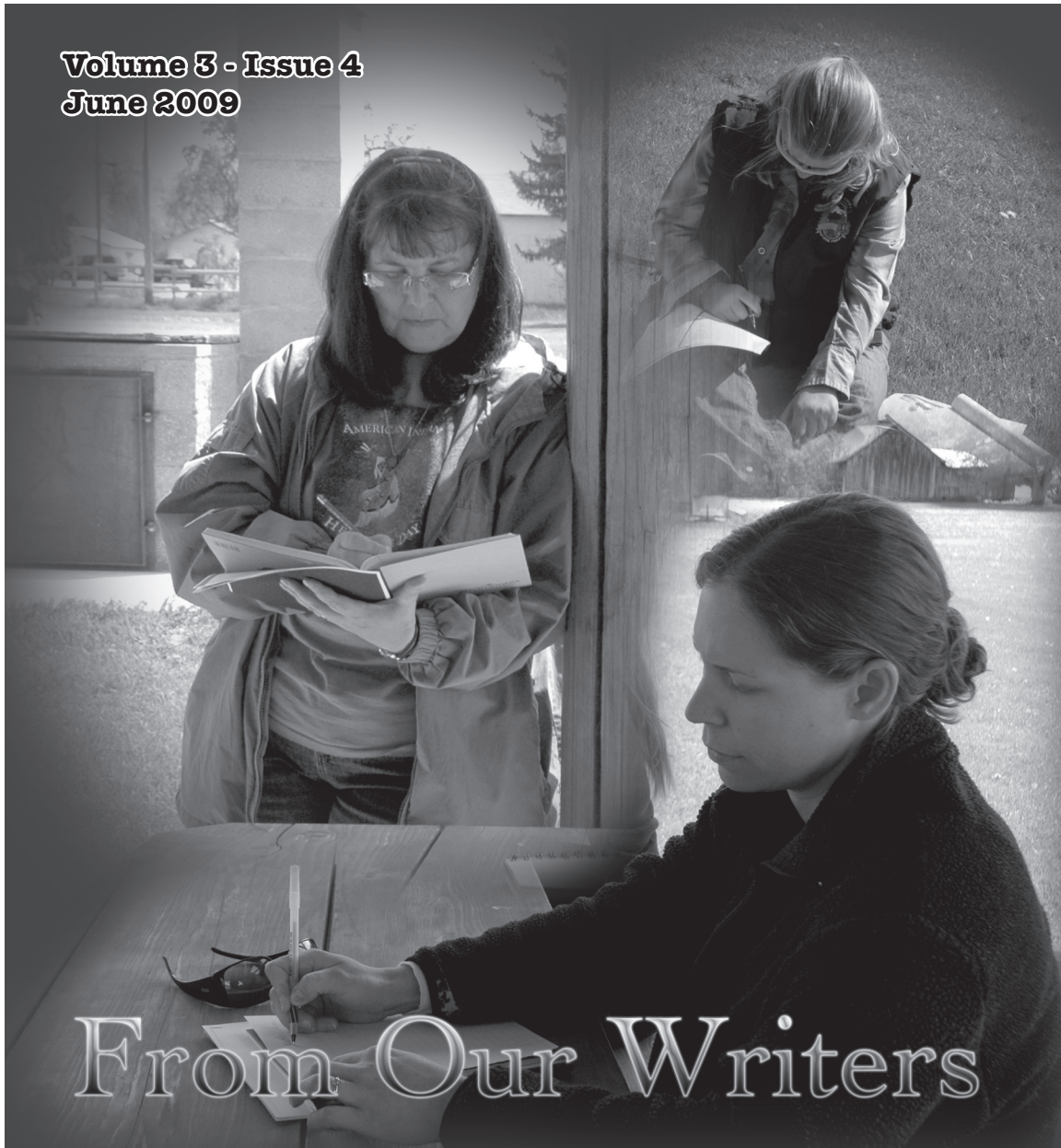


Volume 3 - Issue 4
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From Our Writers

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JOURNAL
of Montana
Writers
Project

Implementing Indian Education for All
Submission Deadline: August 1, 2009
Publication Date: September 2009

In 1972, the Montana State Constitution was amended to recognize “the distinct and unique cultural heritage of American Indians.” In 1999, State Representative Carol Juneau, a member of the Blackfoot tribe, authored a bill that made four provisions to clarify the legislative intent behind the amendment and by 2005, the bill was finally funded. While Montana’s process has been slow, Indian Education for All (IEFA) was still the first educational policy of its kind in the country. Other states are looking to Montana as a leader in these efforts as we strive to make the promise of Indian Education for All a reality. How has this mandate played out in your classroom? In what ways is the writing you are doing with students deepening their knowledge of Montana’s Native history and culture? How has this work changed your teaching? What impact have you seen in your students? What challenges have you faced? What advice can you offer teachers who have yet to tackle IEFA curriculum integration?

And as always, *The Montana Writing Project Journal* welcomes submissions for any of the following areas. There is always room for quality work that does not fit the categories or the current thematic issue.

The Practice of Teaching: As you work to teach writing, what methods get results? You might build an article from a demonstration lesson or a successful classroom unit. Reflect on what pedagogical practices have proven effective and share some ideas or strategies that we can put into play in our own classrooms. The length of the submissions for this section could vary wildly. They might be brief pieces of no more than a paragraph or two that outline a successful lesson, but they might also materialize as lengthier pieces that explain a whole unit and give some theoretical background or support for your work.

Fresh Insight: What is happening in education that you feel you must say something about? Use this as a forum to share your views on writing education. There are many things going on at the classroom level up to the national level that we as teachers are thinking about, wanting to change, or are hopeful or angry about. This is a platform to expand and articulate some of those ideas. What important issues are those around us (or are we ourselves) not thinking enough about?

Teachers as Writers: Amid the daily chaos of teaching, what personal writing have you been able to do? What are you ready to publish? What better way to encourage all of us to continue to be writers than to offer one another some of the work we are doing. Submissions of any genre are welcome.

Book reviews: What titles have you found useful when working on writing? Consider reviewing one of your favorite texts to give others an idea of the content and approach that they can expect from the author. We would be especially interested in fairly new releases with which others may not yet be familiar.

Original Photography: Share images from your classroom, professional development, or photos that complement any of your writing submissions. Images should be sent as jpeg image files with a resolution of at least 1200 by 1800 pixels. Anyone who appears in the photo should be identified, along with any other relevant caption information such as a brief explanation of what is depicted, the photographer’s name, and an approximate date the photo was taken.

