

The background of the cover is a dark green. On the left, a laptop is open, showing a black screen. To the right of the laptop, there is a stack of books with various colored spines (orange, blue, red). In the foreground, a stack of papers or documents is fanned out, showing their edges and some text. The title 'VIRGINIA ENGLISH JOURNAL' is printed in white, with 'ENGLISH' in a black box. Below the title, 'VOLUME 63' and 'NUMBER 1' are printed in white.

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Editor

Daniel Woods
Department of English
Radford University
Radford, Virginia
Voice: (540) 831-6372
Fax: (540) 831-6800
E-mail: drwoods@radford.edu

**Editorial Assistant and
Production Coordinator**

Patricia Branch Kosty

Cover Design

Patricia Branch Kosty

Editorial Board

Pam White, Roanoke City Public Schools
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From the Editor's Desk

Hello and welcome to the Spring/Summer edition of the Virginia English Journal. I hope that you are reading this issue by a pool or on a beach or even near a campfire. Wherever you are I hope you are finding time to relax and rejuvenate as we start the summer and I am glad that the VEJ is with you.

We've undergone quite a few changes in the last few months and I'd like to thank all of you for the wonderful feedback and continued support. In keeping with the theme of change I do have one small announcement about a new aspect of the VEJ that will start with the next issue. In an effort to encourage scholarship by future teachers we will now be accepting articles by current undergrad and graduate students for a feature titled: "Promising Young Scholars." This new section will be an opportunity for outstanding students to share their research with an informed audience and for the teaching community to reflect on the thoughts and ideas of our future teachers.

Much like the "Great Teaching Ideas" section we have featured for many years, this section will be listed as a "feature" rather than a purely peer-reviewed article thus allowing us to maintain the high academic integrity of the journal, while also best serving our membership. Please encourage your best and brightest students to submit their work for this new feature.

Lastly, while I'm on the topic of submitting work, I would also encourage each of you to submit your own work, no matter it's form, to the VEJ. Your work allows us to continue to publish one of the best affiliate journals out there. One of my favorite things about the VEJ has always been the wide variety of works that we feature, both academic and creative. As a reader I was always happy to find a wonderful poem or piece of fiction placed nicely in between several research articles. The combination of works that nourished my love of literature with those that informed my pedagogy and ongoing scholarship always made the VEJ special to me. Like the editors that have gone before me, I have continuously considered the VEJ to be first and foremost a journal for the members and of the members of the Virginia Association for the Teachers of English. As such, I wholly believe that we should always strive to assure that it reflects the interests of those members. I encourage each of you to submit a piece or two of your work to your journal.

Enjoy your summer and I look forward to seeing all of you in Williamsburg in October.

Best,

Dan Woods

The Little Engine That DOES! An Interview with Dr. Patricia Proudfoot Kelly

At a recent symposium on undergraduate research writing at Virginia Tech this past February, I had the pleasure of partnering with Dr. Patricia Kelly on some group sharing we were doing as part of the program. Through our group discussions and introductions, I learned that not only is Dr. Kelly still quite passionate about and involved in the education school going on at Virginia Tech, though no longer in the classroom, she is in charge of an amazing program that brings VT to Malawi and has also been traveling to several other countries! I was instantly curious to learn more about the program and Dr. Kelly graciously agreed to meet for an interview.



popular. Though teaching was a female family tradition, Dr. Kelly did not initially wish to follow in her mother and grandmother's footsteps. In fact, she recalls saying to herself, "I am NOT going to be a teacher" and so pursued her education in economics, as well as English because she "just

loved it." In her first years of college, she took an Intro to Education course and recalls that immediately she knew: "I was home." To this day, Dr. Kelly believes that for those who pursue a career in education, "It's a calling."

Dr. Kelly has been an educator since 1959, earned her master's and doctorate, became a professor in a primarily male-dominated world, has served on the VATE board, attended and presented at NCTE for over 50 years, mentored students and teachers, published numerous articles, served on several editorial boards, presented both nationally and internationally, and most recently become an international educator. I remembered Dr. Kelly from VATE years ago and always thought she was so modestly effective in what she did. When I would see her from time to time

We started out our interview with coffee from the café in front of a roaring fireplace at the new South County Library in Roanoke with some background on where she attended school and started her career, and the origin of her middle name, Proudfoot, which I assumed was Native American. However, Dr. Kelly explained that it is actually an English name from her ancestors in Carlisle, England where the name is still quite

at VATE events, I again found her self-sufficiency and calm admirable. Before the NCTE conference in San Antonio a few years back, I was waiting for my plane at the Roanoke Regional Airport and saw Dr. Kelly also waiting with the obvious patience of a seasoned traveler, little did I know at the time how much traveling she had been doing.

Listening to her introduce herself in a break out group this winter at Virginia Tech for the symposium, I put it all together. I was so impressed at the generosity and commitment she exhibited when discussing the successes and challenges of student life and the various other pursuits in which she was involved on VT's campus, but the glow that came over her when she beamed about the Malawi project and her involvement in South Sudan was unmistakable. I wanted to know more about her past, present, and future in education and to share it with fellow educators to help spread her inspiration and continued zest for challenging herself to be an exemplary educator.

Though she was interested during our interview in our early conversation and contributed graciously, it was not until we moved into the part of her life story where she met and became a "follower" of Dr. Robert Small, who was then a graduate student at the University of Virginia, that the true joy and love for the type of teaching education she felt drawn to, came pouring out.

She went on to Virginia Tech to study under Dr. Small, who had become a professor at VT, and though she felt there was never a period of greater intellectual growth than that time spent learning at Virginia Tech, Dr. Kelly learned the ins and outs of the college world of education and was sometimes surprised at the challenges women still had to face. A long-time admirer of Gloria Steinem and even copied her personal style, Dr. Kelly was not to be deterred and, in fact, found her conviction through these experiences to be the best educator she could no matter the struggle. She felt the hardest step after she earned her doctorate was to go back to Cave Spring High School to pay back her three years in exchange for her degree. Even though she truly enjoyed teaching in the public schools, she had come to love the university environment and wanted to stay on doing the work she was doing. Dr. Kelly admitted though that, "The 60s and 70s, however, were some of the best times in public education because they allowed us to teach and allowed the kids to think." Like many educators today, Dr. Kelly believes that education is best left to the educators, but understands the sometimes necessary evils that politics can bring to the profession.

During these early teaching years, Dr. Kelly found a strong sense of connection to various English associations, particularly NCTE which was to her "synonymous with the *English Journal*,

[her] lifeline to other committed teachers sharing their ideas." She began attending the NCTE Convention in 1968 and remained an active member for over fifty years. Through her NCTE connections, she joined ALAN as recommended by Bob Small, and later was invited by Lynne Alvine to join WILLA, the assembly formed from the original NCTE Women's Committee.

Since 1977 when Dr. Kelly was asked to join the faculty at Virginia Tech, she has called Virginia Tech her home. Dr. Kelly also became involved in VATE during those years and was President in 1981. While at Virginia Tech, Dr. Kelly also became a member of the National Writing Project, something she said she "never expected to have such a profound impact on her personal and professional writing and her teaching," and is also still active with ALAN and IRA. In 1998, she became Director of Teacher Education at Virginia Tech and was awarded Professor Emerita of Teaching & Learning in 2003. Instead of resting on her achievements, she decided to make the most she could of them and even though she sometimes worried about her plans, she affirmed that, "You have to challenge yourself. I often think to myself, this is the time I am going to fail." Hard to imagine from someone who has more awards, honors, and international acclaim to tactfully mention in the space of this article. Browse her professor's page under professional and international experience, presen-

tations, grants and consultancies, or selected publications on the Virginia Tech website to see what I mean.

After all her successes and accomplishments, I asked her, "Why Malawi?" She explained, "It is called the Warm Heart of Africa" and it is a peaceful area of Africa with no civil war or political unrest, though certain dangers are inherent there. Dr. Kelly noted sadly, "Every family has lost someone to crocodiles. There are elephants and hippos everywhere and when we go across the river they make us wear a life jacket!" She giggled and shook her head in disagreement at the idea of staying afloat saying, "I would rather go fast!" Scary thought, but I can see her point.

This coming trip will be her 31st to Malawi alone as she has been traveling internationally five or six times a year as she has been done in the classroom since 1998/9. This all began for the Virginia Tech international master's program. Dr. Kelly explained that, "Virginia Tech professors would travel overseas on their 'down time' for three week programs making these degrees actual, legitimate Virginia Tech master's degrees. Some love it, but never go back, while some stay on. The new in-country master's program in South Sudan is for women only." She admits it has been quite a labor of love and that "never in a million years would I have guessed I would be doing this, but since 1999, it has just been phenomenal."



Her international work has taken her to several different countries and allowed her the opportunity to experience many cultures meeting unique people. Dr. Kelly is pictured above with some Maasai warriors in Kenya. She explained, “We were doing a two year project, which turned out to be three years because we were interrupted by a terrible killing spree that affected the whole country over a bad election process.” Though saddened by events such as this, Dr. Kelly realizes it is all the more reason for folks like herself to help where they can to bring education and opportunity for growth to these countries.

