptions of herself evolve over the course of the film? How do others' perceptions of her compare/contrast to her own perceptions?
11. How do societal expectations of women in the 1950's play a role in Ellis' story?
12. Do you agree/disagree with Ellis' decision to return to America?

OF MITES AND MEN

Robert Frost's "A Considerable Speck" was published in *The Atlantic Monthly* in July, 1939. Three years earlier, Grant Wood painted "Spring Turning." (<Reynolda.org>, search "Spring Turning") Setting both pieces in time is important. The Great Depression had, depending on what part of the country one lived, its darkest days behind it, but the Dust Bowl conditions were still rocking the West and affecting the entire nation. World War II was looming.

The two artists had gone through difficult personal times as well. Frost's wife died in 1938, and he had resigned from his professorship at Amherst to "wander around . . . for a while till I can decide who I am now, and what I have to go on" (Thompson, 471). Similar turmoil preceded Wood's painting of "Spring Turning." In 1934, he was appointed Director of the Public Works Artist Project in Iowa. Financially bolstered, he married and started teaching art at the University of Iowa. "Spring Turning" is the only art he produced during this period. Both his marriage and his teaching career had faltered by 1936.

Both men needed to back away from life and gain perspective. The two pieces are studies in perspective.

When we "enter" most pieces of art, we usually enter on its level. We look directly into the eyes of the portrait, we look down at a still life as if we are standing beside it, or we stand on a hillside to see the mountains in the distance. Generally, we are somehow grounded. "Spring Turning" does not give us those roots. We hover, as if we were in hot air balloon, high above rolling hills that are being plowed. Big squares of brown are being carved on round hills. Three tiny farmers are plowing behind their two horses—each team working individually on separate fields. Off in the distance, one field is completely plowed. Their task seems impossibly difficult.

There is a farmhouse, but it doesn't seem to be the subject of the painting. The cows that dot the pasture seem relatively insignificant. Nevertheless, the house anchors the workmen, and the cows tell us that life is regular and predictable—milking twice a day every day. Our imagination takes us inside the house to see someone cooking for the plowmen or washing their clothes. The minimalist nature of the work invites us to imagine.

Those rolling hills dominate. Sensuous and eternal, they've seen glaciers, buffalo herds, prairie fires, and generations of people who claim to own them. The plowmen who are currently scratching their backs will be replaced by giant machinery by the end of the century. Chances are the farmhouse will disappear as fields get bigger and bigger.

Among the lessons of the Dust Bowl was the need to terrace land to prevent erosion. These plowmen are creating furrows that will guide the topsoil down to the creek. Wood may be making a statement about careless farming practices. He would know, by 1936, the devastation caused by cattle and sheep destroying the grasses that had held the land in place on the plains despite years of fire and wind and drought. Their presence along with the lack of erosion control were chief causes of the Dust Bowl. The painting may be commenting on that. Perhaps that is why the square "pegs" don't feel right on the round hills.

On the other hand, the painting may be about the power of tenacity. The miniscule plowmen show us that all work is done "row by row." Wood may be speaking here about the nobility of work. It may quietly reflect the faith in what hard work might produce. It could demonstrate the eternal optimism that farmers must have to get through all the work and setbacks they face.

Wood isolates each of the plowmen. He may be making a statement about the human condition.

"Spring Turning" could be romantic, showing the harmony between nature and mankind. It

might be about the nobility of mankind when joined to the land. Wood keeps us hovering at a distance so that we do not see the sweat and dirt and so that we are lulled into dreamy idealization of the American farmer. It certainly seems like a place where “sheep may safely graze.” (J. S. Bach, “The Sheep May Safely Glaze,” inspired by Psalm 23).

Wood may be being humorous. The cartoon-like nature of the painting invites us to imagine the seven dwarfs entering from the side: “Hi ho, Hi ho, it’s off to work we go.” The trees that line the road are stylized and uniform. It is a felt board background for a kindergarten storytelling session.

Furthermore, perspective often produces humor. Bad marriages and troubled careers may be painful up close, but with enough perspective, “spring turning” reflects hope: this crop will not be like last year’s crop!

Frost’s “A Considerable Speck” is an apt pairing with “Spring Turning.” Perspective seems central to whatever interpretation we give it.

