

Photo by Casey Olsen

Journal of the Montana Writing Project

CONTENTS

The Practice of Teaching

- 5 ♦ "Character Analysis with a Multigenre Approach" Donna Miller
- 7 ♦ "Driving Montana Route 93" Heather Bruce
- 13 ♦ "Youngest Writers Celebrate the Holidays" Judy Compton
- 21 ♦ "Book Review: Writing Without Boundaries" Christa Umphrey
- 23 ♦ Resources for Teaching Multigenre Writing

Teachers as Writers

- 16 ♦ "Remembering Rina"

Announcements & Updates

- 2 ♦ Call for Submissions
- 4 ♦ Attend a Summer Institute
- 13 ♦ Rural Conference on Writing Education
- 22 ♦ Renew Your Montana Writing Project Membership and Journal Subscription

New Teachers

Submission Deadline: March 1

Publication Date: April 1

In 2005 the Alliance for Excellent Education reported that every day 1,000 teachers in the U.S. left the profession--and this didn't include those who retired. In Montana that year we lost 573 teachers. New teachers are twice as likely to leave as those with experience, and they leave even more rapidly in poor districts. How can we reverse this trend? How can we encourage and support skilled and knowledgeable teachers to remain in the profession and continue working with our kids? How have you reached out to new teachers in your building or department? What programs for mentoring does your district have in place, either formally or informally? What would you like to see? What are the most pressing needs for incoming teachers? If you are new to the field, what advice do you have for the profession? How can we better support newcomers? How can we encourage them to stay? What was your first year like? How did the reality compare to your expectations? What did you like about your first year? What did you find most difficult?

Please consider sharing your teaching ideas, experiences, and resources.

The Montana Writing Project Journal welcomes submissions for any of the following areas. Of course there is also always room for quality work that doesn't 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 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 a paragraph or two that outline a successful lesson but 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 they can expect from the author. We'd be especially interested in fairly new releases that others may not yet be familiar with.

Original Photography: Share images from your classroom, professional development, or photos that complement any of your writing submissions. Images should be sent as 300 dpi image files. 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 or opportunities or any other information that would be of interest and use to the Montana Writing Project Community.

Upcoming issues

Fiction Writing

Submission Deadline: June 1

Publication Date: July 1

Boys & Writing

Submission Deadline: September 1

Publication Date: October 1

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 shouldn't exceed 2,500 words.
- Please list your name, address, academic affiliation, and e-mail address on your manuscript.

Multigenre Writing

"A multigenre paper arises from research, experience, and imagination. It is not an uninterrupted, expository monologue nor a seamless narrative nor a collection of poems. A multigenre paper is composed of many genres and subgenres, each piece making a point of his own, yet connected by theme or topic and sometimes by language, images and content. In addition to many genres, a multigenre paper may also contain many voices, into just the author's. The trick is to make such a paper hang together."

Tom Romano, *Blending Genre, Altering Style*

Since Romano first coined the phrase "multigenre research paper" in 1995, teachers across the country have been expanding the idea to various grade levels and using the approach to help their students achieve numerous writing objectives. Though taking the risk to lead your students into the open-ended nature of multigenre writing can be frightening, done effectively, multigenre assignments can help students develop many of the same skills as traditional writing assignments. Donna Miller (page 5) gives an excellent example of one way she has used multigenre writing to put a new twist on character analysis and working with *The Crucible*, two traditional pieces of many English curriculums.

Projects like Donna's can expand the number of genres in which students are comfortable reading and writing. Multigenre projects can also validate the relevance of some of the genres over which students already have some level of mastery. Teacher-researchers like Suzette Youngs and Diane Barone have advocated bringing into the classroom the multiple genres students see in their homes and in the outside world. Not only does this help students strengthen writing in various situations, it also creates a closer link between home and school literacies. Heather Bruce's article (page 7) shares multiple ways to accomplish this while working with multigenre writing.

In addition to the pedagogical pieces, we also dedicate a significant section of this issue to a collaborative multigenre piece we all wish we didn't have occasion to assemble. This fall we lost an incredible member of our Writing Project community. Rina Moog passed away unexpectedly on October 22, 2007. I'd only just begun to get to know Rina in the past year through our work together in Project Outreach, but it really seemed as if she'd been a part of my world much longer than that. Before we meet in person, I'd heard about Rina's work, read her writing, knew about the multiple things she was getting done in her professional life. I knew I liked Rina before I had the chance to actually meet her in person--an experience I don't think I've had before. Once I started working with her I often thought Rina was kind of like I hoped to be once I'd grown up a bit-- regardless of the fact that I was already almost a year older. Her presence was calming, even as she worked intensely and passionately. She was always professional and knew how to skillfully work within organizations without ever forgetting about the students she was working for or losing her ability to connect and interact with them. I loved working with Rina because even in a group of like-minded people she always seemed to be the one who could really see things from my perspective. She always understood what I was trying to say or my vision of what I wanted to accomplish, which always made me feel she understood me. I think that may be the most valuable skill for a teacher, writer, or a friend.

As those of us in the Writing Project figure out how to continue the work we'd begun with Rina, we remember and celebrate (page 14) the person we already deeply miss.

Christa Umphrey

Check out the Montana Writing Project website:

<http://www.cas.umt.edu/english/mwp>

- background information about the Writing Project
- upcoming events
- resources
- registration forms
- contact officers & staff
- Journal archives

Become a Montana Writing Project Teacher Consultant: Attend a Summer Institute

Montana Writing Project

An Institute for Reading, Writing, Questioning and Reflecting for teachers of all levels

Montana is a member of the National Writing Project network.
It operates under three primary premises:

- Teachers as Literacy Leaders
- Teachers as Researchers
- Teachers as Writers

The Montana Writing Project Summer Institute is an intensive,
four-week program where participants:

- Write daily for personal and professional purposes
- Explore current and foundational research in the teaching of writing
- Engage in inquiry through writing and reading
- Prepare and demonstrate inservice presentations that could be shared with districts and departments
- Hone leadership skills
- Network and learn with other teachers of writing from across the state
- Receive a \$200 professional library
- Earn 9 graduate credits
- Receive a full tuition waiver, and pay \$610 in fees

Orientation:

Great Falls, Montana
MSU/COT Campus
Saturday
April 12, 2008

Dates & Locations of the three Summer Institutes:

Missoula

June 16- July 11

Browning

June 16-27 & August 4-8

Columbus

July 21- August 8

To apply fill out the application on the MWP website

www.cas.umt.edu/english/mwp/

Or contact Heather Bruce, Director
Department of English, LA 133
The University of Montana
Missoula, MT 59812
406-243-4680
heather.bruce@umontana.edu

Character Analysis with a Multi-Genre Approach

Donna L. Miller

Arthur Miller explores human behavior in his play *The Crucible*. By closely examining the characters in the drama, readers can see the truth in several of the following quotes about human nature:

"Character cannot be developed in ease and quiet. Only through the experience of trial and suffering can the soul be strengthened, vision cleared, ambition inspired, and success achieved."
--Helen Keller

"A diamond is a chunk of coal that made good under pressure."
--Unknown

"A fanatic is one who cannot change his mind and will not change the subject." --Winston Churchill

With its myriad of character types, this play lends itself to character analysis and to multi-genre writing. I invite students to select a character for their analysis work and to write a How To Be poem, a news story, and additional character sketchings in prose, highlighting this individual.

As they read, students notice the detail that makes a character come alive. They watch for habits, gestures, catch phrases, actions, pet peeves, values, or beliefs. In their notebooks, they keep a list of such details and telling behaviors or mark significant pages with Post Its.

Then, they choose their strongest points and arrange them to provide a preliminary glimpse of their chosen character. How-to writing gives instructions, basically a guide on how to be someone, in this case. Its unique purpose comes with a unique structure and tone. To create the imperative tone, one simply begins each line with a verb. Writers should think of the list as steps, informative directions for behaving as this person might. There is no set number of steps; just the requirement to include significant and telling traits to fully embody the character.

This list poem provides an especially felicitous format for presenting multiple details that in regular prose might lack fluency and sound choppy.

Next, students focus on an event that showcases the character and spotlights certain traits. This is usually a scene in which the character reveals his/her true colors, motivation, or purpose. Once they have written headlines, students proceed with the lead and additional fleshing details. We peer edit these to ensure proper style, since news stories certainly feature a genre all their own.

Questions to Ask about a News Story

- Does the lead kick off the story by stating a surprising detail about the character and his/her connection to the events in Salem?
In a simple, direct, and concise way, the lead should tell the how and the why of the story, introducing the major elements of the article's information.
- Are the first seven to nine words of the story alive, alert, crisp, and informative?
A lead must draw the reader's interest and attention immediately.
- How many words are in the first paragraph?
Although the lead may go beyond the first paragraph, the first paragraph itself should not extend beyond thirty words.



Donna Miller teaches high school English in Chinook and serves as co-director of the Montana Writing Project.

Journal of the Montana Writing Project

- Are the verbs powerful, vibrant, and active?

The story should sparingly use “be” verbs and should avoid passive voice whenever possible.

- What is the tone of the story?

The tone should be objective yet still convey a sense of urgency or astonishment about events in Salem. Don’t use any first or second person pronouns. You are reporting newsworthy events, not writing an editorial, so keep your opinion out of the story.

- Does the remainder of the story embellish the major idea presented in the opening part of the lead?

The word choice should be detailed and precise so that the reader can “see” the events unfold. Focus on facts while you retell the key connection your character has to the story and reveal as many important character traits as possible. However, avoid repeating ideas already covered by your poem.

- Does the story contain at least one quote from an eye-witness?

- Does the story contain some of the other required elements not covered by the poem: Background, Physical Appearance, Temperament, Ideas, Additional Traits and Descriptive Words, Key Lines Spoken by or about the character?

Many of these ideas can come in appositives or modifying phrases and clauses.