Her work with the Global Health Professionals project is focused on women, specifically the HIV-AIDS and nutrition issues in Africa. She learned the HIV-AIDS epidemic is largely “due to a road that runs north to south through the continent and straight through Malawi. They have signs in the schools to warn girls to stay away from the truckers who offer candy, and treats. The health Fellows are also trying to get women to the hospitals so children

wouldn't be born with HIV through the birth canal since moms can get vaccines.” Global Health is also concerned with improving nutrition in these regions. Dr. Kelly was again giggling as she was retelling stories about the ever-present “monkeys who steal the food in the gardens so brazenly that the women have to beat them away with sticks to protect the food.” Dr. Kelly went on to detail the amazing potential Malawi has to produce numerous crops as well as to harvest what is already available, if the people can be made aware of the options. Since there is no mandatory schooling in Malawi, less than 50% of the population goes to school so the need for education of all kinds



is great. Yet, Dr. Kelly commented that “Malawi has eleven languages which are all Bantu-oriented, but must learn and speak English to achieve in school.” I was so impressed as she went on to explain her treks first by vehicle then on foot through the bush to numerous villages wearing full-length skirts as was expected of the women, even those working in the fields. On one such ex-

cursion, Dr. Pat Kelly was joined by Dr. Kathy Kelly, a Radford professor (and fellow NCTE/VATE/ALAN associate and all-around amazing person). Both professors are pictured here with chickens as a further part of the project for the women's nutrition program.

When I managed to refocus in my role as interviewer and get back on task instead of being so completely engrossed in her delightful adventures, I jokingly said, "Isn't there anywhere else you have been or other things you have done?" Without skipping a beat, Dr. Kelly said, "Well actually, I was in East Germany six months after the wall went down. We were among the first Americans over there and were interviewed by the newspapers and all. It was truly amazing to see that hardly anything had been repaired. The Russians let the country fall apart." She said her travels to Europe to search her ancestry have been wonderful and she loves the historic architecture found throughout. Her favorite town is "Quedlinburg, East Germany where only one building was bombed in World War II by a stray. The town still has more half timber houses than any city in the world from year 900 which are still standing, while the rest of Germany was bombed to the ground and block after block after block was destroyed. Originally, the Americans had control of that city, but gave it to the Russians." While there, she stayed in a house that was from the year Shakespeare was born.

As our interview drew to a close, I asked Dr. Kelly some random questions like if there was anything she would go back and change at this point in her life. She confessed with a devious smile, "If I could go back, I would be an Art Historian. That would be the height of decadence for me." Her favorite quotation is: "Dance as if no one is watching, but I can't do this now because people will think I am crazy." Favorite author? "The poet I loved to teach was T.S. Elliot."

She might be unassuming in stature and initial presentation, but Dr. Patricia Proudfoot Kelly has accomplished more in her life than some entire school faculties combined might have. Perhaps due to the inspiration from her favorite book *The Little Engine That Could*. She admitted, "I always loved that book. It just resonated in my head. I found it in a flea market and when I read it again as an adult, I realized the little engine was a female! She did things that the boy ones wouldn't do! That blew me away! I still have that book on my shelf today."

Not only is Dr. Kelly, Pat to many, an extremely accomplished educator for more than five decades, she is a inspirational humanitarian using her energy and much heart to spread her special brand of education all the way around the world to Malawi, Africa and beyond. In all my previous encounters with Dr. Kelly, I couldn't help but notice no matter the situation she projected

a peaceful, demure confidence while clearly and firmly expressing herself. In the field of education, Dr. Kelly has been and continues to stay on top of her profession and to be a role model to so many - just the international praise and affection that exudes from her Facebook page tells a story in itself. Dr. Kelly says her future will be working on more projects for Virginia Tech in South Sudan and Egypt and that she still wants to develop a study abroad program in Kyrgyzstan. Somewhat hesitantly she revealed, "I have to quit at some point. I am 74 and am still hiking with the students in Malawi. When I have to sit at the bottom of the hill, then I will quit, but I can still climb the hill and that is why I am still out there."



Christine Woods holds a B.A. in English from Longwood University, an M.Ed. in Educational Psychology from the University of Virginia, is a NVWP Teacher Consultant '96, NBCT '07, VATE Past-President '08-'09, current PATE President, Roanoke Valley Reads Photography Chair, is currently teaching English at the Roanoke Valley Juvenile Detention Center and Virginia Western Community College, and is the mother of two middle school daughters she adores.

Creative Writing

Returning to ubiquitous essays,
Savoring lost summer longings.
Scary ghoulish plotted stories and
Witch's hat shape poems for Halloween.
Grateful acrostics or hunting essays for Thanksgiving.
Essays reminiscing about Christmas treats
And favorite snowy hills sled races.
Ambitious January resolutions,
Unrequited February love poems,
Spring blossom haiku, and final research papers.

Now we just write essays and more essays,
Even an essay about how to write an essay.
Administrators praise my metacognitive strategies
While I'm cursed by my poor beleaguered students.
All that remains is the omnipresent research paper:
Poe's death theories, modern versus ancient ballads,
Events around the era of Mocking Bird slayings.
Edited, documented, buried in MLA form
Which students never supported anyway.

– Anita Brown Booth

Anita Brown Booth teaches 9th and 10th grade English at Craig County High School and lives in Roanoke, Virginia. She loves literature, writing, especially poetry, and teaching.

Resources for English Teachers: Who Knew and How?

We know how important education is to the success of both individuals and nations in today's world. We also know how critical good teachers are to students' educational success. What has not always been clear, historically, is what teachers should actually teach in secondary English classes, given the changing nature of English as a discipline. Whether we use the Common Core State Standards (CCSS) or the Virginia 2010 Standards of Learning (SOL) as a template for what students should know and be able to do, it is clear that our expectations of secondary English teachers have evolved radically since the first attempts to define the discipline in the late 19th century. As expectations increase and resources for professional development dwindle, an important concern arises: What resources are English teachers using in their efforts to enable themselves to teach an evolving discipline with changing societal expectations, and how do they discover those resources? This study identified how frequently certain professional resources are used by secondary English teachers in Virginia public schools as well as how teachers become familiar with those resources.

Literature Review

Importance of Good Teachers

In Preparing Teachers for a Changing World: What Teachers Should Learn and Be Able to Do (2005), a study commissioned by the National Academy of Education, Darling-Hammond and Bransford noted that "education is increasingly important to the success of both individuals and nations Standards for learning are now higher than they have ever been before, as citizens and workers need greater knowledge and skill to survive and succeed" (p. 2). Moreover, "growing evidence demonstrates that—among all educational resources—teachers' abilities are especially crucial contributors to students' learning" (Darling-Hammond, & Bransford, p. 2). Students who have effective teachers three years in a row have 50% higher scores on achievement tests than students with ineffective teachers during the same period (Zuckerman, 2011). In Ferguson and Ladd's (1996) study of Alabama students, they found that "together, teachers' academic ability, education, and experience, when combined with class sizes, accounted for more of the predicted difference in student achievement gains in

mathematics between districts scoring in the top and bottom quartiles than poverty, race, and parent education” (Darling-Hammond, & Bransford, p. 14). Clearly, good teachers are a critical component of a 21st century education.

Changes in English as a Discipline

In the 1890s, the “Committee of Ten attempted to clarify the purpose of high school English, to reconcile and balance the different strands that then were being taught under the umbrella of English—grammar, philology, rhetoric, literature—and to unify the field into a common focus” (Milner, Milner, & Mitchell, 2012, p. 3). This involved a compromise that yoked communication and literature into one discipline with a shifting and precarious balance between the two. When the National Council of Teachers of English (NCTE) first considered the question “What is secondary English?” in 1916, the answer was “Nobody knows” (Milner, Milner, & Mitchell, p. 2). While all teachers must be “adaptive experts” who are prepared for effective lifelong learning that allows them continuously to add to their knowledge and skills” (Darling-Hammond, & Bransford, 2012, p. 3), teachers of secondary English must manage developing proficiency in new literacies as well as struggling with the essential vagueness of English as a discipline, a vagueness that has historically made English a discipline in process. English teachers,

more than teachers in any discipline, must constantly revise and refine their teaching skills.

According to *21st Century Literacies: An NCTE Policy Research Brief* (2007), today’s employees engage with a technology-driven, diverse, and quickly changing ‘flat world.’ English/language arts teachers need to prepare students for this world with problem solving, collaboration, and analysis—as well as skills with word processing, hypertext, LCDs, Web cams, digital streaming podcasts, smart boards, and social networking software—central to individual and community success. (p. 1).

These skills—referred to as digital literacies, 21st century literacies, technology and/or multimodal skills—are currently codified in the 2010 *Common Core State Standards* (CCSS), the International Society for Technology in Education (ISTE) *National Educational Technology Standards for Students* (2012) and *National Educational Technology Standards for Teachers* (2012), and the NCTE (2008) *Definition of 21st Century Literacies*. In public schools in the Commonwealth of Virginia, the *Curriculum Framework for 2010 English Standards of Learning*, which has been aligned with the CCSS, defines these literacies. Responsibility for teaching these new literacies is, invariably, within the purview of English

teachers. Given the exponential rate of change in new literacies and technology tools, preparing English teachers to be proficient and to maintain that proficiency over the course of their careers is problematical.