A Considerable Speck

A speck that would have been beneath my sight
On any but a paper sheet so white
Set off across what I had written there,
And I had idly poised my pen in air
To stop it with a period of ink
When something strange about it made me think,
This was no dust speck by my breathing blown,
But unmistakably a living mite
With inclinations it could call its own.
It paused as with suspicion of my pen,
And then came racing wildly on again
To where my manuscript was not yet dry;
Then paused again and either drank or smelt—
With loathing, for again it turned to fly.
Plainly with an intelligence I dealt.
It seemed too tiny to have room for feet,
Yet must have had a set of them complete
To express how much it didn’t want to die.
It ran with terror and with cunning crept.
It faltered: I could see it hesitate;
Then in the middle of the open sheet
Cower down in desperation to accept
Whatever I accorded it of fate.
I have none of the tenderer-than-thou
Collectivistic regimenting love
With which the modern world is being swept.
But this poor microscopic item now!
Since it was nothing I knew evil of
I let it lie there till I hope it slept.

I have a mind myself and recognize
Mind when I meet with it in any guise
No one can know how glad I am to find
On any sheet the least display of mind.

The speaker in the poem hovers above the mite on the page in much the same manner as the viewer of Wood's work. The plowmen, too, "seemed too tiny to have room for feet / Yet must have had a set of them complete."

The poem is less enigmatic, perhaps, than the painting. Frost shows the writer pausing when he notices the moving speck on his page. We follow the writer's movement: he lifts his pen to have it come down on the mite, but stops. He follows the frantic movements of the mite, imagines how the mite doesn't like his "ink" because the mite has "inklinations" of his own (Frost gives us a wink), comes to admire the mite, and lets it live—to sleep, perchance to dream.

There is no stanza break in the poem until the last four lines. The narrative is followed, then, by the commentary: it's surprising and pleasing to find "display of mind" on a page.

But Frost is not simple. There are always layers. His iambic pentameter never falters, but the rhyme scheme follows the action of the poem, starting with sedate writing (a,a,b,b,c,c) during the exposition. When he sees the moving creature, his thoughts are interrupted, and the rhyme scheme changes (d,e,d,e). The next line, "And then came racing wildly on again," rhymes with no other line. It is the moment of panic for the mite; there is complete lack of control. The writer, for a moment, also loses focus. Then the writer gets control once again and falls into somewhat erratic (like the mite's movements) but regular rhymes. By the end of the poem, though, he is back in control with an a,a,b,b pattern. (Compare this to Frost's rhyme scheme in "Stopping by the Woods on a Snowy Evening." Notice how the rhyme scheme there also reflects the indecision and resolution in the poem: a,a,b,a/b,b,c,b/c,c,d,c/d,d,d,d. Amazing.)

Likewise, the "speed" of the poem reflects the content. Consider the long vowels in "Then paused again and either drank or smelt—/ With loathing," followed by the speed of "for again it turned to fly." Try reading the first line rapidly and the end of the second slowly. It sounds, well, wrong. Frost's folksy old poems are carefully cut diamonds. He manipulates us.

We might take the writer's wry (bordering on cynical) comment at the end to be the "meaning" of the poem. What we know, however, from reading other Frost poetry is that he wants us to pay attention. "Mending Wall," for example, too often is interpreted to say "Good fences make good neighbors." It is a line, after all, that is repeated twice. Another line, though, is also repeated twice: "Something there is that doesn't love a wall." Consider, too, how often "The Road Not Taken" is used to preach about bad decisions even though Frost clearly states, "Both that morning equally lay" and "I will be telling this with a sigh."

We know, then, to look again at his work. There is nearly always more.

We can read "Spring Turning" as a piece that comments on an idyllic lifestyle with its regularity and predictability. Those plowmen will follow this trip around the field with another trip when the fields are planted, and another when the fields are harvested, and another when the winter wheat is sown which will need to be turned under the next spring when the whole process will start over again. Year after year, the plowmen control what they can.

They have a plan, but like the mite in the Frost poem, the plowmen ultimately must "Cower down in desperation to accept / Whatever [is] accorded [them by] fate." Tornadoes, droughts, floods, blizzards, and markets are beyond their control. The pen-wielder of Frost's poem, by his own admission, has no "tenderer-than-thou / Collectivistic regimenting love." The plowmen and the mite know that it's all a gamble.

Frost was no stranger to the vicissitudes of life. At the time he wrote this poem, he had failed at farming and teaching and writing. He was yet to find his place in American letters. The hand of fate had been capricious. In the heart of the poem, in that unrhymed line, "And then came racing wildly on again," we hear panic. There is no rhyme nor reason. "Immanent Will" (cf. Thomas Hardy's "Convergence of the Twain") is impersonal and holds the pen, and the danger of destruction is great.

