Getting the Conversation About Race Right

Not Light, but Fire
How to Lead Meaningful Race Conversations in the Classroom
Matthew R. Kay

Do you feel prepared to initiate and facilitate meaningful, productive dialogues about race in your classroom? Are you looking for practical strategies to engage with your students? Inspired by Frederick Douglass’s abolitionist call to action, “it is not light that is needed, but fire,” Matthew Kay has spent his career learning how to lead students through the most difficult race conversations. Matt not only makes the case that high school classrooms are one of the best places to have those conversations, he also offers a method for getting them right, with guidance on:

• How to recognize the difference between meaningful and inconsequential race conversations.
• How to build conversational “safe spaces,” not merely declare them.
• How to infuse race conversations with urgency and purpose.
• How to thrive in the face of unexpected challenges.
• How administrators might equip teachers to thoughtfully engage in these conversations.

With the right blend of reflection and humility, teachers can make school one of the best venues for young people to discuss race.

Grades 6–12 | 288 pp/paper | 4R-1098 | $24.00

The brightest minds in education...in 140 characters or less.

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National Council of Teachers of English
DEVELOPING CONTEMPORARY LITERACIES THROUGH SPORTS: A GUIDE FOR THE ENGLISH CLASSROOM

Edited by Alan Brown and Luke Rodesiler

Promoting critical sports literacy is a way of reaching all students in the middle and high school classroom.

Love them or loathe them, the prominence of sports in schools and society is undeniable. The emphasis on sports culture presents teachers with countless possibilities for engaging students in the English language arts.

This book, a collection of lessons and commentaries from established teachers, teacher educators, scholars, and authors, will support teachers in turning students’ extracurricular interests into legitimate options for academic study. The collection and its companion website provide numerous resources that support teachers in developing students’ contemporary literacies through sports.

Explore seven interrelated sections:
1. Facilitating literature study
2. Providing alternatives to traditional novels
3. Teaching writing
4. Engaging students in inquiry and research
5. Fostering media and digital literacies
6. Promoting social justice
7. Developing out-of-school literacies

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Call for Manuscripts

Submit all manuscripts through the English Journal Editorial Manager at http://www.editorialmanager.com/ncteej/. Questions can be sent to EnglishJournal@ncte.org.

Submission Guidelines

• Manuscripts should be double-spaced throughout (including quotations, endnotes, and works cited), with standard margins. Please save copies of anything you send us. We cannot return any materials to authors.

• In general, manuscripts for articles should be no more than 10 to 15 double-spaced, typed pages in length (approximately 2,500 to 3,750 words including citations).

• Provide a statement guaranteeing that the manuscript has not been published or submitted elsewhere.

• Ensure that the manuscript conforms to the NCTE Guidelines for Gender-Fair Use of Language. (See address below.)

• Number all pages.

• Use in-text documentation, following the current edition of the MLA Handbook. Where applicable, a list of works cited and any other bibliographic information should also follow MLA style.

English Journal is refereed, and virtually all manuscripts are read by two or more outside reviewers. We will attempt to reach a decision on each article within five months. The decision on pieces submitted in response to a specific call for manuscripts will be made after the call deadline.

Prospective contributors should obtain a copy of the Guidelines for Gender-Fair Use of Language from the NCTE website at http://www.ncte.org/positions/statements/genderfairuseoflang.

Fakery v. Facts

Publication Date: May 2019

We are living in a fake world. . . . But we find reality in this fake world. —Haruki Murakami, “The Art of Fiction No. 182,” The Paris Review

The Internet is a dominating force in young people’s lives. Common Sense Media—an independent nonprofit organization focused on helping children learn to navigate a technology-drenched world—reports that, on average, teenagers consume media nearly nine hours a day. They are much more likely to learn about the world through online social networks than through traditional sources like newspapers or broadcast news. Determining if information is trustworthy has always required questioning and effort, but in a cultural landscape where data manipulation, partisanship, and propaganda are de rigueur, that effort is magnified exponentially.

We are all susceptible to beguiling falsehoods, but teenagers, because of the intensity of their relationship with the digital universe, are uniquely vulnerable. Helping students learn to decipher credible sources of information may be one of the most important roles an English teacher plays in the 21st-century classroom.