Staying Current in a Shifting, Ill-defined Discipline

The U.S. will need 1.7 to 2.7 million new teachers in the next 20 years (Hewitt, 2009, p. 12). With as many as 50% of new teachers leaving the profession within the first five years of their careers (Ingersoll, & Smith, 2003) and attrition through retirement, school systems must constantly replace teachers. While new teachers may be trained in the literacies and best practices current at their graduation, those skills may quickly become outdated. Standards created—and constantly updated—by organizations such as NCTE, ISTE, CCSS, and departments of education help teachers with what to teach if they are aware of the standards. Standards do not provide guidance on how to teach. According to Zemelman, Daniels, and Hyde's (2012) meta analysis of best practices, one indicator of best practice is teacher attitude and outlook. When teachers take professional initiative, when they perceive themselves as directors of their own professional growth rather than as recipients of staff development, their students benefit. A professional teacher "following best practice standards . . . is aware of current research and consistently of-

fers clients the full benefits of the latest knowledge, technology, and procedures" (Zemelman, Daniels, & Hyde, p. 1). Amid budget cuts to education, it is often difficult for teachers to attend conferences and "advocate for professional efficacy by insisting that they be given the time and resources required to make the best decisions for their students" (Lindbloom, 2013, p. 11). Teachers may be left to their own resources: learning from experience, reading, and collaboration with other teachers to increase their awareness of resources and instructional possibilities (McCann, 2013, pp. 21-22). According to Smylie's (1989) study, teachers ranked learning about teaching from actual experience in the classroom as the most important source of new pedagogy while ranking consulting other teachers as second. In this study, we examined how English teachers discover the teaching resources they need to remain current in both content and best practices.

Methodology

Research Design

We had two research questions: (1) What resources do English teachers routinely use? (2) How do English teachers become aware of resources? We used a mixed methods online survey as the most efficient way to reach a cross-section of Virginia secondary English teachers and obtain both quantitative data and qualitative personal response.

Participants

Our 230 participants were a convenience sampling of English teachers working in all eight Virginia Department of Education (VDOE) regions of the Commonwealth. [See Table 1.] The majority (80%; n=184) had experience teaching high school English while half (50%; n=115) had experience teaching middle school English; only 7.39% (17) had elementary language arts experience. Over half (60.43%; n=139) had more than ten years' teaching experience; 26.09% (n=60) had four to nine years' teaching experience; 10.43%

The 2009 *Virginia School Divisions Locale Descriptions* uses slightly different designations for the 133 divisions in the Commonwealth: Rural (Fringe, Distant), Suburban (Large, Midsize), Town (Distant, Fringe, Remote), and City (Small, Middle, Large). Moreover, while there are more rural divisions (59.39%; n=79) in Virginia than there are areas designated as city (12.03%; n=16), town (15.03%; n=20), or suburban (13.53%; n=18), the number of teachers per division and the total number of teachers in rural divisions would be lower with many systems having only one high school, for exam-

Table 1: Virginia Regions in Which Participants Have Taught

Regions	1 Central Virginia	2 Tidewater	3 Northern Neck	4 Northern Virginia	5 Valley	6 Western Virginia	7 Southwest	8 Southside
% of Participants	26.09%	16.96%	1.74%	33.04%	9.13%	3.91%	6.96%	16.09%
# of Participants	n=60	n=39	n=4	n=76	n=21	n=9	n=16	n=37

(n=24) had one to three years' experience; 3.04% (n=7) had less than a year of experience.

Three participants skipped the question about their current teaching assignment; more than half of those responding (n=227) currently teach in a suburban school system (51.10%; n=116); 32.16% (n=73) currently teach in a rural system; and 16.74% (n=38) currently teach in an urban system. It is difficult to determine how representative this is of the state's school systems.

ple. According to the 1990 U. S. Census, which used only rural and urban designations, 30.61% (n=1,894,000) of the population of Virginia lived in rural areas while 69.38% (n=4,293,000) lived in urban areas, which included populous suburban areas. Our participants are close to being representative of the population of Virginia in the 1990 census: If we combine our urban and suburban designations as the U.S. Census Bureau did, 67.84% of our 2013 participants worked in urban schools, compared to 69.38% of the general popula-

tion; 32.16% of our participants were in rural schools compared to 30.61% of the general population.

A majority (64.78%) of participants hold a master's degree (n=149); an additional 19.57% (n=45) have completed some graduate school; and 2.17% (n=5) have a doctorate. More than 86% of participants (n=199) have taken graduate-level courses. According to the 2012-2013 VDOE *State Report Card*, 55% of Virginia's teachers have a master's degree while 1% have a doctorate; this study's sampling of English teachers has a higher than average number of teachers with advanced degrees.

Instruments

We created an eight-question online survey using SurveyMonkey. [See Appendix A.] Five of the questions concerned demographics: grade level experience; years of teaching experience; experience teaching in which Virginia regions; description of current school system as rural, suburban, or urban; and level of education. Question 6 asked teachers to indicate their awareness and use of 13 online resources for English teachers using a 4-point semantic differential scale: 1) Not aware of; never use 2) Aware of; never use 3) Aware of; use occasionally and 4) Aware of; use often. Question 7 asked teachers to indicate how they became aware of each resource, checking all that applied: Not aware of, University classes, Professional development, School administrators,

Colleagues, and Self-discovery. The VDOE and NCTE sponsor 12 of the 13 resources. The VDOE resources include the Curriculum Framework, Test Blueprints/Released Tests, Online Writing Resources, Vocabulary Resources, ESS Sample Lesson Plans, and Teacher Direct. NCTE resources included Standards for the English Language Arts; Book Publishing Program; Hot Topics; Journals; Position Statements and Policy Briefs; and Readwritethink.org, created in conjunction with the International Reading Association (IRA). VDOE and NCTE resources were included as being crucial to staying current in expectations of English teachers working in Virginia. Thinkfinity, a commercial site, was included because one of the researchers uses it frequently for her high school teaching.

Question 8 was an open-ended question: What else would you like for us to know about your awareness of and/or the availability of resources? The open-ended question at the end of the survey questionnaire offered respondents the opportunity to correct misconceptions and to add details, resources, and information not addressed by the closed questions.

Procedures

Data collection. We created a list of email addresses for Virginia's middle and high school English teachers using information linked from the VDOE online *Virginia Public Schools – School*

Division Menu by Region. We sent an email to 519 individual English teachers, English department chairs, and English curriculum specialists in Virginia public schools April 9, 2013, asking that they complete our online survey about resources for English teachers and forward the email to teachers in their school or division. [See Appendix B.] We sent out a reminder email April 15. [See Appendix C.] During the nine days the survey was open, 230 teachers responded.

Data analysis. We used the data analysis and filtering features of SurveyMonkey to analyze quantitative responses. We pasted the qualitative data, responses to the open-ended question, into a Microsoft Word document and examined the responses, employing memos, coding, data display, and connecting strategies to identify common themes and to determine the frequency of common responses.

Limitations. While our participants are better educated than the general teaching population in Virginia, we can find no data to determine if they are better educated than the general population of English teachers in Virginia. They may be a self-selected group of especially responsible teachers; people who take the time to complete a survey like this in the busiest time of the school year may not be representative of all Virginia teachers or Virginia English teachers. Participants are close (within

1.54%) to being representative of the urban, suburban, and rural population of Virginia.

As with any study in which participants self-report, validity may be a concern. We have no way of determining if teachers accurately reported the resources they know and use or where they learned about those resources. Since there was nothing connecting respondents to their responses, it is difficult to imagine what would motivate misrepresentation other than simple human error; however, there were errors of this type. For example in Question 6, 106 participants checked that they were not aware of and never used Teacher Direct, but in Question 7, 110 participants checked that they were not aware of Teacher Direct. Moreover, the use of a semantic differential scale may also have caused errors. How consistently can individuals differentiate between using a source occasionally or often? A larger sampling might produce different results.

Research Findings

Research Question 1: What resources do English teachers routinely use?

Participants were asked to indicate level of awareness and frequency of use for each of the 13 listed resources. The majority of those surveyed indicated Aware of; Use Occasionally or Aware of; Use

Often for four resources: VDOE Curriculum Framework (89.13%; n=205), VDOE Test Blueprints/Released Tests (84.78%; n=195), VDOE Online Writing Resources (77.19%; n=176), and Readwritethink.org (67.54%; n=154). Readwritethink.org is the only non-VDOE resource that the majority of those surveyed are aware of and use at least occasionally. More than 90% of those surveyed were at least aware

A majority of those surveyed did not select Aware of; Use often for any resource; however, many of the resources—especially the VDOE resources—are used typically only at certain times during the academic year. At least 89.13% all teachers (n=205), regardless of how long they had been teaching, use the VDOE Curriculum Framework, a resource used throughout the year. Only 42.86% of participants (n=3) who

Table 2. Resource Use by Years of Teaching Experience

Resource	< 10 Years Teaching Experience n=91	>10 Years Teaching Experience n=139
VDOE Curriculum Framework	87.91%; n=80	89.92%; n=125
VDOE Blueprints/Rel. Tests	81.32%; n=74	87.05%; n=121
VDOE Online Writing Res.	72.22%; n=65	80.44%; n=111
VDOE Vocabulary Resources	40%; n=36	50.36%; n=70
VDOE ESS Sample Lessons	28.89%; n=26	37.68%; n=52
VDOE Teacher Direct	25.84%; n=25	30.37%; n=41
NCTE Standards	40%; n=36	56.12%; n=78
NCTE Journals	18.89%; n=17	39.13%; n=54
NCTE Position & Policy	6.6%; n=6	17.39%; n=24
NCTE/IRA	72.23%; n=65	64.49%; n=89
Readwritethink.org		
Thinkfinity	6.6%; n=6	18.87%; n=26

of three VDOE resources: Curriculum Framework (97.83%), Test Blueprints/Released Tests (97.83%), and Online Writing Resources (92.54%).

had been teaching for less than a year use the VDOE SOL Test Blueprints/Released Tests compared to 86.10% of participants (n=192) with at least one full year of experience.

