

Inter ★ STELA



The Online Professional Newsletter of the
SASKATCHEWAN TEACHERS OF ENGLISH LANGUAGE ARTS

DECEMBER 2005

Give me the liberty to know, to utter, and to argue
freely according to conscience, above all liberties.

-- John Milton (1608-1674)

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From the Editor

I love to argue. Many of the students that I have the privilege of learning with share this interest. At times I am wont to discourage intense discussion in the interest of charging forward with the content of the day. Increasingly, however, I am determined to let it rip when it is truly in the spirit of furthering understanding and communicating in a passionate, persuasive manner. I do not need to go further than the speaking objectives in the ELA curricula to justify such derailments of carefully constructed lessons. Sadly, the more time I spend on committees, around boardroom tables, or even over a cup of coffee with friends, the more I worry that both the artistry and the decorum of argument are being lost. Indeed to disagree these days, or to float a less-than-accepted opinion into a room, is to introduce the potential for conflict and this is all too rarely seen as an opportunity for growth, learning and community-building. Once again (apologies in advance to my already overtaxed colleagues), I believe that it must fall to ELA teachers to rage against the dying of the argument!

Truth told, I have been heavily influenced by some recent co-curricular experiences and I feel I must clear my editorial conscience. Our school started a debate team this year and we recently argued our way through our first round of competition. At the end of last year, when I was still dabbing the blood spilled in taking an oath to refuse anything new, a few of the students came to me and suggested that since I like to argue I would make a perfect debate coach. It turns out that their flattery and enthusiasm were just emphatic enough to seduce me with the implicit promise of the teachable moment. As is usually the case, I am delighted that they were so compelling, as the Saskatchewan Debate and Elocution Association has seen to it that our team's experiences thus far have been immensely enjoyable and intensely rewarding. Be it resolved that students across Saskatchewan should wander into their ELA classrooms, debate hats in hand.

Ryan Land
Inter*STELA Editor

From the President

Welcome to another issue of our on-line journal, Inter*STELA. While STELA continues to look forward and to change with the times with such innovations as this on-line journal, I want to take a moment to look back. As we celebrate Saskatchewan's centennial, and more importantly, STELA's fortieth anniversary, I want to recognize the work of the SETA/STELA pioneers. STELA and its members owe a debt of gratitude to the vision and efforts of people such as Wendy Barker, Robert Currie, Mabel Fleming, Trevor Gambell, Paulette Hubbs, Gary Hyland, John Loewen, Sam Robinson, Conrad Romuld, Frank Roy, Lionel Wilson, and Robert Wuschenny (and the list could go on and on). Without the commitment of these dedicated professionals, ELA teachers in our province would be without a voice, and without a professional organization whose mandate is to improve the teaching of English Language Arts and to promote an exchange of ideas and information.

Remaining true to the principles of our mandate and following the example of our innovative founders, STELA continues to move forward, embracing change and helping ELA teachers keep in step with those changes. Our annual conference is just one way in which we keep educators apprised of developments in the teaching of English Language Arts. The March 31 conference at Temple Gardens Mineral Spa in Moose Jaw will be the perfect location to continue the renewal process for dedicated teachers who relish the opportunity to find out about changes in ELA curricula, to get new ideas from colleagues, to renew acquaintances, and to make valuable contacts with other ELA teachers. Likewise, Golden Taffy, our annual student writing journal, is also embracing change. If your students would enjoy a visit from a Saskatchewan author, we invite you to enter your students' ideas in our renaming contest. Finally, although Inter*STELA may not have been part of those pioneers' vision, the exchange of ideas—no matter the medium—clearly was. Once again, I am confident that this edition of Inter*STELA, compiled by our diligent editor, Ryan, is filled with a delightful array of useful ideas and professional materials for our members. As STELA looks back on forty years of English Language Arts, we hope you enjoy this edition, and we look forward to seeing you at the spa in Moose Jaw on March 31!

Cheers,
Maureen Braun
STELA President
November, 2005

Conference 2006

ELA Tips from Moose Jaw

Friday, March 31, 2006
Temple Gardens Mineral Spa Resort Hotel
Moose Jaw, Saskatchewan

Key Note Address
Dr. Carol Schick

Luncheon Speaker
Gary Hyland, Poet & Artistic Director
of Moose Jaw's Festival of Words

Workshops
"There's a story in everyone," Lydia Frazer
"Poetic License: Poetry in the ELA 6-9 Classroom," Ryan Land
"Survival Guide for First Time Teachers of ELA," Melissa
Gardner and Joyleen Orescanin

Presenters
Dr. Bill Prentice, Audrey Hill

Literary walking tour of Moose Jaw and other surprises!

To make room reservations for the STELA conference call:
1-800-718-7727 (<http://templegardens.sk.ca>)

Registration information:
Joyleen Orescanin 693-4626 / joyleen@mail.mjsd1.ca

Conference 2006

ELA Tips from Moose Jaw

Friday, March 31, 2006
Temple Gardens Mineral Spa Resort Hotel
Moose Jaw, Saskatchewan

Call for Presenters

The conference committee eagerly invites teachers to present their ideas, approaches and strategies in a workshop or discussion format. If you are willing to offer a session, please contact:

Valerie Mulholland
Faculty of Education, University of Regina
3737 Wascana Parkway
Regina, SK S4S 0A2
Telephone : (306) 585-4618
val.mulholland@uregina.ca

Please provide the following information:

- ✓ Name
- ✓ School Address
- ✓ Phone Number
- ✓ E-mail
- ✓ Biographical Information
(Please provide a description of yourself to be included in the conference programme. Typically, presenters reveal experience, interests and teaching assignment.)
- ✓ Title and Description of Session
(Please indicate whether you plan a workshop or discussion; intended audience; purpose of your presentation.)
- ✓ Technology Requirements
(audio-visual equipment, internet access)

SLA Conference

Thistledown Literary Press SLA Conference April 2005 Address

By A.M. Forrie

Oh Canada, We Stand On Guard for Thee

Opening Remarks

Before I begin the publisher's perspective in this forum, I am compelled to acknowledge that writers as the creators of the work are essential to the evolution of both publishers and libraries, and, of course, without libraries to collect, store, organize cultural knowledge, civilization would be severely handicapped.

