Adult basic education for older learners remains a vital but largely unexplored area for literacy studies. Rosenberg approaches the people in this excellent book with that most precious human instrument for researchers and novelists: an attentive ear. —Eli Goldblatt, Temple University

Rosenberg reminds us that even those who are nonliterate have a relationship to writing—usually one charged with violence. Yet she also reveals how that relationship can change, even late in life. Keenly observed and gracefully written, this book enriches our understanding of the extracurriculum of composition.

equally likely to assume that nonliterate people do not know, think, or understand in the ways they do, that the silence of nonliteracy is both intrinsic and deserved. But as Lauren Rosenberg illustrates, marginalized adult learners are quite capable of theorizing about their position in society, questioning dominant ideas, disrupting them, and challenging traditional literacy narratives in American culture. In Desire for Literacy: Writing in the Lives of Adult Learners, Rosenberg takes up the imperative established by community literacy researchers to engage with people in motivations and desires to become more literate when they choose reading and writing for their own purposes. Focusing on the experiences, knowledge, and perspectives of four adult learners, she examines instances in which participants resist narratives of oppression, particularly when they become authors. Rosenberg’s qualitative study demonstrates that these adult learners are already knowledgeable individuals who can teach academics about how literacy operates, not only through how students, instructors, and scholars of composition think about the meanings and purposes of literacy.

Rosenberg

THE DESIRE FOR LITERACY

CCCC/NCTE

To order, visit our website: https://secure.ncte.org/store/ or call 877-369-6283.

Freedom Writing

African American Civil Rights Literacy Activism, 1955–1967

Rhea Estelle Lathan


Print ePrint
Stock No. 17880 eStock No. 17897
$34 member/ $30 member/
$36 nonmember $32 nonmember

Through a blend of African American cultural theory and literacy and rhetorical studies highlighting the intellectual and pedagogical traditions of African American people, Rhea Estelle Lathan argues that African Americans have literacy traditions that represent specific, culturally influenced ways of being in the world. She introduces gospel literacy, a theoretical framework analogous to gospel music within which to consider how the literacy activities of the Civil Rights Movement illuminate a continual interchange between secular and religious ideologies. Lathan demonstrates how gospel literacy is deeply grounded in an African American tradition of refusing to accept the assumptions underlying European American thought and institutions, including the oppression of African American people and the denial of full citizenship rights.

Lathan’s critical historical analysis of the Citizenship Schools on South Carolina’s Sea Islands draws on oral histories, personal interviews, and archival data, allowing her to theorize about African American literacy practices, meanings, and values while demonstrating the symbiotic relationship between literacy and the Civil Rights Movement. Central to her research are local participants who contributed to the success of citizenship education, and she illuminates in particular how African American women used critical intellectualism and individual creative literacy strategies to aid in the struggle for basic human rights.
Journals from NCTE

Here’s what subscribers are saying about their NCTE journals . . .

**Without question, I would not be where I am professionally without NCTE journals.**
—Peter, Secondary member from Georgia

**Practical ideas that are theoretically based—I use journal articles as the primary text in my English methods class for Secondary English Education students.**
—Connie, Secondary member from Pennsylvania

**Language Arts presents solid theoretical perspectives that have helped me think deeply about current issues in the present political environment. Even though I am a secondary teacher educator, I find many of the articles a great asset for enriching companion pieces in English Journal and/or Voices from the Middle.**
—Roberta, member from California

**Keep up with research and opinion in composition.**
—Curtis, College member from Montana

**NCTE provides a wide range of journals and programs that go to the heart of the needs of teachers at all levels. NCTE resources keep us in touch with broad changes that challenge and expand our own understanding as we teach. It’s how we can continue to learn. . . and to lead.**
—Ellen, College member from Michigan

**So that we know what is going on in other classrooms and the battles we all are fighting to make language learning and writing the center of any curriculum.**
—Michelle, College member from Georgia

Subscribe now . . . . www.ncte.org/journals

As an NCTE member, you have access to over a century of journal issues online. Most recent two years limited to current subscribers.
Join NCTE in Atlanta, Georgia, to explore the many ways educators are advocates for their students, communities, and profession!

"Faces of Advocacy" takes place in Atlanta, Georgia, November 17–20, 2016, with workshops and special events November 17 and November 20–22.

Visit www.ncte.org/annual for more information.