- Have you edited closely for correct punctuation and grammar?

- Does the story have an interest-grabbing headline?

Details that don’t fit into these two formats show up in the prose parts of the paper. I ask students to determine if their characters are dynamic or static, flat or round; to collect key lines spoken by and about their characters, and to consider a symbol that captures their character’s nature. Furthermore, they record details about the character’s connection to any of the play’s irony, symbolism, conflicts, allegorical purposes, and thematic intent. Any lines, passages, or plot points quoted will be parenthetically documented, so students get practice with this skill, as well.

The key to successful multi-genre writing is intertwining these disparate pieces into a cohesive whole. This is best achieved through strong transitions. I demonstrate with a model:

Often in literature, characters make mistakes. In Arthur Miller’s play *The Crucible*, Reverend John Hale makes the mistake of believing deception and of finding evidence of witchcraft where there is none. Motivated by ambition, “the pride of a specialist” (33), and intellectual challenge, Hale hopes “to face what may be a bloody fight with the Fiend himself” (36). “His goal is light, goodness, and its preservation” (36). Yet, through him we learn that the infection of evil may spread by ordinary people who are both the mindless agents and the victims.

To shape our understanding of this dynamic individual, we can begin by examining some basic character traits:

How To Be John Hale
[insert poem here]

However, a sketch of Hale is incomplete without also assessing his values, beliefs, and ideas. [add these and other details you have collected to reveal Hale’s transition from a prideful to a humble man]

The turning point for Hale occurs when prominent, reputable women in Salem begin to fall victim to the witch hunt. Once Hale realizes his mistake, he begins to fight for righteousness and the innocent. He argues vehemently with Deputy Governor Thomas Danforth on several occasions until he finally resigns his position with the church and court:

Hale Renounces Trial Proceedings
[insert news story here]

Students will continue with additional prose details until the sketch is complete. Then, all that remains, a conclusion wraps up the piece and underscores the character’s purpose in Miller’s play. I encourage students to conclude with some ideas on what a reader can learn from their chosen character as a role model and/or with some statement revealing for what purpose the author utilized this character in advancing his ideas (thematic relevance) or in creating his story (plot tie-in).

While this project presents obstacles with students working in the genre for the first time, many of them find the challenge stimulating or appreciate the creative, non-traditional approach to literary analysis.

Driving Montana Route 93: Multilingual, Multigenre Revision

Heather Bruce

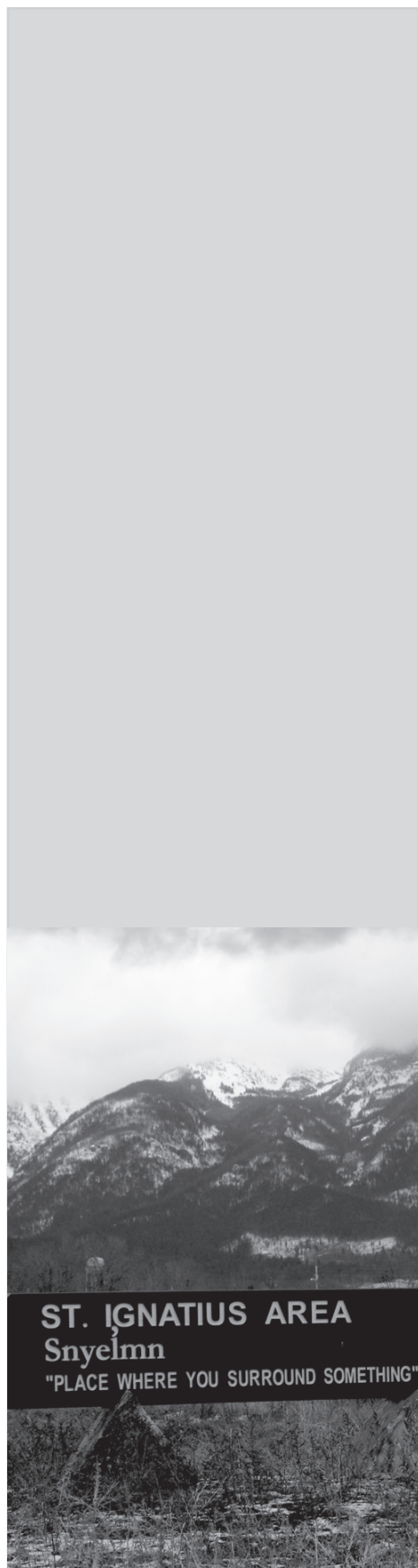
The day after Thanksgiving, I drove south on Montana Route 93 through the Flathead Indian Reservation home to Missoula after a visit with friends in Kalispell. It has been a while since I've traveled north, and I was surprised to see the progress that has developed with Highway 93 redesign and rebuilding. When I first moved to Montana in 2000, the challenge of negotiations among citizens, local, state, federal and tribal governments regarding Highway 93 redesign were constantly in the news. It seemed as though no solutions agreeable to all would be reached. Federal and state governments were primarily concerned with highway safety. Tribal goals were much broader and included consideration of existing wildlife habitats, respect for natural features of the land, and historic preservation. During the course of news commentary and coverage of the project, I received my first education on anti-Indian racism in Montana. I recall stunning instances of unapologetic racism expressed in letters to the editor, opinion pieces, journalistic quotations, which addressed the topic of tribal involvement in the project. As I drove south that Friday attempting to read new locational signs written in both English and Salish, I was grateful that the Confederated Salish Kootenai Tribes of the Flathead persisted and prevailed against the odds with their goals for Highway 93 redesign and rebuilding.

Bilingual signage revisions make readily visible to all who pass the survivance of Indian rhetorical and material identity in the Flathead. They also make apparent to non-Salish speakers like myself how language identity contributes to presence and ways of knowing. These signage revisions struck me as an obvious example of ways we might augment implementation of Indian Education for All. It got me thinking about the political potential of multigenre writing for exploring that which is too frequently silenced or invisible in the mainstream. Tom Romano in his widely referenced books about multigenre writing, *Writing with Passion: Life Stories, Multiple Genres and Blending Genre, Altering Style: Writing Multigenre Papers* describes multigenre papers, which he adapted for use in the classroom after reading Michael Ondaatje's multigenre novel *The Collected Works of Billy the Kid*. Drawing on Ondaatje, Romano assigned his students biographical multigenre research papers. Romano writes:

A multigenre paper arises from research, experience and imagination. It is not an uninterrupted, expository monolog nor a seamless narrative nor a collection of poems. A multigenre paper is composed of many genres and subgenres, each piece self-contained, making a point of its own, yet connected by theme or topic and sometimes by language, images, and content. The trick is to make such a paper hang together (x-xi).

Romano writes that his students' multigenre papers demonstrate risk taking, creativity, imagination, analysis and synthesis. They are "lively, colorful, and provocative" (Passion 130). They push the boundaries of acceptability, he warns. Some are downright dangerous. All are genuinely engaging to read.

Since Romano popularized multigenre writing, others such as John Gaughan in *Reinventing English: Teaching in the Contact Zone* and Julie Jung in *Revisionary Rhetoric, Feminist Pedagogy, and Multigenre Texts*, have more directly mined the political potential in the "dangerous" zones about which Romano warns teachers in his descriptions of multigenre writing. Both Gaughan and Jung urge us to rethink multigenre for its political potential for opening up the silences. Gaughan borrows the term "contact zone" from Mary Louise Pratt who uses it to describe the spaces where "student and teacher ideologies conflict" (Gaughan 33). Gaughan molds his high school English classes around these clashes among values and beliefs. Using a wealth of pertinent books, poems, films and creative lesson plans, Gaughan addresses the gamut of prejudices and violences—from race and religion to sexuality and censorship—that most adolescents bring with them into the classroom. Gaughan writes, "Whether we like it or not, schools must address societal problems... The traditional organization of schooling is intellectually and morally inadequate for contemporary society" (8). Gaughan uses this rationale to examine some of the dangerous assumptions that undergird our lives. At the beginning of the semester Gaughan asks his students to think about the relationships between place and identity and assigns a multigenre paper about life in his students local communities. Gaughan lives in an urban



ST. IGNATIUS AREA

Snyelmn

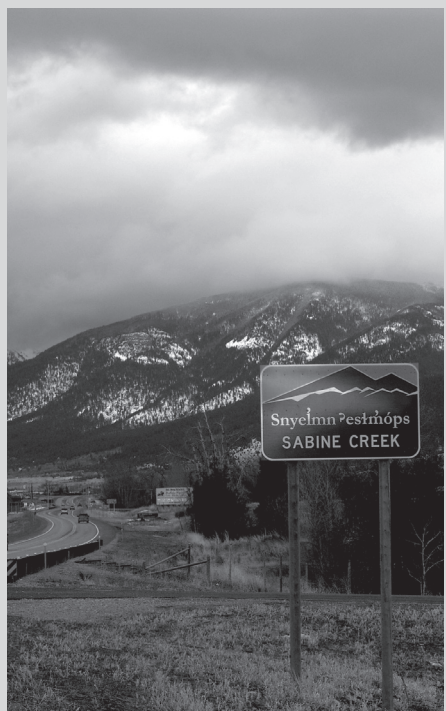
"PLACE WHERE YOU SURROUND SOMETHING"

Throughout the 56-mile stretch of Highway 93 that runs through the Flathead Reservation, signs like the one above share place names in both Salish or Kootenai (with English translations) and the commonly used English names.

The Crow Tribe, in 2006, was the first in Montana to add tribal place names in their native language to four state highway signs like the one pictured at right. The signs offer one example of how place names tell the story of an area. The English name Crow Agency relates the idea that this was the area for the Crow Indians. But according to Tim McCreary, an anthropologist and professor at Little Big Horn College in Crow Agency, in looking at Baaxuwuaashe, baaxuwua refers to the sound of the stones grinding in a mill and means "the thing that makes the rustling noise." The rest of the word, "ashe," means house or building, so the word is usually translated as flour mill. Though the Crow and English words describe the same place, they begin to show the differences in perspective for the area's occupants.