The Publishing Scene

There are many kinds of publishers. There are global international publishers and mom & pop home publishers; there are trade non-fiction publishers, Romance publishers, university publishers, and so on. Thistledown is a literary publisher and as such it is identified by several dominant characteristics:

- It publishes literature: short story, novels, poetry, literary essay
- It is grant reliant: Governments invest money into Thistledown if it follows Government rules and protocol
- It is a limited company; that is it is not a non-for-profit company though identical to it
- It is limited in its financial resources and growth though unlimited in its creative aspects
- In metaphor it is more likely a coyote rather than a shark, more likely a bee than a butterfly

The year I was born, Canada produced a total of 55 Canadian -authored books that were sold in Canada. That same year the US produced about 2000 American-authored books that were sold in Canada. Recent Statistics Canada reported that there were about 12,000 Canadian books published in 2002; of which about 2000 would loosely fall into the literary press camp. About 500 book publishers who published those books generated almost 2 billion dollars. Oh, and at the same time there were about 53,000 US publishers who generate about 27 billion.

I introduce these numbers not for any kind of statistical set up, but simply to create a backdrop to the publishing scene. They also serve to set the viewing angle for my presentation, and will later linger about in my conclusion. I hope this discussion is about more than money and statistics.

Of course, as anyone who has ever tried to successfully make sense of Canadian writer statistics, Canadian publishing statistics, or Canadian Library statistics knows, they are in very poor shape. Still, thinking like the raven there are bits and pieces of shiny things to take to the nest. Some numbers are useful here. As I see it, it is a critical time for Canadian publishing, and it is so important that the major players like writers, and librarians pay attention. Our co-dependence is a healthy and necessary one, and it is being jeopardized.

SLA Conference

The Rationale for Publishing

Why many Canadian literary publishers continue to publish is a financial mystery. There are, of course, some very logical guesses that would likely make very passionate speech material, but that is best saved for my publishing colleagues. Today I am thinking about the community of writers, and especially librarians and the role they have in contributing to Canada's cultural wellness. But to get there, I must first wade you through some serious business.

In the last decade most literary publishers in Canada continued to publish books even though, on average, they had profit margins before tax of less than 2%. Why do they continue in the business of publishing? Further to this, even a number of Canada's once profitable publishers began to show a dramatic decline throughout this decade. Why did this happen? Do cultural publishers persist, because they are ineffective business people, who remain blind to the "bottom line"? Is the reason they continue because they are so altruistic that money never matters to them? Is it because they have limited skills and are stuck in these dead-end jobs? Could it be that they continue because they think government grants will always be there to support their endeavours? These, of course, are perhaps somewhat sarcastic responses, but ones I have actually heard as reasons for publishers carrying on.

The government's "cultural good news" information in the 2000-2001 Statistics Canada reported that in the last decade the number of new titles released by Canada's publishers increased steadily, and during this same period, the total number of books in print increased steadily. The statistics suggested that the book industry was healthy. Canadian publishers were demonstrating great success, experiencing steady growth, their revenues were rising, and yet the number of profitable publishers continued dropping, at times by as much as 20%?

So what do we make of this? Why did publishing houses begin to fold? Why did national distributors go out of business? Why did the independent bookseller business almost collapse? Why did the government have to prop up publishing grants? After all, the book business seemed to be booming. While there is much to say about the impact of the global economy on literary publishing, and the rapid evolutions of the distribution and book selling environments, such discussions are better left for another time.

Suffice to say this: In order to understand Canadian literary publishing today, it is necessary to understand the immense economic forces at work that impede the cultural ones. You need to understand the impact of fewer independent booksellers and power of the big box stores in the selling of books. You need to understand what effect this shift in bookselling has on the book sales of Canadian-authored books, with Canadian content reaching Canadian readers. You need to understand how Canada came to be massively dominated by the book culture of the United States. You need to understand why no government departments may favour Canadian enterprise for any reason when making a profit is at stake. You need to recognize that five months after negotiation of the Free Trade Agreement, in February 1988, a massive cross-border survey indicated "90 percent of Canadians had an opinion about it, while only 39 percent of US people were even aware it had been negotiated".

SLA Conference

You need to question why Roch Carrier, in his role as the National Librarian of Canada, suggested there is a growing body of evidence “indicating that Canada’s 14,000 to 16,000 school libraries are being sacrificed on the alter of cost-cutting drives imposed by provincial governments and school boards,” (The Challenge of Change June 2002 Standing Committee on Canadian Heritage). Meanwhile Bush’s US\$26.5 billion education bill approved a US\$250 million for school library resources. Or understand why the Canadian national average book acquisition budget per student is about \$7 per year – where as US school libraries are now mandated to spend US\$20-28 per student.

So, you see, there are many important ideas to explore that could answer the question about the health of publishing. But one thing is clear these bits and scraps of information as much as they are about money, and cultural policy are about Books.

The Landscape of Libraries and Books

Here, today, an agreed upon topic is clearly the Book. And while the Book itself is seen to be in its own technological evolution, moving in its own metamorphosis, it is still the book with its paper, its cover, signatures, and folios. What we know about the book is this: it is as much about knowledge as it is about information. It is as much about survival as it is about entertainment. My concern as a publisher is relatively simple. Let me phrase it as a question and then provide some attempted answers. The question is this: Why can’t every Canadian-authored literary book be placed in the collections of the major libraries of every province and territory? To me it is a question of economics, and a question of delivery and logistics, but it is not nor should it be a question of philosophy. I’ll admit that it is a loaded question, for at its core rest much more profound questions. But those I leave for you to translate.

Some of the answer to this has become apparent in my discussions with rigorous librarians about books, collections, and the public good. In these discussions the Book is sometimes alluded to as a belonging to “the traditional catalogue” and that as a great gobbler of storage and care, it gets in the way of a library’s emerging responsibilities in the technological evolution. Whispered rumours of newly published books spilling out the basement windows the National Library are accompanied by spreadsheets that plot the recycling of paperbacks. No doubt, the book is definitely a pain in the posterior in any librarian’s approaches to constant challenge of “How do we budget for it all/ How do we fit it all” demands. And more than one librarian has gone to sleep dreaming of the e-book revolution.

So, although the public library generally is viewed today as a print-based institution and the book is honoured as its most significant holdings, the book itself is a big part of the problem when it comes to storage space, maintenance, and house cleaning. Is this then is the answer to my question?

SLA Conference

Part of the answer to my question also lies in slope of the political landscape. As a person who pays attention to libraries, I am aware that public spending on libraries has not kept pace at the federal and provincial levels in Canada. This shortsightedness is compounded by the public's desire to make libraries more relevant in the newer communication technologies. They want it all – yes, yes, grow the book collections, add the dvds, cds, keep the old videos, and don't dare give up on newspapers, magazines, or archives. Just do it all. Without more space or staff, libraries must creatively shoulder the public good. libraries then must make decisions, maybe some of them I'm not going to support or understand.

