English Practice

Teaching for Joy and Justice:

Re-imagining English Language Arts

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English Practice provides you with the opportunity to write and be read. Your viewpoints, lessons, opinions, research (formal or informal) are welcomed in formats ranging from strategies, lesson plans and units, to more formal compositions and narratives exploring big ideas in teaching and learning, to creative writing. We have four sections with the following guidelines to assist you in preparing and submitting your writing:
-Teaching Ideas
-Invesitgating Our Practice
-Salon
-Check This Out

Submissions can be emailed to:
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Editorial

Welcome to our Summer 2013 edition of English Practice, Teaching for Joy & Justice: Re-imagining English Language Arts. Here you will find articles inspired by BCTELA's 2012 conference and its theme. Topics range from deepening students' conversations about books, to the power and possibilities of graphic novels, to the questioning of rubrics as a form of assessment (have you ever wished you had a rubric for your dog? Hmm…). You will also find a book review about digital tools in the English Language Arts classroom, and an article that inquires deeply into the use of technology within learning communities as re-imagined through the Occupy Movement. Then there is the poetry – poetry that draws us joyfully through language into a re-imagining of how we live in the world, how we love the world, and how we hold our deepest beliefs about what society could be.

Here at BCTELA we have been doing some re-imagining, too. We have been exploring the questions: What might English Practice be? How might we continue to re-imagine its purpose and build on its strengths? This issue represents an important step in its ongoing evolution. We have shifted to a peer-reviewed model and this issue is our first peer-reviewed issue. In this way, we continue to invite and nurture diverse and powerful voices of practitioners and scholars of English Language Arts in BC and beyond, so as to best share our valuable perspectives with the world.

Join us! As an open-access, online journal that is making the shift to peer-review, we are growing a vibrant editorial circle to support your journal to be as a thoughtful and relevant as it can be! Would you like to be part of this editorial community and contribute meaningfully to this conversation? Drop the editor a line and let her know. Members of the editorial circle can still contribute articles for review, and they receive support and guidance in their review work.

Finally, we have two upcoming issues that need your contributions. Our next themed issue, Starting a Circle: Exploring Indigenous Education, is now accepting manuscripts for review. With this issue we are extremely happy to be welcoming co-editor, Rob Genaille on board. And, if you are presenting at BCTELA's 2013 conference, Multiple Pathways; Diverse Texts, we strongly encourage you to submit an piece based on your conference paper or a related topic that reflects the conference theme. Please see the call for articles in the "Check this Out" section of the journal for details about how to submit your work!

Thank you for being with us. It wouldn't be the same without you,

Pamela Richardson
Editor, English Practice

Pamela Richardson

Pamela Richardson is on faculty at UBC (Okanagan campus). Her main areas of teaching and research focus on exceptional learning and inclusion, and literary and arts-based ways of knowing. She has a special interest in advanced and creative learning and how to make sense of it in inclusive terms.

Writing Poetry

Salon

Before Eve left the garden, she tugged Adam's sleeve and said,
One more, one more. You would think it was the pomegranate
branch she wanted, the round, drab bush dribbling myth
above a tedious brook or to retrieve a copy of The Temptation of Baghdad,
the novel she kept hidden in the rattler's den. Perhaps the absurd
peacock's ritual or chameleon. The elm or the oak. The cedars of
Lebanon. Ulysses? The buttock of the master on his side. You would
think to leave sword fern or limpet or humpback or rose would be the
definition of loss. England. Oh, England. Sweat of afternoon on alpaca
palm. The Nepalese. The world before and after. You would bet on
the ease of knowing God. Ontological prayer. Yes. Idleness. Check.
No ubiquitous errand. All darkness visible. Proust? Eve tugged on
Adam's sleeve, the fabric new to her, coarse like a broadleaf maple
tucked behind a barrel, a hard/soft gown Plato would wear to the
baths. One? One, she said.

Susan Stenson

Susan Stenson teaches English and creative writing at Claremont Secondary in the Saanich school district. In 2011 she received a Prime Minister's Award for Teaching Excellence. She has published three books of poetry and her work is widely anthologized, most recently in Desperately Seeking Susans (2012) and in Force Field 77 Women Poets of BC (2013).

On Leaving

Salon

Catholics believe life begins at conception. Atheists believe that life begins at birth. Jews believe that life begins when the children leave home and the dog dies.

You can see it in the swarm of bees, that early October morning,
the day she was leaving home—how they circled to the light of the steamy ritual—
shower, suitcase, list—how the daughter screamed and the mother in the natural dark came running to the sound—slim to the towel wrapped around the girl—the embryo-l
onging. Under the hotter air they circled, not bees, they realized, wasps, wasps churning to the summons, not dawn, but light bulb, not queen, but daughter, the smell of her leaving the slow acrobatic fumbling of growing up, those sad days she thought about love or younger, running the hills in her legs and before that, the pleasure of learning a spoon, soup or tea, cheese, breast. Daughter and bees. Wasps. Today, she leaves again in the memory of that first farewell, not all the bags packed, not all the books, this time, she is clear to leave a trail. Those wasps certain they'd been called by the sun fell one by one to the floor. By late afternoon, the poison complete, the father swept the partial husks into the trash.

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News, December

Salon

It may not mean anything to you
but this afternoon I stared at the fuscia
on an ordinary Sagittarian Saturday
but it had been a rainy one and wind
kept me thinking about it instead of
writing this poem and then I threw
the blanket off and got up and yes
stood by the long French door and
peered into the sound, a green December.
Inside the bush four or five grey fists
turned into birds small enough to fit
inside a hand. The leaves bobbing quick
up and quick down. I didn't think I'd put
the birds into the poem, kept writing
about the Goldstream panners, salmon
stocks, awkward tourists in the rain,
apocalypse, and it may not mean anything
to you but I can't stop thinking about bushtits.
I know. It's bad. No one in Toronto will
want to read about birds but I can't resist,
hold on to a few more lines while you
might say birds in a blossom mean nothing
and yesterday I would have agreed but today,
bushtits, mother in her grey dress, winter,
must bury her before the first frost comes.

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Disabled. It's just a word.

Salon

Diagnosing Incompetence

Sorting Abilities into Broken Labels

Everyone Dishonoured

Diminished Imagination

Some Arbitrary Boy Led into an Engrained Disadvantage

Disregarding Individual Strength

Altering Behaviour, Lacking an Entitled Direction

Distance. Isolate. Segregate

Allowing Broken Language an Entity Divine

Describes Inequality

Stereotypes And Boundaries

Leaving Empty Dreams. Discrimination Ignored

Surfacing Assumptions By Labeling Everyone Deficient

Disabled Is Sam.

Always Bouncing yet Lacking in Educational Development

Determined to Integrate Socially, still Allowing Blatant Laughter to Erode his Demeanor

Drowning In Silence, Attacked By ignorant Lessons Etched Deplorable

Driven. Intelligent. Sheltered.

Actively Breeding Learning Emancipated from Discourse

This poem was created by Natalie Vardabasso in collaboration Connie Chapman, Spencer Brown, Jayna Bailey, Naemi Fletcher, Gale Edison, Dana Schepp & Justin Gerbrandt when they were STEP teacher candidates at UBCO in 2011-2012.

Preferring Revolution

Salon

I can't watch the news
listen to the radio

read so many online updates,
without losing myself in the morass:

it's just more genocide
and politician's lies about

what I never agreed could be done
in my name.

And now it's election time
and they want to persuade me

the outright lies of one are worse
than the secrets the other never tells.

My friend who writes novels tells me,
Never watch Democracy Now.

It's too depressing and you'll never
write a thing. How can our small words

ever begin to approach
the weight of that boulder?

I know she's right, that my pen dries up
while my mind, my heart

try to make sense
of what's incomprehensible.

I want to chop wood again,
carry water, be grateful

Maya Tracy E. Borhani

Maya returns to the academy after raising two daughters on an island in the Salish Sea. There, she initiated a Poets-in-the-Schools program. She loves to chop wood and carry water (before, or after, writing poems).

Can Grade Four and Five Students Have Deep Conversations About Books?

Investigating Our Practice

The experiences with my students for more than a decade have led me to believe that grade four and five students are able to have interesting conversations about books that they read. But, explicit lessons and guidance on how to form powerful discussion questions, as well as how to make deeper connections, can really enhance those conversations. Harste and Short (1996) state, "The depth of discussion in Literature Circles depends on a rich history of stories to which children can make connections" (p.199). I feel the power of using literature circles is much stronger when students can also be cognisant of their wonders as they are reading and have time to discuss them. So, I now begin by using a guided reading where I model my thinking and guide my students to developing their own abilities to connect, question, and back up their opinions.

Explicit Discussion of Types of Questions

I try to indicate beside the questions I create for my novel studies, what type of question they are: on, between, or beyond the lines questions [Almassi and Gambrell (1996) refer to Krieger as their source for this referencing of types of questions, p.143; see example *A Strange Came Ashore* by Mollie Hunter--Figure 1]. I have also made a 'questioning circle' modeled after Patricia Kelly and Leila Christenbury (cited in Wilhelm, 2007) to show types of questions related to connecting to self, other books, or to the world (see example: *A Strange Came Ashore* by Mollie Hunter - Figure 2). As I use these questions with the novel, we talk about the difference in the depth of the answers based on their types. 'Between the Lines' questions often lead to thinking about the author's intent and I push for evidence of what made them think this. 'Beyond the Lines' questions often allow for us to collectively find multiple answers. With a better understanding of the types of questions that help create discussions, my students then have become better at forming their own deeper questions.

One example of a 'beyond the lines' question I use, is based on a part in our guided novel that involves secrets. I allow my students some processing time by asking them to write on strips of paper their opinions on when, or if, it is okay to break a promise to keep something secret (Wilhelm, 2007). I have found that the discussions that follow, when we share our ideas, are enriched in that the students seem to be able to see all the different perspectives (trust, safety, intent) that were in our class. The writing and sharing of their ideas later lead to a deeper understanding of the predicament that our main character was conflicted about.

With a better understanding of the types of questions that help create discussions, my students then have become better at forming their own deeper questions.

Michael Nielsen

Mike is the Head Teacher at Chaffey-Burke Elementary School in Burnaby, BC where he teaches grade 4/5. Mike continues to search for ways to engage students and empower their voice in the learning in his classroom.

A Stranger Came Ashore, by Mollie Hunter (Figure 1- Michael Nielsen, 2010)
For each chapter describe one connection you made to the story or write one question you were wondering as we read the chapter.