Shortly after the Crow had their signs in place, the Salish and Kootenai Tribes of the Flathead Reservation began installing signs as well. The signs, which number over a dozen already and are still being installed as sections of the road are finished, are one of the important components of a highway construction project nearly twenty years in the making. The progressive design of The Peoples Way (as the highway project has been named) is the collective vision of Montana Department of Transportation, Confederated Salish and Kootenai Tribes, and Federal Highway Administration. It aims to balance the needs for the safety of visitors and residents (before renovation Highway 93 was the busiest and most dangerous two-lane road in the state), preservation of landscape and culture, and protection of wildlife. In addition to recognizing and marking places important to the tribes, in native tribal languages, construction designs use native materials such as quarried stone and rough-hewn timber, and disturbed areas are being replanted with indigenous plants. Roadbeds follow the contours of the land, with as little rock cutting as possible.



area of the Midwest. His multigenre work is built around reading the text *Our America: Life and Death on the South Side of Chicago* by Lealon Jones and Lloyd Newman, after which students write multigenre papers about their own racially segregated communities of Lockland or Arlington, OH. Montana teachers might consider adapting Gaughan's suggestions by reading James Welch's *The Death of Jim Loney* or Debra Magpie Earling's *Perma Red* and assigning a multigenre paper that considers life in the students' time and locale with the lives and times of Loney or Louise White Elk. Gaughan writes, "multiple genres act as multiple lenses.... Seeing through multiple lenses helps students answer the questions, 'Who are you?' 'Who are we?' And I would add the question, 'How might we want to be toward each other?'"

Admittedly, Gaughan takes numerous risks in his classroom. He provides a case scenario to examine ethics and identity before addressing immigration and race, sexism, sex and sexuality, racial prejudice, war and voice, and censorship and faith among other topics. A class discussion on race and immigration "blazed like a fire out of control," Gaughan reports, but it was a risk he says he'd take again because "the self we construct must reflect our interactions with people different from ourselves" (30). Gaughan demonstrates ways that multigenre can open up the silences and ways of seeing others who might otherwise remain invisible to mainstream view.

Julie Jung additionally urges us to rethink revision as both a political ideology and a textual practice (13). Jung uses revision strategies of silence and listening, margins and borders, reading and responsibility to forward a rhetoric that is committed to listening to those voices that are too easily silenced and often reside on the margins/borders. Hers is a rhetoric concerned with the hard work of (re)reading in order to see/hear those perspectives that are easily ignored on first reading. Revisionary rhetoric, as Jung describes it, advocates writing in ways that facilitate rhetorical listening; it is a rhetoric that demands both to be heard and responded to; as such, it is a rhetoric that makes response possible (13). In the case of the signs on Highway 93, revisionary rhetoric made possible the placement of Salish and English location names on redesigned, revised signage.

Jung also advocates the multigenre form as a rhetorical strategy that can be

used to force the kind of revisionary rhetoric she identifies. Multigenre multivocality—the patching together of many, different, often disparate and discordant voices—creates a revisionary space that highlights rather than silences cultural and ideological differences (33). Jung analyzes Gloria Anzaldúa’s essay “How to Tame a Wild Tongue” from her book, *Borderlands/La Frontera*, as an example of a multigenre text that accomplishes revisionary rhetoric. Anzaldúa combines poetry, memoir, myth, cultural historical analysis written in English and Spanish to argue that “suppression of a person’s identity as it is constructed through language—that is, to refuse to allow someone to use all the languages that create her—is to make that someone ashamed of being herself” (Jung 35). A privileged reader who cannot read Spanish encounters Anzaldúa and feels the experience of facing borders she cannot cross. The “foreign” language confuses her; its presence delays the progression of her reading. This confusion, this delay, creates a space for the reader to hear more fully, Jung argues. If the reader is patient enough and is willing to listen to the silence of her own confusion, what she might hear is, as Kate Adams argues, “some of the suppressed cultural history of the Mexican and Indian peoples of the Southwest that is prerequisite to our appreciation and understanding of [Anzaldúa’s] Northamerican experience” (135). Anzaldúa’s use of multi-genre, bilingual text breaks “long silences, countering the lies of racist and ethnocentric history with creative speech” (Adams 137). Anzaldúa’s multigenre text, as a social act, bears witness to a legacy of silence and oppression; it demands “a wider, deeper listening” (Adams 140); it leads “us to the kind of silence that is prerequisite to our hearing new and vital voices on their own terms” (Adams 141; Jung 36).

Using multigenre texts in this fashion as a tool of revisionary rhetoric to implement Indian Education for All has enormous potential. Because multigenre texts are by definition a composite of diverse genres and identities, they can potentially expose and thereby force us to contend with the silenced tensions and gaps that exist in attempting to implement Indian Education for All. The revised bilingual signage along Highway 93 in the Flathead revealed endless revisionary multigenre possibilities.

A Place-Based, Multigenre Writing Marathon in Montana Indian Country

The idea of a writing marathon comes from Natalie Goldberg’s *Writing Down the Bones*. A writing marathon takes place when writers commit to write and share for an extended period of time. Classroom writing marathons can be combined with full or partial day field trips or walking trips around the school neighborhood during a single class period. Here is Goldberg’s advice about writing during the marathon, which can be adapted for use with students:

Everyone in the group agrees to commit himself or herself for the full time. Then we make up a schedule. For example, a ten-minute writing session, another ten-minute session, a fifteen-minute session, two twenty-minute sessions, and then we finish with a half-hour round of writing. So for the first session, we all write for ten minutes and then go around the room and read what we’ve written with no comments by anyone. . . . A pause naturally happens after each reader, but we do not say “That was great” or even “I know what you mean.” There is no good or bad, no praise or criticism. We read what we have written and go on to the next person. . . . What usually happens is you stop thinking: you write; you become less and less self-conscious. Everyone is in the same boat, and because no comments are made, you feel freer and freer to write anything you want. (150)

Richard Louth of the Louisiana Writing Project gives more detail about organizing writing marathons in his article, “The New Orleans Writing Marathon,” originally appearing in *The Quarterly of the National Writing Project*. The article can be accessed at the following URL: <http://www.nwp.org/cs/public/print/resource/315>.

The version of the writing marathon I advocate here includes place-based and multigenre writing and input that makes visible Indian lives and contributions in Montana. Take students on a field trip anywhere in your locality. Before the trip, try and locate historical photographs that depict the location over time. Searching the archives at the University of Montana, for example, we found photographs of Salish encampments on the banks of the Clark Fork with Mount Jumbo in the background right on the site of the University of Montana today. Another image depicted a Salish man on horseback on the current site of the University oval, no “M” or trail up Mount Sentinel rising behind him.

Students can be prompted to write about the place as they see/feel it today and then look at the photographs and write about the place as it appeared to its original inhabitants. This place-based writing helps students to become aware that there were others living in this place before them and unsilences that reality. From there, students can be encouraged to explore other genres that compile a sense of Indian and non-Indian reality.

What follows is an example of place-based, Indian-aware multigenre writing that I developed during two different “field trips” to the Montana Writing Project satellite that works in collaboration with Blackfeet Community College in Browning, MT.

Understanding, Reconciliation, Responsibility

We are not unaccustomed to hearing angry comments from other teachers and our students attempting to implement Indian Education for All. In our experience in Montana such comments often include statements such as, “I never killed an Indian. I have no responsibility in this.” A well-intended person might indeed be stating the truth of the first proposition; however the second proposition requires a second look if one wants to do the anti-racist work required in implementing Indian Education for All.

Although we, or our families and relatives, may not have directly participated in Indian genocide and ongoing acts of violence toward Indian peoples, all non-Native Americans have benefited and continue to benefit from that legacy of removal and holocaust. The land we live on once supported millions of Native people. Indian people were forcibly removed, starved to death, killed by the scores in order that Euro-Americans and consequent others could move in and enjoy the



Just outside Browning, Montana

peoples, have a responsibility to work for justice and equity by noticing injustice and inequity and working to undo it where we are able. Taking responsibility means responding in whatever arenas of influence our privilege allows us to enjoy—through work in schools, churches, synagogues, community memberships—to notice anti-Indian racism, to do our homework and find out the facts, to correct the perpetual dispense of myths and stereotypes, and to offer a corrective. To speak the truth to power with love (Freire, hooks) wherever and whenever we are able. This is what it means to take responsibility.

benefits of American abundance. Whether or not we or our relatives lived here during the times of the Indian wars and confinement to reservations is irrelevant. The fact that the land was “opened to discovery” by multiple acts of violence is a legacy from which every non-Native American resident benefits. In agreeing to do anti-racist work, to try and understand this violent legacy, to work for reconciliation toward Indian peoples, we must take responsibility—we must “own up” to the facts of American history. By taking responsibility, we might acknowledge the benefits we receive as a result of a genocidal legacy: land ownership, freedom to come and go as we please on a vast continent, access to higher quality education and jobs are just a few examples. We might indeed realize that we and our families may have worked hard to earn what we have, but we might also acknowledge that we, as privileged inheritors of a legacy that continues to oppress Indian

Holy Family Mission, Blackfeet Indian Reservation, Browning, MT

In the boarding school ruins.

Here the wind speaks in tongues. It carries the voices of boys and girls herded into stone dormitories, hair cut, clothes burned, voices silenced—a silence that continues to deafen after a hundred years. Missionaries come to save the heathen for God. The spirits of these little children, taken from their families, tell stories of beatings, rape, death all in service to the whitening of America.

I sit still here in the ruins, on a heap of old dormitory rocks, a pile of sandstone remains that tell the story of frightened girls pulled from the warmth of their parents’ fires, boys pushed off into the night. Rusted barbwire speaks from charred fence posts. Ghosts moan in horror over the blood-chastened fields.

