From the Editors

Just start in to sing as you tackle the thing
That "cannot be done" and you’ll do it.

— Edgar A. Guest

The impeded stream is the one that sings.

— Wendell Berry

The essence of literacy involves making meanings. Reading helps us understand what it means to be human, and writing enables us to participate in the realization of our domains. Alone, and with others, we create and inhabit our cultural contexts—often using words to nurture and enhance our interactions. As English teachers, we serve as guides and mentors, chaperoning learners as they navigate worlds of words.

Our roles are nuanced and complex: we teach about texts with texts, we teach about words with words, and we teach about learning with learners—and as learners. English teachers seek to share our love of the art of literature, as well as our appreciation for its beautiful utility, with learners whose experiences of language are often wildly different from our own. Because language is deeply cultural and always evolving, we must also be eager to learn from our students so we can discover new ways to make meanings from texts.

In this issue, authors investigate the exciting complexities of working and playing in secondary English classrooms. Articles reveal ideas for transplanting teaching into research and cultivating creativity. The pattern of multilayered word-play extends into articles, such as Jed Hopkins and Aaron Yost’s dialogue about dialogicality and Doug Lillydahl’s provocatively titled “Questioning Questioning.” Sirpa Grierson and Sarah Orme use “ekphrasis” to support students as they engage with multiple levels of text and become writers who create meaning. Contradictions are revealed and explored in pieces that seek to make metaphor visible and reconsider enacted lessons as texts that might be revised.

We hope that this issue will inspire you to immerse yourself in the conflicts and paradoxes that this profession presents in abundance. As teachers wrestle with accountability and rankings, our first responsibility is to our learners and to the world they will ultimately construct. We owe it to them, and to ourselves, to aspire to a future filled with interesting questions, complicated discussions, and intricate images. As the excerpts that introduce this passage indicate, impediments are a precursor to melodies, and obstacles create beauty in our meanings.

Works Cited


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