Announcements/ Upcoming Events: Please pass on any information about upcoming events, opportunities, or any other information that would be of interest and use to the Montana Writing Project Community.

Submission Guidelines:

- Send any submissions to montana.writing.project@gmail.com.
- Manuscripts are only accepted in digital form saved as an RTF, Mac Pages, or Microsoft Word file.
- Do not embed image files or diagrams in your text files. Please send them as separate attachments.
- In general, manuscripts should not exceed 2,500 words.
- Please list your name, address, academic affiliation, and e-mail address on your manuscript.

Intoxicated by Spring

Donna L. Miller

As green whispers its way back into the world, my pen itches to write. On a writer's field trip, I sink blissfully into nature's gift of bluest skies dotted by birds in flight, and I listen for the river's call. Soon, the cottonwoods will have their leaves and the willow thickets will provide a maternity ward for deer. Something about spring makes the writer look and listen more deeply. Just as the world around us fills with renewal, we too open and receive the world and its places of enchantment. How felicitous then, that April is National Poetry Month.

In celebration, my students have busily studied Robert Frost, T.S. Eliot, Wallace Stevens, William Carlos Williams, Emily Dickinson, Marianne Moore, Mary Oliver, Taylor Mali, Billy Collins, Mandy Smoker, Heather Cahoon, and many other great artists. Inspired, they respond and write. Soon poetry portfolios will filter in and inquiry projects will cease. This has been a leisurely month of wallowing in words, of noticing, imitating, and mining our writer's notebooks for deposits to shine into publication worthy gems. We've tried on new forms and visited old territories, blown by impulses we sometimes can't explain, imagining new ways of seeing and knowing.

One project that I found especially effective is another inquiry based idea I designed from the mentoring offered by Katie Wood Ray in *Study Driven* (Heinemann, 2007). In fact, I've used this template to design several inquiry projects this past year, including units for Indian Education for All, where my seniors performed research into Native American literatures, and for the writing of a children's book. I share the template as a model for the classroom.

Writing Under the Influence

What genre of poetry do you want to learn to produce? Do you find fascination in the notion of writing a villanelle, sonnet, sestina, tritina, elegy, ode, ballad, epic, two-voice, or slam? Choose a genre that represents new learning for you, essentially, an unfamiliar genre. During writing workshop, you will perform a study, and after immersing yourself in the close study of gathered texts, you will write a piece that shows the influence of the study. In other words, you will write under the influence of inquiry. Here are the inquiry steps:

Gathering Texts: With my help, you will gather five to ten examples of the kind of writing you wish to do. What have you read that is like what you are trying to write?

Immersion: Spend time reading and getting to know the texts you will study. Use sticky notes and highlighters and empty margins to mark what you notice about the poems you are reading. For instance, you might observe how the writer uses shocking detail, repeating lines, or exaggeration to make a point. Once you've given over considerable time to observation, look over these noticings to determine how the texts are written, how they work, and think about the process writers use to craft texts like the ones you are studying. All the while, you will read with an eye toward knowing you will write something like this. Good texts hold the answers to what makes good writing. Here are some guiding questions for immersion:

- What kinds of topics do writers address with this genre and what kinds of things do they do with these topics?
- How do writers craft this genre so that it is compelling for readers?
- How are the pieces organized?
- What particular language work/poetic technique is striking?
- Is there any interesting punctuation at work in the piece?
- Are there any insights about how stanza break decisions were made?
- How do graphics, illustrations, layout, font, add to the meaning and the appeal of the piece?
- How does the title of the piece relate to the meaning?

Writing Under the Influence: Draft, revise, and polish a piece of writing that shows the influence of the study.



Donna Miller, who teaches and writes from Chinook, has also co-directed the Montana Writing Project Summer Institute.

Reflecting: Write a reflective piece in which you address the following points.

- Why did you choose to write in this genre? How did you come to select your topic? Did you have any material in your writer's notebook already related to this topic/genre? Among your gathered texts, which one served as a touchstone text, the model you most admired or found particularly helpful? Explain why you admire the writing and selected it as a touchstone text. If more than one text was fundamental in your learning, feel free to identify additional texts and their influence on your eventual writing.
- Detail three specific techniques you learned about crafting this genre from the writer of this touchstone text. Take me to the places in your draft where you tried these specific strategies. You may use highlighters, sticky notes, keys, etcetera to document this work on your draft. Pay special attention to helping me see how you used what you learned in the study to help you write your piece. Why did you choose these techniques for your own writing?
- Please also note any specific crafting decisions you made that you think are particularly artful.
- What tools for revision that we've studied did you try?
- Explain the thinking behind three specific decisions you made while working on drafting and revising your writing. Be sure to show exactly where in the text you made the revision decisions and explain why you made those changes.
- Explain your process for editing (proofreading) your piece. How did you make sure it was edited as well as it could be? While you edited, what types of mistakes did you notice? Was there one type of mistake more than another? Why do you think that is so?
- What did you learn about yourself as a writer during this study?
- What aspect of the study do you value most?

Although National Poetry Month is now past, we continue to celebrate, reading our penned lines, voracious fans of layered sensory stimulation. The past month of poetry immersion produced some of the following art: "Stars" is a definition poem, "Stallions" represents the result of a nature field trip, and "Raised by Respect" imitates Kelly Norman Ellis's "Raised by Women."

Stars

1) Tiny specks of blazing fire, slowly fall from the sky. 2) Different points in the air, leading you where you need to go or showing you your future. 3) Suns far away, shining and glowing for countless years until they eventually burn out. 4) A place to stare when you are feeling down, a place that helps you forget your worries and reminds you to look at the big picture. 5) The light from all the billions of galaxies in our universe, some so far away it takes many centuries to arrive, brightening our sky at night. 6) What we wish on as a child, gaze upon as a teen, and learn to cherish as we grow old.

Leslie Ford

Stallions

The stallion running wildly
neighs to seek his herd.
When he finds them,
he encounters an unexpected visitor.
The two stallions meet,
eye to eye,
and the fray is on.
Teeth meet flesh
and hooves leave imprints behind.
With victory, one stallion remains imperious
and claims his herd,
but beware:
Another challenger lurks just around the corner.

Madison Malsam

Raised by Respect

I was raised by a slow, pick-up driving
Respect or regret
"Do you think I am scared to get my belt"
Kind of grandpa

A school is everything, do well
"You know what you did wrong
And you better fix it"
Type of mom

A no excuses you can do better
than that and you know it
"Pick your bottom lip up off the floor"
Type of godmother

A good cooking, mind your manners
Wash your hands when you come inside
"Don't you play with your food"
Type of grandma

A few study for these tests
And demand your best
"Don't you dare talk back to me, Miss Miller"
Types of teachers

Yes, I was raised by respect.