I can see them lined up for the camera, their brown faces somber above starched-white pinafores, eyes hollow with terror. They mourn visions of lodges settled along the riverbank, smoke rising over pots of boiled buffalo meat warming for supper—the noisy reconstruction of every family.

The cemetery holds their bones and stories now; rusty iron fence posts, a strip of corrugated tin belies the horror of occupation, surrender. The destruction cannot erase the truth.

The wind speaks for you still.

Teachers who have worked in reservation schools or schools in border towns report impossible working conditions, violence and disregard among students and faculty, institutional racism, the ongoing legacy of the boarding school experience where children taken from families never learned to nurture. It is important to see ways to teach Indian children how to be Real People again, how to care for one another, to respect heritage and traditions, to become resilient, to understand spirituality, to forgive, to become resilient, to become resilient. Taking responsibility means seeing different ways of looking at the world, living with compassion and understanding, reaching out in the face of violence. Resilience, spirituality, forgiveness, resilience. This is the work of Indian Education for All. Dare to take responsibility.

From *Riding the Earthboy* 40 poems by James Welch, Blackfeet/Gros-Ventre

There is a Right Way

The justice of the prairie hawk
moved me; his wings tipped

the wind just right and the mouse
 was any mouse. I came away,
 broken from my standing spot,
 dizzy with the sense of a world
 trying to be right, and the mouse
 a part of a wind that stirs the plains.

The Man from Washington

The end came easy for most of us.
 Packed away in our crude beginnings
 in some far corner of a flat world,
 we didn't expect much more than firewood and buffalo robes
 to keep us warm. The man came down,
 a slouching dwarf with rainwater eyes,
 and spoke to us. He promised
 that life would go on as usual,
 that treaties would be signed, and everyone —
 man, woman and child — would be inoculated
 against a world in which we had no part,
 a world of money, promise and disease.

A Day In the Life: Browning, MT from the Eyes of a Visitor

"This is not a silent movie. Our voices will save our lives." writes Sherman Alexie in one of his early poems. During the long, lonesome, highway hours traveling from Missoula to Browning, Montana, I contemplate both the rise of "the backbone of the world"—the Pikuni (a.k.a. Blackfeet) name for the front range of the Rocky Mountains that is their home—and for the value of prayer. I am driving north to join the Montana Writing Project satellite at Blackfeet Community College (BCC). In my role as Director of Montana Writing Project, I have been asked to participate in a ceremonial sweat to bless the writing project work in Browning. I will join 2007 BCC Summer Institute writing project fellows, honored members of the Blackfeet community, elder Pikuni religious leaders, local community members, students, teachers, and their guests who gather to honor our work and bless its continuance and growth in the community.

Rural Conference on Writing Education April 12, 2007

MSU College of Technology in Great Falls

Keynote by Tom Fox

Dr. Tom Fox was CSU, Chico's 2000-01 Outstanding Professor and is the author of three books and many articles on the teaching of writing. He served as the Director of the Northern California Writing Project at California State University, Chico from 1988 through 2007. He continues to teach at Chico and work as a national coordinator for the Project Outreach Network of the National Writing Project.

Proposals for presenters are welcome and currently being accepted. Contact Donna Miller (wndrwmn@ttc-cmc.net) for more details.

The conference is open to all. If you are unfamiliar with Writing Project, mark your calendar and come see what we are about. If you are a teacher consultant who hasn't been to an event lately come renew contacts with your MWP colleagues.

Registration will begin February 1st: www.cas.umt.edu/english/mwp/

Journal of the Montana Writing Project

This is not a job my education or experience has prepared me to do. Yet, I drive on.

I will be asked to pray—in my own way—to honor the work of those gathered on behalf of the educational success of Blackfeet students—most in NCLB-labeled “failing” schools, working with mandated, scripted curricula that allow no room either for writing nor for culturally relevant impulses.

I don’t pray anymore. Troubled these days by the politics of prayer sold to the highest bidder, I’ve abandoned the Christianity by which I was raised; but I have not abandoned what I learned as a Christian—to reach out to those in need, to pray for them that hate you, to love those that despise you and persecute you, to bless them that curse you, to forgive their transgressions, to turn the other cheek...

So in the hot dark intensity of the sweat lodge, breathing deeply the smoke of sage and tobacco offered to the Creator for blessing, I pray for our project. I pray that the work that we do will go forth and accomplish the good we intend—that it will give teachers the power to speak up on behalf of children silenced by curricula never intended to help them succeed, just intended to help some corporate cats back east get rich. I pray for the power to forgive them for they know not what they do.

I have always been troubled by prayer as supplication—the “ask and ye shall receive” part of prayer. In modern times, that has devolved into requests for material benefits. Around the campfire after the sweat, a teenage daughter of one of our BCC co-directors sings Patsy Cline and Rock of Ages in a deep bluesy soprano. Another of the teacher consultants says she sings bluesy like Janis Joplin and wonders about that song... “Oh Lord, won’t you buy me a Mercedes Benz...”

Without hesitation, I use my choir-trained voice, rusty with disuse, to sing every stanza a’capella: “Oh Lord, won’t you buy me a color T.V? Dialing for Dollars is trying to find me. I wait for delivery each day until 3:00. Oh Lord, won’t you buy me a color T.V?” How ironic in this place at this moment.

In the sweat lodge earlier, I had acknowledged my wholeness with creation, the good all of it, the loving tenderness with which we might treat ourselves and others, the goodness of the effort of writing project. I believed again in the possibility of peace, of mutual congregation toward common good.

I thought of my teaching in more possible terms—that I could do what was needed to find a useful path to forgiveness, to outreach, to access, and for the blessings that come from an idea unfolding in dignity and collaboration.

I felt a peace beyond frustration and realized as I sang Janis Joplin that the goals of state schools are at odds with the cultural ideals so necessary to success in Indian Country. I wondered what it might take for curriculum to be relevant, to speak to the lives of Blackfeet students in ways that bring them to succeed in both the modern and the Blackfeet ways.

Just before I sang about asking the Lord for a Mercedes Benz, we viewed the space shuttle and the space station circling in orbit in the night sky above us—a crescent moon, Mercury, Mars, Venus, Saturn in alignment. A Hopi prophecy, we learn from one of our Blackfeet colleagues, says that “When you see a house in the sky, we are at the edge of the precipice.” I am certain that we are teetering toward the abyss and wonder what it will take to pull us back toward each other in ways that refuse the path to failure.

I am certain that it’s not going to be accomplished through scripted curricula intended to be both teacher-proof and child-numb.

“This is not a silent movie. Our voices will save our lives.” I hear Alexie echo, and I pray. Writing is the way to bring our voices to the fore, to live lives that can be heard... to travel a path together with our minds turned toward the spirit, fully intact.

Prayer in schools is verboten, and I don’t do it there or anywhere on most occasions... but here in this place, I have been moved to pray.

I think if you’re doing a good thing, you don’t need to be afraid.¹

Eagle Poem by Joy Harjo

To pray you open your whole self
To sky, to earth, to sun, to moon
To one whole voice that is you.
And know there is more
That you can’t see, can’t hear,
Can’t know except in moments
Steadily growing, and in languages
That aren’t always sound but other
Circles of motion.
Like eagle that Sunday morning
Over Salt River. Circled in blue sky
In wind, swept our hearts clean
With sacred wings.
We see you, see ourselves and know
That we must take the utmost care
And kindness in all things.
Breathe in, knowing we are made of
All this, and breathe, knowing
We are truly blessed because we
Were born, and die soon within a
True circle of motion,
Like eagle rounding out the morning
Inside us.
We pray that it will be done

In beauty.
In beauty.

“Democracy needs her poets, in all their diversity, precisely because our hope for survival is in recognizing the reality of one another’s lives,” writes Bill Moyers in the introduction to his book, *The Language of Life: A Festival of Poets* (xi). Examining the difficult issues raised by Alexie in ways that allow his words to change our hearts about the negative effects of tribalism, the sorry outcomes of violence and rage, helps give both our students and us spaces and opportunities to speak and to hear a more commodious language; language that makes room for our students’ anecdotal, personal, and cultural reflections as well as the reflections of those so far different from themselves. Our intent as Jim Corder has counseled in “Argument as Emergence, Rhetoric as Love” is to

...speak a commodious language, creating a world full of space and time that will hold our diversities. Most failures of communication result from some willful or inadvertent but unloving violation of the space and time we and others live in, and most of our speaking is tribal talk. But there is more to us than that. We can learn to speak a commodious language, and we can learn to hear a commodious language (189).

Indian Education for All helps us find more ways to teach for peace.

¹ I want to thank my colleague Wendy Warren for this insight.