Chapter 1 "The Stranger"
1) What does Finn Learson do when he is asked if he is Norwegian? (On)
2) How does Finn explain the fact that he is the only survivor from his ship? (On)
3) What bothered Robbie about Finn Learson? (Between)
4) What do you do when a stranger comes to the door? How do you feel? (Connection)

Chapter 2 "Fiddle Music"

1) Did Finn Learson have to answer many questions? Why? (Between)
2) Describe fully a Shetland bed. (On)
3) What strange things happened after everyone went to bed? (On)
4) Do things seem different at night? (Beyond)

Chapter 3 "Gold"

1) How does the author tell us that there is something wrong with Finn's story? (Between)
2) How do you think Finn got the gold coin? (Beyond)
3) Why do you think Finn wants to stay? (Between)

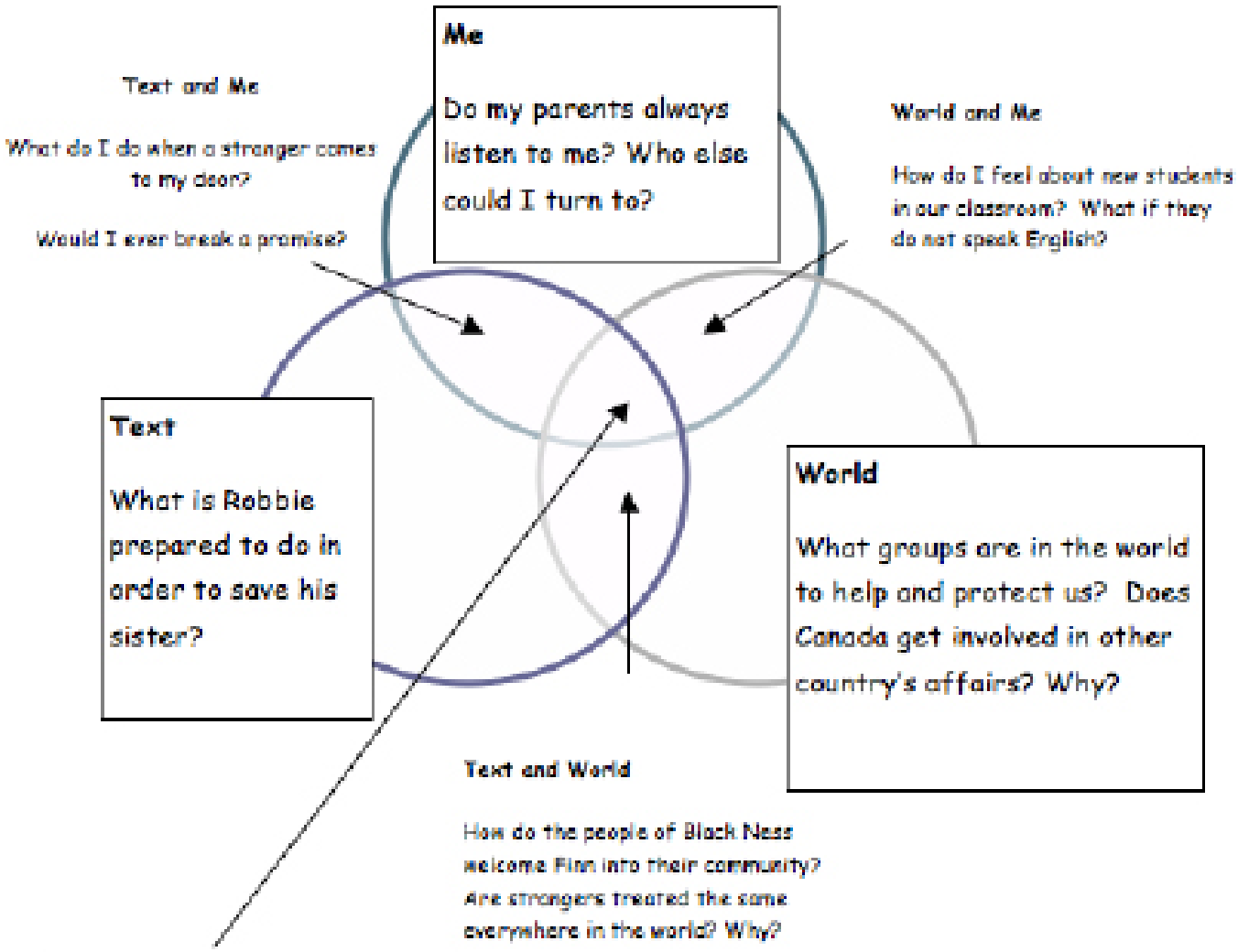
Chapter 4 "...and Dancing and Gold"
1) What talent did Finn display that gained him the admiration of the island people? (On)
2) What other characters have you read about that are mysterious? (connection - other stories)
3) Are new people welcomed the same around the world? (Beyond) (connection - world)
4) How do you feel about new students? What if they cannot speak English? (connection - self)

A Stranger Came Ashore, by Mollie Hunter (Figure 1- Michael Nielsen, 2010)

For each chapter describe one connection you made to the story or write one question you were wondering as we read the chapter.

Questioning Circle: A Stranger Came Ashore,

By Mollie Hunter (Figure 2, Michael Nielsen, 2010)



Checking for Independent Ability to Form Between and Beyond the Lines Questions

After guiding my students through a novel in the first term, I then use *The Invention of Hugo Cabret* by Brian Selznick as a read-aloud to focus on inferring. It is a 500 page book that has half of its pages consisting of full page illustrations that lend to inferring what is happening in the story. The first 24 of 28 pages are pictures, which is a great start for them to try and infer what the storyline is going to be about. I use this book as a way to check if the students are able to independently create their own between the lines questions. Selznick creates a novel that has pictures that flow like the images of a movie, so I have found that the students can easily connect to how an author tries to make them think about things without explicitly writing them, to a director getting his audience to understand things without the actors actually saying the words. I also ask them to form a beyond the lines question that their classmates could answer (they can refer to their examples shown in figure 1 and 2). Feedback is given by their peers and me. Most show independence after a couple of these feedback conferences.

One Quick Whole Class Literature Circle Modeled

With greater abilities to make connections (drawing on their interests, background experience, and understanding) and forming questions that lead to deeper discussions, I then feel the students are ready to begin using literature circles. The classroom community that we develop first term (feeling safe sharing their viewpoints and accepting that each student is at different places in their understanding) leads me to hope for very open conversations. I start by using a picture book *Fly Away Home* by Eve Bunting. By discussing wonders they generate based on the first two pages of the story, my students have helped each other see multiple (more than 10) different possibilities for why people might live in an airport. They also often use their background knowledge to discuss why it would be better than living on the street. Daniels and Harvey (2009) state, "In well-structured groups, we leverage each other's thinking. We learn more, not just because we all bring different pieces to the puzzle, but because, through talk, we actually make new and better meaning together" (p.38). After our discussion, the students' responses to the question of why the characters might be living in the airport have certainly made me believe they have a fuller understanding of the characters' situation.

Ready for Small Group Literature Circle Discussions

I currently run my Literature Circles using a style I have adapted from Faye Brownlie (2005), which involves students reading at their own pace through a choice of novels at various reading abilities. Where ever they are in the novel, they need to be prepared to come to the discussion table with a selection to share that will generate a discussion. As Faye points out, students who travel slower through books have the opportunity to use the insights gained from their past conversations, and can then help newer members who have joined their literature circle group. The students either bring a connection or their confusion to the table in the form of an open-ended question for the other members of the group to discuss. A rubric I hand out to my students can be seen in Figure 3. My students then create weekly responses and questions in a similar format. Responses get feedback and their choice of their best one is used for evaluation. By this stage, there are some who still need guidance to explain using more detail and examples, but the new focus I develop with most is forming good discussion questions. My students also write a book summary and a written response to a chosen teacher question (e.g. How did the main character change?) before they move on to a new novel.

Figure 3 Michael Nielson 2012

	Minimally Meeting Expectations	Satisfactorily Meeting Expectations	Fully Meeting/ Exceeding Expectations
	Loose connection to part of the story, but missing detail and explanation of how they relate.	Related connection to part of story that has some explanation of how it is related.	Connection that has detail and explanation of how related to self, to other stories, or to the world and demonstrates understanding.
Story Part R's mom takes forever to get ready, and when she comes out she is dressed like a rock star.	My Thinking My mom takes a long time to get ready too.	My Thinking My mom made us late for a friend's party once because she took so long to get ready. I hate waiting like R.	My Thinking I connected with this part because I also have to always wait for my mom to get ready. Once she made us late for a party. I missed the present opening and I was so embarrassed because she was too dressed up. I can understand how R felt in front of her friends, like they might judge her poorly because of her mom.

Better Understanding Together

Eisner (1985) cautions about the Development of Cognitive Process Orientation to Curriculum, "Teaching in this orientation requires not only the ability to generate problematic situations for students, but also the ability to raise the kinds of questions with students that direct their attention to levels of analysis they would not be likely to use without the teacher's aide" (p.65). My initial support during Literature Circles has developed into pushing students to go further and deeper with questions (Can you explain that more? What made you think so?), and to help them re-frame their questions into more open-ended questions that allowed for multiple perspectives and interpretations (e.g. Why do the older sisters get out of work? altered to: Should kids have to do work? or Do parents treat all their kids the same?). I also ask them to reflect and write how their thinking had changed or expanded after their talk in the group. Harste and Short (1996) explain, "Children are encouraged to expand and support their comments and to build off what other children say" (p.207).

> S was wondering why the author put the dog in the store. Her group came up with the idea that the author was creating a more interesting and exciting way for the main characters to meet (dog destroys store and is almost sent to the pound) and allowed for the reader to see why the dog needed the girl and the girl really needed the dog. (Because of Winn Dixie)

J connected with parents fighting over when to have a child with her family's decision to have a second child. As a group we talked about what concerns people might have about having a child (too young, too old, too busy with job, not having a job that could support family, not willing to give time for self away and focus on a baby's needs) and then talked about what happened in the book when the couple couldn't agree, but still had the child. (The Pinballs)

D talked about why they had a fort in the story (to get away from other kids and family and have a place to talk uninterrupted). The group then connected to where they go for privacy (under bed and in closets were popular choices). We had also talked about what ages is it easy for boys and girls to be friends and when is it awkward? (Bridge to Terabithia)

E showed great skill as a reader when she questioned that the kids considered Leslie to be a teacher's pet, but E disagreed as she said that this did not match the character that the author was developing and pointed out reasons why she did not think Leslie was trying to be a teacher's pet. This then led to talk about why people would want to be a teacher's pet? Why not? Did they like it when a teacher shared their work with the class and why would a teacher want to share it? (Bridge to Terabithia)

I draw upon my observations and notes from one of my classes to help further illustrate my reflections on using students wonders and connections.

During our independent Literature Circle meetings, there were some great questions that: cleared confusion, guessed at the intentions of the author, and connected with students experiences (see Figure 4).

(Figure 4)

Possible Discussion Question

Have you ever been embarrassed by your parents?

Less Personal

What are some ways that adults embarrass kids?