For this issue of the journal, the editors invite manuscripts that tell the stories of both the struggles and the successes you have had in preparing students to be critical and responsible citizens. Human history and the literary arts we teach offer countless examples of information manipulation as a tool to control thinking and behavior. Which texts have you found most useful in constructing lessons or inviting dialogues about propaganda and targeted misinformation? Which disciplinary questions in English language arts offer opportunities to teach students to be suspect of information and sources? How have you collaborated with colleagues—librarians, teachers in other content areas, and counselors, for example—to create lessons that teach critical thinking? How can we prepare our students to both embrace the digital world and simultaneously question its effects on the culture?

Note: The July 2019 issue (and subsequent July issues) will be unthemed, so submissions on any topic of interest to the secondary English language arts teacher are welcome. To be considered for this July’s issue, please have your submission uploaded to Editorial Manager by November 15, 2018.

Creating Community

Submission Deadline: January 15, 2019
Publication Date: September 2019

Inclusive community learning helps teachers discover ways to design pedagogies that make productive use of . . . the literacy repertoires students bring to schools. . . .

—Steven Alvarez, Community Literacies en Confianza, 2017

Rapidly changing demographics, media saturation, and the exponential increase in technologies are significantly influencing the identities of the students who enter our classrooms each morning. Creating a welcoming and inclusive environment and learning to acknowledge the literacies that students bring with them to school are equally important goals. These goals, however, require attentiveness and a willingness to reflect on our pedagogies, revise our repertoire of lessons, and renew our commitment to the “project of education.”

Teaching in the 21st century often means teaching for the greater good. Schools have the capacity to operate as community spaces where learning experiences expand opportunities for students to thrive in spite of cultural challenges they might face. Caring interest in adolescents’ everyday lives can provide teachers a lens through which to view and understand the literacies students develop in their homes and neighborhoods, but which are often undervalued in the classroom.

For this issue of the journal, the editors invite articles that examine the development of welcoming, inclusive classrooms. What are examples of projects and assignments that honor students’ cultural and linguistic identities? How have you invited students to become active participants in reshaping the culture of your classroom or your school? How do you foster confianza, or confidence and trust, in students to help them become advocates for themselves and their peers? Which aspects of the community of the classroom are most influenced by the communities in which students live? Which texts, lessons, units, or assignments have been most successful in inspiring goodwill and community spirit in your classroom?

General Interest

May submit any time

We publish articles of general interest as space is available. You may submit manuscripts on any topic that will appeal to EJ readers. Remember that EJ articles foreground classroom practice and contextualize it in sound research and theory. As you know, EJ readers appreciate articles that show real students and teachers in real classrooms engaged in authentic teaching and learning. Regular manuscript guidelines regarding length and style apply.
**Speaking My Mind**

We invite you to speak out on an issue that concerns you about English language arts teaching and learning. If your essay is published, it will appear with your photo in a future issue of English Journal. We welcome essays of 1,000 to 1,500 words, as well as inquiries regarding possible subjects.

**Poetry**

For Gwendolyn Brooks, writing was essential to life and “like breathing or eating,” she once shared. More specifically, she noted, “Poetry is life distilled.”

As such, we invite teachers and teacher educators to write poems that “distill” their lives—in and out of the language arts classroom. We seek well-crafted poems that connect our readers to the worlds of teaching and learning.

Send up to two original poems—with no more than 30 lines each—by email attachment to englishjournal@ncte.org. Use the subject line “Poetry Submission for Review.” The poems must be original and not previously published or simultaneous submissions. In your message, please include a brief biographical sketch (40 words maximum) and your contact information. Poets whose work is published will receive two complimentary copies of the issue in which their work appears.

Additional inquiries about poetry submissions should be directed to the coeditors at englishjournal@ncte.org. We look forward to reviewing your work.

**Original Photography**

Teacher photographs of classroom scenes and individual students are welcome. Photographs may be sent as 8” × 10” black-and-white glossies or as an electronic file in a standard image format at 300 dpi. Photos should be accompanied by complete identification: teacher/photographer’s name, location of scene, and date photograph was taken. If faces are clearly visible, names of those photographed should be included, along with their statement of permission for the photograph to be reproduced in EJ.

**Original Cartoons**

Cartoons should depict scenes or ideas potentially amusing to English language arts teachers. Line drawings in black ink should be submitted on 8½” × 11” unlined paper and be signed by the artist.