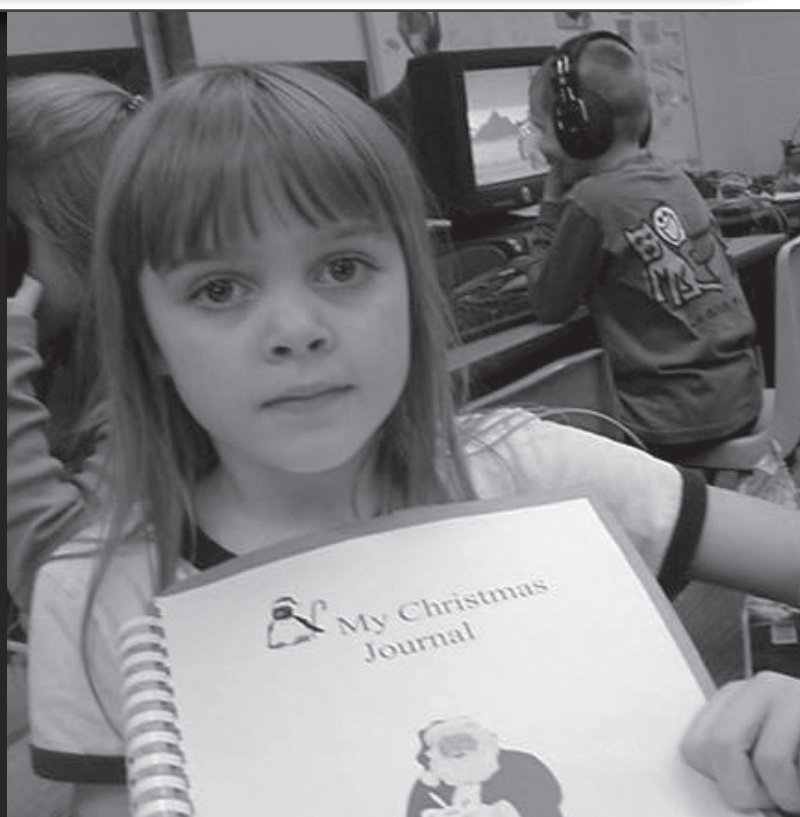
Works Cited

- Adams, Kate. “Northamerican Silences: History, Identity, and Witness in the Poetry of Gloria Anzaldúa, Cherrie Moraga, and Leslie Marmon Silko” in *Listening to Silences: New Essays in Feminist Criticism*. Elaine Hedges & Shelley Fisher Fishkin, eds. New York: Oxford University Press, 1994: 130-145.
- Alexie, Sherman. “Reservation Drive-In.” *First Indian on the Moon*. Brooklyn, NY: Hanging Loose Press, 1993: 16-17.
- Anzaldúa, Gloria. “How to Tame a Wild Tongue.” *Borderlands/La Frontera: The New Mestiza*. Second edition. San Francisco: Aunt Lute Books, 1999: 75-86.
- Corder, Jim. “Argument as Emergence, Rhetoric as Love.” *Pursuing the Personal in Scholarship, Teaching, and Writing: Selected Essays of Jim W. Corder*. Eds. James S. Baumlin & Keith D. Miller. Urbana, IL: NCTE, 2004: 170-189.
- Gaughan, John. *Reinventing English: Teaching in the Contact Zone*. Portsmouth, NH: Heinemann-Boynton/Cook, 2001.
- Goldberg, Natalie. *Writing Down the Bones: Freeing the Writer Within*. Boston: Shambhala, 1986.
- Jung, Julie. *Revisionary Rhetoric, Feminist Pedagogy and Multigenre Texts*. Carbondale, IL: Southern Illinois University Press, 2005.
- Louth, Richard. “The New Orleans Writing Marathon.” *The Quarterly of the National Writing Project*. Vol. 24, No. 1 (Winter 2002). <http://www.nwp.org/cs/public/print/resource/315>.
- Moyers, Bill. *The Language of Life: A Festival of Poets*. New York: Main Street Books, 1996.
- Ondaatje, Michael. *The Collected Works of Billy the Kid*. New York: Vintage, 1996.
- Romano, Tom. *Writing With Passion: Life Stories, Multiple Genres*. Portsmouth, NH: Boynton/Cook-Heinemann, 1995.
- _____. *Blending Genre, Altering Style: Writing Multigenre Papers*. Portsmouth, NH: Boynton/Cook-Heinemann, 2000.

Youngest Writers Record the Holidays

Judy Compton, Hellgate Elementary Teacher and MWP Teacher Consultant, helped her first grade students create Christmas journals. She began the project by modeling on the smartboard and then the first graders wrote their ideas in a rough draft journal. Next they self-edited and revised the rough draft. As they did this Judy helped them by listening as they read their writing aloud to make sure it made sense. When they were done, they then copied the work in their best handwriting into their final draft journal. The final step was adding art -- their handprints, Santa and reindeer, or sometimes a drawing.

At right is Loryn Merrill with her journal.



Remembering Rina

1977-2007

Memorial | Heather Bruce

We in the Montana Writing Project are experiencing a painful gaping loss. Our dear Rina was part of a statewide leadership network dedicated to improving writing instruction for all students everywhere. She gave tirelessly to these efforts. She passionately committed herself to making justice through literacy education her primary project. We looked constantly to her for leadership in finding better ways to help students whom the schools served poorly. We leaned on her for support when our own spirits flagged in doing justice work in settings that don't often appreciate the ways in which such work upends the status quo. We saw her as our beacon, leading us with the light of her wisdom, the clarity of her commitments down darkened corridors haunted by others that were more willing than she ever was to cast aside those who struggle.

Rina was the sweetest soul, the most incredible colleague, the dearest friend, the most shining example of who we wanted as teachers to be. We always felt as though she was miles ahead of us in her understanding of literacy work that still needs to be done now that she has left us. This summer we gathered with her in Santa Fe to think through the difficult challenges presented by providing greater access to literacy programs that might improve instruction delivered to students living in poverty, developing programs that might offer more relevant curriculum to students whose lives are impacted by poverty, and constructing ways we might invite more diversity in our leadership. We struggled together to combine our understandings of such outreach efforts to think through ways to implement the promises for reconciliation intended by Indian Education for All. Rina's insights in this work, her insistence that the work was both doable and necessary helped us every step of the way. We must now figure out how to carry on that work in her absence. Doing so will be no small challenge because of how much she had to teach us.

The one message we want to send is that Rina's commitment to this work was always punctuated by her unflagging understanding of and love for her students. She so believed in you and knew what you were capable of doing and accomplishing. Last week when we last spoke with her, she said that her year had been terribly difficult...it was the only inkling she gave us of her personal struggle. Still, she was pleased with her students, with what you were committed to doing and accomplishing. We would encourage you knowing how much she believed in you to keep on doing and accomplishing in her memory.

Our lives are richer for having known and worked with Rina Moog. Although we have no answers, we are left with a greater understanding of justice, of equity, and of teaching and learning from what she shared with us in her short life. Let us move forward in the light she left on behind.

Rising to the Challenge of Transformation by Rina Moog, 2007

Change is hard. Teachers and students live with this reality every day. Even harder than change is transformation, the kind of change that alters who we are forever. Yet transformation is exactly what happens in the presence of powerful teaching and learning, especially in English classrooms where we use language to negotiate new understandings about ourselves and our world. As Katie Wood Ray says, "Sometimes, we can learn so much—all at once—that it changes who we are" (207; italics in original). This is transformation, and although it is difficult and sometimes scary, it is what we must be striving for as teachers and learners in today's dynamic society.

Earlier in my career, this was not a task I was sure I was up to. Some days I'm still not sure. But in those moments when I doubt myself, my methods, and my mission, I turn to the words of a former student that remind me that providing anything less than a transforming experience is not the path to true education. From a senior, Eddie, who was on the brink of dropping out, I received a letter that issued the following challenge: "Ms. B., please find something very interesting for us to do. You have my attention, but can you keep it? You're our teacher, so teach us something we'll never forget." Admittedly, these words were not initially inspiring. In fact, my first thought was, You've got to be kidding me. Commas and Shakespeare were hard enough, and now he wanted me to find something they would never forget?

What I eventually realized was that it wasn't that he wanted me to teach additional content. He simply wanted to connect with the current material in a way that was relevant. I would love to tell you that from that point on, I have only taught lessons that students will never forget. Unfortunately, that's simply not the case. However, Eddie's words, which hang next to my desk, have become a litmus against which I measure the work with which I ask students to engage. And while I may not always be successful, I owe myself and my students this constant reflection. After all, in this age of increasing educational demands, we are routinely faced with decisions about what we will do and say, as well as what we will forego or leave unsaid. These are necessary choices. There is simply not enough time to include everything we might wish in a given class period, school year, or lifetime.

With this in mind, I spend a considerable amount of time debating what to include in my classroom and allowing myself to give priority to the work that matters. I think meaningful work is that which encourages students to connect their realities and goals to new knowledge and skills.

Another student, Nate, once explained in a poem, "I want to look out the same window / and learn something I don't already know." Students want us to value their "windows," the perspectives and experiences they bring with them to the classroom, while also exploring new views of the world and its possibilities through those lenses. Of course, I still teach commas and Shakespeare. Now, though, I present such information not as an end but as a means of encouraging students to evaluate the present and to create the future. In this respect, work that matters does not just expand what students know now, it influences how they will live from now on.

What I have realized is that no one lesson can provide all students with this type of growth. Certainly, we can all point to specific turning points in our lives, but transformation comes about by a series of these instances that when strung together form the chain of who we have become and line the path we walk toward opportunities on the horizon. Thus, it has become important for me as an educator not simply to measure each lesson's value independently but to gauge the synergy of lessons presented throughout a unit or a year. It doesn't matter that students remember a particular passage from a book, but it does matter that years later they accurately evaluate information and confidently express their ideas. Recently, I was reminded of this when listening to a student attempt to describe one of my classes. She began by listing a variety of discrete activities and projects but concluded by explaining, "When you leave the room, you feel like you have something to say." While I'm sure that not every student who leaves my room feels similarly empowered, I realized that Marnie's words articulated my goal perhaps better than I ever have. For not only am I seeking to effect transformations in students, I am seeking to effect particular kinds of transformations, namely those that encourage students to use their stories and their voices to achieve the futures they want for themselves and their communities.

Unfortunately, I think it is common for teachers in today's classrooms to feel pressured to teach not necessarily what matters in life, but what matters on the next test. While I, too, face this conundrum, I also suggest that there is perspective to be gained by stepping back and seeing the issue of testing education versus appropriate instruction as a piece of a larger struggle. This is a war that is not won or lost on any given day, but in battles that take place throughout a child's education. Paradoxically, what students remember from their educations, what I remember from my education, are the moments. This afternoon, a former student told me how much a particular story we read had changed her life. I'm quite certain that she could not have recalled the thematic unit in which that story was included nor the skills that were introduced or reinforced during our study. This is not to say that all of those other elements didn't matter, but what she remembers is the moment when the transformation was apparent to her.