In general, the 91 participants who had been teaching for less than 10 years were less likely to use resources than the 139 participants who had been teaching for 10 years or more. [See Table 2.] One exception to this was Readwritethink.org. Of those teaching for less than 10 years, 72.23% (n=65) use Readwritethink.org compared to 64.49% (n=89) of those who have been teaching for 10 years or more.

Teachers in suburban schools were at least 12% more likely to use NCTE Standards of Learning for English Language Arts than teachers in urban or rural schools: 60% of suburban teachers (n=69) reported using the NCTE Standards compared to 47.36% of urban (n=15) and 34.25% of rural teachers (n=25).

VDOE's Teacher Direct, made live in September 2012, has been in existence less than a year; 47.32% of those surveyed were not aware of and never use this resource; only 28.57% (n=64) use Teacher Direct occasionally or often. VDOE Vocabulary Resources, released January 2013, have never been used by 53.71% (n=123) of participants; however, it is noteworthy that 46.29% (n=106) already use the new vocabulary resources occasionally or often.

More than half of those surveyed were not aware of four resources: Thinkfinity (62.88%; n=144), NCTE Book Publishing Program (57.21%; n=131), NCTE

Hot Topics (55.26%; n=126), and NCTE Position Statement and Policy Briefs (50.88%; n=116).

Research Question 2: How do English teachers become aware of resources?

Those surveyed were asked to indicate how they heard about each of the 13 listed resources. The responses to this part of the survey included Not Applicable (I am not aware of the resource.), University classes, Professional development, School administrators, Colleagues, and Self discovery. Participants could select one or more answers.

University classes. The majority of participants indicated university classes as the source of resource discovery for none of the 13 resources; however, NCTE resources had the highest numbers. NCTE Standards for English Language Arts, for example, were introduced in 24.11% of participants' (n=54) university classes; NCTE journals were introduced in 19.28% (n=43) of participants' university classes. Only 10.92% (n=25) learned about the VDOE Curriculum Framework through course work; only 8.33% (n=19) learned about Test Blueprints/Released Tests that way.

Professional development & school administrators. The major source of information about VDOE resources came through professional development, which we have combined with administrators since participants found

Table 3. How Participants Learned about VDOE Resources: Professional Development & Administrators

Resource	Professional Development	Administrators	Total
Curriculum Framework	43.23%; n=99	41.48%; n=95	84.71%; n=194
Test Blueprints/Released Tests	39.04%; n=89	41.23%; n=94	80.27%; n=183
Online Writing Resources	37.00%; n=84	37.89%; n=86	74.89%; n=170
Vocabulary Resources	28.70%; n=64	26.01%; n=58	54.71%; n=122
ESS Sample Lesson Plans	26.36%; n=58	26.82%; n=59	53.18%; n=117
Teacher Direct	10.91%; n=24	20.91%; n=46	31.82%; n=70

it difficult to separate the two. More than half of participants stated that they discovered all VDOE resources except Teacher Direct through these sources. [See Table 3.]

Colleagues. Colleagues were a significant source of information on these VDOE resources: 34.06% Curriculum Framework (n=78), 35.96% Blueprints/Released Tests (n=82), and 34.36% Online Writing Resources (n=78). Additionally, 29.20% (n=66) checked colleagues as a source of information on NCTE/IRA's Readwritethink.org.

Self-discovery. The source most frequently found through self-discovery was Readwritethink.org (39.38%; n=89), followed by NCTE journals (29.15%; n=65) and NCTE Standards (28.57%; n=64). The most common source of information for all NCTE resources was self-discovery.

Participants' Concerns

Of the 43 participants who responded to the open-ended question, 7 offered disclaimers for not knowing about or using resources: training or teaching out of state (n=2); not teaching juniors (n=2); being a special education English teacher (n=1); switching from mathematics to English (n=1); and believing that all NCTE resources required a paying membership (n=1). An additional 37 participants chose to respond to this question: What else would you like for us to know about your awareness of and/or the availability of resources? Their responses connected to three general themes: lack of time, problems with resources, and what works.

Lack of time. Six participants regretted having so little time to "read, investigate, and work the resources into plans" because "other needs are pressing." As one participant put it, "I've always ob-

served that teachers are incredibly practical human beings. If a lesson plan is not ready to use/adapt quickly, it won't be used. Similarly, if we are slammed with grading 100 essays, we will never stop to read about what's going on at NCTE (which was highly emphasized by my MAT program). There is simply no time for anything other than putting out the nearest fire, so to speak!" One noted that "curriculum specialists are desperately needed in all schools but who has the money?" Another wanted "a period of time to look for and USE the many resources available . . . or be in-serviced on the usefulness of these resources." Another respondent requested "Content-specific professional development offered by the school district . . . to better understand all that is available for use on VDOE's website and other affiliated sites."

Problems with resources. One problem with resources connected to lack of time is that 4 participants perceived resources as not being user-friendly, from having "almost too much to look at" to being "very vague," or "lacking in content . . . not teacher or classroom ready . . . too shallow to constitute a full class period." On the other hand, 2 participants specifically stated that the VDOE website has become "much more user-friendly and content-helpful since the new curriculum change." Another 3 respondents stated that they were simply "overwhelmed with information," had "no way of organizing or remembering

what's available where," and would like to see a database with an annotated list, including whether resources are free or not. Three participants specifically requested that VDOE release more practice test items for the new 2013 Writing and Reading end-of-course exams early in the year. One participant requested help designing assessments aligned with SOL and VMAST; another specifically requested "websites or activities that I could use to reinforce or remediate problems with subject verb agreement and other grammar problems"; a third thought it "would be much more useful to have access to simple strategies that can be employed in the classroom."

What works. Four respondents mentioned what they found especially helpful: "Once I found Readwritethink.org, I felt I had a great jumping off point and didn't spend a lot of time looking for other resources. I also have a department that shares, so I may use items that a colleague found from one of the resources I think I never use." Another noted, "My curriculum supervisor does an outstanding job of making sure I have updates from DOE and other resources." One found the superintendent's weekly memos and now Teacher Direct helpful. A fourth participant listed conferences, "Promethean Planet—especially the active charts, and You Tube" as being helpful. Participants also use these resources: National Writing Project site, op-ed pages, online

VDOE courses, Stenhouse and Heinemann Press newsletters, Accomplished Teacher SmartBrief, College Board, VASS, VDOE's previously offered Lead Teacher Training Conferences, and Content Teaching Academies ("but they require a much longer time commitment").

Discussion

The Role of Universities

One of us is an English educator and the other a recent master's graduate, so we are concerned about universities' role in informing teachers about resources. It is disturbing that so few teachers learned about VDOE and NCTE resources in their university coursework. Some teachers may have been educated out of state. Some teachers undoubtedly were educated before the Virginia SOL were instituted in 1995 or the NCTE Standards for English Language Arts were first published in 1996. Because of the way we collected data on teachers' years of experience, we have no way of identifying those teachers. Some VDOE resources are very new, but it is discouraging to hear that only 19.78% (n=18) of the 91 participants teaching for less than ten years report learning about the VDOE Curriculum Framework in a university class.

Only 43.18% (n=38) of the 91 participants with less than ten years' experience report learning about the NCTE

Standards in university classes. Over half of all participants had never heard of the NCTE Position Statements and Policy Briefs—a wonderful source for best practice: 52.47% (n=117) or 50.88% (n=116) based on the varying responses to Question 6 and Question 7. Of the 35.96% (n=82) of all participants who had heard of the NCTE Position Statements and Policy Briefs but never use them, only 11.66% (n=26) learned about them in university classes.

Participants checked as many choices as they wished for how they discovered sources, so their reports are not a matter of selecting colleagues or administrators over classes as a source of resource discovery. In Smiley's study (1989), teachers ranked learning about teaching from actual experience in the classroom as the most important while ranking consulting other teachers as second. Having a colleague demonstrate how to use the Curriculum Framework to produce a pacing guide is more useful and memorable than theoretical material presented and tested by a professor; nevertheless, this lack of awareness of crucial material is a real concern to English educators. At our university, we will certainly take additional measures to assure that our graduates have a working knowledge of important resources and the ability—and will—to discover new ones on their own. The fact that most teachers

are finding out about these resources in other ways shows that English teachers are resourceful and willing to assist colleagues, but it is a concern that they need to do so.

The Role of Educators and Professional Development

It is clear that professional development, administrators, colleagues, and self-discovery provide the well-educated English teachers who participated in this study with resources demanded by their ever-expanding, ever-changing discipline. From teachers' responses to the open-ended question, it is also clear that teachers need time to discover, share, and use new resources on a systematic basis as part of regularly scheduled professional development. We would argue that having routinely scheduled time is even more crucial for English teachers because of the evolving nature of their discipline and the additional demands on their time brought by teaching and evaluating writing. Instead of one-size-fits-all professional development, providing English teachers with protected time in which they can function as directors of their own professional growth rather than as recipients of staff development will benefit their students.

The Role of State Organizations

Open-ended responses made it apparent that English teachers need a clearinghouse for information. Teacher Direct, the new nine-month-old feature

of the VDOE website, may serve this purpose as more people discover it. The site, "user-friendly and content-helpful" as one participant noted, is organized in three sections: News, Events, and Library. The News link has three sections: Headlines; Discipline; and Topics, which includes Opportunities for Teachers, Opportunities for Students, Policy and Data Updates, and SOL Testing. According to the website, opportunities include "information on grants, scholarships, awards, contests, and VDOE committees." The Events link provides a searchable database of professional development offered by the VDOE, organized by date and topic. The Library offers a well-organized repository of resources on the SOL and SOL testing. Not long ago a teacher's only source for information from VDOE was to call the central office in the school system or cull relevant bits from reams of state superintendent's memos. Teacher Direct provides a searchable center that teachers can use to discover professional news, opportunities, and resources.