**Columns and Column Editors**

**Beyond Binary Gender Identities**

Column Editor: sj Miller

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Contemporary youth express gender identity in powerful and dynamic ways—in and out of school. Gender identity, the internal sense of how someone feels or experiences their gender, is constantly evolving and shifting, expanding the boundaries of language use and performance. As English teachers, it is our responsibility to center the lives of our students in our classrooms and schools in caring, respectful, and equitable ways. This responsibility includes advocating for students who question and contest cultural expectations of masculinity and femininity. It also includes ensuring that they are valued in all aspects of school and see themselves reflected in curricula, instructional choices, and educational policies. Currently, gender identity narratives are practically absent from the texts taught in high school English classrooms, and there are gaps in school policies that enumerate protections or validate multiple gender identities. We can change this together. The only pressing question is How?

This column invites writers to share the stories of how they recognize and affirm myriad gender identities in their classrooms and their schools and to offer concrete and creative suggestions for developing remarkably responsive language arts instruction. We also welcome stories of effort and struggle because we can learn from reflecting on both the challenges and triumphs of changing our thinking. A range of narratives that describe lessons, assignments, and educational practices that question and critique entrenched ideas about gender identity is necessary to address the kind of insensitivity that characterizes most educational settings. We have all been taught the “appropriate” social expectations for gender and gender identity, but by examining the effects of that instruction, working diligently to reject the gender identity binary, and being willing to learn from and support our students in their ever-evolving and dynamic expressions of gender identity, we can strengthen our schools and communities.

Inquiries, submissions, or suggestions for future columns should be directed to sj Miller at sj.miller@nyu.edu. Submissions of 1,000–1,200 words should be sent as attachments.

**Books-in-Action**

Column Editor: Nicole Sieben

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According to hopemonger Shane Lopez, hope is the belief that the future will be better than the present and that we, as individuals and communities, have the power to create that better future. In his research, Lopez found that all youth have the capacity for hope, but only one in two school-age youth report feeling hopeful about their futures. His findings suggest there may be a “hope gap,” which is also present in our educational systems. English teachers have a role to play in helping to mediate that gap, and many are already doing so. As a framework, hope is a harbinger of possibility, the spine of agency, and a reason to strive. As a learning trait, it provides an important scaffold for academic progress and success. The more we inspire our students to envision the possibilities and pathways of their lives—through the literature and writing approaches we teach, the discussions we facilitate, and the assignments we design—the more we offer them hope.

This Books-in-Action column features essays that consider the ways in which various professional resources help ELA teachers put hope into action in the classroom. It invites writers to focus on the how of hope as they discuss recent publications that help us reimagine our teaching practices. Rather than traditional book reviews, essays should, instead, embed the writers’ reviews within narratives that describe how the ideas in books can be translated into curricular approaches that inspire our students to see their futures as hopeful. We especially welcome submissions that explore questions about the cultural and institutional practices that contribute to the “hope gap” and then offer creative suggestions for mediating that gap.
Inquiries, submissions, or suggestions for future columns should be directed to Nicole Sieben at siebenn@oldwestbury.edu. Submissions of 1,000–1,200 words should be sent as attachments.

**Critical Global Literacies**

**Column Editor: Bogum Yoon**

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Joel Spring, who writes prolifically about American education and globalization, has noted that we live in an era in which “nothing is static.” Across the globe, nations, economies, and governing structures face incessant change, competition, and disruption. The dynamic social forces that undergird globalization spotlight its reliance on interdependence and intercultural awareness. The development of critical literacy practices that focus on global perspectives is central to preparing students to navigate this increasingly interconnected world. As English teachers, we might ask ourselves, “How do we invite our students to become socially responsible and critically conscious global citizens?”

Reading and writing activities that promote global awareness and cross-cultural understanding are important, but they need to be coupled with an emphasis on critical consciousness. A critical lens is fundamental if we are to be successful in opening an intellectual space for discussions of what it means to live in a world in which cultural boundaries are shrinking because of human migration, market practices, and advances in technologies.

This column invites essays that focus on global perspectives as an integral part of the secondary English curriculum. Topics that we are particularly interested in, but not limited to, include instructional frameworks that English teachers can use in the classroom to promote students’ global thinking and cross-cultural awareness with a critical stance; case studies that show how English teachers develop students’ critical global perspectives through various materials, including global literature; and instructional practices that demonstrate how English teachers can bring the world to the classroom.

Inquiries, submissions, or suggestions for future columns should be directed to Bogum Yoon at byoon@binghamton.edu. Submissions of 1,000–1,200 words should be sent as attachments.