Mercifully, the speaker in the poem stays his hand. The interruption of the writer's work by the appearance of the mite scurrying across the page seems almost welcome. It is a diversion. What writer doesn't assume that anyone smelling or tasting the still-wet ink will hate it? The power of the poised pen is neutralized by one whiff.

There is humor in the Frost poem as well as in "Spring Turning". The critical mite who sniffs both literally and figuratively at the writer's work introduces that humor. The ultimate counter-intuitive leniency makes us glad, and sets us up to be walloped by the last stanza. There, confronted with "the least display of mind," we smile first and then back away to see its truth.

Where we are makes us feel like either a mite under the capricious hand of fate or the almighty pen-wielder. From where we hover, we see ourselves being the tiny plowmen who think they are making a difference on those eternal, rolling hills. Juxtaposing the two works gives us the chance to ponder what they meant for their creators and for us. They leave us humbled, a little unsettled, and hopeful. After all a considerable speck is something to contend with.

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WISE WORDS
Lucy Milner

In each issue *Wise Words* features snippets from the writing of miscellaneous observers who have something powerful to suggest to educators (particularly those of English language and letters) and their students.

“The best moments in reading are when you come across something – a thought, a feeling, a way of looking at things – that you’d thought special, particular to you, and here it is, set down by someone else, a person you’ve never met, maybe even someone long dead and it’s as if a hand has come out and taken yours.”

Alan Bennett (1934-)

“ . . . that is what learning is. You suddenly understand something you’ve understood all your life, but in a new way.”

Doris Lessing (1919-2013)

“In the case of good books, the point is not how many of them you can get through, but rather how many can get through to you.”

Mortimer J. Adler (1902-2001)

“The problem in our country isn’t with books being banned, but with people no longer reading. ... You don’t have to burn books to destroy a culture. Just get people to stop reading them.”

Ray Bradbury (1920-2012)

“There is then creative reading as well as creative writing. When the mind is braced by labor and invention, the page of whatever book we read becomes luminous with manifold allusion.”

Ralph Waldo Emerson (1803-1882)

Katharine Martin teaches 8th Grade in Auburn, Alabama

1- How would you describe your instructional philosophy? What are the theories or central ideas that undergird the decisions that you make each day in the classroom? Explain the why behind what you do. Consider details such as your classroom arrangement and practices that encourage student engagement.

Katherine Martin: Martin Luther King Jr. wrote that, "Intelligence is not enough - intelligence plus character, that is the goal of true education." With each text we study, I have an opportunity to show students how the texts are relevant to their lives because we are all part of the human experience. In doing this, I want students to grow as readers, but I also want students to wrestle with the themes and messages of authors. My goal in teaching a student to analyze the text is rooted in the belief that to be a productive global citizen, students need analytical skills and moral fiber. I hope I'm not just teaching *The Diary of Anne Frank*; I hope I'm teaching tolerance.

2-What is your favorite text to teach and how do you teach it?

Katherine Martin: Performing Shakespeare's Julius Caesar with tenth graders provided me with some of the best days in the classroom. We began with simple activities like the "So-So Drama" to help students explore tone of voice and expression. For the actual reading of the play, we performed it with props and sometimes rehearsed and performed scenes in the amphitheater. Students argued about characters' motives through character continuums and writing assignments that asked them to write post cards in the voice of one character to another character. Students debated themes of greed and power in the play by connecting it to current or recent political activity. For part of their assessment, students were asked to perform a monologue, as Kelly Gallagher says, "the way it's meant to be read."

3-What forms of media and technology enhance or facilitate instruction in your classroom?

Katherine Martin: Currently, the school where I teach is a 1:1 school and uses Schoology as a lesson management system. On the practical side, students can easily access content and my agendas for make-up work, but I also use features like the "discussion post" to draw in all students to discuss to a provocative question at the beginning of a unit. (All 29 students can reply to the question and each other's responses in 5 minutes!) When I make a formative assessment, it provides instant data on how many students missed each question so I can re-teach on the spot as needed. The portfolio-making feature allows students to work on a project over time, adding multimedia content to answer the unit's essential question over time or connect themes between units.

4- Describe your approach to meeting the needs of diverse learners in your classroom. Consider student differences in culture, race, gender, learning styles, and academic ability.