Although every transformation is a sum of many parts, what we live are the moments. For this reason, we must view the immediate needs of testing and short-term goals as situated within the larger context of our obligation as educators to provide students with tools to achieve future successes. Presenting curriculum as something students "will never forget" and making sure students leave my room with "something to say" is not an accomplishment I can claim on any given day. Nevertheless, it is a challenge I have been given and a goal worthy of aspiring to. It provides me, moreover, with the courage to make the daily choices to create moments capable of effecting change and, ultimately, transformation.

Work Cited

Ray, Katie Wood. *Wondrous Words: Writers and Writing in the Elementary Classroom*. Urbana: NCTE, 1999.

On the way home from
the National Council
of Teachers of English
convention last November,
Rina and I had a layover
for a couple of hours in the
Denver airport. For dinner,
we had mediocre Caesar's
salads in the "French"
restaurant in the center of
terminal B. Rina told me
a lot about her life. At one
point, while she was telling
me about growing up in
California, I asked her why
she decided to go to college
in Montana. She paused,
smiled, and, choosing her
words carefully, told me
she did that because she
didn't want to study what
she already knew; she
wanted to study with new
people who had different
experiences in life. That's
how I'll remember Rina.

| Eric Bateman

When Words Aren't Enough | Donna Miller

When the night looms as a shadow of hell
and every breath utters in tones of terror,
words alone won't provide a balm to pain,
so I will give you my hand to hold and tug you from despair
with images that massage your mind, engender solace, and nurture peace.
I'll paint a picture of a baby asleep at your breast, his hand curled about your
finger;
a sky awash with magenta, purple, rose, and blue—promising opportunity;
the air alive with the lyric of lilacs, bumble bees, monarch butterflies,
and a meadowlark's song;
of the trees in autumn, ablaze with gold, umber, orange, and maroon,
their spicy, musty odors punctuating the air
with the honking of Canadian geese as they wing their way to warmer climes.
I'd give you a carefree day with nothing to do but read your favorite book,
a latte at your elbow,
a log crackling in the fireplace.
When your body begs for exercise,
you'd shrug into your worn flannel shirt to walk the dogs;
they bound to the river, their butts wiggling in glee, their eyes dancing with mischief.

We'd go to Dairy Queen, order the blizzard flavor of the month,
and bend our heads in conversation,
reliving milestone moments:
marriage, degree work, leadership, giving voice to the marginalized,
empowering students, conference planning, passionate writing.
When pain creeps in, threatening with parasitic power,
we'll push it back, cry in tearful catharsis,
and remember that we are created by being destroyed.
We'd bury the bones, breathe tomorrow's air, and cling to one another.

Journal of the Montana Writing Project

But when you stood at a bend in the path one day,
with sunlight and silence your companions,
because Mercury was in retrograde,
pulling you backwards, sending mixed messages,
you didn't see me there, my hand out-stretched,
so you chose silence,
and my fire died,
one spark at a time.

A meteorite
Streaks across a night sky
Brilliant, glowing, gone.
| Wendy Warren

Dear Rina,

I'm in New York City. Me. The Montana girl. You said you thought I would like it—that I should come here despite my fears, and you're right...as usual...although three days might be a bit long. But I'm wondering, Rina, where are you? I'm waiting for you to share the schedule you said you'd get in a few days, so we could plan our walk in Central Park. I'll free up some time tomorrow afternoon, and let's walk there, Rina, let's walk and talk...because that's what we do when we're together. That's what we do. And we have a lot of catching up to do...

Jonathan Kozol spoke tonight, and your NCTE cohorts were sitting up on the platform, and I know you hate that, but I looked for you up there. Where were you? And let's talk about Kozol. He doesn't seem to be doing so well. The hunger strike is taking its toll, and he seems to know it. He's talking about how he isn't cut out for this kind of controversy. People hate him and it's scary and he's tired, but he's so committed that he'll keep working each day that he has left. I wonder if he thinks that time is short.

But, Rina, you're young and strong and healthy, and the work you're doing is just as important, and hard, and scary as Kozol's. And your commitment is so strong... like you, Rina, like you.

And, come to think of it, Jonathan did talk about the possibility of falling in love. I guess that's his norm at NCTE. Maybe his talk was one giant personal ad. But at least that shows some hope—in his world filled with despair—and where is your hope, Rina, where did your hope go?

Because, while you saw the problems—so much more clearly than I—you always saw the hope as well. And that hope is still there. But you are not. And how can we continue? You had so much to give...

...and you already gave so much. Is that it? What more could we possibly ask of you? Maybe you gave your all in the first thirty years of your life—and that was it. Nothing left. As exceptional as you were, I can grow to accept that.

Because the questions are bigger than all of us. And they will never be answered to my satisfaction. I believe in you, Rina. I believe in who you were. And I will rely upon your wisdom, just as I have since the first week I met you, and I will listen for your voice, which I hear from time to time, and especially here, Rina, in your homeland.

Wendy

"You had us write lie papers,
but you lied to me on Tuesday
after school when you told me
that you would see me
tomorrow.
You lied....
your sadness was just too deep.
Today is Friday.
We used to meet
Every Friday last year
in your room for coffee.
I used to wonder at the time
What an amazing person like you
was doing hanging out
with a kid like me.
I'll miss you."

| from the hallway
at Billings Senior

"You were the best teacher I ever had."

From the Hallway,
Billings Senior High School

Overheard in the hallway, two former students:

Student 1—"You saw *Freedom Writers* – you know that teacher? She was that teacher – well, she wasn't that teacher, but she was that teacher."

Student 2—"She made us read that book."

Student 1—"She didn't make us."

Student 2—"She kinda did, dude."

Student 1—"She was that teacher."

On My Way Home by Rina Moog, 2005

"You should go over to Lynn's today and pick up that college stuff she has for you," my mother reminded me. Early morning sunlight filtered through chocolate-colored blinds into our kitchen. Mom was polishing off the last of her coffee while I lingered over mine. In a week's time I would begin college at a university two hours from our northern California home, where I believed I would never have time to linger over anything again.

"Okay," I sighed, stirring absentmindedly.

"And maybe you could just fix something to take to her. You know, like a casserole or some cookies or something. Just don't be too obvious about it," Mom suggested.

"I'll tell her you made it," I teased. My mother does not boil water. If it weren't for the fact that we lived with my grandparents off and on during my childhood, I would have grown up entirely on takeout.

She rolled her eyes, dropped a quick kiss on the top of my head, and scooted out the door. From my seat at the table, I scanned the cupboards envisioning the contents stacked in their interiors. I had been putting off this visit to Lynn, but I felt resolutely that I wanted to get it over with as quickly as possible. And then I felt ashamed for feeling that way.

Lynn had been a good friend of my mom's for as long as I could remember. Her three children and been my babysitters when I was growing up. They were the big kids I still wanted to be like. Their ranch, just a few miles from ours, was the place I went to have my hair French braided for special occasions, and the place where I learned to keep my balance on the back of my horse as he galloped across the meadow. It was also the place I called in tears after dropping a nearly full sack of sugar on to the cake I had just finished icing for my grandparents anniversary party. "Just fill the hole with frosting," Lynn advised. "No one will notice."

Lately, times had been tough for Lynn. Her kids were all grown up and living in distant towns, her husband had recently divorced her and moved to China with his nineteen-year-old girlfriend, and just a few weeks previous she had been diagnosed with a fast-growing, terminal cancer. Lynn was a nurse, and upon receiving her diagnosis she had immediately quit her job. She wanted to spend her last few months as she pleased. Mom had gone over to her place the night we first heard the news, but I hadn't seen her yet.

For the first time ever, I didn't want to see her. I didn't know what I should say about her illness, or if I should say anything. I wished that I still felt as close to her as I had when I was little, but as her kids had grown and I had become a teenager, our paths had crossed less and less. I still considered her family because of the history we shared, but the thought occurred to me that much of our relationship was indeed already history.

In an attempt to escape that realization, I busied myself making blackberry bran muffins. They seemed like a healthy choice. It didn't occur to me at the time that it was a bit too late for that. I figured muffins were good because I could just tell her we had made a bunch and this batch was left over.

I let the muffins cool a long time, hoping it would help to make my story about leftovers more plausible. When I finally arrived to find her sitting on the front porch, I couldn't help but glance furtively at her face. I was looking for some sign of the cancer in the wrinkles and laugh lines I knew so well. She took my muffins graciously, although I could tell she didn't believe my story. "Your mother didn't make these did she?"

I forced a laugh. "You would have heard the fire trucks," I said, straining to keep my voice light.

She smiled slightly. "Well come on in. I've kind of been gathering up things as I've thought of them." She lead me to a box in the hallway. "I threw in a couple of extra-long twin sheets for the mattresses. The regular ones won't fit those dorm beds. There are also some towels and washcloths in there. I have so many more than I need now. Oh, and I put in one of those writing boards with the bean bag sewn underneath, so you can sit on your bed and work. And wait, I'll give you one of those desk lamps with the bendy necks that you can turn every which way."

"Lynn, this is too much..." I started, but she was already rifling through the closet.

After winding the cord around the lamp's base, she carefully tucked it among the other treasures. I looked her squarely in the eyes. "Thank you," I said quietly.

"It's nothing," she said. "What do I need any of that stuff for anymore?" And just like that a choking silence saturated the hallway. I focused my eyes on the bar that hung across the doorway to the girls' room where I used to hang upside down by knees and not be able to touch the floor.

"Well you better get going. I'm sure you've got a ton of things to do," she said finally. And though I had planned to visit awhile, I was grateful for the chance to escape.

She followed me outside. "Thanks again," I offered, squinting up at her from the bottom of the porch steps. Then I turned toward the pick-up.