Shayna Miller
(with inspiration from Kelly Norman Ellis)

Stories That Are True

Jenni Frizzell

In an old claw-footed, regal, hideously yellow, rocking chair that squeaked with every motion, my grandfather would sit with me on his lap when I was young, rocking and telling stories. I would lay my head in the nook between his shoulder and neck breathing in the scent of the outdoors and his sweet-smelling aftershave. My grandfather was a big man, tall with a stature that demanded attention. He was older than most of my friends' grandparents because he hadn't had my mother until his mid-forties. He was a cattle rancher, born of the early morning steam that rises from hayfields and the nostrils of yearling calves. His work ethic made strangers think him callous, but his friends knew him to be kind, charismatic, and jovial. He was as protective of his land as he was his family, because for him there was no division. Each demanded of him a tender devotion and a stubborn intuition that many people saved for religion. He was solidly devoted to his beliefs, which included his own definitions of right and wrong, but shared them with few. In fact, when it came time for his funeral, no one knew what faith he was, but because all four of his wives attended Catholic mass, he was 'close enough' to have a Catholic funeral. After many afternoons spent sitting curled on my grandfather's lap, his stories became part of my stories, through each squeak of the chair, each deep breath of near sleep, and every story he told that would later build my world into something that made sense, once in a while.

His stories ranged from his childhood in the early 1900s to the morning of the very same day he told it. Every one of his stories was true. Like knowing that there would be a twenty dollar bill in the breast pocket of his pearl-snap shirt for me, I knew that his stories were true. There was one he especially liked telling about how he had to fish my mother out of the Musselshell River when she was four and learning to swim. He had to jump in, ruining his brand new boots, and drag her out before she drowned. Each time he told it, the temperature of the water reached impossibly more frigid temperatures, my mother's peril became more imminent, and the boots more expensive, but no matter how the details changed, the story underneath, like the slow, sun-soaked, current of the mighty, muddied, Musselshell, never changed. Even now I can picture each scene perfectly—I can smell the day.

He also rarely censored himself when it came to word choice or subject matter, much to my parents' dismay. He would talk about how he dated his Spanish teacher when he was in still high school, albeit his teacher was only three years older than he. His final line of the story, always with a glint in his eye, would come out with a slow chuckle: "Now she knew how to conjugate a verb." My mother would blush, shake her head, and say, "Dad, do you think that's really appropriate?" He wouldn't answer. I would grin, knowing I was in the presence of scandal. He would move on to another story about fan-dancers he saw once in Las Vegas where he married his third wife in the 1970s, asking me, in all of my six years, if I had ever considered that among my career choices. I grew up with these stories in my bloodstream, feeling the storytelling gene take root in me, knowing that words carry weight, carry laughter and tears, and carry miracles.

I did not, in fact, become a fan-dancer. I became a high school English teacher and a writer in northwestern Montana. Often on an airplane ride, I have been in polite conversation with someone who asks me what I do for a living. More than once, after I've answered, this person sitting uncomfortably close has asked me what my novel is about. The first time this happened, I was perplexed and asked this older gentleman, mistakenly, what he meant. He asked, I'm assuming rhetorically, if every English teacher wasn't just a dreaming writer. I laughed politely, but inside I wanted to say, God, I hope so!

I was fortunate enough to go to a college where the majority of my professors of English Literature, Creative Writing, and English Education saw no lines between what they did every day or the content they taught. Through them, I learned that teachers of writing are, of course, writers; to think otherwise would be ridiculous. For as long as I can remember, I have found myself writing every day, and I would never think of separating my writing-self from my teaching-self. Sometimes it is a letter, a piece of a poem, or a to-do list, but most often it is in my journal. I graduated with a BA and began teaching, then went on to get my Masters. I do not keep going to school or teaching because I have a passion for correcting papers or devising grammar exercises. I don't get a thrill out of



Jenni Frizzell teaches 9th and 12th grade English at Hellgate High School. She took part in the Montana Writing Project in the summer of 2006, and earned her Master's in 2008. She is a voracious reader, writer, teacher and learner, and she hopes her students continue to surprise her every single day.

essay tests, a stack of research papers that need to be graded over the Thanksgiving weekend, or staff meetings. I became an English teacher because there is something about words, written, spoken, or read, that take my breath away. There is a line, a paragraph, a chapter, that sticks to my brain the way gum sticks to a shoe, whether one of the Brontë's wrote it or the girl who sits in the third desk from the front in my third period class wrote it. Selfishly, I became an English teacher so that I could spend every day with these words, phrases, sentences, authors, readers, and writers. I get to roll around in words all day, every day, the way my dog Meg gets some sort of personal and profound happiness out of rolling in dead smelly things. I get to collapse into words, wrap them around me, throw them like glass at a wall, watch them shatter, peel them apart, eat them up, spit them out, let them nourish me and destroy me. Every day. Not only that, but I get to help other people, younger people—which makes it either easier or more difficult, I can't decide which—pave their own roads with words.

People say that actions speak louder than words. For me, as a writer and as a teacher, I believe that words are actions. It takes thought and energy to write or speak. We are given voices to shape words, to take action, provide insight, give flight to thought, all the while aware of the pain or joy they bring—the history they create. In a world where communication has become something so abbreviated, slowing down to tell, to listen, to believe, has become its own art that we must desperately preserve. To communicate with the written word and to be able to tell our stories is uniquely human. Our world is a hostile place of often terrifying horizons; our stories can be our refuge, tying us to one another, during a time when we desperately need to feel human. In her prose poem entitled "Listen, Listen, Listen" Amy Gerstler says, "At least we can still warm and anoint each other with words when so much else has fallen away."

I have an assignment that I give to Senior English classes about midway through the year. We read memoir pieces, specifically some by Tim O'Brien. Their assignment is to write a story about themselves that is true. There is no length requirement, no topic chosen for them, no censorship of language, and the pieces I get back show me every year that each person walking around on this planet is made up of stories of where they have been, where they want to go, and who has been or will be part of that journey. I get stories of triumph and tragedy, stories of celebration and defeat, and inevitably during this process, someone asks me, "What if it isn't entirely true?" To which I respond, "How will I know?" When I ask students to read out loud, slowly they volunteer. Other students in the room, some of whom have gone to school together for twelve years, sit wide-eyed in amazement at what their colleagues have experienced. Each year, I write my own true stories, and each year, I sit wide-eyed in amazement at what corner of my life that story has taken up. Some make me laugh, some make me cry, some are stories of triumph and tragedy, others of celebration and defeat. We experience a humbling equality when we look at one another through the lens of our stories. Words have a strange ability to level the playing field. They humble us on the great stage of communication, if we really listen to what is said. In a classroom, or in a rocking chair, something incredible happens when true stories are told.