As a heavy-user household of library materials I am in awe of what is available at the Saskatoon Public Library. I regularly borrow dvds, cds, videos, as well as books – and I set it all from my home on computer. I not only reserve materials, I renew them, check on their due dates, and even order materials that I would like. And while I might not be able to do that everywhere in Canada, it is certainly becoming more commonplace than not. I know what this means to me as a citizen; I brag about it to my less fortunate friends. But what does this mean to me as a book publisher? Do I suspect that there is less money for book purchase? Do I suspect that there will be fewer books purchased for libraries? As I gather information about ThistleDown's books, I am made aware that fewer of our books are being placed in the main public libraries. This is in part, perhaps, explained by what is catalogued and how it is catalogued when using the internet to collect holding information, and it is in part, perhaps, the result of more and more books the market place. (There are more than 50,000 American publishers who have access to the libraries in this country.) But as we continue to monitor in which libraries ThistleDown books appear, it is becoming obvious that they are not a priority in the major Canadian library systems.

Some of the most recent Statistics Canada tell me in their round-about way, that Canadian libraries are purchasing more books, their collections are growing, and library use is on the increase. This should satisfy the answer to my publisher questions, should it? Add to this statistical information of the Canadian Library Association itself that estimates that “approximately 19 million Canadians -- about six out of every ten Canadians -- own a library card and borrow roughly 276 million items in a typical year. And, how can things be that bad for book publishers if the total expenditures of Canadian libraries are somewhere between \$2 billion and \$4 billion, of which about \$320 million was spent on collection development.” (The Challenge of Change June 2002 Standing Committee on Canadian Heritage)

The Publisher , The Writer and The Cost Factor

As a publisher it is up to us to find and publish writers we believe should be read by everyone, and expect that the smallest success would be that Canadians read them. Publishers are in the business of investing in writers and developing the “first copy”. Anyone in business knows this is the most expensive proposition, and it plays large in the economies of scale. As a publisher we are also in a partnership with the writer. We are expected to sell the licensed work, sell rights to the work, and expose the writer to as much audience as we can afford. It is when I read information like “Canadians borrow 276 million items per year from libraries” that I want to ensure that every writer we have published is as heavily exposed in the library system as we can manage. If libraries won't take the book, what chance is there?

SLA Conference

In the period before 1960 it might be argued that the writer and the publisher as original creator and supplier of the “information” were in control. The book had the highest status for libraries, because for the most part it was their *raison d'être*. Most Canadian-authored books could find a place in the main libraries of the country and often several additional copies were purchased for branch libraries, even if the writer was unknown or the subject matter was regional, the expectations was that Canadians everywhere should have access to these writers and books. So what happened?

While literary publishers continue to invest in the “first book”, produce a viable cultural product, conduct their business responsibly, there is rarely a national endorsement from Canadian libraries. It is to be noted that most regional libraries will carry regional writers, and that some regional libraries will carry some Canadian –authored books from outside their region, but aside from the national bestsellers there is no Canadian-authored book that is available in all major Canadian libraries. This makes me think something is amiss. Not only is this a lost opportunity for the publisher to make a sale, it is also an important placement for the writer whose PLR will grow by such placement. If government support for libraries is at least partly premised on the belief that Canadians must have access to Canadian voices and Canadian stories, then shouldn't every major library in Canada have all the Canadian-authored literary books? While there is obviously no budget for placing a copy of every single Canadian-authored book in all 21,000 libraries in Canada, what if the 100 largest libraries purchased all 12,000 Canadian-authored books” Calculating at an average cost of \$20.00 a book (which I'm sure they could secure from wholesalers much, much cheaper), this entire purchase would cost the library system 24 million dollars. Assuming that I have interpreted Statistics Canada correctly when they say on average Canada's largest libraries spent in the late 90's over 60 million a year on new materials, it seems reasonable to me that Canadian authored books published in a given year should be at least 36% of this library money. If this is too optimistic and libraries only purchase books that they suspect will have a high readership demand then think of even the smaller picture of literary presses like Thistledown and the others that produce collectively about 2000 books per year. This would only cost Canada's largest 100 libraries about \$400,000. How cheap can it get to do something that would mean a significant stability to literary publishers, would enhance the financial bottom line of the creators through the PLR. and do what Canadian libraries should do.

Ah well, I guess it did come down to money after all. But in the process of creating an idea that would make cultural sense is it such a strange one? In a province about to spend \$800,000 on fireworks, I might pitch that this money could feed ten writers for three years, purchase for 100 libraries, every Canadian-authored book from Canada's Literary presses for two years, or pay a publisher's staff salary for ten years. I think that money spent that way would create more BANG for the buck. But then I guess that is why I'm a publisher and not a pyrotechnical savant celebrating the Saskatchewan Centenary. Like Mr. Carrier has bluntly stated that libraries “do not have the tools in some areas to fulfill our mandate to preserve the published heritage of Canada”, I say we better wake up the cultural sensibilities of our public library policy-makers and funding agencies to ensure that Canadian literary books are readily available to all Canadians.

Case Study

Big Bottom

The class began with Sara kneeling beside Len's desk with a piece of paper in hand whining almost to the point of crying. I heard things like, "She doesn't know anything. She is so stupid. Can't you re-grade this and show it to her, pleeeeee Len ... pleeeeee Len?" Sara was snuggling up to Len, my co-op teacher, as best as she could and her lip protruded in a sexy pout. I had just returned a paper to Sara and feared that she was talking about me. Drowning in insecurity, I questioned my power, or lack of it, in this classroom. Was he going to change her mark and undermine my authority and maybe not even tell me? Was he going to chastise me for giving the low grade? At the same time, I was thinking about how coquettish it was for her to do this during my class and within my earshot! How was I going to maintain the respect of the students when this was going on? Out of respect for me, was Len going to ask her to sit down and continue the conversation later?

I attempted to resume teaching and soon after, Sara took her desk but seemed agitated. As I often did, I asked her what was wrong. The answer was more than I had bargained for. Sara erupted with a string of nasty insults about a female first-year teacher who had given her sixty five percent on a paper that "Len" concluded deserved eighty percent. She then made comments about the size of the new teacher's bottom and how this teacher was obviously on a power quest. Turning away, I tried to ignore what had been said; I was speechless. My eye darted to Len to see if he was going to stop this inappropriate behavior but he, too, was pretending it wasn't happening. Len and I never spoke of the incident.

Although I had not handled it the way that I had wanted, I thought that this would probably be the end of the sticky situation. I was wrong. I had become quite good friends with the new female teacher, Allison, and because we were of the same approximate age and shared a common belief in women's rights, we developed a peer relationship and an exchange of support between two inexperienced teachers. During one of our regular chats in her classroom, Allison asked about my co-op teacher and inquired what kind of guy he was. Quite fond of him and his fatherly approach to my internship, I responded with many positive compliments.