The Virginia Association of Teachers of English (VATE), the state affiliate of the NCTE, may be able to provide another centralized clearinghouse for information. In the past, the VATE website has hosted an annotated list of resources prepared by members of the organization as well as an ambitious, interactive literary map of Virginia writers, last updated in 2009. The literary map in-

cludes links to teaching resources. The annotated list of resources is currently not available on the website; moreover, there is no system in place to periodically revise, organize, and update the resource list. At the May 2013 VATE Board meeting, there was discussion of updating the literary map in time for the 2014 NCTE conference at the National Harbor near Washington, DC. Developing and maintaining these databases requires endless hours of work researching, writing, and publishing online. University affiliates of VATE might engage their preservice members in maintaining these databases in collaboration with inservice teachers, who know what resources are actually useful to their practice. At the May Board meeting, there was also discussion about making all VATE publications, including *Virginia English Journal*, available online. The Board came to no conclusion, torn between reserving publications as a benefit of membership and offering them as a shared resource. VATE's Board and membership might do two things: 1) establish a resources

chair to assure that its website offers a current, searchable repository of resources based on the suggestions of English language arts teachers; 2) make its resources a complement to VDOE resources and available to everyone at no charge.

Defining the content of English classes may be a moving target. As content, literacies, and technologies change, the knowledge and skills required of English teachers may alter. Our participants have made it clear that one thing does not change: English teachers need *time* to keep up with the changing landscape of English, time to follow best practices, *time* to become "aware of current research [so they can offer their students] . . . the full benefits of the latest knowledge, technology, and procedures" (Zemelman, Daniels, & Hyde, 2012, p.1). When universities, educators, and state organizations work together as a close professional community to support each other, we see the best outcomes for English teachers and for their students.

Appendix A: Online Survey

The survey is found at this url: <https://www.surveymonkey.com/s/XCSHKD7>

Appendix B: Email Request

Dear English Teacher,

As English teachers ourselves, we are writing to request your help in gathering data on English teacher resources through an online survey that will take approximately 10 minutes to complete. We know that you do not have time even to breathe—especially at this point in the school year, so we greatly appreciate your participation in this research. Department heads, would you please pass this along to your colleagues?

Please follow this link to take the survey: <http://www.surveymonkey.com/s/XC-SHKD7> We look forward to getting your response by Wednesday, April 17.

No known risks are linked with your completion of the survey, and your participation is voluntary and confidential. If you have questions, please let us know.

Thank you,
Brittany Clark, M.A. candidate, & Robin Smith

Appendix C: Email Reminder

Dear English Teacher,

Thank you so much for your help with our survey. We have had an excellent response rate because of you. If you have not completed it yet, there is still time. Follow this link: <http://www.surveymonkey.com/s/XCSHKD7> by Wednesday, April 17.

Best,
Brittany Clark, M.A. candidate, & Robin Smith

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Robin Smith earned her BA and MA in English literature from Longwood University and her PhD in instructional technology from George Mason University. She taught high school English for over 25 years in rural and suburban areas of Virginia and is currently teaching English education courses at Longwood; her research interests are 21st century literacies and teacher preparation as well as English language history and dialect prejudices.

Brittany Clark earned her BA in English from George Mason University in 2010 and her MA in English from Longwood University in 2013. She has experience teaching 7th, 9th, and 12th grades in various public school systems. She is currently employed by Lynchburg City Schools.

“Story Board”

Our lives are performed for an audience of our peers. Will we be loved or applauded or panned or reviewed favorably or not attended and closed early, a failure. Or will we become the play of everyman, a morality play, good versus evil lived daily, Arthur Miller and *The Death of a Salesman* or like a Neil Simon comedy *The Goodbye Girl* or an Andrew Lloyd Weber musical or a dense, Off-Broadway edgy performance written by Sam Shepherd. We are all

practitioners in many arts, but in the end we are dramatists “who strut and fret our hour upon the stage and then are heard no more, you know, walking shadows. Will we be like Horatio, when Hamlet said, “I knew him well,” holding up the skull for scrutiny. Will we be anonymous, known by few, overlooked in death, a tribute to a life not well lived? Or will we go not “gently into that good night,” every day a day to walk the boards, to be heard, Spalding Gray, Spalding Gray.

Stop the world, I want to get off, said Edward Albee, but I can’t get off if I am called back for an encore, please, one after the other, curtain call, curtain call, in the spotlight please, not in the morass of a mall, not a small life, but a large and full one, damn the torpedoes, full speed ahead. I know “for whom the bell tolls,” and it is not for me, not for me, not for me, on this day. . . .

A script. A script. I need a script. I cannot do this impromptu. I must have a script. What is my motivation? Who is playing me? Who is playing my love interest? Who must I fight? What incident will drive me to the ultimate conflict. I have forgotten my words. What will I do? Line . . . , line . . . , line . . . ,
All Quiet on the Western Front. Hairspray. Hairspray.

– Herb Thompson

Herb Thompson is a Professor of Education at Emory & Henry College and is a widely published poet, essayist, and literary critic. His research interests include the American West, play, literacy, and educational policy.

Rethinking Research: A Multigenre Movement from Canon to Choice

In today's classrooms where educators are asked to teach 21st Century Literacy Skills, the challenge for many teachers becomes how to teach children of diverse cultures, learning styles, and abilities sitting in the same classroom. Looking out at my own classes of high school seniors, I see a great gulf from one student to the next. There are many varied knowledge levels, motivation levels, and socio-economic levels. Identity becomes a mutable trait as students try to figure out where they fit in to today's schools.

Geeta, an Indian-born, American-raised teenage girl struggles with her sari as she tries to thread her earbuds so she can listen to her e-reader; Jamie, a boy who walks the line between his African-American and Chinese-American roots draws Manga as he reads along with his book, responding to what he has read with an art form he loves; Julie scribbles furiously in the margins of her book as she talks back to her text; Dale walks around the room holding his book out in front of him, moving his body as his eyes scan the pages, needing that movement to focus on the task at hand. These students know the inevitable "assessment" is coming, so they record their responses as readers, but in a way that stays true

to their style of expression and learning. There is an air of ease in our classroom because students know they have choice when it comes to what they read and how they show their mastery of skills.

It was not always this way though. Like many teachers who came to this profession, I had a degree, an interest in the profession, experience with my own kids, and the inevitable "binder" that awaits you as a new teacher. The "binder" supposed to guide you through the mechanics of laying out how to teach your subject, but in my experience, there is no factoring of actual students and classroom environment in that binder. My binder gathered dust on a shelf my first year as I struggled, made mistakes, learned from some, and survived. Robert Frost once said "In three words I can sum up everything I've learned about life- it goes on..." and that sage wisdom guided me my first year. Whether I was ready for it or not the life in my classroom continued on every day.

A new direction for stale curriculum

As I contemplated the year ahead and the skills I needed my students to leave our school with, I was drawn to a desire

to help guide them into figuring out some of those issues of identity. I wanted my students to leave high school with a sense of what they believe in, an appreciation and recognition of their strengths, and an awareness of how their community has shaped them. Tall order, but important. In my pre-teaching education, I had done a great deal of research about multigenre composition and I recognized the approach as a viable avenue for the curriculum style I wanted to implement- one brimming with choice and voice.

An Ohio Writing Project teacher, John Gaughan, wrote a book that I poured myself into. *Reinventing English* chronicled Gaughan's own experiences in the classroom utilizing a Contact Zone curriculum, and more specifically, his use of multigenre composition. Contact Zone Theory, and the arts of this curriculum approach, offer a possible answer to how I could scaffold all my students into the higher-order thinking necessary for the modern global workplace and, yet, still accommodate their multiple learning styles and modes of expression. As Gaughan points out, Contact Zone Theory offers a space where myriad voices and modes of expression contend with each other and find their place in the educational system. It has been suggested by researchers and educators that the pedagogical arts of the Contact Zone hold the potential to, perhaps, recast the traditional curriculum and, ultimately, give

access to avenues of critical thinking and expression to students of diverse populations and learning styles. I wanted to observe how my real-life students would respond to this approach and type of assessment.

Choice is an important aspect of my educational philosophy, and I felt that offering that option in the realm of research writing(the most arduous and dry part of our curriculum thus far) might help kids see that research and the composition that goes with it can be fun and exciting! My hope was that my students would dig deeper into their topics, see diverse points of view, and develop an appreciation for the inquiry process.

Tom Romano first introduced the idea of the "multigenre" research paper as an avenue for diverse learners to develop critical analysis and research skills in his book *Blending Genre, Altering Style*. Romano developed this form of writing in response to the reliance on traditional curriculum research papers that did not allow a space for diverse learning styles and expressions to be heard. The multigenre research assignment still entails many of the tenets of the traditional research paper. Students still must examine expository documents, analyze them with respect to their topic, and then cite them in a traditional bibliography. In this way the multigenre research paper offers the best of both worlds: teaching the skills

necessary for learning standards mastery while offering a vehicle for choice through expression in multiple genres. The difference between the multigenre research essay and the traditional research essay comes in the students' synthesis and written expression of the research. Multigenre writing allows an entry point for students to remake a traditional curriculum into a form that allows their expressions of literacy to be legitimized (Dickson, DeGraff, and Foard). I did expect, however, that students inured to the traditional lockstep curriculum would find this new form of research writing and expression uncomfortable.