I have tried to write pure fiction. I have started countless short stories, plays, or novels entirely invented, but I find that either one of two things happens: the writing snakes its way

around a truth until it pounces on it and I find I am writing nonfiction, or I don't care about it enough to write it with the passion it takes to tell it well, because it is not a story that is mine. I don't own it. For me, personally and as a writer, there is no pure fiction, only slightly greyer areas of truth. At the base, the feelings of the story—author to reader—are true in the truest sense. When I write fiction, I don't feel my nerve-endings exposed and electrified, and don't feel my heart pounding away at the thought of someone else reading this?!

After my most recent failed attempt to write fiction I threw in the towel and surrendered. I was angry. I was angry because I know I can write, I call myself a writer, I'm not afraid to share what I write with others, and I read voraciously. Therein was the key. I began inviting all of those authors I admire to tell me what they knew about writing through their stories, and what I found, at the end of the day, was a common thread—each of them were telling stories that were true, in one way or another. Eduardo Galleano, Joyce Carol Oates, Annie Proulx, Milan Kundera, Gabriel Garcia Marquez, Charles Dickens, Salman Rushdie, Tim O'Brien, Mary Shelley, Augusten Bourroughs, David Sedaris, Candice Bushnell (yes, the author of *Sex and the City*...I will gladly confess to my secret stash of selfishly delicious summer reading), even poets and playwrights, each stated loudly and clearly, that their stories, regardless of the word "fiction" or "nonfiction" printed on the back cover, regardless of where Barnes and Noble shelves them, were true in some way. These stories, in many genres, were true in poetry and in prose, names changed to protect the innocent. I realized that my fascination with literature was because sometimes I felt like a detective, wondering what the author was really saying through his or her work, what part of his or her life was underneath the story being told. I knew that they were each telling me something deeply personal, but that I just had to find it. It is for this very same reason that I have a hard time reading the Fantasy genre. I can't remove my stories from the world in which they happen, even though that world is a messy, nasty place sometimes.

When I am in search of advice or a compassionate voice, like many people, I turn to music or poetry. The songs that I love, the ones that make me want to scream at the radio, "YES! That is exactly how it feels!" or the lines of poems that bring tears to my eyes, are the ones that are deeply, painfully, honest. It took the writer, the singer, the lyricist, an unbelievable amount of courage to lay it on the line, to cut themselves open and expose their own truths, and it's that courage that I envy. There is something about someone else's risk of laying a true experience out there so publicly that makes us feel not so alone. Connecting in this way to our stories and the stories of others, makes them priceless and timeless, the teller and the listener equally invested right down to the marrow.

It felt like trumpets sounded over my head when this realization hit me. The material I'd been looking for, all of the stories, were sitting right there waiting for me to grab them. I didn't need to create a town, or a house, or a character of a mother or brother, or a failed relationship, stories that would conjure tears or laughter or even tears of laughter, because I had them already, in the flesh, three dimensional. It seems too easy, especially since I find journal writing to be effortless, maybe because I never think anyone else will ever be exposed to my neuroses and thought processes. Similarly, students are more willing to write their best in journal entries than in a prescribed essay or forced



from the classroom of Jamie L. R. Feeley:
Writer's Notebooks

"This is my Creative Writing class with their Writing Into the Day (WITD) notebooks. We wrote in these every single day this year - not only in Creative Writing, but also in regular English, grades 9-12. I am 'gifting' their notebooks to them as we leave school. Humorously, you can see the sign up board in the background for WITD too."

Front row, left to right: Rachael Dabel, Madeline Haidle, Eitaro Kobayashi. Middle row: Mrs. Jamie Feeley, Sheila Bailey, Jessi Eaton, Eli Indreland. Back row: Keith Tipton.

prompt they cannot relate to. But as I reach for these stories, some of them more dusty than others, some still raw and full of life, I realize that the simplicity stops at the realization that they are there, waiting to be told. The telling becomes an entirely different thing.

In his collection of stories *The Things They Carried* (categorized as fiction) about his time in Vietnam, Tim O'Brien says a lot about stories. In fact, he almost says more about telling stories than he does about the war. He says, "It comes down to gut instinct. A true [war] story, if truly told, makes the stomach believe." He also says, "I want you to feel what I felt. I want you to know why the story-truth is truer sometimes than the happening truth." While I don't have any war stories to tell, I am carrying things, I've got victories, I've got fodder for thought, and so do my students. And I believe in every one of their true stories, right down to my gut.

My grandfather knew about story-truth long before O'Brien wrote about it. Sure, he made up parts of some of his stories, others he told in such raw honesty they made my mother's ears turn red. But at the base of each story was its truth, and that is what has stayed with me as I tell my own stories and encourage others to tell theirs. It's the way the sun looked shining off the hood of his refurbished Mustang, it's the way his hands were sweating as he asked a girl to dance for the first time, it's how long and dark the night is when her parents are fighting, it's falling in love and breaking the law, it's a prank on a sibling, it's a new member of the family. It's the smell of aftershave in the nook between his shoulder and his neck, it's a regal, ugly rocking chair and pearl-snap shirts. Story-truth is not an excuse to lie, or hide facts, or make myself look bigger-faster-stronger, or to protect myself from what needs to be told; I only use story-truth to make the stories truer. If I do ever write the next great American novel, it will be based, seeped, saturated, in truth.

Listening to Meadowlarks Heather E. Bruce

I pause atop grass- and sage-
covered hills above Miller Creek
to listen to meadowlarks.
Their cheerful, boisterous carols rise over
trail's edge on sun-warmed currents
of morning moods. Lyric with
a call-and-answer choir, a jumble
of ten, flute-rich notes whistle
spring's return. Their warbling
symphony signals rapturous outpour,
exuberant male spirits staking claim

to breeding territories. Work to be done.