**From Campus to Classroom**

**Column Editor: Melanie Shoffner**

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Preservice teachers, practicum students, and teaching interns view the familiar landscape of the secondary English classroom from a different vantage point. Their current learning experiences—in and out of the classroom—offer opportunities to rethink understandings of their content, their future students, and their development as English teachers. By sharing their perspectives as they grapple with the complexities of ELA education, they extend and diversify the professional conversation while fostering their own growth as reflective practitioners. Their insights have the power to provoke veteran teachers and teacher educators to think differently, as well, revisiting familiar assignments, reconsidering current perspectives, and reexamining long-held beliefs about teaching and learning.

This column seeks to share the viewpoints of those poised to enter the classroom as they consider the nature of teaching and learning the English language arts. We invite preservice teachers and interns to contribute thoughtful first-person essays about navigating the theory and practice of ELA teaching as they interact with students and teaching colleagues. Essays may address any topic and may be coauthored with fellow preservice teachers, cooperating teachers, university supervisors, or professors. Authors might address such questions as, Why is the ELA content I will soon teach viable for 21st century students?; How do I engage with issues of justice, equality, and diversity, in and out of the ELA classroom?; and What do I consider the most pressing issues facing soon-to-be teachers? Essays grounded in the theory of ELA pedagogy are of particular interest.

Original submissions of 1,000–1,200 words should be sent as an electronic Word file to Melanie Shoffner at shoffnme@jmu.edu. Inquiries about potential topics are welcomed and encouraged.

**Journeys Inward**

**Column Editor: Mary Ellen Dakin**

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In *The Courage to Teach: Exploring the Inner Landscape of a Teacher’s Life*, Parker J. Palmer asserts that teaching is composed of three essential knowledge bases: knowledge of our subject, knowledge of our students, and knowledge of ourselves. “Who is the self who teaches?” he asks; the search for answers to this question has the potential to transform our classrooms and our lives. English teachers work at the crossroads of the epic and the everyday. We wander with our students through the shifting terrains of literature, and we sometimes find that the texts we teach and the conversations they provoke challenge us to explore our own “inner landscapes.” These moments urge us to consider the kind of teacher we have been and also the kind of teacher we are becoming.

This column invites writers to craft authentic nonfiction narratives of self-discovery, redirection, and renewal. When have you seen your own life reflected in the literature you teach and paused to ponder the implications? What specific events, situations, texts, classes, or ideas challenged the teacher within and sent you on a journey toward some greater understanding of your subject, your students, your world, and yourself? Tell us the story of that journey. We are especially interested in lively, personal writing that shares specific classroom moments that inspired introspection, challenged your thinking, and pushed you to consider how who you are influences how you teach. We welcome submissions that showcase voice, sensory details, dialogue, and dynamic characterizations that encourage readers to reflect on their own teaching journeys.

Inquiries and submissions should be directed to Mary Ellen Dakin at maryellendakin@gmail.com. Submissions of 1,500–1,800 words should be sent as attachments.
Teaching Shakespeare

Column Editors: Laura B. Turchi and Ann C. Christensen
Laura B. Turchi, Assistant Professor, College of Education
Ann C. Christensen, Associate Professor, Department of English
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Shakespeare’s plays, staples of the secondary English curriculum, are both “difficult” and rich in opportunity. This column asks about and offers ways in to Shakespeare’s works beyond starting with act 1, scene 1. It also serves as a forum for teachers to share instructional activities, innovative lessons, and useful tools they have developed to help students enter a Shakespearean text and dig deep. How do you assist students with Elizabethan English verse, promote their interest in complicated characters, or relate their worlds to the social worlds depicted in the plays?

Writers for the column should consider how the strategies they discuss are relevant to those teaching struggling readers and emergent English learners, as well as those teaching students with advanced literacy skills. We are especially seeking classroom narratives that push against equating a Shakespeare play with a summary of plot and characters or with watching the film version. We invite stories that illustrate the value of attending to language, movement, staging, and expression and that cast studying a Shakespeare text as an opportunity for students to explore identity and perform their understanding in innovative and multimodal ways. To complement these stories, we welcome classroom and student videos, podcasts, and other Shakespeare-inspired creations as posts to our “Teaching Shakespeare” group on NCTE Connects.

Questions to consider might include, When you teach Shakespeare plays, which scenes work best “on your feet”?: What film clips pop for discussion?: or How do you guide your students to use images, dictionary definitions, and period sources to complicate a reading of “Moor” for Othello, or the Prince of Morocco in The Merchant of Venice, or Aaron in Titus?

Inquiries, submissions, or suggestions for future columns should be directed to Laura B.Turchi at lturchi@uh.edu or Ann C. Christensen at achrist@uh.edu. Submissions of 1,000–1,200 words should be sent as attachments.