"Don't forget," she called out suddenly, "the only person you're going to spend your whole life with is yourself." I didn't know what to say to that, so I acted like I didn't hear her. Sliding into the truck and waving as I backed out, I wondered what she meant.

When I unpacked the box at home, I found a few extra items. There was a small ziplock bag containing several rolls of quarters and labeled with the words "Laundry Money." I also found a phone card with a sticky note affixed to it that bore the inscription, "Call your mother!!" And finally, she included a small, framed picture

of her children and me that must have been ten years old. It showed up on Halloween as they prepared to take me to town to go trick -or-treating. I was dressed as Wonder Woman, with my winter coat on over a pair of blue swimsuit bottoms that my mother had pasted with silver star-shaped stickers. I smiled as I remembered that night, my delight with the costume and with the prospect of a night out with the big kids.

I got the chance to thank Lynn again when I went over to say good-bye a couple of nights before I left for college. She never said anything more about the woods she spoke on the day I retrieved that box of goodies. I remembered how I had played them over in my mind as I drove home that day, “The only person you’re going to spend the rest of your life with is yourself.” She had said it without bitterness, just a simple statement of fact. I wanted to ask her what she had meant, but I didn’t know how to bring it up. I understood why someone in her position might feel that way, but I didn’t know why she would say it aloud, say it to me.

Her body deteriorated even more quickly than was expected, and she died before Christmas. According to her wishes, there was no memorial service. Home for winter break, I recounted the story of Lynn’s words to my mother, hoping that maybe she could explain, but she, too, was mystified.

I did not think of Lynn’s words again until May of the following year. I was lying on my back on the lawn in front of my dorm. The bright sun painted the inside of my closed eyelids a fiery red, and the new grass prickled my bare arms and legs.

“I think you’re just running away. You don’t know what you want to do and you’re scared. Dashing off to Montana isn’t going to help anyone.” The words, spoken by Debbie, an older woman friend I had met in college, floated to me from where she sat nearby. She was neither as old nor as wise as Lynn, and I was one of her only friends.

“What do you know?” I had felt like arguing. College hadn’t turned out exactly as I had thought. The campus, relatively near my home and filled with people I had grown up with, felt like a repeat of high school. I was angry that Debbie didn’t see this and support my decision to challenge myself.

And then, as I lay there Lynn’s words seeped back into my consciousness, and this time they made sense to me. “The only person you are going to spend your whole life with is yourself.” It didn’t matter if Debbie backed my decision or not. Her disapproval was completely irrelevant. It probably had more to do with her own unhappiness than with anything to do with me. Moreover, I recognized that moving to Montana was something I needed to try, and Lynn’s words gave me the courage to carry out my plan.

In the years since then, I have continued to return to Lynn’s wisdom in times of uncertainty. Because of how much her words have helped me, I frequently share them with my high school students as well. Some find her advice uncompromising. They are not yet in a place where they can appreciate Lynn’s gift. Perhaps they never will be. Nonetheless, I continue to feel her quiet resolve in the wind at my back, urging me forward, whispering encouragement, and freeing me to follow, without apology, the path I know as my own.

This Stays | Lorrie Henrie-Koski

Groping for words to express a loss, I’ve had no luck. The pain is too jagged; the loss too massive. I should have known the answer would come from my students...

While shuffling through student portfolios for a particular one, a stray page dropped out. A student had selected for her portfolio the words of a song by a Japanese duo, Inuyasha and Kagome, saying in part:

Wouldn’t it be nice
If we could throw all the pain
And sorrow away?
Reality is just so cruel
But whenever I close my eyes,
You’re there,
Smiling.

Rina’s smile, her raised eyebrow, her head thrown back in laughter
– these stay with me.

Her dedication to nudging every student to realize his or her worth
– this stays with me.

Her easy manner and enchanting way of weaving words
– these stay with me.

Her acceptance of people for who they were, rather than who she wanted them to be
– this stays with me.

The unspoken challenge Rina left us: go forth and nurture writers who harness the power of the written word for justice for all
– this stays with me.

The students’ words on a poster in her high school hallway – “We’ll never let you go,”
– Rina stays with me.

For Rina | Casey Olsen

It's been over a month now,
since I heard the news.
The confusion is still ever-present.

Why?
And I ask again,
why?

And I know before I ask
that there is no pat answer
to be given.

Someday
the dull buzz of this confusion
may pass.
Someday I will be okay
to live without answers.
But I gotta say
what bothers me most
is how we are left,
suffocating
beneath the end of the story.

I rummage through my disorganized stacks
of papers and disheveled desk drawers
to find forgotten writing by you,
treasure it,
place a paperweight on it,
lock it in a file drawer
lest it too will flutter away.

To distract myself
from the questions and weary darkness,
I concentrate on wishes.
Like your student who wrote,

"I wish I could be in your classroom,
in my old seat in the front...
I wish I could hear you speak and for me not to say a word,"

and that's where I focus on wishes of my own.
I wish I would have made it
to one of your students' poetry slams.
I wish I would have taken you up on it
one of those times you suggested that
we teach each other's classrooms,
pull a switcheroo on them one day.
I wish we would have done that.

I wish we could sit in Barnes and Noble again
to consider lines from Natalie Goldberg, like
We are writing ourselves sane.
You know,
that one that reminded me of a Hemingway quote
I once heard where he said:
*You have to truly hurt like hell
before you can write well.*
And you thought that would be a good one
for your students to hear.

Hearing that line in my mind now
Has given me this realization, although I fear too late:

You wrote incredibly well.

I Am From by Rina Moog (With thanks to George Ella Lyon)

I am from morning meetings:
E-Anthology, book tours, hot topics,
burning questions.
I am from writer's notebooks, multigenre
memoirs, and Turning Point invitations,
from discussing NCTE resources and classroom
communities.
I am from "the naked blazing power of print"
(Thomas Wolfe).

I am from reading articles about best practices,
from wishing the next school year
started this afternoon (Casey).
I am from tension
between content and mechanics,
celebrating similarities and differences,
and masks.

I am from Dave's "unverbalizeable know-how,"
from his multi-modal means, from his challenge
to "write our world differently."
I am from Diane's "Midnight Musings,"
from Dan's mountains
"slippery with layered dreams."

I am from debriefings,
metacognitive babble, and fish bowls.
I am from reading text like writer,
and reading demonstrations like a presenter:
notice, talk, name, think, envision (Katie Wood
Ray).

I am from inquiry,
from honoring and examining student work.
I am from rationales and suggested readings,
instructional activities and objectives,
from research that informs teaching.
I am from the wobble.

I am from reflective practitioners,
from adjusting priorities,
starting points, and models.
I am from aligning beliefs with practices,
from finding new ways into writing.
I am from "going back to teaching" (Cathy).
I am from Montana Writing Project.

Scribe Notes
June 14, 2005

Ms. Moog was one of the most amazing
people and teachers I've ever known.
Because of her help and encouragement, I
was able to get through my first two years of
high school ..She helped so many students
and touched the lives of all who knew her.
| Jasmine Loran

"We'll never let you go."

From the Hallway,
Billings Senior High School

Ms. Moog was an amazing teacher. I loved her so much. She was the only teacher I knew that took the time to help me with scholarships and my personal life when no one was there. She has been such an inspiration to me to become the person I am. My cousin and I would talk with her after school just about everyday! I will never forget what she did for my cousin and me. She had one of the biggest hearts I'd ever seen in a teacher. She has affected everyone's life in a special way. She had a wonderful spirit and genuine heart.

| Daisy Naranjo

Rising to the Challenge of Transformation | Wendy Warren

A comet exploded
Quite unexpectedly
In the middle of October--
Three days after your thirtieth birthday.

Like me,
Stargazers and astronomers
Watched in wonder.

Hearing the news,
I closed my eyes,
Envisioning that night's campfire,
Sparks soaring above our heads.

My eyes were guided by a glowing trail
Above the tree line,
To a star
As it streaked across the sky,
Vanishing, like you, from my view.

My heart dimmed,
Uncomprehending.
The comet brightened,
Expanding.

Each morning
I set my hope
Carefully upon it,
Guided by
The celestial glow
In the east.

I held my sight level
Fearing the moment it would fade
As it continued its journey
Along the sky road.

Time passed beyond notice
Until, from silent tears,
Starflakes
Floated from the sky,
Alighting, tenderly at first,
On my exposed heart.

This is how storms begin.

The earth froze
As solidly as my heart.
Clouds roiled and churned.
The night deepened.

A blizzard of your soul's shattered fragments
Fell, piercing me where they landed
As splinter and shard found their mark.

I could only sit and stare,
Frozen.

Where tears had dried
At the corner of my eye,
A light flickered.

Stiff limbs began to throb
As they warmed,
Alerting me to
My own reflection.
Again, I watched in wonder
As hundreds of tiny candles
Glittered on an icy lake.

Each tiny incision bled
Flame,
Tattered edges
Sparkling,
Prisms
Lighting the eternal night.

The comet's indelible brightness,
Now turned inward,
Illuminates me.

And still, you are there
Nudging me
To rise to the challenge
Of transformation.

Book Review

Christa Umphrey

Writing Without Boundaries: What's Possible When Students Combine Genres
 © 2007 By Suzette Youngs and Diane Barone, Heinemann.
 \$18.50

Though multigenre writing continues to gain popularity with teachers, much of the professional literature still focuses on aiding secondary English teachers and college composition instructors. Youngs and Barone's new text is filled with ideas and techniques that are relevant for elementary teachers, and they've included a wealth of student examples from these younger writers to help other teachers bring the projects to life in their own classrooms.