I thought the reading strength of one of my readers became apparent when she asked, "Do we have to give a page number or can we just talk about ideas we are starting to get from the author?" I had to say a big wow after this question and tell her how great it was that she was really thinking about the author's intentions. She was able to illustrate what expert readers do to her group as she pointed out things that were causing her to form opinions about the author's direction.

I have seen the power of literature circles for engaging students in higher order thinking and allowing for scaffolding of reading ability (Almasi & Gambrell, 1996; Brownlie, 2005; Daniels & Harvey, 2009; Harste & Short, 1996). I have had students who have been assessed as having a lower reading level than a novel they have chosen, show good comprehension in their summaries and answers to questions, when their reading has been supported by the literature circle conversations. For many, being able to bring their confusions and wonders to the table for conversation, allows them to comprehend the books more successfully than they could have alone.

This became very noticeable to me after comparing two different 'Battle of the Books' (small groups in a "Jeopardy" style format) competitions. One 'Battle of the Books' competition was based on a collection of books each group had members read through on their own, trading if there was time. The results had our best group answering just over half the questions correctly. But the next competition, which was based on the books that we used for our literature circles, had all the groups answering more than three quarters of the questions correctly. Their stronger understanding and comprehension I believe was evident due to their conversations in Literature Circles where they could bring inquiry questions to the table.

Almasi & Gambrell (1996) state, "The reading conversations help children construct meanings that go beyond what they could construct alone or without verbal interaction" (p.53). From their conversations, I have seen my students go deeper into their thinking about the novels than they would have by reading alone (as seen by the additions to their responses after our meetings). I have also seen my students show growth in their ability to independently create higher level, deep thinking questions. For example, some student questions that developed were: 'Can one person in your life change things?', 'Why would someone not want to come to school?', and 'Why would someone watch something they know is wrong and not say something?'

Can grade four and five students have meaningful conversations about books like adults do? I believe they can from my observations, but I do believe that some explicit examples and guidance in the beginning can really enhance those conversations in going deeper. I feel successful when the students with minimal guidance can generate a deep question, answer it fully with detail, evidence, and explanation, and then after a conversation with peers, they go back and add several more ideas that were generated from the conversation. Once we reach this point, my students are constantly asking for literature circle meetings and I look forward to listening to their lively conversations as well.

Novels that were used include:

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Bunting, Eve (1991). Fly Away Home. New York: Clarion Books.

Byars, Betsy (1977). The Pinballs. NewYork: Harper & Row Publishers Inc.

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Living Creatively: A Poet's Testimony

Investigating Our Practice

Like many English teachers, I cannot remember a time when I was not enamoured with words, utterly, hopelessly in love with words.

I have lived a privileged life in words. From the glad and grateful perspective of fifty-nine years old, I look back over almost six decades as a student, educator, parent, and grandparent, and I acknowledge how words have been my constant companions. I am now a grandfather to three delightful granddaughters with lyrically poetic names: Madeleine, Mirabelle, and Gwenoviere. Madeleine, my first granddaughter, will begin Kindergarten in September, 2013. I remember well her first words. I remember how I was planning to be called Pa (like a grandfather on Bonanza or The Waltons or Little House on the Prairie) when, one day, Madeleine named me Papa. Obviously one Pa was not as lyrical as the repetition of Papa. And I remember the day when Madeleine spoke her first polysyllabic word: bellybutton. She always revels in the sounds of words, the possibilities of words. She is always asking questions, telling stories, drawing images of her parents, and entertaining her family with jokes and riddles. She loves to dance and watch movies and swim and sing and listen to music. She is full of creative hopes and desires. Like a Newfoundland winter storm, Madeleine is a whirling and swirling force of creative energy. I hope her creativity is nurtured and celebrated in the school she will soon attend. But for all my hope, why am I still fearful?

> I cannot remember a time when I was not enamoured with words...

In the late 80s, when I pursued doctoral studies at the University of Alberta, a drama education professor asked me, "What do you remember about creativity and creative experiences in school?" After carefully reflecting on my memories, I confessed that I could remember almost no creative experiences in school. I was not invited to write creatively, or to engage with art or music or physical education or literary texts in creative ways, at least not in the regular classes. There were extra-curricular opportunities for drama and public speaking and editing the school yearbook. But my school experiences were almost exclusively about memorization, rules, correctness, evaluation, and competition.

Carl Leggo

Carl is a poet and professor at the University of British Columbia. He seeks to live poetically with hope and love in words and in the world. He is currently learning to be a grandfather.

Elements of Elementary School

Carl Leggo

I remember
kindergarten, the first day,
crying, dressed in a white shirt

I remember
report cards, school photos
being glad my textbooks were new

I remember
egg salad sandwiches wrapped
in wax paper in brown paper bags

I remember
the boys' washroom
piss and antiseptic

I remember
Sadie Jenkins who everybody said
never ever took a bath

I remember
the beam of dust seen when the sun
peeked through the hole in the blind

I remember
Miss Hicks who smiled and seldom got angry
the prettiest teacher I ever knew

I remember
swinging in the alder trees, spring and autumn
bursting in rough buds of light

I remember
the strap sitting on the teacher's shoulder
like a limp tongue

I remember
the smell of a new leather briefcase,
how we'd take turns sticking our noses in

I remember
    punching Glen in the stomach because
    he said he had really hard abs—he did

I remember
    day-dreaming about
    kissing Janet

I remember
    the poster with a line of gold stars
    my own Hollywood Walk of Fame

I remember
    bells, shouts, angry voices, bells and more bells,
    like the principal's voice full of threats

I remember
    aqua ink in Sheaffer fountain pens
no ballpoints allowed

I remember grade 8
    when I memorized so many facts
    I had little room left for anything else

I remember
    thinking that adults were odd,
    hoping I never had to become one

When I was growing up in Corner Brook, Newfoundland in the 50s and 60s, I knew no poets. I read the poetry in school textbooks. I do not remember really enjoying the poetry I read. It always sounded and felt alien. The language did not resonate with any language I knew. And the experiences and themes addressed in the poetry were just as foreign and strange. I was nineteen years old when I first heard a poet whose voice resonated with mine. I attended a poetry reading by Al Pittman held at the Arts and Culture Centre in St. John's, Newfoundland. Like me, Al grew up in Corner Brook, Newfoundland, and he wrote poetry that was narrative and personal, accessible and familiar, like a warm homespun sweater. At the time I first heard Al read his poetry, I was still dealing with a school system where my grade eleven English teacher had told me I would never be a writer. I remember the incident still, so vividly. My English teacher gave me back an assignment and declared: "Carl, you'll NEVER be a writer." She didn't say: "Carl, this particular essay isn't very good," or "Carl, you've got to work harder," or "Carl, maybe if you spent more time, you'd write a better essay." She said simply but definitively: "Carl, you'll NEVER be a writer." Unfortunately, I believed her.

As a writer in school I learned that I had to master effective English, and whip sentences into shape and obedience, and compel them to do my will, and tame the wildness of language and imagination and emotion. I was a master-in-training learning the trade of mastering effective English, and I learned only that I do not have the ruthless and unconscionable heart to be a master. I was always laughing with the letters and the words and the sentences. I wanted to be their friends, to be invited to their parties, to fall in love with them, to know their falling in love with me. I didn't want mastery; I wanted mystery. We become readers and writers by engaging with the spells and mystery of language. We need to emphasize the mystery rather than the mastery of language. None of us ever masters language. We can never rest assured there is nothing more to learn. If we embrace the mystery and the playfulness of language, then we remain humbly committed to new possibilities for learning and living.

Spelling

Carl Leggo

in school I learned to spell words with precise correctness
but I seldom learned the sensuous spell of language

in school I learned the rules and stipulations of grammar
but I seldom learned the glamour, the alchemy of prepositions

in school I learned the conventions of syntax
but I seldom learned the lyrical resonances of connections

in school I learned to chant the teacher's dictums
but I seldom learned the enchantment of poetry

in school I learned facts, fat fatuous facts full of lies,
but I seldom learned the restorative joy of fiction and fantasy

in school I learned to color inside the prescribed lines
but I seldom learned about wild places beyond, elsewhere

in school I learned the denotative definitions of words
but I seldom learned the magic of capacious connotation

in school I learned to be good, an anesthetic obedience
but I seldom learned to ask with aesthetic wonder, what is good

in school I learned to be neat tidy clean even pristine
but I seldom learned to enjoy the body's erotic energies

in school I learned to grow my brain-mind-head like a cabbage
but I seldom heard my heart beat or the hearts of anyone else

in school I learned to fear the arts like wild lions, lacking logic,
but I still caught glimpses of dandelions in the cracks of sidewalks

and so I dance with lines, straight and slant, curvaceous and cursive
and I dance with dandy lions, too, no longer fearing their ferociousness

Too many teachers think they are the guardians of a garden of correctness. Too many teachers see themselves like angels with flaming swords at the gates of the garden. Many teachers have grown up in an educational system where they were constantly evaluated and graded, and so they are constantly grading students with letters and numbers. They are constantly assessing students according to prescribed standards. Schools are too often focused on criticism when we need more creativity. We need a collaboration of criticism and creativity. As English teachers we are well-trained in critical responses to texts. We know how to attend to the construction of sentences, paragraphs, and essays. We know how to identify the thesis statement and the arguments and counterarguments that defend the thesis. We know how to attend to faulty parallelism, misplaced commas, and weak concluding sentences. But do we know how to respond to creativity? Do we know how to nurture creativity? Do we know how to attend to the mystery of language, and the possibilities of writing for healing and restoration and joy?

In order to nurture creativity, we need to emphasize playing with language. Much of my work as a teacher educator is to encourage teachers to be playful in their approaches to writing. I have always loved language, but I have not always felt confident as a writer. When I was very young, I wrote some scraps of poetry, more lyrical phrases and vivid images, but I began to call myself a poet only in my later twenties. At the time, my personal life was troubled, even chaotic, with crises connected to marriage and spiritual commitment and professional vocation. Out of an experience of intense confusion and angst, I began to write in a journal, and as I wrote I heard a writer's voices that I knew were mine, but voices I had never heard before. Now, for more than three decades I have been writing poetry as a way to make sense of lived and living experience. Poetry has been like a practice of prayer or meditation, a daily way of attending to the world in words so I can ask tough questions, and order and organize the complex emotions and experiences that swirl through each day, and commit myself to a worldview that insists on hope and joy and love. In my poetry, I am always seeking to understand the 59 years that I have lived on the planet. I write poetry as a way of making sense of the places I have been in order to testify to the joy that I have arrived at.

The word poetry comes from the Greek word poiein, to make—so as a poet, I'm a maker. In my poetry I seek to make sense, or make stories, or make lines of connections with others. I am always engaging in an ongoing composing or constructing or making. I live my poetry, and poetry lives in me, and poetry opens up the world so I can know and see and understand with new perspectives and possibilities. Like Gregory Orr (2002) I know that "poetry can have enormous transformative power" (p. 6). Poetry represents my ongoing testimony to the possibilities of joy and justice.