The chat then took a dark turn when Allison closed her classroom door so that we could not be overheard. Allison explained that a student had come to her and complained about Len's marking, his teaching and his interpretation of a book. This student had complimented Allison on her "fresh" teaching style and had asked her to look at an assignment that Len had marked so that Allison could re-mark it for her. My mouth dropped when I realized that we were talking about Sara. I didn't say anything about what


had happened in my class weeks before partly due to embarrassment at my poor handling of the situation and, partly because she did indeed have a large bottom. I urged her to go to Len and clear the air. As far as I know, she never did.

It is hard to say if I handled this situation properly. I don't know if there is a right and a wrong way to deal with a student insulting fellow teachers. Furthermore, I find it interesting that I felt a certain relief when I had discovered that Sara wasn't talking about me. Did this fact make Sara's remarks any more acceptable? Is teaching more of a popularity contest than I thought? Conversely, I couldn't help wonder how much this situation had to do with the construction of gender. When considering the situation from many perspectives, it becomes far more complicated than I originally imagined.


Do you have a response to this case study? Do you have a case study that you would like to share? If you would like to respond or get some response to a case of your own, please e-mail it to Inter*STELA (rcland@sasktel.net). Names must be changed and the teacher's name will not be given.

McDowell Foundation

You Can Help Improve Teaching and Learning



Piece by Piece



McDowell Foundation

The McDowell Foundation...

Was established in 1991 by the Saskatchewan Teachers' Federation.

Is an independent non-profit organization that raises money for teacher research.

Promotes the cause of public education through research to improve teaching and learning.

Is named after the late Dr. Stirling McDowell, former general secretary of both the Saskatchewan and the Canadian Teachers' Federations.

Has funded more than 100 research projects, awarding over \$500,000 in research grants.

Provides a variety of flexible gift options to individual and corporate donors.

"All through my career in public education, I've believed that teachers have the best and most practical solutions to improvement of the quality of instruction at the same time as they help their students improve their lives."

Dr. Stirling McDowell

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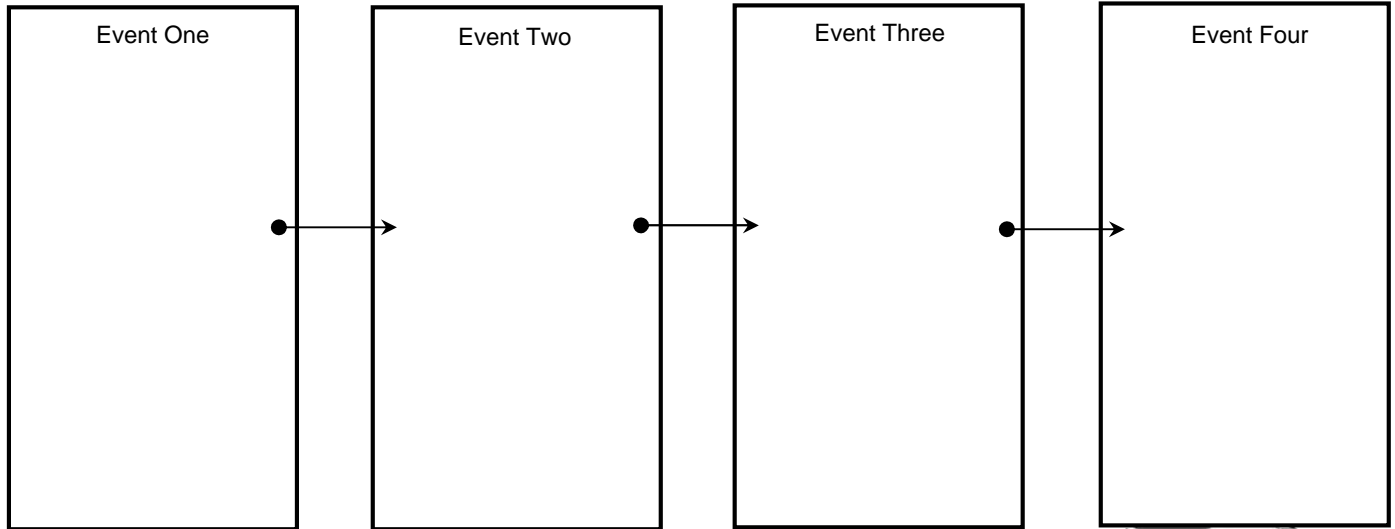
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Lesson Plan

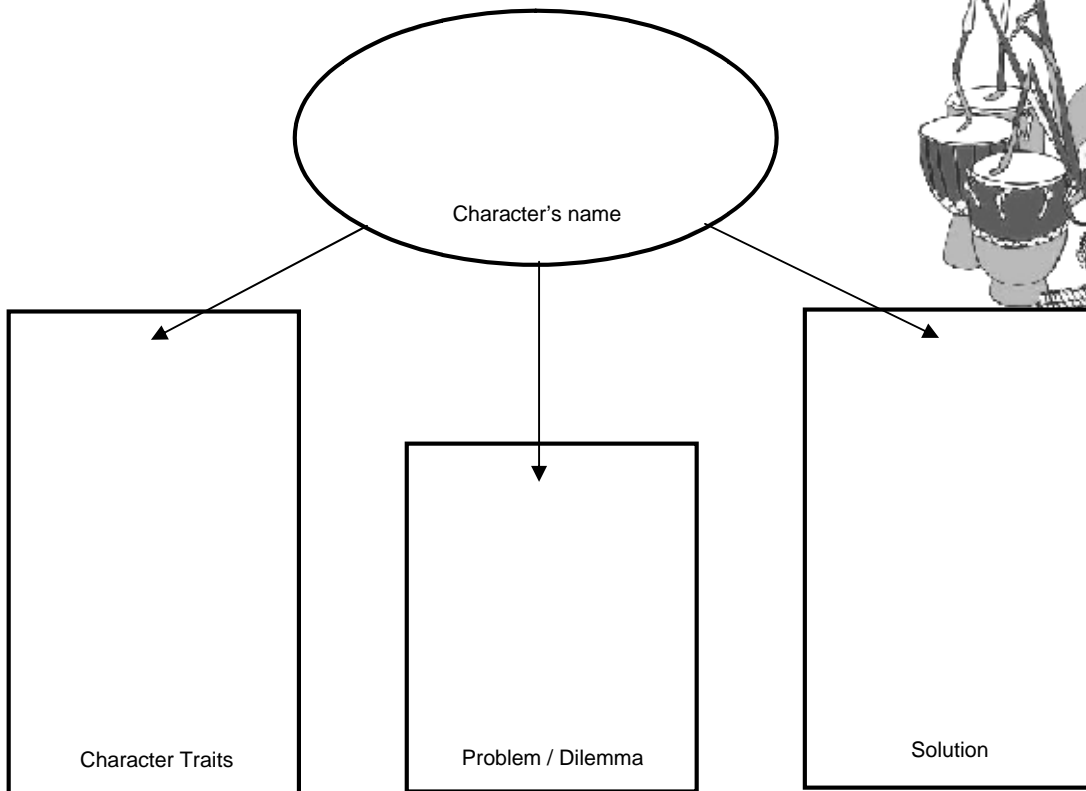
African Storytelling Assignment (Submitted by Jason Howse)