Katherine Martin: My first strategy for differentiated instruction is simply to learn about my students: What struggles do they have outside the classroom? What interests does each student have? From there, I can build a rapport that makes it possible to create analogies and examples that make sense, pick reading material that might draw in a student, and connect with a learner that may otherwise be reluctant to engage in the material. Secondly, at the start of school, I teach my students the signposts for analyzing literature (*Note and Notice* by Beers/Probst). We read an excerpt from six different novels in the first two weeks of school in order to learn the signposts; the characters are diverse in race, gender and culture. This sets the tone that students will encounter both "mirrors and windows," as Jacqueline Woodson calls them. Students will hopefully see themselves reflected in at

least one of the characters, and students will also see a window into those who are different from themselves.

5- *Where do you find your best new teaching ideas? Do you rely on web content generated from other teachers, conversations with teachers you know, journals, professional conferences, or other resources?*

Katherine Martin: I was home for seven years with my children and then returned to teaching; I felt like a new teacher all over again! The teachers in my department have given me the most effective new ideas, and I am more likely to implement them with success because I can have ongoing conversations with my colleagues about how to tweak and change assignments and units to fit our school culture. I also observe other teachers' classes, both the teaching and students' presentations. Seeing the process and the end result helps me reflect on my practice and what I want students to be able to do. Most recently, attending *NCTE* has filled my teacher toolkit to the brim, and I am currently using several new strategies and lesson ideas I learned from the conference. The conference shifted my philosophy about students reading more independently so that they become life-long readers.

POSTS

MERCILESS IRONY

Jay Foster

Just Mercy: A Story of Justice and Redemption

Author...Bryan Stevenson

Citation... (2015) Spiegel & Grau: New York

Basic concept: Bryan Stevenson is an attorney dedicated to defend death row prisoners. His story, *Just Mercy*, critiques racism and mass incarceration in our justice system (“the prison population has increased from 300,000 people in the early 1970’s to 2.3 million people today”) through the eyes of Walter McMillian, an African American convicted of murdering a white teenage girl—this despite the fact that he is in the company of his entire community at the time of the murder. The merciless irony is that this injustice takes place in Harper Lee’s *Monroeville*, Alabama. Under pressure to solve a high profile crime, the “law” scapegoats Walter. Appeal after appeal, officer after officer of the justice system colludes to maintain the fiction that justice has been served by Walter’s suffering. When he was a boy, the author’s grandmother pulled him to her and said “You can’t understand most of the important things from a distance, Bryan. You have to get close.” *Just Mercy* pulls you close, close to the horrors of death row and the stench of racism. And then it frees you—just like Walter—to act on the understanding that justice and mercy are deeply connected.

Discussion Questions:

1. Stevenson writes about his experience, “Proximity has taught me some basic and humbling truths, including this: Each of us is more than the worst thing we’ve ever done. My work with the incarcerated has persuaded me that the opposite of poverty is not wealth; the opposite of poverty is justice.” (pp.17-18)

a. What does the author mean, “the opposite of poverty is justice,” and how does this statement relate to the “humbling truth” that we are more than the worst thing we’ve ever done?

2. Stevenson argued before the Supreme Court that imprisoning teens under the age of 14 to life sentences, carried out in adult prisons, constitutes cruel and unusual punishment, violating the constitution. In the chapter detailing this fight, the author tells how his own grandfather, at age 86, had been murdered by teenagers in a robbery. In working with these teenagers in prison, he writes that “I was starting to understand” how such senseless acts can happen (p.267) This piece of the author’s life story seems to fuel his drive for justice. How do you relate? How does your story drive your commitment and passion?

Allied texts:

-*The Cross and the Lynching Tree* by James Cone

-*The New Jim Crow* by Michelle Alexander

-*Invisible Man* by Ralph Ellison

HOW TO TELL FAKE NEWS FROM REAL NEWS

Daniella Feijoo

How to Tell Fake News from Real News

Author...Laura McClure

Source...*TED-Ed Blog Interviews Category*

Link... <http://blog.ed.ted.com/2017/01/12/how-to-tell-fake-news-from-real-news/>

Date Published...January 12th, 2017

Basic concept: This article focuses on the lack of media literacy among young people in the United States. The author provides some basic suggestions for how young people can strengthen their own ability to tell real news from “fake news”. McClure stresses the importance of looking at the writer’s bio, making sure the article includes multiple primary sources when discussing a controversial claim, and focuses on when and where the article was published.