Heron

Carl Leggo

the world is falling apart
and my response is to write
another poem about
the heron I saw this morning
while walking the dike beside
the Fraser River when perhaps
I should write about salmon
daily disappearing, or hiding,
or Japanese-Canadians
who once fished here but
learned with war they were
more Japanese than Canadian
even if they were born in
Steveston, British Columbia,
and know as much about Japan
as the rest of us who grew up
on Hollywood war films,
or I should write about urban
sprawl or agrarian disaster
or untreated sewage or the earth
quake that will one day wash
all Lulu Island into the Gulf
of Georgia like a memory
too proud for itself, but no
I write again about the heron
standing still in the river
as if I know anything at all
about herons, since taught
forever by Walt Disney
to anthropomorphize wildness,
I imagine countless stories
for the heron, but know
only the heron's otherness
and utter disregard for me
watching it like a creature
with nothing better to do
while the world falls apart
and I write another poem
about the heron I saw
standing alone in the grass
on the edge of the river
waiting for a fish or a bug
minding its own business

At the beginning of writing courses, I always explain to students that I regard poetry as the most capacious genre of writing because poetry is valuable for calling attention to sensual and lyrical experiences, telling stories, discussing philosophy and politics, exploring and expressing all the heart's emotions and adventures. I explain that there is no topic or question or theme or experience that cannot be addressed in poetry. Jane Hirshfield (1997) reminds us that poetry brings "new spiritual and emotional and ethical understandings, new ways of seeing, new tools of knowledge as significant for an increase of inner life as radio telescopes are for an increased knowledge of the spiraling arms of distant space" (p. 79). She also wisely claims that "poetry leads us into the self, but also away from it" (p. 32). Poetry is a way of attending to the personal, but poetry always opens up ways of understanding how we never stand alone. We always live in relationship with others, with everybody, with the vast and intricate network of all creation.

For a long time I have been promoting the experience of living poetically, of how we can learn to live well in the world. As Shuswap-Kootenai poet Vera Manuel (2008) writes, "poetry is a powerful source of healing" (p. 150). Most of my poems are about daily living experiences. They are frequently autobiographical, about growing up on the east coast of Canada and living for many years on the west coast of Canada. I am especially interested in writing poems that others can read and enjoy, poems that remind readers that the world, for all of its chaotic and challenging messiness, is still a marvellous and wonderful place to linger. I write poetry in order to remind others to enjoy being alive, to enjoy the sensual experiences of being outdoors, of being with children, of relationships, and I also write poetry in order to address challenging issues. Writing poetry helps me to make sense of experiences and helps me to connect with other people. When I claim that writing poetry helps me to live poetically, I do not pretend that everything is perfect. Instead, I am promoting the possibility of living well in the messiness of the world. Poetry is not only this eloquent and lovely use of language that gives us sweet thoughts and entertains us and moves us. Poetry is all that, certainly, but it is a great deal more and it can move us to action.

We need opportunities to write in innovative and creative ways, to take risks in writing, to experiment with diverse discourses. Writing ought to be experiential, experimental, expressive, creative, conscientious, challenging, collaborative, multimodal, meaningful, problem-solving, purposeful, and playful. David Bohm (2004), the physicist, does not mince words in his judgment that "generally speaking, what we learn as children, from parents, teachers, friends, and society in general, is to have a conformist, imitative, mechanical state of mind that does not present the disturbing danger of 'upsetting the apple cart'" (p. 20). Writing should always be focused on learning to "upset the apple cart." We are all creative, and creativity is essential to teaching and learning. Above all, creativity refuses to conform because creative energies are always committed to transformation.

Though I have written and spoken extensively about advice for nurturing writers and writing, my essential advice for all writers, young and old, can be simply expressed in a series of eight imperative sentences:

• Believe in your writing and yourself as a writer.

• Commit yourself to writing every day.

• Explore and experiment and take risks.

• Engage innovatively with a wide range of genre.

• Cultivate a keen sense of your voice.

• Always read lots of other writers.

• Share your writing with others.

• Seek to know the world in writing.

Then, with that essential advice, I invite writers to write. Here are some suggestions for inviting writing that I offer to my students. Of course, these are only a few of the thousands of prompts and invitations that might be offered. They are not likely all equally valuable, especially with all writers all the time, but they might be useful for some writers some of the time.

•W rite about your name.

• Write about memories of bread or rice.

• Write about your childhood backyard.

• Write about the stories of scars on your body.

• Write about a favourite place.

• Write about a friend.

• Write about shoes you have

owned.

• Write about kissing.

• Write about eating your first meal at MacDonald's.

• Write about your first bicycle.

• Write about the first time you flew on an airplane.

• Write about adventures in the kitchen.

• Write about your bed.

• Write about an experience in an elevator.

• Write about losing a tooth.

• Write about your responses to favourite music or art.

• Write about your first love.

• Write about a childhood hero.

• Write about falling in love.

• Write about falling out of love.

• Write about your three most significant memories.

• Write your credo, what you believe, what you have given your heart to.

• Write an Internet ad.

• Write about a favourite item of clothes.

• Write lists of questions about: love, racism, homophobia, violence, or bullying.

• Write about your bedroom closet.

• Write about a time you were astonished.

• Write an obituary.

• Write about world history at the time of your birth.

• Write about a family dinner.

• Write about your last vacation.

• Write a story about an object that has personal significance.

• Write about a time you were afraid.

• Write a double-voiced poem about likes and dislikes

• Write your own eulogy.

• Write a list poem about all the things you like, and all the things you don't like.

• Write about a family wedding.

• Write about vocation.

• Write about your family origins.

• Write about being a teacher and a learner.

• Write about favourite teachers you have known.

• Write a Facebook bio.

• Write a collage of words and photos and art.

• Write about a member of your family.

• Write about your town or city.

• Write about a time you were really happy.

• Write a fictional autobiography.

• Write a poster poem about problems in the world.

• Write about objects that represent who you are.

• Write a set of directions to instruct somebody how to snowboard or parallel park.

• Write about your gifts.

• Write about fast-food restaurants.

• Write a blog about the daily life of an adolescent.

• Write about your family at the time of your birth.

• Write about the joys and challenges of learning and teaching.

• Write about a moment in your past week.

• Write about one day in the life of a busy student or teacher.

• Write reviews of films, music, books, and TV.

• Write a dramatic monologue.

• Write about a paper clip.

• Write about hope or love or joy.

I conclude this testimony to living creatively (knowing there are no conclusive conclusions) with a poem because poetry is full of capacious possibilities and magnificent mystery and joyful hope.

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Babble and Doodle

words as a perpetual pursuit
Italo Calvino

stretch words tight and taut so they twang
words wait between the lines to be called
these words, your words, more words, words

throw words in the air, seek shapes
words never let you go, always let you go
the world woven in the shadows of words

write the earth, one word after another
words open up expanding worlds
words, spoken here and there, for you

care about words, offered with care
words seek their way, light offered
the way into the haunted words

lay down words, linear and labyrinthine
words wind through the blood, no end
a parade of words, glad to be alive

laugh with wild words, dangers everywhere
words remember what can't be forgotten
words with the heart's beat, full of breath

host a surprise party for words
words don't always need punctuation
words, the hermeneut's heresy, a long quest

seek words that give you goose-bumps
words whisper secrets in shopping malls
scribbled words in gusts of wind

hold words tentatively, not with tentacles
words challenge grammar with glamour
words as a perpetual pursuit, full of yearning

Encounters With What Counts: Rubrics, Rubes, and Deleuze

Investigating Our Practice

This short essay is a theoretical argument examining the common practice of rubrics in schools. I took as my starting point that we as teachers create rubrics as part of better assessment practices, and then I considered the implications of a rubric-styled assessment with a deliberate aim of troubling the practice. Troubling pedagogical practices from a theoretical position benefits education because it brings to the foreground conversation and debate. It enables everyone involved in the conversation to think critically about the choices she or he makes, and often leads to new questions and different kinds of thinking.

Along the way I do make a few mild assumptions about what is happening in schools today: one, that we as teachers create and use rubrics; two, that we believe this is the right thing to do to improve assessment; three, that we are still putting grades on student work; four, that communication with parents about student learning is still primarily done via a report card. Certainly not all of us are assessing and reporting this way. With the common core curriculum now in place in the United States, I'm assuming a certain appeal of common practices, and it is my aim to question these practices, hoping that they become much less common than they are.

As I see it, rubrics are an attempt to make visible to the student the criteria of what counts. Curiously, when it comes to joy and justice in assessment, what actually happens with rubrics is how subjectivity—still part of the process—disappears from view. In thinking about justice and assessment, perhaps we could strive to keep assessment as a very human activity, remembering that when counting what counts, what ought to also count is the human encounter. A rubric too often stands in between the human to human encounter. With its prefix "en," the encounter suggests a location, a relationship, an intersection that depends on where one is, what one believes, and who the participants are. Thus count becomes encounter in the same way theos becomes enthusiasm. Keeping this in mind, joy and justice might be possible in assessment when rubrics are not a move to more objective and accurate assessment, but a tool given to students to increase their footing, their power in the possibility of negotiating a better a standing. Justice does depend on how we stand in relation to one another, how we understand one another. Too often the rubric stands hand-in-hand with the teacher and it is the teacher who is further empowered.

An example might explain more specifically what I have in mind. In the human encounter of a negotiation, I imagine we as teachers—just before handing back a set of essays—telling our classes, I've given everyone 10-20% less than what you deserve. After the outcry, we might ask students to write all over the margins of their papers the reasons why their marks should be higher. This serves two purposes: One, it begins the negotiation honestly. Two, it means we can start to think more imaginatively about all those in marginal notes that we write with care but that students don't read.

Curiously, when it comes to joy and justice in assessment, what actually happens with rubrics is how subjectivity—still part of the process—disappears from view.

In this new frame of the human encounter, students are now interested in those marginal comments because they are given the power to assess themselves, and they can get another 20% by

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doing it. Now that they are convincing us that their essays deserve more, motivation is high enough for us to introduce some criteria that are really effective in their making such an argument. Enter the rubric. Now in the hands of the students. My criteria would have a lot of similarities to some of the standard 6+1 traits rubrics that are available. But I've gone about the matter differently, more humanly, approached the matter backwards if you will. Such a refreshing approach matters to students, likely because it is more just. When the rubric moves from the teacher's hand to the student's hand, the scales of power are more balanced.

Like so many gadgets in our society, the rubric follows in the tradition of techne. With today's overemphasis on technology, it is sometimes easy to forget that technique is at the heart of the techne tradition. By perfecting technique, one has a way of acting instantly, instinctively, without thought. The advantages are easily seen, and athletes put in years and years of work doing just that. The promise—perhaps the fantasy—is that the rubric might work the same way. In putting all the work up front developing the rubric, the promise is that this work will never have to be done again. Perfecting our technique—or physique—our well-honed rubrics are ready to perform instantly, instinctively, without thought. So much so we might even be tempted to stand behind our rubrics, saying, It was the rubric that generated the mark…there's nothing I can do.