It is this discomfort with alternative forms of written expression that creates the type of Contact Zone found in John Gaughan's classroom. Gaughan identifies the multigenre research paper as one of the many pedagogical arts of the Contact Zone. Gaughan assigns multigenre papers because students' examination of multiple genres offers more than one lens for them to see through. This adoption of multiple perspectives enables the students to critically analyze a problem and, ultimately, find an answer that may not have presented itself in the "traditional" research paper format.

Miller posits that there is an inherent Contact Zone within the walls of today's classrooms, arising from the grappling of the diverse ways that we

read and write and, then, from how we engage in discourse about that reading and writing. Maxson follows up Miller's observations and revisits the Contact Zone in relation to written expression. Maxson asserts that his Contact Zone approach focuses in on the formality of academic writing required in traditional curricula. Maxson hypothesizes that the "devaluation of non-standard and the elevation of formal English" (27) creates a latent oppositional discourse in the varied classrooms of today.

A plan for experimentation

My classes consisted of high school seniors enrolled in an English 12 – College Bound (CB) course. The English 12-CB course focuses on British Literature and the students' critical analysis, both verbal and written, of the major themes and impacts of the Literature on modern society and thought. As part of their standardized English 12-CB curriculum, the students were required to complete an assigned research paper using the research methodology and topic selected by the instructor. Up to this point, the research papers students had written were the traditional, formal, fully documented essays that many of us learned in our own high school days. Students get a topic, find some sources, write about it in a detached, regurgitative style, and move on. But, I wanted this experience to be different. I know the power of being curious about your search, enjoying the way you express the knowledge you gain, and the power

of reflecting on the process of synthesizing everything. I wanted my students to taste some of excitement that comes from true, engaged in-depth inquiry.

All students read *The Heart of Darkness*, by Joseph Conrad, in class as part of the standardized English 12-CB curriculum in my school system. After reading the book, teachers assess it in various ways; from end-of-novel tests to literary research papers. Though this novella is short in pages, it is meaty in content. I saw *The Heart of Darkness* as a perfect opportunity for students to understand the text in a deeper, more thoughtful way through research.

Over the next few weeks, we slogged our way down the Congo, with Marlowe at the helm. Students looked at Conrad's use of organic imagery, inversion of color connotations, and reliance on dense diction. In anticipation of the multiple genres they would be exploring through their research paper, we looked at connective and supportive works from other genres. We looked at maps of the time period, poetry in varied forms, an essay by Chinua Achebe, and watched the movie "The Mission." All of these diverse genre pieces helped give the students a wider frame of reference to interpret Conrad's writing.

It was evident in weekly discussions that students had deeply connected to the story. One student tied-in news articles covering oppression evident in

the genocide in Darfur, another talked about the connection between the marginalization of the women in the novel to the marginalization of soldiers under the "Do not tell" legislation, while another student sparked a fiery debate about the issues with immigrant rights in our country as parallel to what the natives at the stations experienced. After some heated and thorough discussion about the definition of what it is to be considered "civilized," the students were ready for their assessment. I introduced the idea of multigenre composition with explanation and illustration using the examples Tom Romano posts on his website. Many of the students had read Laurie Halse Anderson's young adult novel *Speak*, and were impressed with how Romano's student had explored that book through multiple lenses in the example.

Figure 1. Heart of Darkness Multigenre Research Essay

The students were given the following assignment:

Literature-Based Multigenre Research Essay: Your next book project is to create a multigenre essay based upon *Heart of Darkness*. You must do three things:

- Read the work;
- Research criticism about the work, the historical time in which the work was written, and the author; and
- Compose a multigenre paper that explores and communicates

through imaginative genres the content and themes of the literature, as well as historical/critical information and, perhaps, biographic information about the author that illuminates the work in some way and enhances the reader's thinking about that work and author.

*Choose something that interests you about the book, for example, you could address British Imperialism and colonization of native cultures...or perhaps you could explore women's roles, the Ivory Trade,...use your imagination!

Required Elements of the Multi-genre Research Essay:

- A "Dear Reader" Letter (see the examples on Tom Romano's website - this piece should be in letter format and hook your reader into your exploration of the chosen topic);
- An Expository piece (1000 words. Make this vivid, informational, concrete writing; give us the background to guide us through your topic);
- Nine student-choice genres, including at least one visual element (photograph, drawing, computer generated graphics... use your imagination) and at least four written genres; how you represent the rest is up to you - be deliberate!
- Bibliography - AT LEAST five

sources (MLA format - see the style guide with example posted on our class website);

- A "Notes" Page (Be sure to provide solid rationales for each of your pieces; I want to see where your thinking went); and
- Unifying elements that tie your genres together - Make this cohesive - think repetition, genres that build upon each other, progression, etc.

***Allow your curiosity about your topic to guide you. Be persistent. This is an exercise in inquiry, so inquire: ask questions of the text and your research. How does your research reveal a latent part of the text? Thoughtfully guide us, as readers, through your excavations and discoveries. Dig in!

As you gather your information, keep in mind what we have learned of reliability and credibility of sources. It is tempting to just fall back on Google, but be careful. Often this leads to inefficient searches and unreliable information. There are incredible databases available; there are a lot of websites, too, many useful. But some sites are shallow, inaccurate, and misleading. The library is still a go-to place for journals, magazines, newspapers, book chapters, and primary material. If you need help, ask!

A note about Genres:

Peruse the list of example genres available on our class website, but remember that the genres used in your submission are only limited by your imagination. Often the most effective genres come from the examination of your book. A student writing about a novel involving World War II told from the perspective of a newspaper reporter, for example, constructed her Multigenre Paper as a newspaper from the time period. She incorporated genres we would find in an actual newspaper, including a "Dear Abby" column asking for advice about a white girl dating a Japanese American boy. The newspaper reflected a deep understanding of the novel's themes, as well as a great deal of research about the time period and construction of a period newspaper.

What Happened?

Over the four weeks that students researched and wrote their respective papers, the classes were given lessons as they relate to the assignment (e.g., MLA formatting and style, peer editing and review, and so on). Rather than the normal ennui that the research paper process generally inspires, there was a spark of excitement in the room. Students were interested in their chosen themes and avidly exploring the possible forms of expression for their research materials. Michelle chose "mar-

ginalization of women" as her topic and was eagerly writing a poem in two voices between the tribal queen of the novel and Conrad. Brendan was deep into the topic of civilized versus uncivilized; he found expression in a montage of juxtaposed images that represented conceptions of civilized and savage behavior, writing a one act play of master and servant, and creating an obituary for the "death of civilization" that was cutting and insightful. Marlene found her inspiration in Achebe's essay about the racism he saw in the novel; she wrote a series of narratives representing the silent voices of the natives in the novel. That, was powerful and moving!

The students showed sophistication in their analysis of the book, depth of research, and imaginative synthesis of genres. As a teacher, this was much more enlightening and fun, than the traditional research papers I had previously read. And, as an observer, the classroom was full of excitement, engagement, and collaboration. This is not to say that every student rose to the occasion; some did not. I had a few students who could not wrap their heads around writing about research in this uncomfortable way. I had some students who just did not put in the effort to really gain something out of the experience. As educators, we know these cases will always happen; but it cannot stop us from stepping out and trying to help our students stretch and develop. Sometimes, a little discomfort is neces-

sary to realize what we may be capable of.

The father of the multigenre approach to writing, Tom Romano, posed the question, "Can we identify kinds of learning in students' experiences that would not have been easily achieved in more traditional writing?" (*Blending Genre, Altering Style* 128). Many have taken up Tom Romano's call to answer this targeted question. Mack posits that the process of examination of diverse, conflicting viewpoints of one event stimulates higher order thinking and critical analysis and, ultimately, allows students to demonstrate "a sophisticated knowledge of various types and uses of language that integrates factual information into a meaningful text versus copying or simple recall" (97).

In her introduction to *Professing in the Contact Zone: Bringing Theory and Practice Together*, Janice Wolff puts forth a challenge to educators. Wolff asks that we reexamine the content of what we teach, how we deliver those lessons, why we teach, and further examine why we lend privilege to certain discourses while at the same time dismissing others. She gives recognition to the need to "reimagine the already imagined spaces of the classroom" (Wolff 13). Allowing students choice of expression, especially in such traditionally accepted areas like research writing, holds the opportunity for disparate voices to be heard, legitimized, and

valued. Multigenre composition gives students the chance to think deeply and write,"...with faith and fearlessness..." (Romano, "Practicing What We Preach"). Faith and fearlessness is what I want for all my students.

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Carrie Honaker teaches English at Hidden Valley High School in the Roanoke County Public Schools and is the Assistant Director of the Blue Ridge Writing Project. Ms. Honaker is a leader in employing technology-driven educational tools to engage the critical thinking styles of 21st Century learners. She has been an invited speaker at regional, state and national conferences for English teachers. She leverages her experiences as a restaurateur, cook, and writer to bring broad-based, multi-genre learning to her students. She has published scholarly articles for peer-reviewed journals on the topic of Multigenre Composition, as well as poetry in The Virginia English Bulletin and ALCA lines. She is currently working on two books: a professional text showcasing practical writing strategies for the secondary classroom and a foodoir, Strawbabies and Chocolate Beer, reflecting stories from her childhood on a Vermont farm interspersed with recipes.