Comment: This article zooms in on a significant issue impacting all Americans, but specifically young people. With the social media revolution, a majority of young people receive all of their news through various social media platforms, which makes them susceptible to “fake news”. The fact that McClure provides readers with concrete solutions for how to filter out “fake news” makes the process of finding good, reliable news sources much more efficient. The author also provides reliable news sources such as *ProPublica* and *NPR* as examples of what to look for in trustworthy media outlets. Teachers and parents can produce rich discussion about deep philosophical subjects like truth, belief, and knowledge in a world of misinformation by encouraging students to double-check sources and by modeling reading news from various reliable outlets. The Stanford study listed at the end of the blog post is linked to teaching the text because it provides concrete processes and solutions for how young people can ensure they are reading reliable sources.

Quotations:

“Bottom line: Don’t believe everything you read. There is no substitute for critical thinking.”

“Fake news, like all propaganda, is designed to make you feel strong emotions. So if you read a news item that makes you feel super angry, pause and take a deep breath.”

“Fake news may include fake sources, false urls, and/or “alternative facts” that can be disproven through further research. When in doubt, dig deeper. Facts can be verified.”

Allied texts:

-*Monster* by Walter Dean Myers

-*Nothing but the Truth* by Avi

-1984 by George Orwell

-*Fahrenheit 451* by Ray Bradbury

-*WNYC’s Brooke Gladstone and Bob Garfield The Breaking News Consumer’s Handbook*

-*Sue Shellenbarger’s Most Students Don’t Know When News Is Fake*

-*Stanford Study Finds*

Rebecca Brown

A retired high school English teacher. She spent her last ten years of full-time teaching at the University of North Carolina School of the Arts. From 1985-2015, she worked as a consultant with College Board training AP English teachers throughout the South and wherever College Board sent her. During the summers, she taught AP Institutes and was a director of the National Writing Project at Wake Forest University.

Brianna Brown

A graduate of the NC Teaching Fellows program at UNC-Chapel Hill and the WFU MA-Ed. program, Brianna Brown is in her eighth year of teaching. Brianna taught 10th grade English in Davie County and Wake County public schools for seven years before shifting to teach at a private Middle School. She currently teaches 7th grade and 8th grade Literature courses and coaches Middle and High School Cross-Country at Thales Academy in Rolesville, NC.

Katie Ellis

A graduate of Sewanee: The University of the South (B.A. in English) and Middlebury College's Bread Loaf School of English (M.A.). She currently teaches 10th and 12th grade English at Darlington School in Rome, GA, where she also coaches Cross Country and Track.

Daniella Feijoo

A sophomore double major at Wake Forest University studying Politics & International Affairs and Spanish, with a minor in Latin American & Latino Studies. Daniella has aspirations to earn a masters in Latin American Studies at Georgetown University and continue on to law school.

Jay Foster

Director of Chaplaincy at Wake Forest Baptist Health, directing chaplaincy services in hospital, and with community projects, including care for homeless, for immigrants, and first responders. Jay received a B.A. from Furman, a Master of Divinity from Harvard, and a Doctor of Ministry from Princeton Theological Seminary. He is a Licensed Professional Counselor, and Clinical Supervisor for Chaplains.

Tracey Hughes

Chair of the *NCTE Assembly on American Literature*. A high school teacher for the past 16 years, she is currently a member of the Humanities Department at Maret School in Washington, D.C. Prior to becoming a teacher, Tracey practiced law as an associate at Debevoise and Plimpton and clerked for a federal district court judge. She is a graduate of Georgetown University (BA Government, MA English) and Boston College Law School.

Melanie Huynh-Duc

After receiving her B.A. in English with Honors from UNC-Chapel Hill in 2004 and her MAEd from Wake Forest University in 2005, Melanie has taught English and journalism at Northwest Guilford High School for the past 12 years. She received the Waddill Excellence in Teaching Award in 2010 and was Northwest's Teacher of the Year in 2013.

Lucy Milner

Began her teaching career in urban high schools in Georgia and North Carolina, continued teaching English methods classes at Salem College, and simultaneously, was passionately engaged in North Carolina's innovative summer program, the N. C. Governor's School, first as an English teacher and then as its Director. She has written book reviews and features for newspapers and educational journals, two books on children's literature and English pedagogy (as co-editor), and six editions of *Bridging English* (as co-author).

Joan F. Mitchell

A part-time assistant professor in the Department of Education at Wake Forest University. She is co-author of the English education textbook *Bridging English* (now in its 6th edition), and her current research focuses on writing pedagogy in the secondary classroom. As a regular presenter at both *NCTE* and the *North Carolina English Teachers Association* annual conferences.

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