In much of Africa, **Anansi** (the spider) is believed to be the keeper of the stories. He is a very good storyteller, and you must learn his secrets. Use the graphic organizers below to help map out your story and its characters.

My story is: _____



Character / Crisis Description



Lesson Plan

African Oral Storytelling Rubric

Student's Name: _____

Title of story: _____

Level of Difficulty: 1 page or less 2-3 pages more than three pages

	Beginner	Apprentice	Practitioner	Master Storyteller
Story Elements	Student had difficulty remembering their story. As a result, listeners were confused by the progression or significance of the story.	Student gave a brief retelling of the story, but some key elements from the story were omitted.	Student appears to have selected 6 story elements, but became confused and/or told some elements out of sequence.	Student clearly selected 6 key elements to focus on, and retold them in sequence.
Spoken Language	Student's retelling is in plain language, few descriptors are used and no key phrases from the story are incorporated.	Student's retelling is in plain language, few descriptors are used, but one key phrase from the story has been incorporated.	Student's language has elements of effective storytelling, though some plain language is used. Student has incorporated one key phrase from the story.	Student employs a very "tell-tale" language during the retelling. (S)He is interesting and engaging, and incorporates some key phrases from the story.
Non-Verbal	Student makes no intentional physical gestures during the retelling. Storyteller's eyes were usually focused away from the listeners.	Student made some physical gestures, but these did not appear to compliment the story. Student made regular eye contact with listeners.	Student made some physical gestures that complimented the story, but struggled to maintain eye contact with the listeners.	Student made several physical gestures that complimented their storytelling. Student also maintained eye contact with listeners throughout.

Comments:



Debate

Debate in the Classroom

By Dennis Nesseth

There are invariably one or two students in every class who have great things to contribute, but don't seem to belong to a group where their contributions are valued. Often, the quiet girl who sits at the back of the third row in period six may have a thoughtful comment to make, but doesn't want to be labeled as "one of those kids who think too much." Debate can be a great activity that you can use to open an issue, to explore your students' creativity, to provide an environment for students to be accepted for their points of view. Debating can get students communicating orally as they internalize and personalize that which they are reading and studying.

The following is an outline, based on a presentation by Camille St. Amant, of the session that Lorelie DeRoose, Executive Director of SEDA (Saskatchewan Elocution and Debate Association) and I led at the last STELA Conference. There are some really fast and easy activities to do with your students. If you are interested in more, you need to check out the SEDA website: www.saskdebate.com. It's a great website: easy to use and lots of great printouts. Check out the site. Try some activities. Be it resolved that you'll love it!

DEBATE in the CLASSROOM

I. Why Debate?

II. Toolkit

III. Debate Lesson/Mini-Unit

IV. Using the Mini-Minute

V. Formal Debate

VI. Competitive Debate

VII. Resources

VIII. Suggested Theme-Related Debate Topics for ELA

Debate

DEBATE in the ELA CLASSROOM

I. Why debate?

- ✓ Develop critical and creative thinking
- ✓ Improve communication skills
- ✓ Build independent learning skills
- ✓ Hone personal and social skills (organization, public speaking, respect ...)
- ✓ Learn about a wide variety of topics
- ✓ Explore and develop themes in the ELA classroom – springboard activity
- ✓ Support ELA objectives of Speaking, Listening, Writing, Reading, Representing, and Viewing
- ✓ See “Eight Ways of Learning”

II. Toolkit

- ✓ Bell or whistle
- ✓ Envelope of pictures (homework assignment: have students bring pictures from magazines/newspapers)
- ✓ Clock/watch and time cards
- ✓ List of controversial topics – see theme related debate topics

III. Debate Lesson / Mini-Unit (30-60 minutes to teach the skills; application unlimited)

1. Focus your thoughts and words (5-10 minutes)

- ✓ Students in pairs
- ✓ Give them a list of 5 common nouns
- ✓ Students take turns speaking for one minute on one or more of the words. If a student pauses or uses fillers (um, like, you know), his/her turn is over.

2. Mini-Minute (5-10 minutes)

- ✓ Line students up in two rows, facing each other
- ✓ Students in one line are each given a magazine picture and one minute to study it
- ✓ When the clock starts (counting down from 1:30) the students with the pictures start describing it to their partner. They must speak for at least one minute but not more than 1½ minutes, again without pausing or fillers. (Their partners may judge this.)
- ✓ Optional: give the listening partners the chance to “counter” or “clash” with what they just heard, by speaking for 30-45 seconds about the same picture. (They might create an alternative interpretation or story about it.)
- ✓ Switch roles, allowing the second row to select, study, and speak about a picture
- ✓ Alternative: 1st speakers describe the picture, changing details. The listeners then have 30 seconds to look at the picture and the 30-45 seconds to identify all the changes.

Debate

3. Role play the reason to learn debate skills (2-5 minutes)

- ✓ Two students (volunteers chosen by you)
- ✓ One plays the parent, the other is the teenager.
- ✓ Setting: Teenager asks permission to go out with some friends for the evening. Parent replies “Yes, you may go, but don’t stay out too late.” Teenager arrives home at 3 a.m.
- ✓ Role-play: the conversation at 3:01 a.m. (The point is that nobody defined “late”.)
- ✓ Discuss as a class.

4. Freedom vs. Rules (5-10 minutes)

- ✓ Using board/overhead/poster show students a continuum with “Freedom” on one end and “Order” on the other, with 1-10 in between.
- ✓ Assign various parts of the room to correspond with 1-3, 4-7, and 8-10.
- ✓ Have students move to the part of the room that corresponds with their opinion on each of the following topics (looking at one topic at a time). Should curfew/car privileges/lessons/video games/tattoos/MSN ... be governed by strict rules or not governed at all?
- ✓ Once they have all moved, have 2-3 students from each area tell why (in 30 seconds or less) they chose that part of the continuum. They should be trying to convince others to join them by persuasive speech.