{ SAVE THE DATE }
Editors’ Introduction

Reading, Writing, and Teaching across Borders: The Nation-State, Citizenship, and Colonial Legacies of Linguistic and Literate Practice

Cori McKenzie
Michigan State University

Mary M. Juzwik
Michigan State University

Ellen Cushman
Northeastern University

Kevin G. Smith
Northeastern University

In this capstone issue of the 50th volume year of RTE, the articles spotlight language, learning, and the teaching of English(es) within, beyond, and across the borders of the nation-state. In taking up a focus on borders themselves, the issue challenges RTE readers to reimagine notions of citizenship—particularly citizenship in and across nation-states—by tracing the travels of everyday literate practices across space and time, critiquing and resisting the colonial histories and legacies of learning and teaching English(es) around the globe, and mobilizing ethical cosmopolitanism and translanguaging as pedagogical and conceptual resources for border crossing. As the studies in this issue bring the political border of the nation-state into the foreground, they show how large-scale cultural, economic, and political forces bear on teaching and learning, on reading and writing. The four article-length studies are conducted in four nation-states on four different continents with four distinct colonial legacies: Camaroon, Singapore, Brazil, and the United States. The issue highlights how such legacies and histories shape the teaching and learning of English(es) in national, cultural, and economic contexts. The (inter)national focus of this issue is particularly striking and, we think, greatly needed in the field of language and literacy studies today. These studies reveal relationships among scenes of teaching and learning Englishes; the social and material borders that shape our world; and the (re)affirmation, resistance to, and negotiation of power asymmetries at these borders. More specifically, these studies consider from a global perspective: How do literacies cross borders, especially those of distinct nation-states? How might the teaching and learning of English(es) create borders and boundaries? How might the teaching and learning of English(es) engender ethical or empowered border-crossings?

Vivian Yenika-Agbaw sets the stage for the issue by inviting readers to consider how borders (both real and imagined) are continually constructed, in part through schooling practices, including national curriculum related to the teaching of English. Using content analysis influenced by postcolonial theory, Yenika-Agbaw
explores conceptions of citizenship present in the nonfiction passages of literacy textbooks printed during four moments in Cameroon’s history: the colonial period, the postindependence period, the postcolonial period, and the era of globalization. She finds that an imperialist ideology most explicitly permeates the textbooks from the colonial and postindependence periods. The textbook from the era of globalization “reflects a broader understanding of the global community, with one passage interrogating what it means to be a citizen in the era of globalization.” As she notes, even a “series created for twenty-first-century children does not escape its colonial legacy, for it continues to perpetuate an image of Africa introduced in the earlier textbooks written and published by British scholars” (p. 395). In short, the white supremacist ideology lingers throughout every era of textbooks examined.

The “lingering” colonial and white supremacist ideology present in current literacy textbooks compels Yenika-Agbaw to note that “the literature we select to share with children, whether as excerpts in textbooks or as stand-alone books, may harbor values that impact children’s citizenship . . . in ways that educators may not realize” (p. 396). Yenika-Agbaw’s piece thus invites readers to consider how literature curriculum creates and perpetuates long-standing racist and Western-centric borders between those who count as “citizens” and those who do not, those who belong to the culture portrayed in the literature and those who are “culturally and literally uprooted” (p. 396). For appendices to Agbaw’s piece, which include booklists, please see the online version of the article at www.ncte.org/journals/rte/issues/v50-4.