The promise of the techne tradition is that once done the work won't have to be repeated again. The short cut. The assembly line. Tasks broken down into specializations—any human activity that involves repetition can be perfected (and workload reduced) with the right tool.

I've created a rubric for my dog
In order to more clearly outline
my expectations and set the right
owner/pet regulations, in order to not
lose control of his behavior,
and to more fully enjoy the time
(while he is mine), I've decided
to create a rubric for my dog.

Setting out the criteria of the average
dog has not been so hard: come
when you are called, do your
business at scheduled intervals
in designated places. Lie down,
sit up, don't eat too much. These
things, its seems, are obvious.

The trouble has been in teaching
him how to excel at being a dog,
knowing how hard it is to get

into a canine university, you see

the nature of my difficulty. Each

morning thus we've jumped through hoops,

I record his height, and depth,

and breadth, and in these ways

he progresses through the grades.

Sometimes, at night, when homework

is complete, he snuggles up

around my feet, and for a moment

is a living thing so warm that I forget

his schooling, and we nod off to sleep.

The argument proceeds that if we are to do something more than once, it's best to do it the same way every time. This saves time. The irony here, as technological advances show us so well, is that while saving time, work is not saved. It simply means we can do more work in less time. I have a Blackberry in my pocket in line with society's current fetish with that model of thinking. What I've proposed above is a shortcut in a more hermeneutic kind of way, in the fashion of Hermes, where there's some trickery involved. In techne, by finding the right technique something can be rendered perfect every time, without having to do the work of starting at the beginning every time. In hermeneutics, the work is coming up with the trick, of being refreshing, of knowing how human beings tick. The rubric is about certainty, confidence, and correspondence between the mark given and the actual value of the work submitted to the teacher. In hermeneutics, the challenging part is seeing more in reality than our tools can measure; it means being able to see what is not seen, to see more than singular correspondences in the values of our lives.

Perhaps another example can illustrate the injustices that result in holding too strongly to singular correspondences. In the world of rubrics, work submitted corresponds to the student's ability. We as teachers know the slippage of the signifier here. So, faithfully, we often find ourselves arguing that in this instance the mark is not a reflection of the student's effort or ability, but simply a value placed on the work. However noble our intentions, this argument fails to make the world of techne more just, for the final mark (or report card mark) clearly corresponds to the student herself or himself. In the most important realities of valuing people, the student's name corresponds to a number. It is the student herself or himself that will be rewarded or scolded. So what does student work represent? What is the teacher actually marking? In addition to marking the work, the teacher is marking the student. A rubric cannot reflect this. I have yet to come across a rubric that is designed to give feedback on exactly where and how much a student has improved from last time. Equally rare are tools that help teachers track their feedback over time. What do these two gaps in our practices tell us about the nature of the rubric as a tool? The rubric is less interested in learning and more interested in accuracy. With a rubric in hand it might be possible to believe that a teacher can mark a paper more accurately and represent the results more clearly. And this is a belief I'd rather we as English teachers not hold.

Deleuze and Parnet (2002) write that "The English zero is always in the middle." In a number line kind of insight, they point out the beauty of integers and decimal points. Every mark on a student paper is in the middle. There are no set correspondence points. This does not have to be terrible news to those assessing student work, it can simply a prod to treat the profession as more human and less technical. Yes, say Deleuze and Parnet, this will be "uncomfortable," (p. 30), but, they say, "having lines of flight," (p. 29) or a way out, is the source of sustainability. Explaining the power of the rhizome, they point out that "grass grows in the middle things." Grass

grows everywhere. It does not take root and lay claim. What is implied through the imagery is freedom. It is under conditions of freedom, I believe, where students and teachers in English classes thrive. Imagine students free to experiment with style and not be worried an English teacher will mark them down for using the first person pronoun. Or imagine teachers free to award bonus marks, and not fear administration accusing them of mark inflation. Students free to write personally. Teachers free to not mark papers, or free to have their students mark the papers, and not be accused of being lazy, or corruptors of the system. Students free to fail because they can try again. Teachers free to fail because they were trying something new.

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Power to the People:
(Re) Mapping Education and Technology Discourses through Occupy
Investigating Our Practice

The Pink Panther imitates nothing, it reproduces nothing, it paints the world its color, pink on pink…makes its rupture, its own line of flight, follows its 'aparallel evolution' through to the end.

- A Thousand Plateaus, Gilles Deleuze and Felix Guattari (1987, p. 11)

On October 15, 2011, initial supporters of OccupyVancouver first convened on the grounds of the Vancouver Art Gallery, in solidarity with OccupyWallStreet and similar gatherings worldwide. This grassroots social and political movement that "imitates nothing" and "paints the world" its own colors led to unexpected, amorphous, and porous openings in socio-economic, political, environmental, and educational discourses, throughout the world. These ruptures, in turn, led to new conversations, new forms of protest, and new threads of inquiry to explore. Several of OccupyVancouver's prismatic threads wove around questions of how the encampment served as an educational space, and the kinds of technologies that were employed within these educative experiences. Intrigued by how the arts-based research methodology known as a/r/tography, when "brought to bear on the ethical tensions of inquiry as…relates to purposeful action as well as personal and collective activism" (Springgay, 2008, p. 164), might offer insight into these questions, I address these questions through one a/r/tographic method known as "métissage" (Hasebe-Ludt, Chambers, & Leggo, 2009), which implies a weave, or a literal braiding of different narrative strands. Just as a/r/tography explores "where meanings reside in the simultaneous use of language, images, materials, situations, space and time….[and] the circumstances that produce knowledge and understanding through artistic and educational inquiry laden processes" (Springgay , Irwin, Eds., 2008), then by this definition, so too is the Occupy movement an a/r/tographical experiment (still) in progress/process. As with a/r/tography, and as one apropos Occupy poster wisely advised,

WARNING: DO NOT

CONFUSE THE

Maya Tracy E. Borhani

Maya returns to the academy after raising two daughters on an island in the Salish Sea. There, she initiated a Poets-in-the-Schools program. She loves to chop wood and carry water (before, or after, writing poems).

COMPLEXITY

OF THIS MOVEMENT

WITH

CHAOS

(Poster at Occupy Vancouver, October 22, 2011)

Teasing open today's typical understanding of the term "technology," we might re-imagine what we mean by that term. Do we only think of industrial and electronic achievements of the last hundred and fifty years? Or do we include human technologies, such as fire-starting, or agriculture? What about hand technologies such as dishwashing, speaking sign language, knitting a garment? And what of aural technologies, music and rhythm, or the technologies involved in the making of art (utilizing many senses)? Do these older, often forgotten technologies have a place in our discourse, in these digital days? Educator Pat O'Riley (2002) wonders, "Is it possible to have silence and stillness in the dominant technology discourses so that other voices may be heard, so that students might hear their own voices and the voices of 'others'? (p. 37). The Occupy movement wholeheartedly embraced multiple technologies, both traditional and cutting edge, from so-called low to high tech, to facilitate and support its infrastructure, communication, and educational needs of its members on a daily basis.

In many ways, Occupy embraced a return to people-powered technologies, modeling peaceful and generative alternatives to predominant technology discourses. One such example, an ancient verbal and aural technology known as call-and-response, facilitated smooth participation in nightly General Assembly meetings, often attended by upwards of 200 people. Dubbed the "human mic" (shortened from "microphone"), this simplest of technologies became the mouthpiece for Everyman/woman, and the great equalizer in such a large crowd that ensured all voices would be heard. The "human mic" is nothing more than one person's words "re-broadcast" by the surrounding crowd, in call-and-response style. For example, when one person calls, "Mic Check!" the people within hearing range respond, echoing in unison, "MIC CHECK!" Continuing, the conversation goes something like this:

> Everyone wanting – EVERYONE WANTING – people power now – PEOPLE POWER NOW – raise your hands! – RAISE YOUR HANDS!

Two hundred sets of emphatic hands wave in the calm, blue air. People at the back of the crowd have no problem hearing what is being said, as the conversation is modulated into short speech segments, to make it easier to remember and pass on.

Considered a "low-tech" form of technology, the human mic (or "people's mic," as it's also called) is notable for its engagement of "total physical response" (Asher, 1969, p. 253) (TPR) learning methods, or whole-body participation in the vocal and communicative exercise – chest, heart, lungs, throat, vocal cords, cheeks, and mouth are all engaged. TPR is strongly emphasized in certain language-immersion programs, helping the whole body to "remember" what it is learning.

The "people's mic," this human-powered, no-cost technology is equally notable for the direct exchange between self and others that it fosters, and without which it would not work. We once again depend on each other to amplify stories around a (metaphoric) communal fire, to make sure those in the back can hear, too; we *connect* with one another. As poet Carl Leggo reminds, when we know someone else's story, it becomes impossible to hate them (personal communication, October 23, 2012). Similarly, this ancient breath-powered

technology helps to connect people who might otherwise not have occasion to make eye contact or to meet, uniting them in a common purpose. Surely this encourages peacemaking, to engage in a communal activity that requires attentive listening and the sharing of voices?

Thus, while participating in this call-and-response sharing of important community information, without the need of electricity or an elaborate sound system, people also experience the regenerative qualities of a participatory communality. Vitality infuses the crowd. Strangers connect. The harmonics and strength in the joined voices fill the air, and waft out over the crowded square and busy streets. There is a song, a rhythm, and a cadence (all technologies in their own right) to the call-and-response. People instinctively respond to that, sometimes before fully "knowing" why, drawn into the participatory and somatic experience of peacefully vocalizing in cooperation with others. For many, this is a new educational plateau. Even for seasoned participants, it remains an immensely powerful experience – to hear, see, and feel the swell of humanity working together for a common, non-violent purpose: to share the news, and pass it on.

The human mic has also become a kind of verbal symbol, a non-hierarchical, migrating motto and mantra that belongs-to-everyone, and no-one. It is used to call attention in a crowd, when information needs to be communicated quickly and efficiently: upon hearing the magic words – "Mic Check!" – people pay attention; the human chain of command forms voluntarily, and passes the information on. The mantra also doubles as playful greeting or prayer, with people shouting out the glorious password in communal song, just for fun: "Mic check! MIC CHECK!" Wherever you are, someone will respond. If you keep calling, more people will stop what they're doing, and call back in response; pretty soon it's a rising tide, a moment of communal attention and participation. Smiles abound. Have we, in recent times, underestimated or forgotten the value of this communal tool, housed in our own throats, as well as of the bonds of personal and social connection that it stirs among us? .This is an integrally important element of the Occupy experience that cannot be overemphasized, constituting the first time some participants have ever tasted such a sense of personal empowerment and meaningful connection.