5. Debate mechanics and terminology (5-10 minutes)

- ✓ Resolution = the topic for debate (Be it resolved that students should wear uniforms at school.)
- ✓ Define the terms = limit the topic (students = Saskatchewan citizens ages 9 to 15; wear = clothe themselves; uniforms = identical clothing ...)
- ✓ Affirmative team = those in favour of this resolution
- ✓ Negative team = those opposed to this resolution
- ✓ Needs for change = reasons why this resolution is true and/or necessary
- ✓ Support the status quo = reasons why this resolution is false and or unnecessary
- ✓ Outline the plan = give details to put the resolution into effect (uniforms will be pink blazers and green shorts, must be worn in the school at all times, effective September, 2005...)
- ✓ Clash = point out errors, reasons why the other team is wrong
- ✓ Question Period / Cross-Examination = this is the only time debaters DIRECTLY address one another, asking questions which the other team/debater must answer.
- ✓ Rebuttal = concluding speeches; the wrap-up at the end of a debate; debaters remind the judges/audience of their good points and all the “clashes” they made with their opponents’ ideas
- ✓ Moderator = the person who introduces the resolution and the speakers, reminds them of the proper order to speak, keeps track of speakers’ turns during discussion period
- ✓ Judges = the people who listen, make notes, and decide who won the debate, based on which team presented better facts/evidence/arguments. These are the people to whom the debaters should be speaking.
- ✓ Timekeeper = watches the clock, showing time cards to indicate how much time remains in each speech.

Debate

6. Mini-debate (5-10 minutes)

- ✓ Divide class into four teams and assign 1 (or 2) resolutions. (Brainstorm possible topics/resolutions?)
- ✓ Give them 5 minutes to come up with definitions, needs for change, and support for the status quo. (They must be prepared to argue both the affirmative AND negative sides of the resolution. This teaches them, hopefully, to look beyond their own opinion/knowledge.)
- ✓ Draw numbers to choose affirmative/negative/judges...
- ✓ Allow debaters 30 seconds each, alternating from affirmative to negative. (It is better to give them LESS time for their first debate, so that they WANT to say more, rather than becoming disheartened by using only 30 seconds out of the allotted 4 minutes.) Remind them that each must first “clash” with something the other team said, before making their own, new, point.
- ✓ After each student has spoken ONCE, give them a two-minute discussion period (3 minutes if the teams are quite large). Remind them that at this point they must ASK QUESTIONS, not make speeches. Alternate from side to side.
- ✓ Allow 1-2 minutes to prepare the final rebuttals; only one student from each team will speak, starting with the NEGATIVE. The affirmative team always gets the last word, as their job is more difficult: they have to convince the judges that the resolution is true/necessary.
- ✓ OPTIONAL: have the “judges” (the two teams who were the audience) vote in a secret ballot to decide which team won.
- ✓ Switch roles, allowing the judges to present their debate.

IV. Using the Mini-Minute Format

- ✓ Have students bring news articles instead of pictures. (You will have to specify that the articles must involve some sort of controversy or issue with two sides.)
- ✓ The student must speak 1 - 1½ minutes, starting with a summary (5 Ws), and then presenting the two sides of the issue involved, followed by their opinion.
- ✓ Optionally assign another student to be the active listener who must get up and “clash” with the presenter for 30-45 seconds.
- ✓ This could be a Friday activity, or a class opening/closing activity. It could also be tied in the Language Arts (persuasive writing, paragraph organization, opening/closing sentences...)

V. Formal Debate

- ✓ The SEDA “Guide to Debate: includes a moderator’s script, a judge’s flow sheet and score sheet, a draw sheet, and more complete explanations of the various debate terms and strategies.
- ✓ Choose topic(s) and assign teams. (Either the whole class can do one topic and resolution, or choose a topic for each set of four/six students. Teams can be two or three students, because in the “formal” debate there are generally two “constructive” speeches as well as one “rebuttal” per team. The drawback of having a three-person team is that the person doing the rebuttal really can’t prepare much until during the actual debate.)
- ✓ Research (library, internet, SEDA’s prepared packages, student polls...)
- ✓ Make a “draw sheet” and arrange to use 2-4 rooms (classrooms / boot rooms/ library). YOU, the teacher, do not have to hear every team debate. While two teams debate, two other teams will act as judges (3-4) and, optionally, a moderator/timekeeper (1 student can do this). Because the judges have to fill in a flowchart to follow the debate, you can evaluate them on this.
- ✓ After 1 round of debate, the debaters become judges (and moderator), while the other teams get the chance to debate.

Debate

VI. Competitive Debate

The Saskatchewan Elocution and Debate Association organizes the provincial competitive debate schedule. There are four regions; generally four tournaments per year, and students can qualify to move on to the provincial competition, to nationals, and even to world events. School-based clubs volunteer to host the various tournaments, with the help of SEDA. An average tournament would involve 20-40 teams, with 40-50 volunteer judges, and 15-30 student volunteer timekeepers and moderators.

VII. Resources

Saskatchewan Elocution and Debate (SEDA) has a resource library, research packages on diverse subjects, and a widespread community of debate coaches willing to help set up clubs/answer questions, etc. SEDA can be contacted by phone 306-780-6083, or by email at info@saskdebate.com.

Based on a presentation prepared by Camille St. Amant.

FREEDOM vs. RULES

	Freedom					Rules				
Curfew	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10
Car Privileges	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10
Lessons/activities	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10
Access to "violent" video games	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10
Choose to get a tattoo	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10
Supervision of MSN usage	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10

1. With regard to each parent/child issue, indicate whether the parent(s) should accord the child total freedom (lack of rules) or impose strict rules on the child.
2. Move to the area of the room that corresponds to the number you indicated.
3. Each group will take turns speaking to convince others to join them. You may speak only 15-30 seconds.

Debate

Debate-Related Activities

a) Clash Builders

1. Devil's Advocate

Purpose: To provide opportunity to speak in a direct clash environment.

Size: This can be played by a group of 4 people up to an entire class. The advocate takes one side, and everyone else in the group takes the other.

Structure: A moderator controls who has the right to speak and when. The moderator alternates between the big group and the advocate. The advocate can be a teacher or a student who likes to argue.

Topic: The topics vary. It might be a student issue like gum in the classroom, or a controversial issue like capital punishment. Using a debatable issue within a unit theme is the most common choice.