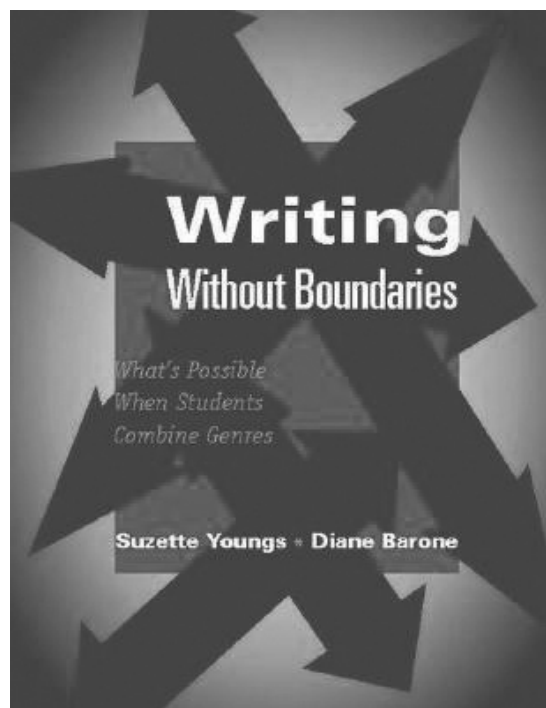
Youngs and Barone collect and present advice and strategies from teachers well-known for their published work with multigenre writing such as Tom Romano and Camille Allen as well as referencing and integrating much of the writing workshop work done by Katie Wood Ray and Ralph Fletcher and Joann Portalupi. They balance this scholarly approach with practical examples gathered from teachers working with multigenre writing in their classrooms.

The techniques Youngs and Barone share really emphasize helping students explore "perspective, audience, and purpose for each genre." The activities and processes they suggest work to deepen students understanding not only of what a multigenre project might look like but also what exactly the term genre means to begin with. Many students, especially in early elementary, won't have much background with genre. The authors explain, "We want students to understand that genres have a purpose just by the characteristics of the piece and that genres do not exist within a vacuum" because they've found, "often children are taught a genre and do an investigation of it, yet do not understand when in their lives they would choose to write from it and for what purposes."

The solution Youngs and Barone have put together to remedy this problem is what makes up the bulk of *Writing Without Boundaries*. In the text they share their ideas, beginning with organizing the classroom as a writing workshop and then guiding students through a genre study based on Isoke Nia's (1999) framework: best-guess gathering, immersion, sifting, second immersion, selecting touchstone texts, touchstone try-its, writing, reflecting and assessing. After explaining how they lead students through the genre study, they next move on to show what a complete multigenre project could look like in the classroom, including the processes for finding topics, examining examples, writing proposals, helping students in organizing and defending the sections they've written, and peer conferencing.

Writing Without Boundaries helps teachers cultivate students' familiarity with genres while also helping them to discover how real-world readers and writers communicate through genre. It also offers techniques to show how a single topic can be seen, and written about, from many perspectives. Additionally, the book contains some practical tools--lists of genres, organizational aides like goal sheets, genre study sheets to help students clarify what they are learning, and questionnaires that help students analyze individual genres and reflect on how they add to the piece of writing as a whole. There is also some discussion about publishing and sharing final projects. The text is comprehensive enough that a teacher who has never done multigenre work would have more than enough guidance to get started; experienced teachers of multigenre writing would still probably find a few good tips and ideas.

The authors follow their chapter on building a multigenre unit from scratch with a section that includes two examples of how teachers have incorporated multigenre work into existing curriculums. The first section outlines a unit where students choose a historical figure they are interested in knowing more about. Their chosen figure is then randomly paired with three of the people other students have chosen. The class is then given the scenario that their group of four historical figures is stranded together on an island and only one of them is going to be able to get a balloon ride back to civilization. To win the ride the writer must convince a panel (via a five-minute persuasive speech) that they should be the one awarded the ride. It will be as if the remaining three never existed and all their contributions to the world will vanish. This project begins as a single-genre study of persuasive writing based on research. As the project continues the students move on to investigating what other kinds of genres existed in



their subject's time period and choose some they could create to more fully tell about the figure they've chosen to research. Students also make a timeline of their subject's life and work which helps to break up the class into research groups organized by time period. By the time the students have finished the unit they have done a lot of work with both historical content and writing. In this same chapter the authors also share a unit where teachers used a multigenre writing activity as their culminating activity for their work on the Revolutionary War. This scaffolding shows how a unit based on state and district curricular standards could smoothly integrate writing in multiple genres.

As Youngs and Barone share these new approaches to organizing writing, they still recognize the increasing pressure teachers are under to be able to clearly connect what they are doing in the classroom with students' progress on local, state and national assessments. Teachers also need to show how they are hitting various standards. They bring the text to a close with a chapter that gives teachers ammunition to do just this by using student examples to consider both formal, standardized assessments and classroom-based assessments. They also address how multigenre writing can meet both local and national standards.

Though Writing Without Boundaries would probably be most useful for mid-elementary teachers without much experience with multigenre writing, the strategies and tips are really applicable for working with any level of writer. Youngs and Barone give any teacher everything they need to get started: rationale, research, lesson ideas, and student examples.

Join the Montana Writing Project!

Every student deserves a highly accomplished teacher of writing.
Let Montana Writing Project help you increase your effectiveness.

Join the Montana Writing Project and benefit from what MWP offers:

- Quarterly Journal subscription
- Workshop strand at the MEA/MFT fall educators' conference
- Professional resources from the National Writing Project
- Networking with writing teachers nationwide
- Professional development support
- Opportunities to conduct writing workshops and curriculum in-service

Name: _____

Address: _____

City: _____ State: _____ ZIP: _____

E-Mail Address: _____

School: _____ Grade Level _____

Phone (work): _____ Phone (home): _____

Please enclose \$10 for regular membership.

Mail this form and your check to:

Montana Writing Project
University of Montana, LA 133
Missoula, MT 59812

Teacher Resources for Multigenre Writing

Allen, Camille. *The Multigenre Research Paper: Voice, Passion, and Discovery in Grades 4-6*. © Heinemann, 2001. \$18.50.

Allen was possibly the first to share strategies for leading upper elementary students through the process of developing multigenre research papers. The book starts at the beginning and explains how to organize your classroom, help students choose topics, and introduce them to research. She provides concrete minilessons on the writing of poetry, character sketches, and nonfiction to help get your students writing. She also describes ways to tie together multiple genres to create flow within students' final papers. Allen also stresses the integration of the arts and oral communication skills and includes a final chapter focuses on evaluation and the many ways you can measure growth and evaluate progress. Student writing samples, journal essays, and two complete multigenre papers are also included.

Davis, Robert L. Davis and Mark F Shadle. *Teaching Multiwriting: Researching and Composing with Multiple Genres, Media, Disciplines, and Cultures*. © Southern Illinois University Press, 2007. \$35.00

This text introduces the idea of "multiwriting" as an alternative, open approach to traditional college composition. The authors argue for the supplanting of the outdated research paper assignment with research projects that use multiple forms to explore questions that cannot be fully answered. The text is aimed at composition teachers at all levels and includes sixteen helpful illustrations and provides classroom exercises and projects for each chapter.

Johnson, Cheryl & Jayne Moneysmith. *Multiple Genres, Multiple Voices: Teaching Argument in Composition and Literature*. © Heinemann: Boynton/Cook, 2005. \$18.50.

The authors approach to multigenre work takes the form of a multivoiced argument (MVA). The MVA explores the many perspectives of an argument by using multiple genres written from different points of view. Johnson and Moneysmith believe the MVA is the instructor's answer to dullness, predictability, and disengagement, because it has the power to energize student writers by engaging them in informed role-playing, rigorous research, and sophisticated analysis. *Multiple Genres, Multiple Voices* presents a step-by-step approach to teaching the MVA and includes classroom-tested exercises and assignments, strategies for responding and evaluation, and two complete student examples that demonstrate how to develop a multivoiced project.

Putz, Melinda. *A Teacher's Guide to the Multigenre Research Project: Everything You Need to Get Started*. © Heinemann. 2006. \$23.50

Tom Romano writes the forward to this book, but Melinda Putz is a veteran of the multigenre project all on her own, and she shares all the crucial details about making it work and assessing the finished product, including:

- * suggestions for organizing and planning, including an example schedule
- * advice on helping students choose topics
- * chapters on introducing students to new genres and reintroducing them to old ones
- * ideas for teaching revision and cohesion
- * specific techniques for evaluation
- * thirty-five reproducible handouts for use throughout the process.

Putz also includes a companion CD with numerous tabletop displays of finished projects as well as one entire project shown piece by piece.

Romano, Tom. *Blending Genre, Altering Style : Writing Multigenre Papers*. © Heinemann: Boynton/Cook. 2007. \$22.00

Blending Genre, Altering Style was the first book to address the practicalities of helping students compose multigenre papers. Romano discusses genres, subgenres, writing strategies, and stylistic maneuvers that students can use in their own multigenre papers. Each idea is supported with actual student writing, including five full-length multigenre papers that demonstrate the possibilities of a multigenre approach to writing. There are also discussions of writing poetry, fiction, and dialogue, in which readers will discover how students can create genres out of indelible moments, crucial processes, and important matters in the lives of the subject under inquiry. One chapter alone is devoted to helping writers create unity and coherence in their papers.

Youngs, Suzette and Diane Barone. *Writing Without Boundaries: What's Possible When Students Combine Genres*. © Heinemann, 2007. \$18.50 (see review on page 21)



MWP is one of 195 sites in the National Writing Project (NWP) network.

State Officers:

Heather E. Bruce, Director

Department of English, University of Montana

heather.bruce@umontana.edu

Donna L. Miller, Co-Director

English Instructor, Chinook High School

Millerd@chinookschools.org

Dave Christensen, Co-Director

5th Grade Teacher, Lolo School

christensens@montana.com

Staff :

Christa Umphrey

Technology Liaison & Publication Editor

christabel.umphrey@umontana.edu

montana.writing.project@gmail.com

Montana Writing Project
University of Montana, LA 133
Missoula, MT 59812