The "human mic" also cultivates acute listening and skills of attentiveness, proficiencies too often missing in the noisy fray of our accelerated world. As a low-tech "microphone" and "amplifier" capable of gathering people together and creating unity through the communal task of shared broadcasting, the human microphone offers great potential as a dynamic educational tool to explore in classroom settings. Teachers will recognize the value of letting their students experiment with the human mic, both for sharing information, and for the body-centered play with rhythm and language it inspires. And because it's fun, and kids enjoy participating in something *in which they are needed* in order for it to carry on. The pedagogical implications of this kind of exchange are profound. Students' minds are similarly challenged in the memorization and recitation processes inherent in the call-and-response process. It also engages communal responsibility in creating and maintaining classroom order: via the ubiquitous "Mic Check," a teacher enlists the students' help in calling themselves to attention. The pedagogical implications of this style of self-involved education are also inspirational.

The direct democracy hand-signal process applied during General Assembly (GA) meetings is similar to the "people's mic" in its embodied TPR methods. Also a "low tech" technology, the process accentuates acute listening, attentive participation, and in this case, the use of hand signals (rather than voices) to communicate within a large assembly. *Everyone* has the opportunity to voice assent or dissent via pre-designated hand signals that are taught to all at the beginning of the meeting. Verbal chaos is avoided in what is a surprisingly effective and orderly process of communication. Simple hand signals for "agree," "disagree," "can't hear," "clarify," "point of order," "block," and "wish to talk" (among others) help a facilitator at the front of the crowd, and her spotters, placed strategically throughout the crowd to help point out whose hands are up, to guide the discussion accordingly. Sometimes, this process is inordinately slow and arduous, but its benefit is simple: every voice is heard, and a horizontal, rather than vertical, democracy is enacted.

Takethesquare.net (2011) offers a comprehensive overview of the direct-democracy process (generally referred to within the Occupy movement as a General Assembly, or GA), as developed by the Commission for Group Dynamics in Assemblies of the Puerta del Sol Protest Camp (Madrid) in May 2011, including an explanation of the hand signals. This webpage also offers the reminder that "(w)e use positive (and)… Inclusive Speech which makes no gender distinctions. It is clear that force of habit can be hard to break, but it is convenient that between all of us we mutually remind ourselves to remember this" (Takethesquare.net, 2011). These principles, attendant to equality, equity, and parity among diverse and sometimes disparate parties, teach respect, cooperation, and negotiation; these are essential tools that today's students need, to understand and navigate the realities of systemic oppression, and routes of decolonization through them.

Through such deliberate processes of communal involvement, and the use of these "low-tech," easily accessible, and "free" tools and technologies (our hands, voices, and minds), these processes exemplify an urban enactment of a "slow pedagogy of place" (Payne & Wattchow),

> an embodied sensory-perceptual and conceptual-theoretical 'sense' or 'possibility' of place… assisting its participants to understand the relations of their body and nature, in time and space, as they are experienced phenomenologically…a slow ecopedagogy." (2009)

Living in the Occupy encampment means participating in nightly meetings, too. Time spent in the plaza develops into multiple layers of meaning; personal, communal, social, and political. Finding educational value in these enactments of direct democracy, and in living in place, we come to see this as a powerful immersion lesson in cooperation with others, in how to listen acutely and with one's whole being, and in offering an inclusive space in which to unlearn oppressive behaviors, replacing them with pedagogies of tolerance and forgiveness.

Furthermore, by learning to balance personal desire with what will best benefit the collective, the direct democracy process quickly teaches efficiency and conciseness of when to speak and what to say; we learn, together, that what we have to say better be important to make it worth holding up the already inherently lengthy process! On the other hand, the patience taught and learned through listening to, and waiting through, the remarks of another is also a deeply valuable pedagogy in today's hustle and bustle of impersonal, lost, and missed connections.

One of the "high-tech" endeavors that sprang up hand in hand with the Occupy encampment was the rise of citizen journalists and web streamers. Cell phones at the ready, and laptops held open, facing outward, with cameras turned on and live-stream accounts up and rolling, ordinary people in the crowd and the more self-directed citizen journalists stood prepared to broadcast everything live, around the world, instantaneously, through a complex web of cyber-satellite connections. Keri Facer (2011) explains that

> The rise of a body of citizen journalists, able to gather information and circulate it widely outside the restrictions of the traditional broadcast media, is seen by many cultural scholars as offering the potential to reshape the quality of public debate….(O)ppression and corruption, it is suggested, will be harder to sustain.

Thus, riding these cyber-waves of digital technologies, aided by a plethora of young computer and internet-savvy creatives utilizing every electronic and digital device and media imaginable to broadcast the revolution (OccupyWallSt, n.d.), the Occupy movement became synonymous with citizen documentation. From live-streamers, to videographers, camerawomen, social media tweeters, bloggers, cell phone snappers and professional photographers, to YouTube streamers, wizards of website production and maintenance, and writers generating good old fashioned word content for newspapers, TV, and radio, this flood of citizen journalists flowed into becoming the media team at OccupyVancouver, sharing their skills and voices with the world.

> Just as people can self-organize to contribute to Wikipedia…they can participate in social change and coalesce into revolutionary movements as never before. Enabled by social media, leadership is coming from the people themselves. Internet innovations…lower the cost and effort of collaboration. Social media are a game changer because they greatly facilitate citizens' ability to organize despite censorship. They speed up the metabolism of dissatisfaction, enabling peers to come together to produce leaderless but nevertheless powerful movements for change. (Tabscott, 2011)

True to Gil Scott-Heron's prophetic song, "the revolution will not be televised" (1970); the mainstream media's tragically incomplete coverage of the events (and meanings) of Occupy are no surprise to many. Yet, thanks to the shimmering network of collaboration between Occupy websites around the globe, "the revolution will be live" (Heron, 1970), through the constant live-stream, tweets, and status updates from marches and rallies held around the globe.

Worldwide, this self-informed, self-educating, technological solidarity acknowledged and enacted between the various Occupy camps and their media feeds echoes the erasure (suggested by the antics of our Pink Panther) of formerly static boundaries in space and time, as high-speed internet and smart phones enable instantaneous communication and support between parties who live time-zones apart. "The Revolution will not be televised, but it will be broadcast on Live-stream" (OccupyWallSt.org, n.d.). At any given moment, one can watch instantaneous feeds from Liberty Square, Berkeley's Sproul Hall, Denver, Madrid, or Tahrir Square. There's no denying what's seen with the naked eye, the ultimate first-hand documentation. As Donna Haraway (2004) reminds, "[M]y cyborg myth is about transgressed boundaries, potent fusions, and dangerous possibilities which progressive people might explore as one part of needed political work" (p. 12-13). Or, we might explore these as part of needed educational inquiries, as well. These are the wondrous possibilities open to media-cyborgs and citizen journalists, the cross-fertilizations between citizenship and activism, between journalism and peacekeeping, like those who helped send the pepper spray incident at the University of California, Davis, viral on the Internet within moments of its occurrence. The old boundaries are porous, as Facebook accounts leaking to the world from Tahrir Square first revealed.

Once begun, in multiple venues and formats, the learning exchange never stopped.

The educational implications of citizen journalism are practically endless, involving writing, editing, film production, and storytelling skills. These activities embody a way of learning that involves "live" participation in the making of history. In addition, by learning through doing, a form of instant apprenticeship emerged, and became a hallmark of the Occupy camps. If you wanted to learn how to do something, and asked, chances are someone would help you figure it out, or find someone else who could. A veritable free, hands-on, outdoor classroom, the Occupy encampment represented just that to many of its inhabitants, daily visitors and volunteers: a learning lab. Life long learning, a global enterprise, shared between members of different cultures, nationalities, age groups, genders, skill levels and abilities. In most instances, the exchange was effortless, painless, and deeply rewarding for all involved. Occasionally, conflict would arise; but even then, in most instances, the model for engaged, compassionate, non-confrontational and non-violent civic care was exemplary, as relay teams of self-appointed individuals networked among themselves regarding triage concerns, and the need for mediation and/or the assistance of nursing, mental health, or other professionals.

Thus, aspects of ongoing and community based learning arose organically from within the groups of people on the ground, and their support teams off-site. Working together out of an awareness of the need for ongoing self-education and soulful self-expression, these experiences became integral to the life of the encampment, arising in various delicious and fulfilling ways.

Donna Haraway (2004) notes "…at the inflection point of crisis, where all the tropes turn again, we need ecstatic speakers" (p. 47). This is, I believe, an educational imperative. And so, each Occupy city took up its own ecstatic voice, hosting visits from noted scholars, artists, activists, economists, politicians, and thoughtful concerned citizens, who in turn took the stage and spoke, sung, or performed to inspire the community. From performances on a stage, conversations would spiral out, igniting new thoughts, further conversations, debates, artwork, and more. Wandering the camp late at night, you might overhear someone still discussing what a speaker had intoned earlier that morning. Spontaneous performances began to erupt in the open space right beneath the stage, at the base of the Art Gallery's north steps. The same was true of spontaneous poetry recitations, and mini-lectures – which eventually led to attempts to schedule sign ups for these events happening off the "main" stage, in and of itself an interesting educational experience for those involved (a crash course on stage management and community organizing!). Once begun, in multiple venues and formats, the learning exchange never stopped.

All art-making, presentation or performance requires some form of technology to come into being, whether by using a pencil to draw with, a voice with which to sing, or the physical nuances and gestures on which acting relies. The Occupy movement, like the long history of social and environmental justice movements before it, expressed itself through many artistic and performative moments: from hula-hoopers and elaborate costumers, to the caricatured "misbehave" masks, with their anonymous and fixed smiles, worn on people's faces as well as on the backs of their heads (giving a double, counter- effect to the image perceived, suggesting two sides of our own behaving/ misbehaving selves, and of every issue). From poi, fire acrobats, juggling, and dancing in the streets and on the steps, plaza, and grounds of the art gallery, almost everyone on site participated in some sort of cultural or performative activity.

Coast Salish elders blessed a sacred fire, as is their tradition, accompanied by a steady, resonant beat from frame-drums. The Quakers came down to sing one Sunday afternoon, serenading the crowd with Aaron Copeland, contrasted with the equally delightful Amanda Palmer (from the Indie band The Dresden Dolls), who proffered a laughing, relaxed set for free, before her sold-out show on Granville later that night. Plucking a ukulele and singing a comical, heart-warming anthem in her raw, gutsy voice, her own educational outlook seemed to echo that growing within the camp:

> Even if your grades are bad
>
> It doesn't mean you're failing… (Palmer, 2011)

Ukulele Anthem promotes the ease and joy with which we can all make music, or art, offering the challenge to pursue creativity's beacon whenever and wherever possible:

> They only cost $19.95,
>
> that's not very much….
>
> So why don't you learn to play the ukulele?