2. Two Person Clash

Purpose: To give each student practice with directly opposing another's argument in a non-threatening environment. To practise listening and note taking skills.

Size: Played by the entire class simultaneously, in groups of two.

Structure: The students break into pairs. One person rises and states a series of opinions for up to 2 minutes. The other one makes a flow sheet (see attached). When person number one sits down, the second person stands and directly attacks all the arguments of the first speaker for up to two minutes. While this happens, the first speaker completes a flow sheet. Then the first speaker stands again, and directly argues for one minute. The class will need about 5 minutes preparation time to think of arguments and decide a topic. Since all the pairs do the activity at the same time, students are less self-conscious.

Topic: The topics vary. Students may choose topics themselves by searching for something they disagree about. Alternatively the teacher may provide topics and students select sides.

b) Consensus Builders

1. Talking Circle

Purpose: To provide each student the opportunity to speak uninterrupted. To provide an opportunity for students to share ideas.

Size: The entire class.

Structure: Students sit in a circle so that everyone can see each other. An object is used to select who will speak. It is passed around the group in a continuous direction. When students have the object they choose if they would like to speak. The object is generally passed at least twice.

Topic: The topics are selected by the teacher and are generally either emotional in nature or a difficult issue the group must work through.

Debate

2. Consensus Crunch

Purpose: To allow students to structure their own speaking. To build teamwork skills. To teach the ability to compromise.

Size: Various

Structure: The teacher selects a topic designed to be divisive. The class is given a set time limit in which everyone must agree to a common opinion (agreeing to disagree does not count). The students structure how they will formulate their discussion and work to build the common opinion. The teacher observes, interfering as little as possible.

Topic: The topics are selected by the teacher and are designed to be difficult to reach consensus on.

c) Persuasive Speaking

1. Historical Monologue

Purpose: To apply research skills. To assume a role. To speak persuasively.

Size: Individual

Structure: Students are assigned a key historical, literary, or public figure. Each student researches the figure and chooses a key accomplishment to highlight. A monologue of 3-5 minutes is written and performed for the class.

Topic: The people are selected by the teacher and might include characters, authors, etc.

Suggested Theme-Related Debate Topics for Grades 10 to 12 English Language Arts

Grade 10: drivers license age, probationary license, Kyoto, global warming, smoking in public places, clear cut logging, hunting, testing on animals, equality, affirmative action, euthanasia, heroism – a hero can break the rules, character trial: guilty or not guilty, women's rights, labour unions

Grade 11: nature vs. nurture, childhood experiences shape the adults we become, personality is determined by age 4, curfews, car privileges, required lessons/activities, effect of violent media on children, tattoos, body piercing, Marilyn Manson, MSN, junk food in schools

Grade 12: commercialism is harmless, poverty, effects of technology (e.g. Internet has been positive for education, third world countries, etc.), Hamlet was insane, The Canadian West (Maritimes, North, etc.) is disadvantaged, treated unfairly, etc., same sex marriage, gun registration, Canadian literature is unique, Canadian literature is unappreciated by Canadians, rural women are marginalized

Teacher Writers

Lest we forget.

Forget what?

That humans are vicious puppeteers
who send boys into bullets.

That sometime somewhere
there will be
someone
who needs a soldier to fight for them.

I will remember, like a bullet in my heart.

What do you want to hear?

That I stayed in that trench
a cold reaching further into my soul
than into my bones.

That I moved through a pooling ink
onto that beach
stepping over friends who stumbled and died.

That even if I had come home to you
the memories scarring my mind
would hold me far from your reach.

The headstone reads
'Sunshine fades, shadows fall,
But sweet remembrance outlasts all'
Outlasts what?
A life.

You might remember if you knew.
This morning and tomorrow, I am dead.
I am lost
among a list of names,
ideas for men who disappeared into time.

What else is there to remember?

Only that somebody died once,
somebody who fought for
something.

Lest we forget.

By Holly Doidge

Edge

We were twelve
standing on the edge
of the storm black slough.
In my friend's hands,
a rifle.
A steel grey sky
rained cold.

Rifle erupted.

The duck pulled a string of bullets
like splashing pearls.

I stood
watching him kill
with certainty and malice
and wished I could be
so cruel.

By Dennis Nesseth

CCTELA

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(Include photocopy proof of status) \$25.00

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Email: cctela@mts.net Fax: 1-204-253-2562 Telephone: 1-204-255-1676

Holocaust

A Treasure Trove

Imagine a teacher who wants to incorporate *The Diary of Anne Frank*, *Elie Wiesel's Night*, *Eve Bunting's Terrible Things* or other Holocaust-related literature into the classroom. S/he has not taught it before and feels overwhelmed by the subject and the perceived difficulty of teaching it. Typical of many s/he worries about it being too grim, worries that an event perceived as a Jewish experience may be somehow inappropriate for a public school setting. The teacher finds little material on the Holocaust in available textbooks even though the Holocaust is referenced in state standards, and s/he has no idea how to find classroom resources in a cost-sensitive environment.

Holocaust Museum Houston has a comprehensive answer for all these issues. Since 1998, it has offered Holocaust Curriculum Trunks. These 20x31x19 inch or 6.8 cubic foot trunks are full of books, posters, CD's, DVD's and other material for use in the classroom. Some of the items come in class sets of 25 or 30, others in sets of 5 or single copies. Broad reference items and teacher resources supplement the student resources.

There are five different types of trunks, one for elementary grades, one for middle school and three at the high school level including one for social studies, one for language arts and one for advanced placement language arts. For the teacher who would like a head start in lessons plans, each trunk comes with a curriculum rich with lesson plan ideas. Whether the Holocaust module is to last a couple of days or a couple of weeks or even longer, the curriculum trunk provides all the resources necessary dealing with the Jewish genocide and the other victims of the Holocaust. The trunk provides class sets of some of books, an easy and quick way to access additional literature resources. Critical thinking and writing skills are honed by studying Holocaust perpetrators, rescuers and bystanders and the issues of individual responsibility and moral courage that bedevil every student of this watershed time in human history.

Perhaps most important of all, there is no charge for use of the trunks. Holocaust Museum Houston loans its 100 plus trunks for periods of three to five weeks. There is no fee for the loan, and the Museum pays the cost to ship the trunk anywhere in North America for delivery to the school and pickup from the school. The Museum asks only that the school issue a letter committing to fund the replacement of any of the trunk contents that are lost during the loan. There is never a charge for wear and tear.