I have read about meadowlarks
in the Peterson Guide. This singing
lark is waiting for a female to arrive.
He lures her with gurgling song,
then points his bill in the air,
puffs out his yellow throat, flaps his wings
above his head in seductive display.
Succumbing to his minstrel charms,
two nest in his territory. In a depression
in the ground, each female raises her
family. He guards against intruders.
She covers the clutch with a grass roof,
broods and feeds chicks until
fledglings fly away.

I have been thinking about empty nests.

I remember the first time I stopped
to listen to meadowlarks...

Nothing in the 105° July heat feels cool
this day. A bloody sun sinks west of Utah Lake
behind the Lake Mountains. The afternoon spent
at Saratoga Springs, a sorry refuge of clay beach
and stone. Day's end drives us south
on Redwood Road. We wonder how long
is the route around that end of the lake
before we find the freeway, wing home.
Halfway, at Pelican Point, we decide to turn back.
I catch the voice of a meadowlark
lifting through an open window on dry breeze—
bright yellow breast, black, V-shaped “necklace”
marks the soloist atop a fencepost. It's a bit late
for brooding, yet on he sings.

My children—wet, muddy, sweaty—are asleep
strapped in car seats in the back of the red Subaru.
I pause
a moment in sun shadows to pay attention
to the fresh water of larksong.

After, I return to the car, speed home
to chores that await.

Recalling that accompaniment now,
I wonder,

“What other relationship,
but parenting, seeks as its goal, separation?”

I yearn daily for the minutiae
of children in the house, in my life.
What silence renders is loss,
the pain of release. A lifetime of work,
patience, love, doing a job that must be done,
and then suddenly, they fly, and
it's irretrievably changed.

While I cannot see the lark now,
over the hill behind the sagebrush
his song takes again to the air.
The bird book flails to describe
the silver syllables of his song:

“Oh, yes, I am a pretty-little-bird” or “I am go-
ing to eat pretty soon” or “Utah's a
pretty place” or “Hip. Hip. Hurrah. Boys,
three cheers.”

I try not to think, “Where are my boys
right now? What are they up to?”

But I have already thought it,
and I am weeping.

Oh, to be present and needed again in those ways...
opportunities flown with time's passage.

Then I hear him again,
so clear, it's as if the meadowlark
is singing just to me, telling
me that everything will be all right. I stand
upright, listen to his hymn, recall
Wallace Stevens,

“I do not know which to prefer, the beauty of
inflections or the beauty of innuendoes, The
[meadowlark] whistling or just after.”

I turn to walk down the hill, move on.
Move on. Move on.

Missoula, MT; 2007

Literary Letters Give Voice and Analysis

After experiencing three weeks of MWP and after reading Jim Mahoney's *Power and Portfolios*, I revamped my Novels class this semester. No more do we all read the same chapter and fail the quiz over the details together the next day. Now students choose from a variety of novels and a variety of projects. One of the projects is to write a letter (aka Mahoney's literary letter) to your choice of audience for each novel read for the class. These letters have given students a voice and power that I've rarely seen in other writing assignments. I have been impressed with the amount of analysis that comes automatically rather than forced with formats and pre-made outlines. Students have written to friends, relatives, entire groups of people, authors, and characters.

Brenna Sundby
English Teacher
Sweet Grass High School
Big Timber, MT

Dear Andrew,

Last week, you were chatting with me about how you were learning about irony in your English class. I know that you have read the book *The Adventures of Huckleberry Finn* by Mark Twain, and I wanted to be sure that you were able to extract the irony from the book. There are plenty of situations that are ironic in it, but I am going to focus on the biggest picture of irony which is the thinking of Huckleberry Finn.

Throughout the book, Huck considers himself to be uncivilized and not well raised compared to the average person. He was in the process of being civilized by the Widow Douglas and her sister Miss Watson when he ran away. There are numerous moments in the book where Huck states his feelings which would be completely logical today, but back then, he thought his thinking was ignorant and uneducated. When Huck was helping Jim gain his freedom, most readers today would consider his actions the moral thing to do because we have freedom today, but for Huck, he was going against society. Huck says, "...I knowed very well that I had done wrong, and I see it warn't no use for me to try to learn to do right..." Huck had said this when he was rescuing Jim and hiding him from people who would enslave him. During the period of time that the book took place, it was wrong for blacks to have freedom, but Huck thought in today's modern way of thinking, and that was to get Jim his freedom because to Huck, he was a good person and deserved that right. Another example of this irony is Huck's sensibility compared with Tom. Tom's character is considered to be more learned than Huck's character, but Huck always thinks of the most common sense ways of doing things while Tom has to take the ridiculous routes just like in the books he reads. In the book, Huck wants to dig Jim out using the picks and shovels that are on hand, but Tom just can not have that because it is not how it happens in the books. This is ironic because according to the society that the boys lived in Huck is the homeless rascal, and Tom is reasonably educated, and it goes to show that education can be used in different ways because, according to common sense, Huck is smarter than Tom.

Now, Andrew, if you ever read this book again or have to do a report on irony, I hope my letter can aid you. If you would ever like to further analyze the irony in *The Adventures of Huckleberry Finn* feel free to send me a letter.

Sincerely,
Abby Lair

P.O. Box 475
Big Timber, MT 59011
March 16, 2009

Chief Bromden
Oregon Insane Asylum
Salem, OR 97001

Dear Bromden,

I just finished reading the book *One Flew over the Cuckoo's Nest* by Ken Kesey and you narrated the novel. I thought you did a very good job of showing detail and explaining everything that went on. You also did a very good job of acting like you were deaf and dumb.

Ever since you told me that you were acting that you could not hear or talk I wondered why. Did something happen earlier in your life that made you not want to talk anymore or what? That was one thing I always thought about while I read. People kind of started to catch on to you but nobody knew exactly for sure. There were a couple times that McMurphy hinted that he knew you were faking it, but he never said anything about it.

Another thing I always thought about while I read was why did Nurse Ratched try and keep everyone on a strict schedule? I know if I was you I would have went crazy following the same schedule like you did for that long. That McMurphy character was something else. I don't know of many people who would fake a mental condition, but when he shows up he brings some life to everyone in the place. Always trying to irritate the Nurse Ratched and being one of the first people to laugh in the ward in quite some time. I felt that after being around everyone in the ward for that long of a time McMurphy started to become a little crazy himself. I do not know if that is just me or if you noticed it also? I think he started to become this way when he found out that Nurse Ratched could keep him there as long as she would like. I noticed McMurphy quit trying to irritate Ratched when he found this out, and this makes sense to me, the better he acts the sooner he can be released.