Bring your etch-a-sketch to work,

And if you want to change the world

Then why not quit and feed the hungry? (Palmer, 2011)

Further promoting the message that art and performance are technologies that belong to everyone, the cover for "Ukulele Anthem" (Palmer, 2011) boasts the encouragement to "Just Play ~ Art's Not Hard." If not the ukulele, then a drum; at most times of the day or night, a drum circle could be heard in progress at the encampment. The communal musical instruments of choice for many, drums pound out the heartbeat that links us all, and our place on this earth. True to Palmer's adage, many a young person (or a closet-drumming older one) found community, and the much-needed opportunity to practice listening to, and playing alongside the rhythm of others, at these circles, hearing their own heartbeat amidst a chorus of others. For some people, this spontaneous musical education unveiled itself as improvising on a saxaphone, or trying out some dance steps to the beat that others played. This community musical experience unfolded and constantly bubbled up under the trees, in tents, at night till almost dawn, on drums, guitars, horns, violins, cellos, voice, and flute, bouzouki and harmonica, accordion and washtub. Music, another ancient technology, one that we humans copied from the birds and the spheres, and that we have returned to and improved upon since we first discovered how to clack two hollow bones together, sprouted once more, naturally, when the people gathered together and made time to play and sing, in rhythm with the cosmos.

Indigenous ways, and philosophy, the signs and banners read like a Wikipedia of the

Does this tell us something about the unnatural rhythms of education that we impose within schools and classrooms? What if we offered music making as a research experiment, wherein students were the lead investigators? What if that exploration was ungraded, and the only requirement was that it be fun for the researcher? Possibilities unfold, the more we let our own imaginations wonder what kinds of educational environments we could build with music, and heretofore unexplored forms of cooperation, as our guides.

Raising a related question, a video file posted on YouTube (Novak, 2011) during the early weeks of the occupation offered a sensitive portrayal of the juxtapositions, commonalities and distinctions between events happening inside the Art Gallery's (more elite) walls, with those occurring outside, within and around the Occupy "village." The video begged the question: whose art gets to happen where? Who do public spaces belong to? When we stop to ask these questions, we recognize the urgent educative concerns wrapped up in them: what are we teaching our students about art, where it happens, and who gets to make it? How do we continue to make more room for other ways of knowing, expressions, and aesthetic sensibilities within our pedagogical practices? And what do we have to learn from street artists, and public swells of art-making for protest and celebration?

The colorful and creative poster art that so characterized the Occupy movement often lived a double life: first, as a hand-held sign in a march or rally, and later, adorning Occupy's homes (tents), the village square, and workplaces (the Media tent, Food Not Bombs tent, the People's Lovely Library). Stylistically, they rangee from graffiti and poster art (on poster board, recycled cardboard, old barrels, orange safety cones, fabric banners) to cartography (a 6x10 foot map showing the layout of the "village" within the Art Gallery square), huge white boards bearing colorfully handwritten schedules of daily events, and individual offerings of leftover protest signs, prayer flags, or donated artwork sprouting here and there around the grounds. One project, a community art project with material provided by the instigating individual, resulted in a bevy of colorfully painted, small wooden tiles that graced the fountain and steps of the encampment for the full

five weeks of the physical occupation. This colorful project embodied the essence of community based, participatory learning. People camping in the square painted tiles, but so did tourists passing through, and businesswomen heading home at night. Communal art making with a twist, decorating a village, and offering the joy of art to all.

The plethora of poster art that in many ways defined Occupy served a primary function of communication; but in addition, the beauty, humor and satire that went into many of these pieces turned them into a mobile art installation. The slogans communicated political stances, heartfelt personal pleas, and legal arguments. These signs and banners offered an educational opportunity all their own, in very "low-tech," time-honored ways of getting a message across. Embodying lessons of history, economics, politics, rhetoric, environmental studies, Indigenous ways, and philosophy, the signs and banners read like a Wikipedia of the movement's primary concerns. According to the mainstream media, it was a bunch of fringe people carrying signs. But to the people on the ground, and those watching around the world, we were learning from one another's signs, their diverse messages, and the countless dialogues and deeper conversations that fermented in these exchanges. Poster art was once again a powerful revolutionary force. Supplies were provided, always on hand, for making new signs, or copying a good slogan seen on someone else's sign. Many small children accompanied their parents on marches, holding signs aloft from mom or dad's taller shoulders, practicing family-style education and civic engagement. These are the deeper, educational layers implicit in this simple art and technology, a cardboard protest sign.

By physically occupying, by protesting, by not going home afterward, and by placing our bodies in *public* spaces, a political and civic reinhabitation occurs: people, dogs, structures, and artwork literally (re) populate, *inhabit*, and (re)claim public spaces. According to Jody Berland (2009), this is also a reclaiming of the margins of society, noting

> we define the 'margin' as any site which requires and enables communities to employ cultural technologies as counterhegemonic tools. Such spaces are currently subject to vicious assault… the intense recommodification of information and experience, the erosion of noncommercial spaces…are part of the ongoing production of space which implicates communities at every scale. (p. 97)

The OccupyVancouver community likewise utilized such "cultural technologies" (which we forget to think of as *technologies* – as in *techne*, to make) in order to push back against some of the structures and systems we were protesting. For instance, the People's Lovely Library was housed in a large, canopy tent, shelves stocked with books on a wide variety of subjects, along with pamphlets, reprints, chess boards, playing cards, armchairs and a couch. A hub of information exchange, relaxation, and shelter from the rain, it was housed right next to the Tea House, which kept up a lively flow between the two mutually conducive areas of repose and study. In the Art Tent, materials were spread on a large table, and regularly restocked by volunteers, providing anything from posters to puppet making supplies. The phenomenal Food Not Bombs crew organized food donations, preparation, storage, and serving, as well as sanitary dishwashing (which became its own health education imperative, and a source of great community building). Serving an average of 1000 meals a day since it opened on October 15, 2011 (personal communication, November 21, 2011), until the time of its closing by the city of Vancouver six weeks later, the Food Not Bombs collective managed to do what governments – with all of their fiscal and staff resources – were unable to do: feed the hungry.

These culturally endangered technologies of self-education and community erudition through reading, dialogue, and exchange; of political expression through music, costuming, performance, and poster art; and of cooking healthy food and feeding the people became prime "subversive" weapons of the people's encampment in their quest to be heard by the powers-that-be. If the message was not received, the unexpected gain was the education itself, and the discovery that technology is as simple as a handshake, or a ukulele strummed to the rhythm of the stars. What we exchange, as humans, through the technology

of seeing, the technology of singing, the technology of building a stage so others can sing – these are all educational endeavors, as we live and learn together in the village that we create to raise us all. Everything at the encampment boiled down to learning: how to share close quarters with the campers next to you, getting to know your neighbor, having to work with the police and fire officials, learning to tolerate others' differences, or how to live without amenities; through these acts of constraint or limitation, *other processes of becoming were liberated*. Formerly students, office workers, and teachers, people transformed into chefs, dome-builders, live-streamers, facilitators, and good friends. In the day to day processes of learning to live together, "(d)ecolonization involves learning to recognize disruption and injury in person-place relationships, and learning to address their causes. Because colonization refers also to the colonization of the mind and body, it involves the practice of unlearning and undoing" (Greenwood, 2010, p. 19). Many were liberated from manifestations of internal and external oppression to which they'd been party unaware, and were lifted up into aspects of *becoming* that were richer in personal understanding, as well as in the creation of community. "One of the most miraculous things that has happened at OccupyVancouver is that we set out to start a political encampment, and along the way, we inadvertently proved that we can house, feed, care for, and socialize people better than the city can and at a fraction of the cost" (personal communication, Suresh Fernando, November 20, 2011).

Where do people's movements – political, cultural, and social – head from here? How do we implement what was advocated in the suggestion "to hold general assemblies in every back yard" (OccupyWallSt.org, n.d.), that is, to engage all people in these kind of discourses? How will we, as educators, participate in these conversations?

> These spaces need therefore to be understood as important resources for practicing democracy; they are, in danah boyd's terms, new 'networked publics'…(T)o effect social and economic change we need to explore what social activism might mean in these spaces, just as we need to reinvigorate such activism in the public spaces of our city streets. (Facer, 2011, p. 92)

So we continue to network, from the rising of the Idle No More movement in Canada and around the globe (IdleNoMore.ca, 2012.), to the recent One Billion Rising campaign to end violence against women (OneBillionRising.org, 2012), which danced its message into the streets and around the globe on St. Valentine's Day 2013. As educators, we are already engaged in thinking about future generations, and how lifelong learning can be supported. In these movement fusions (Cole & Foster, 2001), educational opportunities abound to learn about and engage in social and environmental justice campaigns. We still need to "come together, right now" (Lennon & McCartney, 1969), embracing both low and high tech means, as we learn from one another and from the world around us, spreading the word through our song, through our dance, and through the purity of our intentions. So might it one day be.

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Writing: Making a Connection with 21st Century Students

Check This Out

I wish I had come across Dana Wilber's book, *iWrite: Using Blogs, Wikis and Digital Stories in the English Classroom*, earlier in my teaching career as it makes one point very clear: "there's a natural urge to jump on the bandwagon and try the newest technologies with students even when it may not be the best idea… [the point is] that technologies are tools, nothing more" (94). Specifically, "we [now] have to teach writing in a way that makes use of the new tools that effectively scaffold writing, and yet not adopt every kind of technology just because it exists" (11).

It is the ideas mentioned above that encapsulate the central idea of Wilber's book: using digital tools as a valid source of writing in our English classes. The fact is the lives of teenagers are mediated by technology. Students are actually involved with writing in their personal lives (Facebook, fan fiction sites, Blogs) yet for some reason these methods of writing are deemed to be 'invalid'. As Wilber (2010) poignantly notes, it is essential to connect the kinds of writing that are now part of the world so that students can learn to be literate in larger contexts than mere test taking or standardized assessments. Furthermore, Wilber points out that forms of social media can be just as challenging as traditional methods of writing, "they all have a particular grammar or way of expressing meaning; all require a meta cognitive understanding of how to create that meaning, and all can work well in the classroom" (18). Using new forms of writing, even texting, allows students to experiment and learn to use language differently, to communicate using different forms of media (Wilber, 2010), which is an important skill in our growing technological society.

The majority of Wilber's book describes the functions of Blogs, Wikis and digital stories and how to use them in an English Language Arts (ELA) classroom. She discusses how these tools allow students to develop their own thoughts and voices as writers, provide time for reflection, a place for collaborative writing and, most importantly, an opportunity to engage in writing on a daily basis. In addition, she states how writing digital stories, for example, requires the same framework as writing traditional stories. From this, Wilber notes that we are essentially teaching the same ideas with regards to writing, but must apply these skills to newer forms. Students have adapted to a world that traditional education is choosing to oppose or ignore and the literacy skills of our students are not matching up to what they need in order to navigate the 21st century (Wilber, 2010). The idea, then, is to recognize and acknowledge that students are writing on a regular basis, that this method of

Writing digital stories, for example, requires the same framework as writing traditional stories... we are essential teaching the same ideas with regards to writing, but must apply these skills to newer forms

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writing should not be deemed as invalid, but should be embraced as

a medium to use in order to engage students in classroom activities where they are able to see the connection between their personal and school lives.