Legacy

What I yearn to leave behind
Is my passion for literature.
Lush excesses of the Romantics
Keen fervor of the Brontes
Delicious delight of Austin
Mysterious flights of modern fantasy
Mystical worlds of Tolkien
Gothic lassitude of Sigrid Undset
Terse syntax of Hemingway
Satiric pique of Dorothy Parker
Quiet rage of Langston Hughes
Language transporting imagination
Creating conscious need
Gateways to the soul of writing

Two-thirds informational readings then
Stories oppressed by literary terms,
Definitions escorted by three examples.
Premeditated thesis statements
Forced to march in five paragraph essays
Chained by character education
On tedious, tired, trite topics
Foreshadowing compulsory writing prompts.

– Anita Brown Booth 2012

Anita Brown Booth teaches 9th and 10th grade English at Craig County High School and lives in Roanoke, Virginia. She loves literature, writing, especially poetry, and teaching.

Some Further Thoughts about Writing: In Favor of Mindless Repetition

When I was in high school, my senior English teacher who had been there for at least three generations when I went through, used to assign us a 3-5 paragraph paper to be written on some topic as exciting as winter or fall or about whatever we did last summer. The prompts frequently were non-existent or lifeless, but we had that “theme” due every Friday. Bless her heart. She then spent the entire weekend correcting errors, usually surface errors or matters of convention, on all of those “themes” for as many as a 150 students per weekend. What a life. I have always felt that I learned very little from this experience, for I always waited until the last minute to do the paper and tried to make my first draft be the last draft. I did it in ink, and I would sit there and try to think things out in my head before I put anything down on paper—all of which was a cognitive impossibility. Heaven forbid if I made a mistake, for I might have to recopy a page or the entire essay, and that would have been a terrible fate for a task that excited me in no way whatsoever. Boring, boring, boring.

It went along this way from my first year in high school to my senior year, and I thought writing all of these mindless essays were exercise in stupidity. To this day, English departments in public

school and especially English departments at the college level, attempt to correct all errors in student writing because they feel if they do this, their job as they see it, that students will learn to write better. Better writing may happen in fact for a few highly motivated students, but in actuality, it seldom does. Instead, what happens is that the students feel bad, throw the corrected papers away, and learn little. Nothing changes. Worse, there will be no change for the better in student writing until students make the decision to benefit from what has been pointed out to them. It is not beyond their intellectual ability to address larger rhetorical issues, such as organization or coherence, or matters of convention, such as commas in compound sentences or commas in introductory subordinate clauses. However, until students take the responsibility to learn from the advice and direction their teachers have given them and do something about it, there is nothing a teacher can do at any level to insure that students will learn. You can fail them, threaten them, deride them, or even motivate them. It makes no difference. How terrible that the good intentions of their teachers have been wasted for so many years.

As much as I hated writing boring es-

says in high school, something good did happen as a result of this experience. Though I didn't gain much improvement as a writer, I did--due to the repetition of putting words on paper--lose a fear of getting started. In fact, the more I put words on paper, the easier it became, even though the product may have not been perfect. As John Gardner once said, "Until you have something, you've got nothing" when it comes to writing.

I have now taught a general studies course at Emory & Henry--ETLA 306: *Edward Abbey's Desert Solitaire and Cormac McCarthy's No Country for Old Men: Exploring the Desert Southwest and the Beginning of Modern Environmental Writing*--for the third time, and during the most recent version, I realized that something had happened that I had not observed or recognized previously. The students wrote reader responses for each reading assignment, about 20 reader responses. The length of these responses was as few as 500 words each up to 1000 words or more each. This means that even the weakest students in the class wrote at least 10,000 words of informal writing, and the better students wrote as many as 20,000 words during the course. Each student also did three short formal papers, 3-4 pages long, and one major paper, 10 pages long and documented. They also wrote an informal paper for their final exam. The result of just the informal writing was that students

found it easier to write papers in their other courses because they could do it more quickly. The repetition increased their fluency and the speed of their writing production. Practice, in other words, even if it didn't make things perfect, at least made them easier.

This increase in fluency was enhanced by how I handled my responses to their formal papers. I pointed out the two or three major areas of concern, directed them to study these areas themselves using their handbooks--and with a friend if this helped--, and then make an editing pass through their paper where they personally attempted to deal with these problems. If they then gave me a copy of their paper with evidence that they had made a good faith effort to address their areas of struggle, e.g., maybe a draft where every place where a comma in a compound might occur was circled, then I would answer any question of any kind about their paper. They accepted this procedure, even if they didn't use it themselves. They all agreed that if I did all of the work for them, with no commitment on their part, that nothing would change. They agreed that they would never become independent, autonomous, and competent. I think everyone improved, but of course not all students achieved perfection.

It takes practice over time to improve writing. However, if students have more experiences of this kind, and if

the students make a commitment to learn that which they need to learn, then I think most of the writing difficulties we now see as common might begin to disappear.

Herb Thompson is a Professor of Education at Emory & Henry College and is a widely published poet, essayist, and literary critic. His research interests include the American West, play, literacy, and educational policy.

Minus Five

Zero evidence of planning
The opening sentence
Begins with “Do you...”
Or “This essay is about...”
Ambiguous thesis
Zero indentations
Exaggerated margins
Second person narration
A heart dotting an i
Text message abbreviations
Streams of consciousness
Or other run-on, non-sentences
Mangling their, there, they’re
The descriptor “nice”
Feeble conclusions
Revision refusals
A dearth of passion

– Anita Brown Booth 2012

Anita Brown Booth teaches 9th and 10th grade English at Craig County High School and lives in Roanoke, Virginia. She loves literature, writing, especially poetry, and teaching.

Alvin Ailey's Revelations: Teaching spirituals in the American literature classroom

Have you ever wondered how you can teach students about slavery in the United States without ending the unit feeling like you should be teaching a more complex unit on African-American experience? When I taught American literature to eleventh-grade high school students, I wondered how African-American students might have felt learning from a white southern woman what the approved curriculum from a textbook had to say about slavery. Would the African-American students feel that my curriculum design represented the stories of their parents, grandparents, and great-grandparents? Would they feel that the curriculum design represented the hope, faith, and sense of community that they may find in the churches they might attend? Would all students—black and white—be moved to talk, read, write, and answer their own questions through research? Would all students identify this curriculum as being educational and successful in fostering a deeper understanding of slavery and how it affects the lives of students today?

The Commonwealth of Virginia public school textbooks usually include the lyrics for two spirituals in the eleventh-grade textbooks, “Swing Low Sweet Chariot” and “Go Down, Moses,” dur-

ing the 1850-1914 period, under the theme of Division, Reconciliation, and Expansion” (Prentice Hall, 2005). While curriculum textbooks offer readings, skills, questions, and writing activities, it is the teacher’s job to utilize her professional experience to focus the unit and thus encourage students to explore fully the complexity of the American experience. That enslaved people in the U.S. endured their conditions through despair and sorrow as well as faith and community could be one overarching understanding that I would teach in a unit on slavery. In English classes, teachers help students understand literature through speaking, listening, reading, writing, thinking and viewing. That said, I would recommend showing Alvin Ailey’s masterpiece film, “Revelations” as an invaluable pedagogical tool for expanding students’ understanding of enslavement and its central role in African-American experience. *Beyondthenotes.org* writes:

Revelations consists of three sections, each of which contain three or four numbers: first, “Pilgrim of Sorrow” alludes to the atmosphere of oppression in the south and a search for deliverance through spirituality; second, “Take Me to the Water” evokes baptism and a

sense of hope and renewal; and third, "Move, Members, Move" consists of exuberant, high-energy numbers conveying church and community.

Ailey choreographed "Revelations" and first performed it in New York City at the 92nd Street YMCA in 1960. Born in 1931, Ailey created the work as a collection of "blood memories" from his childhood in Texas in the late 1930s and early 1940s. He took what he heard from family members and others in his community and choreographed a dance to represent his childhood experience (Pinkney & Pinkney, 1995). Ailey (1995) writes, "They recreate the music I heard from ladies in Texas who sold apples while singing spirituals, memories of songs my mother would hum around the house, and the songs I sang in junior high school" (p. 101). Soon after the premiere of "Revelations," Ailey began to tour internationally. Today the Alvin Ailey American Dance Theatre is known as the International Ambassadors of American Culture (Geography curriculum). For more than fifty years the company has performed numerous works (with more than seventy dances in its repertoire); however, it is a given in most countries that the last piece of every show will be the performance of "Revelation."

I first saw "Revelations" at City Center in New York City in 1986, when I was dancing on a full-time scholarship

at the Alvin Ailey American Dance Theater. Watching the thirty-minute performance can be a life-changing experience for students, as it was for me as an eighteen-year-old. Viewing "Revelations" opened a window in my mind and enlarged my thinking about the intense psychological and physical struggles enslaved people experienced and their spiritual beliefs as a means of negotiating the difficult, sometimes deadly circumstances under which they lived. Before seeing "Revelations," my understanding of African-American experience derived in large part from watching the movie *Roots* as a child and sitting at the kitchen table listening to my grandfather tell stories of the harsh reality and treatment of slaves. After seeing "Revelations," however, I understood the strength, love, and community of the enslaved people. Most important, Ailey's piece helped me understand the purpose of spirituality for many enslaved people. One cannot watch "Revelations" without being moved by the dancers who bring movement to the stories of African-American experience through spirituals.

The opening scene of "Revelations" begins with the music "I've been buked" As the spiritual begins, "I've been buked and I've been sold," the dancers move to the theme of sorrow. The nine barefoot dancers wear minimalist costumes in earth tones. Bailey (2005) writes, "The costumes and set would be colored brown, an earth color, for com-

ing out of the earth, for going into the earth" (p. 98).