All in all I felt this was a good novel. It showed how characters can change the way they act and feel about a subject when they gain a little confidence. McMurphy helps everyone in the ward become more confident, and they start to speak out during group meetings and rebel against the Big Nurse. But, in time, the Nurse gets back at him and shows him who's boss in the ward.

Sincerely,
Josh Graham

Poetic Justice
Writing Marathon, Browning, Montana
Wendy Z. Warren

Pages illuminated by a slot machine's dim light
Senses adapting to the onslaught of light and sound
Inside this human cave.
Prairie and mountains beckon just outside these walls.

Siren songs of encouragement
Sing down the aisle as
A tourist wins.
The sudden clatter of metal

Jangles loose
The woman next to me
Who stalks off, cursing,
A flash of light skin and white tank top.

Mirrored ceiling tiles refract
A thousand points of light.
Onto the one armed Robin Hoods
Of the Blackfeet Nation.

I am alien here,
Illegal.
People speak a language
I will not understand

A grizzled old rancher, minus a few teeth,
Sees my notebook and pen,
Gives me a friendly greeting,
Asks, "So, are you tryin' to figure these machines out?"

I laugh and say, just to feel these words on my tongue,
"No, I'm a writer.
If I had these machines figured out, I don't think I'd be writing,"
Which is a lie, I realize, mid-sentence.

"Someone won \$14,000 dollars here last week," he tells me,
"And my brother won \$6,000."
"Keeps you going, I'll bet," I say.
He nods, smiles, wishes me well, and moves on.

As I turn to leave,
The flash of a T.V. stalls me as I hear,
"74% of business undergrads admit to cheating."
"No kidding," I think, glance back,

And step into the sunlight.



Browning, Montana

Merrilyne Lundahl is the temporary hire for the MWP Program Coordinator position previously held by Eileen Flannigan. Please contact Merrilyne regarding any issues Eileen previously handled.

The new contact address for this position is mwp@umontana.edu. In the future, this address will stay with this position; please update your contact information accordingly.

Man of Steel

Jake Hansen

“You’ll feel a warm woosh as some of that hair catches fire. Instinctively, you’ll reach up to put out the fire, forgetting that you have an arc welder in your hand.”

You have been working on a five foot nine human figure made out of steel. You have used a chop saw to cut forty-five degree angles into strips of l-beams, welding the cut strips together in rectangular box frames that will be the various segments of the figure: calves, thighs, torso, head, arms, feet. You used the drill press to punch holes in each l-beam, every six inches, so that the segments can be put together with bolts and wing-nuts. You picked wing-nuts because even little kids can figure out how to use them, and you’re trying to make your art accessible and interactive. You’re hoping that people will change the pieces of the figure around during the exhibit. Friends of yours have come by occasionally to see what you’re working on, and they have asked interested questions about each piece.

“The idea behind this one is to imagine what it would be like to be inside there,” you’ve told them.

You’ll be working late one night, finishing the head and neck pieces. A tiny shard of hot metal will jump from where you’re working onto your long brown hair. You’ll feel a warm woosh as some of that hair catches fire. Instinctively, you’ll reach up to put out the fire, forgetting that you have an arc welder in your hand.

The arc welder, designed to fuse corroded metal together, will tear and burn its way into your left cheek just below your temple. The resulting scar tissue will keep that eye closed for two and a half months. Your teeth will be visible through the hole in your cheek. Most of the hair on your upper lip and all of the hair on that side of your head will be burned away, including your eyebrow.

Your parents will come up from California, but your father will not be able to come into the room until the fifth day after the accident. Your younger sister will tell you that there has been talk of a lawsuit, that he thinks the University shouldn’t have allowed students to work unsupervised in the studio, that the burns wouldn’t have been as bad if you had been found sooner.

You will spend a lot of time thinking about the events of the week or two immediately preceding the accident. The thing you will cry about, this particular day, will be how a boy at a party had tried to get you to move your hips separately from your shoulders while you were dancing. His hands had rested at your belt line, and he’d taken his job very seriously. He had looked at your hips with focused, genuine concern, and you had looked mostly at his face.

“Remember Axl Rose?” he’d asked. “How’d he go back and forth in front of the microphone? Kind of like a snake, right? Like this.”

Your family will be getting ready to go for dinner, and they will think that you’re sleeping. Your little sister will be upset, telling your mother how unfair it is that this has happened to you, that you don’t even get to come to dinner with them. Your mother will be distracted and exhausted. She will not know what to do about any of this.

“Put some lipstick on, dear, you’ll feel better,” she’ll say.

A nurse will come in to change your bandages, and your family will leave for the restaurant. The nurse will shake her head as they leave, turning off the football game that your father had been watching and turning the lights down above your bed. She’ll notice the tears on your cheek and wipe them away before taking off the old dressing.

“I know, honey. I know,” she’ll say. She will help you eat your banana pudding, humming a song that sounds familiar. You will not be able to place the song, but you’ll be pretty sure it’s by Billie Holiday. You will think that if this song had been playing you would have been able to dance better, that you and the boy might have ended the night differently. You will wonder if the boy would have visited you, if he would have laughed with you as you tried on different wigs, if he would have stayed all night with you in the hospital. It will occur to you that you can’t remember his name. This will frighten and upset you, and you will rise up out of your bed in a panic. Your dinner tray will fall to the ground and the nurse will jump back, startled. You will become increasingly agitated, pulling the IV out of your arm and staggering into the hallway.

This is how a little boy will see you for the first time: a hysterical, deformed monster, charging down the hall towards him. He will start to cry and wail for his mother. The nurse will be calling for an orderly, and your sister will walk out of the elevator, too frustrated with your parents to enjoy her dinner. You will stumble over a supply cart and lie on the cold linoleum floor, half naked, crying. It will occur to you that this is what it means to be beautiful.

Saying One Thing in Terms of Another

Donna L. Miller

“...classroom tested texts that elicit response, poems and inspirational quotes from professional writers so that teachers don’t have to go hunting themselves to locate lesson material, student response models, ‘Applying the Lesson on Your Own’ sections, strategies for writing about local history, and a research based rationale. With all of these perks, the book provides a wealth of prompts for helping students breathe love and wonder into their lines.”

Terry Hermsen’s new book *Poetry of Place: Helping Students Write Their Own Words* (NCTE 2009) lured me with its title and then hooked me with its research on metaphors. Hermsen’s introduction provides a section, “Four Interlocking Theories: Metaphor, Physicality,

Visualization, and Play,” which presents the basis for his book, the theory from which the book operates.