Contents of the trunks can be found at the Museum's website, www.hmh.org where reservations can also be initiated. Click on the Education button to get to the curriculum trunk material. Should you have questions not answered online, contact trunks@hmh.org or call Colleen LaBorde at 713 942-8000, extension118. The Museum will also provide onsite teacher training workshops upon request. This curriculum trunk program is the largest of its kind in the world, and the Museum diligently seeks underwriting support to keep the program free to the classroom teacher and school. Take advantage of it.

Book Review

A Review of Walter Feinberg's On Higher Ground: Education and the Case for Affirmative Action

Reviewed by Cheryl McDowell

In Walter Feinberg's book, On Higher Ground: Education and the Case for Affirmative Action (1998), he discusses in great detail how other theories of Affirmative Action can or cannot work and the reasoning behind it. His book provides many real-to-life examples and cases when Affirmative Action has failed and succeeded and gives his reasoning why. Unfortunately, for Canadian readers, Feinberg's examples and data come from the United States, leaving us only to imagine the effects of Affirmative Action on Canadians. The book is a short read, but dense in the sense that there is a lot of content, definitions, and information to reflect on.

Affirmative Action is something that we may have heard about before, but do we really understand what it means, or understand how to apply it to our classrooms?

"Affirmative Action is a set of laws, policies, guidelines, and administrative practices that is intended to end discrimination that violates the inherent equality of persons by discriminating against individuals on the grounds 'that they are inferior or different' (Rosenfeld, 1991). Usually affirmative action policy aims to (1) reduce present discrimination with (2) the intent of increasing the number of targeted minorities and women in universities and colleges and at all levels of the work force" (Feinberg, 4).

In other words, Affirmative Action works to make educational and occupational opportunities attainable and successful for everyone, no matter the race, gender, or background they may come from.

Affirmative Action affects us as educators and greatly affects our students because they are the future recipients of the benefits of Affirmative Action. As teachers, we need to provide awareness of what Affirmative Action is doing for our students' futures so that we can be a gateway to success for everyone in the classroom. It is our duty as educators to make sure that stereotypes and misnomers about Affirmative Action are addressed and that students have a clear vision of what it really is. Society can paint a bleak picture of what they think Affirmative Action is by using stereotypical assumptions that hinder students' ways of thinking.

Whatever we choose to do as educators to help advocate Affirmative Action, we need to remember that "[t]he idea that education should help all students achieve their potential is an educational imperative" (Feinberg, 43) and it is our duty to provide many educational and occupational opportunities for every student.

Book Review

A Review of Michael W. Smith and Jeffrey D. Wilhelm's Reading Don't Fix No Chevys: Literacy in the Lives of Young Men

Reviewed By Stacey Wolfe

Michael W. Smith and Jeffrey D. Wilhelm's Reading Don't Fix No Chevys is the product of an in-depth investigation of the literacy practices, both in and out of school, of approximately fifty young men from a variety of backgrounds and achievement levels. Smith and Wilhelm's purpose is to better understand the issue of boys and literacy and to find some practical solutions for classroom teachers.

Smith and Wilhelm begin the book with some necessary background and theoretical information, including a brief summary of past research and the biological and socialization theories used to explain issues surrounding boys and literacy. They also look at the power of critical theory to "provide lenses for examining and critiquing the status quo and for providing alternative visions of social worlds such as schools and classrooms" (Smith and Wilhelm, 13), allowing readers to understand their theoretical position.

In chapter two, Smith and Wilhelm begin explaining the findings of their research. They examine the activities the boys engage in and their reasons for participating and find these reasons align with Csikszentmihalyi's concept of flow and the boys' need for relationships and social interactions. The authors use these requirements for engagement to explain their findings in the remainder of their book. For example, in chapter three, they suggest boys sometimes choose not engage in school even though they believe it is valuable because school lacks many of the requirements of engagement, and in chapter four, they demonstrate how the variety of literacy activities the boys participate in outside of school do contain the elements required for engagement unlike much of the material they are asked to read in school. In chapter five, Smith and Wilhelm focus on the types of texts boys enjoy and conclude there are no stereotypical "boys books" because there is too much diversity among boys. However, they do find some factors which help sustain boys' engagement with texts, all of which are related to the concept of flow and the need for social interactions.

Book Review

In the final chapter, Smith and Wilhelm examine the implications of their research for classroom teachers and encourage teachers to challenge the fundamental questions of teaching: why, what, and how. They also question the current definition of literacy saying, “Our work has caused us to wonder how we, both personally and as a profession, have taken school definitions of what counts as literacy so much for granted when this definition excludes so much of what passes for literate activity in the world” (Smith and Wilhelm, 186). They suggest an inquiry based approach to literacy which allows teachers to include all the aspects of flow, a social dimension, and a variety of texts including both traditional literature and non-traditional texts. Smith and Wilhelm conclude by revisiting the concept of habitus, “the entrenched and unexamined commonsense way of doing things that is accepted as natural and that constrains both thought and action” (203), and by challenging teachers to change despite the habitus which exists in education.

Throughout the book, Smith and Wilhelm include lengthy quotations from the boys and portraits of them to help readers perceive the boys as diverse individuals, just as they did, thereby, preventing hasty generalizations. However, the book is not based exclusively on anecdotal evidence. The authors also include a variety of theories to explain their findings such as Csikszentmihalyi’s concept of flow and Vygotsky’s Zone of Proximal Development. While the book is a thoughtful examination of the literacy of boys, the authors suggest that the research should also apply to girls, which is a logical conclusion considering most of the theories they use to explain their research apply to both genders. However, if their research does apply to girls as well, readers are still left with the question of what causes the original differences between boys’ and girls’ literacy habits. Regardless of this shortcoming, the questions raised and the proposed solutions provide all teachers with many things to think about. Being able to see why the boys are engaged with the things they are and how many of these reasons are absent in our classrooms causes one to question how to make our classes more engaging to help all students learn better.

Submissions



Inter ★STELA Needs You

NEW! FREE BOOK FOR SUBMISSIONS!

- ✍ We need submissions and feedback in order to sustain and improve this newsletter. We accept submissions for any of the columns included in this or previous newsletters.
- ✍ In addition we are especially interested in the following:
 - ★ creative writing (fiction and poetry) by teachers
 - ★ non-fiction, especially by Saskatchewan teachers abroad
 - ★ letters to the editor or notes from the field
- ✍ If you are interested, or if you have questions or concerns, please send an e-mail to Ryan Land (rcland@sasktel.net).
- ✍ Submissions should be sent as a Word attachment or within the body of the e-mail.
- ✍ You must be a member of STELA in order to submit.
- ✍ NEW! While there is no payment for publication, we are now pleased to offer a free book to members who make contributions to the newsletter. Each contributor will receive a complimentary Thistle-down Press book by a Saskatchewan author.