Although Wilber does refer to some websites, she does not provide concrete examples of how students would be actively engaged in writing. In addition, although she does mention the significance for students to understand how to shape their writing on social media networks she does not really explain how to do this. In other words, she does not truly acknowledge the fact that students need to be taught how to write in publicly open, 'permanent' written spaces. Besides the basic grammatical skills, students must be aware of how the tone of their words and phrases are used to express their opinions and they must learn proper communicative writing skills in order for their thoughts and opinions to be taken seriously.

I believe that Wilber's book offers an excellent starting point for all English teachers to gather thoughts and ideas on using technology as a writing tool in the classroom. Although the traditional forms of writing are still significant and the 'standardization' of writing will continue to exist, educators cannot ignore the fact that there is now a new form of writing, a form which our students are actively engaged in and require the proper guidance.

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Graphic Novels: A Literary Superhero

Teaching Ideas

"Please put down your books and stop reading." These are words I thought I would never say as an English teacher; however, when I brought graphic novels into my classroom, I had to say these words more than once. I was first introduced to graphic novels as a High School Teacher Librarian. Many of the students were coming into the library holding what I thought were very thick comic books. They would sit down at the tables and get completely engrossed in what they were reading. I became curious and so I started asking questions. I asked if I could take a look at what they were reading. These books were not anything like the Archie and Superman comic books I had grown up with so I asked, "What are these books called?" The students replied very matter of factly, graphic novels. That was seven years ago and since then I have been on somewhat of a crusade to encourage teachers to incorporate this "literary superhero" into their teaching.

A graphic novel can be defined as a narrative told through the use of visuals and text. It is this combination of visuals and text that makes this literature format so inviting and exciting for my students. The visual element of graphic novels is what is so critical because today's students need to be more than just print text literate. In order to completely comprehend the story presented in a graphic novel, the students cannot just focus on the words, they need to "read" the pictures as well. Interacting with the text in this way has encouraged deeper comprehension because the students need to connect the pictures and the words that are presented in each panel and then follow the arrangement of panels in the correct sequential order to help them understand what they are reading. My students have been able to make better inferences about characters because they are able to hear the dialogue because of the way it is written in the speech bubbles or thought bubbles and they have learned the importance of paying attention to facial expressions and body language when analyzing character relationships. Reading graphic novels has helped my students become thoughtful and insightful readers by developing their abilities to make connections, ask questions, infer and synthesize the "big ideas". Teaching these strategies through the use of graphic novels has acted as a spring board for when we begin reading print text novels.

So, how did I introduce graphic novels to my students? Two resources were invaluable to me as I began to plan my lessons: *In Graphic Detail* by David Booth & Kathleen Gould Lundy and *Teaching Graphic Novels Practical Strategies for the Secondary ELA Classroom* by Katie Monnin.

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The following are some key elements that I focused on in my initial lessons because this would set the groundwork for all future lessons:

· Students must be shown how to read a graphic novel. There were some students who had never read a graphic novel before and were unsure of the reading sequence because they were most familiar

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with the left-to-right eye motion characteristic of print - text reading

· Students need to understand the text features of a graphic novel and how these text features work together to tell the story

· A discussion about the similarities and differences between print - text novels and graphic novels needs to occur so students can determine that even though the majority of differences revolve around text features, graphic novels and print text novels share the same elements of fiction (plot, setting, conflict, characters)

· Students need to be aware of facial expressions and body language to make inferences about characters

· The use of color to depict tone, mood and the passage of time

· How the language is conveyed through the use of speech bubbles, thought bubbles, caption boxes and sound effects

The first lesson I presented gave the students an opportunity to look at a variety of graphic novels , come up with a definition of a graphic novel and then look at the text features of a print text novel and graphic novel. Here is a sampling of the definitions my students came up with:

- "A graphic novel tells a story using both words and pictures. It has characters, setting, conflict, and a plot. Speech is delivered through bubbles rather than quotation marks. A graphic novel is like reading a movie."

- "A graphic novel is a novel that uses visuals and text to tell a story. The visuals and the text are in boxes. When the characters talk there are speech bubbles and when they are thinking there are thought bubbles."

- "A graphic novel is like a longer version of a comic book. It tells a story and has characters, setting and plot. Sometimes they are in color and sometimes they are in black and white. It is important to look at the pictures because they help tell the story. Graphic novels also have sound effects."

Once the class had come to an agreement on a definition, I then wanted them to look at the text features of a print text novel and a graphic novel. Below is a sample of the student handout.

After the students had some time to look at the text features, we then started to discuss the similarities and differences between a print text novel and a graphic novel.

The second lesson focused on what I believe to be the six most important Graphic Novel text features. I gave the students the following graphic organizer and as a class we discussed the definitions and then they had to find an example in their graphic novel and draw it (next page).

Once I had taught this lesson sequence, it was time for the students to start reading. In my grade 8 English classes, the

With Your Partner, take a look at a graphic novel and a print - text novel and write down 5 things you notice about each book.

Graphic Novel	Print - Text Novel

PT = Print - Text Novel GN= Graphic Novel

Similarities	Differences
· Both have speech, dialogue, conversation	· PT: character's speech is in quotation marks · GN: character's speech is in speech bubbles
· Both have chapters, page numbers	· PT: you read from left - right · GN: you read left - right; up & down
· Both have a plot / storyline	· PT: story is told in paragraphs · GN: story is told in boxes
· Both have characters	· PT: you have to imagine what the characters look like · GN: you can see what the characters look like

students read The Olympians series by George O'Connor. The series includes: Zeus, Athena, Hera and Hades. My original plan was to have the students read one of the myths, but they were enjoying the graphic novels so much, many of them asked if they could read all four!

My summative assessment for this unit of study was to have the students choose one of the myths they read and create a new character and a new scene that could be a plausible addition to the myth. They would demonstrate their understanding of character, setting, plot and graphic novel text features by creating a series of 8-10 panels that would introduce this new character into the original myth. To prepare the students for this task, a number of formative assessments were developed to help students understand how graphic novel authors and illustrators develop characters, setting and plot. After the students had read the first two chapters of their graphic novel, they identified the protagonist and completed a character analysis. This character analysis encouraged students to examine the protagonist's physical appearance as well as how his/her personality traits were revealed through actions, speech bubbles and thought bubbles. The students completed this character analysis in graphic novel style, by demonstrating their understanding of the character through the use of pictures and words. As they continued reading their graphic novel, students then focused on activities that helped them understand how the use of color is used to establish the various aspects of setting such as: mood, time and place. The final formative assessment focused on the elements of plot such as: initial incident, rising action, climax, falling action and outcome. Students were required to identify these incidents in the graphic novel and draw them in 8-10 panels using speech bubbles, thinking bubbles and caption boxes to explain their thinking.

I adapted my instruction throughout the unit by encouraging the voracious readers to read more than one of the graphic novels and they could choose which graphic novel they would use to complete the formative assessments. Struggling readers were given the choice to just focus on one of the graphic novels and their formative assessments were adapted in the following ways: instead of 3 personality traits, they had to identify 2 and instead of identifying 8-10 of the plot elements, they needed to show me that they could pick out 5 of the most important events in the order that they happened. These adaptations helped ensure success for all students and the successful completion of the formative tasks equipped the students with the necessary skills they would need to complete the summative assessment at the end of the unit.

My experiences with bringing graphic novels into the classroom have been more than positive. I have learned that graphic novels have the ability to entice a struggling reader and challenge a gifted reader. The struggling students in my classes experienced success and were able to clearly articulate to me through their assignments that they understood the characters, setting and plot of their graphic novel. As I circulated around the room and had conversations with them, I never got a sense that they felt overwhelmed with the text as they may have if I had chosen to do a whole class print-text novel. The visual component of the graphic novel enhanced

Term	Definition	Illustration
Panel	The box that contains the visuals and the text – most often a rectangle or a square. Each panel helps tell the story.	
Gutter	The space between the panels. The "glue" that holds the story together. The gutters give the reader a chance to process the information presented in a panel before he/she moves on to the next panel.	
Speech/Word Balloon	These balloons contain the character's speech and point towards his/her mouth.	
Thought Bubble	Bubbles that look like clouds that contain the character's thoughts. These bubbles come out of the character's head.	
Caption Box	Usually rectangular shaped boxes that are placed at the top of a panel. The caption boxes give the reader information about setting (time & place). They provide the type of information similar to a narrator in a play.	
Floating Panel	A smaller panel that "floats" on top of a panel. It is like a "zoomed in shot" of the bigger visual. Floating panels may focus in on one character's face or on a part of the setting to give the reader more detail.	

their understandings and gave them confidence that they could complete the assignments because they could read at their own pace and not feel like they had to keep up with the rest of the class. For the gifted readers in the class, they never felt bogged down by the pace that is sometimes taken with whole class novel instruction because they were given the opportunity to read more than one of the graphic novels and many of them chose to read all four. They were challenged to increase their vocabulary as we worked through the character descriptions and were pushed to make thoughtful observations about the visuals because at first, many of them were only reading the text and not really paying attention to the visuals. They had to be encouraged to "slow down" and read the pictures as well as the text because they were missing important visual cues and nuances that were a part of the story. Using graphic novels as a way to incorporate visual literacy into my English classes, which have traditionally focused mainly on print-text literacy, has been an exciting challenge for me and a worthwhile endeavor for all of my students.

References

Booth, D. & Lundy, K. (2007). *In graphic detail.* Markham, Ontario: Scholastic.

Monnin, K. (2010). *Teaching graphic novels. Practical strategies for the Secondary ELA classroom.* Gainesville, Florida: Maupin House Publishing.

Recommended Texts

Social Studies:

Scholastic Time Line Series:
This series of graphic novels has elements of both fiction and non-fiction and so they are a great way to teach text-to-text connections. As the students read the graphic novels, they identify the historical facts that are presented in the story and connect them to the information that is presented in their textbooks.

Grade 7

The Golden Scarab (Ancient Egypt)

Gladiator (Ancient Rome)

Set in Stone (Mesopotamia)

Grade 8

Beware the Vikings

Rebel Prince (Prince Henry),

Master Leonardo

Grades 8-10

Grades 8-10: Shakespeare Graphic Novels by Oxford University Press

A Midsummer Night's Dream

Romeo & Juliet

Macbeth

Grade 9 & up

Graphic Novels about the Holocaust

Good-bye Marianne, by Irene N. Watts & Illustrated by Kathryn E. Shoemaker

Anne Frank, by Sid Jacobson & Ernie Colon

Resistance, by Carla Jablonski & Leland Purvis

Maus I & II, by Art Spiegelman