Chapters like “Awakening Metaphor,” “Training the Visual,” and “Reengaging the World” all offer exercises, models, and ideas for stimulating writing. However, these aren’t your typical “teaching poetry tips.” Instead, Hermsen supplies creative, innovative, sometimes surreal ways to engage students in poetry, using literature, art, or a nature night hike to spark ideas.

Since I am always on the look-out for new methods for literary response, my favorite part of the book was the lesson called “Mockingbird Moments.” Here, Hermsen encourages us to consider literature as meaningful lens through which we can look back on our lives, saying: “Literature gives us the means to weigh our lives. [It is] a metaphoric process itself, a place we can go for images, characters, gestures, and scenes as measuring sticks for our own behavior, our own dreams” (104). With an exercise called “entering a moment in a novel” (109), Hermsen demonstrates how the adapted poetry form allows readers to “approach the world through multilayered, metaphorically rich lenses” (109). He also engages a reading like a writer approach to literature, with the eye trained to uncover metaphor and imagery, a technique he demonstrates using Harper Lee’s novel *To Kill a Mockingbird* and Arthur Miller’s play *The Crucible*.

The book possesses additional useful features: classroom tested texts that elicit response, poems and inspirational quotes from professional writers so that teachers don’t have to go hunting themselves to locate lesson material, student response models, “Applying the Lesson on Your Own” sections, strategies for writing about local history, and a research based rationale. With all of these perks, the book provides a wealth of prompts for helping students breathe love and wonder into their lines (205).

Because Hermsen’s lessons incorporate art, photography, the outdoors, experiments with the elements, and the research of place, this book offers writing ideas for the visual arts, science, and history teacher as well. Furthermore, with all of its “supposing,” the book nurtures interpretive and creative thinking skills, “giving students the means to develop more engaged worldviews” (180). Essentially, Hermsen provides a rationale for teaching the arts, quoting Rudolph Arnheim:

The arts are neglected because they are based in perception, and perception is disdained because it is not assumed to involve thought. In fact, educators and administrators cannot justify giving the arts an important position in the curriculum unless they understand that the arts are the most powerful means of strengthening the perceptual component without which productive thinking is impossible in any field of endeavor (vi).

With his narrative of one poet’s journey through the schools, Hermsen provides not only justification for arts education but also a rich resource for employing writing as a tool for thinking.



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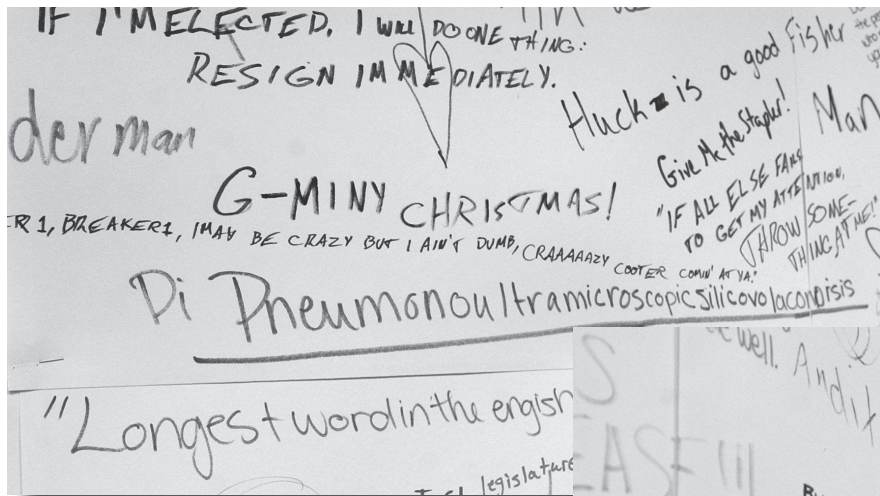
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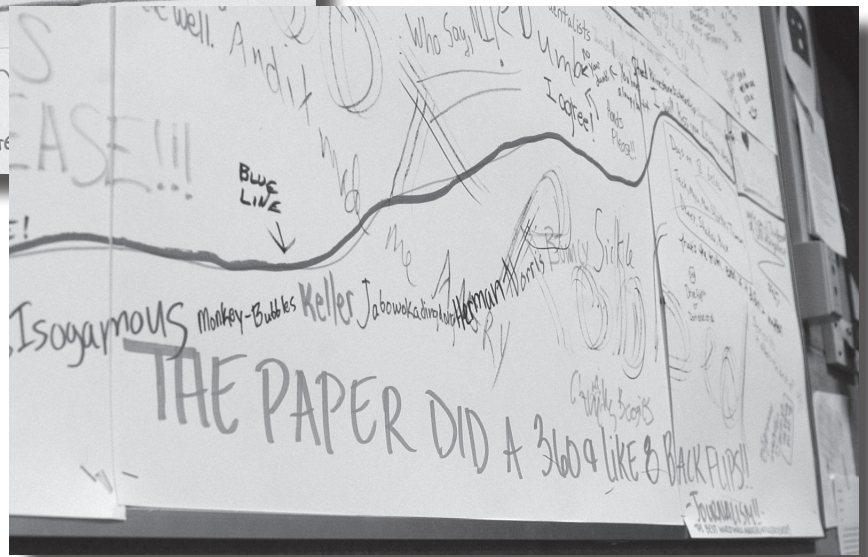
Montana Writing Project
Dept. of English
University of Montana
32 Campus Drive
Missoula, MT 59812



Word Wall

Brenna Sundby
Sweet Grass High School

My only bulletin board is The Word Wall. Students write words, lyrics, quotes, memorable classroom one-liners on it. Attached are photos of sections of it. This is the third Word Wall of this school year because it keeps filling!



Another reason to attend this year's MEA-MFT Conference!

MWP Keynote Address

Jim Mahoney Power and Portfolios: Exploring and Sharing Power

Thursday, October 15th
1:00- 1:50 pm
Skyview High School Auditorium

A former teacher and English department chair, Jim Mahoney has retired several times, having been called back to serve for "one more season" at different schools. He currently supervises student teachers at The College of New Jersey where he also teaches the writing methods classes for future English teachers. He also teaches writing classes at DeVry University in Fort Washington, Pennsylvania.

Mahoney is the recipient of New York State English Council's Teacher of Excellence and Programs of Excellence awards, plus two CLASS awards for curriculum design. He has also been awarded three NEH Fellowships. In 2007, he received the CEL (Conference on English Leadership) Exemplary Leader Award. Jim is the author of two popular books about teaching methods and strategies, including *Power and Portfolios*.