When the curtain opens, the nine dancers are clustered; arms and legs are in second position with palms facing front and open; heads are up facing heaven revealing their vulnerable necks. With bodily tension and movement that flows the left hands begins to move upward as the dancers lean to the right, the dancers then lean to the left as the right arms with palms facing front move upward pulling the dancers to standing.

With arms held straight, parallel and overhead and eyes looking upward facing the heavens, the dancers simultaneously circle their parallel arms several times. Six dancers then lunge to opposite sides with arms circling down and heads following. Three dancers front, middle, and back lean over in a wide second position with arms circling down and head following. All curved arms then slowly rise and stop. The image suggests a flock of birds flying. The dancers' movements seem to say, my body may be enslaved but my soul is free.

In addition to "I've been buked," the songs Ailey used include "Didn't my Lord deliver Daniel," "Fix me, Jesus," "Processional," "Honor, honor," "Wade in the water," "I wanna be ready," "Sinner man," "The day is past and gone," "You may run on," and "Rocka my soul

in the bosom of Abraham." The dances represent the theme of the spiritual journey from slavery to freedom embedded in African-American experience. Ailey's choreography expresses the internal, externally through the body.

As a teacher who makes curriculum choices that go beyond the textbook, I recommend adding more spirituals to the unit on slavery by showing Alvin Ailey's masterpiece film "Revelation" to help students understand the sorrow, struggle, and faith of enslaved people. This film can be used as a primary source by the teacher to provide students with an opportunity to do research on slavery and its connection to spirituals. With all three components—spirituals, dance, and stories—we can come to a better, fuller understanding of the journey of enslaved people. In so doing, teachers can be more effective at representing that experience to students thus connecting the past with the present.

Using contemporary professional dance company performances to introduce students to spirituals is a powerful way to get them interested in the history of the American experience. When teachers teach using 21st-century literacies, students can develop proficiency with the tools of technology, build relationships with others to pose and solve problems collaboratively and cross-culturally, design and share information

for global communities to meet a variety of purposes, manage, analyze and synthesize multiple streams of simultaneous information, create, critique, analyze, and evaluate multi-media texts, and attend to the ethical responsibilities (Definition by NCTE, 2008).

Students can use multi-media to define what a spiritual is and how it functions in the larger context of African-American experience; the meanings of individual spirituals; the community of people for whom these songs were significant; the historical period of their greatest significance; the poetic elements of spirituals, including refrain, rhyme and rhythm; and the overall emotional qualities of the songs/poems. Next to actually traveling back in time, watching performance may be the best way to immerse students in a holistic experience that piques all of the senses. 21st-century literacies are about reading a complex text and making sense of it.

Before showing “Revelations,” I recommend asking students to draw two columns on a piece of paper or open and utilize a word document if a computer is available. In the left-hand column students will write descriptions of the dancers’ movements that evoke the sense of oppression from slavery. In the right-hand column they will write descriptions of the movements that represent freedom, faith, and community.

Since the entire dance runs approximately thirty minutes and includes numerous spirituals, you can stop the video after the first spiritual, “I’ve been buked,” and discuss what students have written in their left-hand columns. Ask the students to stand and mirror the dancers in the video after they have shared their answers. The students may see that the choreography shows a complex combination of both states of being—oppression and freedom—occurring simultaneously before ending with a greater emphasis on the themes of hope and freedom. In the beginning section of the dance, Ailey shows faith in God when the dancers’ eyes look up and their arms are reaching toward the heavens as they then begin to circle their arms. To represent freedom the dancers position themselves as a flock of birds flying. To represent oppression by their masters the dancers look down and cross their arms to their chests as they release and contract their pelvis and lunge using sharp, twisted, low movements to indicate bondage. Questions that can frame this activity follow:

- How does the choreographer show the theme of “freedom from slavery?”
- What movements did Alvin Ailey use to represent the words of the spirituals?
- How does rhythm in the spirituals illustrate the theme of freedom from slavery?
- How can movement be used to

symbolize oppression, freedom, hope, fear, and sorrow?

After showing “Revelations,” you can ask the students to share overall impressions and assessments of the film. In the end, ask the students what they think Ailey wanted them to know about African-American experience. What is Ailey’s message to the world?

While teaching about despair, sorrow, faith, and community in the context of African- American experience, and particularly in the context of enslavement and racial oppression, teachers can present a wide variety of literature and artistic multi-media interpretations to enlarge students’ understanding of the diversity and complexity of African-American experience.

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Mary Beth Cancienne PhD is an Assistant Professor of Middle and Secondary Education in the College of Education at James Madison University. She teaches English methods, Curriculum and Co-Curriculum, Teaching in a Diverse Society, Student Teaching Seminar and supervises high school English practicum and student teachers. Her current work is focused on teaching through 21st Century Literacies and Multimodal learning.

The Night Light

The residents of an insane asylum wander this
Barnes & Noble in search of stories captured on wood
pages accessible the old way, from eyes to words on a page
to a brain to enlightenment, ah yes, life is not all existential,
not all Camus, a sweating Marcello Mastroianni in his
Algiers apartment, alone, deconstructed in a pre post-colonial
world, a modern landscape when written and filmed,
now a sliver of history caught on celluloid.
Who in their right mind and with any
interest as a human being would now read
Camus? Life goes on, and those people searching
for their stories in a Barnes & Noble
aren't bad people. They just have
brains that sit and sweat vicariously in Paris
apartments, as opposed to actually standing on
the curb, screaming, yelling, watching
as the world goes by, attempting to
grab it with their hearts, their
souls. A soul on a street corner
is better than an empty mind
in a bookstore, Where am
I now? Heading for the door, heading
out the door, out into the dark, dark night,
full of action, rigor, tension, and light.

– Herb Thompson

Herb Thompson is a Professor of Education at Emory & Henry College and is a widely published poet, essayist, and literary critic. His research interests include the American West, play, literacy, and educational policy.

Call for Manuscripts

Virginia English Journal

Fall 2013/Winter 2014, Vol 63, #2

Educating for Literacy: A Spectrum of Possibility

In keeping with the theme for this year's VATE Conference, we are looking for articles that explore the wide array of Literacy education that teachers of all levels undertake on a daily basis. Students are reading and writing more than at any other time in history. The lament for the 21st Century teacher is that the reading and writing that students are doing is rarely academic in nature. However, in an effort to harness the "literary" energy of their students, many teachers are finding creative and innovative methods to integrate traditional literary practice with the interests and energies of their students. To those teachers I say: it is now it's time to share!

For the Fall/Winter issue of the VEJ we are looking to explore the Literacy Education we use in the classroom. We invite all forms of research and writing related to the wide array of literature used in today's classrooms. What type of literacy education do you engage in in the classroom? What does literacy education mean to you and how has that meaning changed over time? Why? How has the prevalence of social media and the 24-hour news cycle changed the way that you approach the "reading" aspects of your teaching?

Virginia English Journal is a fully refereed journal. In addition to publishing full length articles on English language arts teaching and learning, we feature teaching ideas in our Great Teaching ideas column.

Deadline: November 15, 2013

Authors should submit their articles electronically as e-mail attachments, preferably Microsoft Word or Corel WordPerfect; however, other formats and word processing programs are acceptable. We do not accept simultaneous submissions. **Please include your mailing address, as well as a short biographical sketch including the name of your school, position, courses taught, and a brief statement about your professional life; also include a statement of submission noting that the work has not been submitted elsewhere simultaneously for publication.**

Send to drwoods@radford.edu, for the attention of Daniel Woods, Radford University, P.O. Box 6935, Radford, Virginia 24142. The editor reserves the right to modify manuscripts to fit length and language considerations. Please include "VEJ Submission" in the "Subject" line of your e-mail. Alternately, interested individuals may call the Editor at 540.831.5097.

Great Teaching Ideas

Call for Manuscripts

Virginia English Journal

The *Virginia English Journal* invites you to submit articles of two to ten pages describing great teaching ideas. Chosen submissions will be featured in our Great Teaching Ideas column, which appears in each issue of the *VEJ*.

No one teacher possesses all the knowledge required to teach the ever widening range of topics and students that we face from year to year. Yet there is a solution. We can learn from each other. This column asks you to share with fellow teachers the activities, materials, or assignments that have worked for you and your students. By sharing ideas and borrowing ideas teachers work together to develop repertoires of strategies that work. We invite your submissions.

DEADLINES:

Spring / Summer : May 1st

Fall / Winter : November 15th

Authors should submit their articles electronically as e-mail attachments, preferably Microsoft Word or Corel WordPerfect; however, other formats and word processing programs are acceptable. We do not accept simultaneous submissions. **Please include your mailing address, as well as a short biographical sketch including the name of your school, position, courses taught, and a brief statement about your professional life; also include a statement of submission noting that the work has not been simultaneously submitted elsewhere for publication.**

Send copies to Daniel Woods, Radford University, P.O. Box 6935, Radford, Virginia 24142. The editor reserves the right to modify manuscripts to fit length and language considerations. e-mail address: drwoods@radford.edu. Please include "VEJ Submission" in the "Subject" line of your e-mail.



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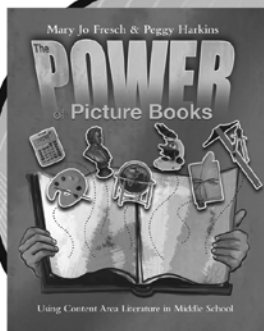
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