MWP offerings for MEA in Billings for 2009

1. Marcia Beaumont & Merrilyne Lundahl, “Experience Writing in a Place-Based Setting” (3 hours): If you’re tired of sitting in the classroom, curious about MWP techniques, thinking about creative ways to infuse IEFA, and interested in a new conference experience then join us on a “field trip”. Come with notebook, pen, and your car keys on an adventure full of writing, sharing, and sightseeing.

2. Heather Bruce, “Montana Writing Project LIVE!” (2 hours): Come participate in a Montana Writing Project professional development session and discuss writing issues of teaching concern. Participate in several typical activities of a day in a Montana Writing Project Summer Institute. Participants will try classroom-tested strategies for motivating students to write. For educators K-20 across the curriculum and content-areas.

3. Heather Bruce, “Peace-Building: IEFA & Place-Based Writing” (2 hours): This sectional examines peace-building and writing strategies for examining the promise of reconciliation intended in Indian Education for All through place-based writing activities that recall Montana all students’ local connections. We will examine uses for writing based in place through Google Earth and Google maps.

4. David Christensen, “Painting Images in Poetry with Image Grammar” (1 hour): Collective minds piecing together the craft of writing sophisticated sentences, participants will become familiar with using Harry Noden’s “Image Grammar,” brush strokes to work at the sentence level, creating sophisticated structures that paint pictures, vivid and bold, in the reader’s mind.

5. David Christensen, “Uncovering the Connection to Place” (1 hour): To begin understanding the importance of place in the lives of native peoples, non-native people need to understand how their own lives are linked to place, how the stories of their lives are tied to place. This workshop explores the participants’ identity as tied to place.

6. Shannon Horton, “Peer Editing: Aiming for Real Change” (1 hour): It is a challenge to help students achieve real change from draft to final. This workshop focuses on putting ownership in the student’s hands to motivate effective revisions in writing.

7. Nancy Linnell, “Journal Writing in the Primary Classroom” (1 hour): Invite your students to learn phonics, sentence structure and grammar during daily writing/art experiences that honor the students’ lives. Journal time is highly structured and individualized for maximum student and teacher success.

8. Merrilyne Lundahl, “Teaching Where We Are: Place-based Language Arts” (2 hours): This session engages participants in reflection and discussion about place and community in our classrooms with ideas about how we might connect students to place through writing and engage students in writing through place. Possibilities for incorporating place into teaching practices, specifically within English language arts classrooms will be explored.

9. Jim Mahoney, “MWP KEYNOTE: Exploring and Sharing Power” (1 hour): Why are we willing to hold power over students, perhaps thinking they won’t take responsibility for initiatives we give them? All humans work better when power is shared because it’s energizing. Students are no different. Given the opportunity, they can go beyond our expectations and wildest dreams.

10. Jim Mahoney, “Part A: From Writer’s Notebook to Revision” (1 hour): The author of “Power and Portfolios” uses Writer’s Notebooks to inspire writing topics and ideas. Learn firsthand the teaching strategies that make students personally invested in the revision process. Participants will also be able to view portfolio examples from Jim’s students detailed in “Power and Portfolios”. Please bring a notebook.

11. Jim Mahoney, “Part B: Writing As Gifts and Literary Letters” (1 hour): A second installment from “Power and Portfolios” author Jim Mahoney. You may attend this sectional whether or not you attended Part A. Using student examples as inspiration, participants will learn firsthand how writing to others is a great way to get students engaged in compositions. Please bring a notebook.

12. Jim Mahoney, “Part C: Evoking Images from Words, Evoking Words from Images” (1 hour): A third installment from “Power and Portfolios” author Jim Mahoney. You may attend this sectional whether or not you attended Part A or B. Learn strategies to expand the images locked in a text to produce a fuller understanding, practicing skills that good readers use to create images from texts.

13. Jim Mahoney, “Part D: Using Cognitive Skills to Unpack a Text” (1 hour): A fourth installment from “Power and Portfolios” author Jim Mahoney. You may attend this sectional whether or not you attended Parts A, B or C. Discuss skills good readers use: paraphrasing, restating, asking questions, making guesses/connections/inferences to unpack a complex text.

14. Joni Meier & Lorrie Henrie-Koski, “Increasing Comprehension: Using Writing in Math” (2 hours): Picture books, mind-mapping techniques, and exit and admit slips are all great ways to incorporate daily writing into the classroom. This is an interactive inquiry-based workshop that will open the door to the many possibilities and methods of utilizing writing as a learning/comprehension tool in math and science curricula.

15. Wendy Morical, “Genre Inquiry: Flash Fiction” (1 hour): “Read like a writer” (Katie Ray) and experience a genre inquiry using flash fiction. Construct understanding about an unfamiliar genre and generate strategies for composition. This engaging lesson teaches students how to approach unfamiliar text, fosters ownership of writing process, reviews elements of fiction, and encourages reflection.

16. Casey Olsen, “Finding the Weathered Truth: Identity, Community and IEFA” (2 hours): Having difficulty incorporating IEFA into your classroom? Want your students to notice the world around them and take pride in their communities? Explore the essentials of place-based education, using the local community and environment as a starting point to teach concepts across the content-areas. Rediscover the meaning in Montana names.

17. Brent Scott, “Putting Grammar in the Writer’s Toolkit” (1 hour): Discouraged by lackluster student writing full of bland reporting and grammatical errors? Pulling your hair out over how to convince students to substantially revise their written work? This workshop, an introduction to Harry Noden’s Image Grammar, helps you and your students re-imagine grammar as an accessible writing and revision tool.

18. Brenna Sundby, “Identifying and Controlling Tone” (1 hour): Understanding tone requires high school students to stretch their vocabulary, master propaganda techniques, and express voice in their own writing. Students can identify various tones in different pieces of literature about the same IEFA topic, then control tone in their own writing.

19. Eileen Zombro, Wendy Morical & Sue Stolp, “Newspaper Club for Middle Schools” (1 hour): Come share the trials and tribulations of three MWP consultants first attempt at publishing a middle school newspaper. We will discuss or successes, failures, epiphanies and our final products. If you are involved in a school newspaper we invite you to share your own experiences with the group.

20. Christa Umphrey, “Integrating IEFA Through Writing” (1 hour): Looking for ways to incorporate IEFA components into your existing curriculum? Bring a notebook and pen and come try out some of the ways teachers from across the state are integrating IEFA and writing and leave with a handout of additional lesson write ups, resources, and integration ideas.



The University of
Montana

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