If Yenika-Agbaw’s work seeks to understand the way that curriculum creates borders, then Suzanne S. Choo’s piece might be read as a call for literature curriculum that encourages ethical and humanizing border crossings. Continuing the conversation started in Peter de Costa’s paper in the first issue of Volume 49, about cosmopolitanism and the teaching of English in Singapore, Choo begins by outlining the difference between what she refers to as “strategic cosmopolitanism” and “ethical cosmopolitanism.” Strategic cosmopolitanism refers to an openness to connecting with those outside the nation-state as a way of supporting economic development and other nation-centric aims; ethical cosmopolitanism, on the other hand, refers to an other-centric openness to those outside one’s nation-state (or community) “grounded in ethical rationality” (p. 402). She then uses these terms to analyze the degree to which the national literature curriculum is undergirded by strategic cosmopolitanism and to analyze the effects of this influence. She finds that strategic cosmopolitanism does indeed “direct” literature education at the national level, and then provides case studies of three teachers who resist the strategic cosmopolitanism of the national curriculum and instead employ ethical cosmopolitan pedagogies in literature classrooms. In the end, Choo argues that literature instruction has the capacity to foster the “hospitable imagination” as conceptualized by scholars like Jacques Derrida and Martha Nussbaum, and to promote an ethical cosmopolitanism that supports students as they make connections to global issues, engage in transnational explorations, and disrupt stereotypical representations in other-centric ways.
Choo traces how different cosmopolitan stances might either reify problematic boundaries or encourage ethical and humanizing boundary crossing. In ways similar to Yenika-Agbaw’s textbook analysis, Choo’s study suggests that a literature education grounded in strategic cosmopolitanism might reify borders between who counts as a citizen and who counts as an “other” who must be encountered for the economic good of the country. Choo’s piece offers insight into how conceptual borders might be crossed, suggesting that English teachers can find ways to cultivate the hospitable imagination through literature instruction. This article seems to challenge English curricula and pedagogies that define persons or groups of people in instrumental terms, for the economic good of a nation-state.

Yenika-Agbaw’s and Choo’s articles offer insight into the relationship between English teaching and the real and imagined borders that divide the “self” from the “other” and the “citizen” from the “noncitizen.” In the next two research articles of the issue, the authors explore how the act of crossing the borders of nation-states—specifically Brazil, Mexico, and the United States—shapes the teaching and learning of Englishes. Kate Vieira’s study of the writing remittances that circulate between migrants and those they “leave behind” underscores the role that nation-state borders play in homeland literacy practices. Vieira defines writing remittances as the “migration-driven literacy practices, technologies, and products—such as laptops, webcams, letters, texts, and knowledge about such tools and practices—that migrants often send or bring home and that often promote increased use of literacy and/or literacy learning” (p. 434). She explores the circulation of writing remittances through analysis of results from 19 literacy history interviews with 16 Brazilians (ages 18 to 65) whose family members had migrated to other nation-states and then returned. In the interviews, Vieira asked these homeland citizens how communication happened across borders, what memories they had about learning to use different technologies to write, and how they used various writing technologies in their lives. In the study, she focuses on a musician named Hugo, whose interview was “especially telling of shifts in transnational communication over the last two decades” (p. 431) and whose experiences vivify Vieira’s claim that the remittances that result from migrant movement across borders refigure the literacy demands on those who remain in the homeland.

Vieira’s piece underscores the complexity of the relationship between literate practices and the literal act of border crossing. First, the piece points to the bidirectional nature of literacy teaching and learning across nation-state borders. For all of the participants in her study, writing remittances circulated between the global south and north. Those who remain in the homeland, then, do not merely consume new kinds of technologies and new ways of being literate; rather, they exchange them, invest them, and use them as capital. The findings show the ways in which teaching and learning literacy through the materiality of writing remittances are tied up in social relationships, economic realities, and “larger systems of political control” (p. 425).

As with Vieira’s, the final research piece in this issue, by Mary Amanda Stewart and Holly Hansen-Thomas, traces the teaching and learning of literacies across
boundaries. Through a case study of Paula, a 16-year-old woman with Mexican and U.S. citizenship who lives with extended family in the United States in order to attend an American high school, Stewart and Hansen-Thomas examine how a transnational bilingual student learns Englishes through the process of translanguaging. This case study is driven by two questions: “What transnational experiences are evident in the participant’s life and literacies?” and “How does the participant respond to instructional practices that leverage her transnational life and literacies through translanguaging?” (p. 455). In answering the first research question, the authors draw upon the ways in which Paula’s past, present, and future are shaped by the assumption that she will be a “global citizen” who not only crosses boundaries in her use of languages but also literally crosses national boundaries throughout her life. In response to the second research question, the authors note that a five-class-period translanguaging unit allowed Paula the space to creatively and critically use translanguaging practices.

Stewart and Hansen-Thomas conclude from this study that boundaries necessarily create binaries—a finding also seen, for example, in Yenika-Agbaw’s study, where boundaries create a binary between citizens and noncitizens, and in Vieira’s study, where the boundaries of nation-states create binaries between those in the homeland and those outside of the homeland. Yet, Stewart and Hansen-Thomas assert that the transnational act of crossing physical boundaries and the translanguaging act of crossing language boundaries both seem to resist binaries. As Stewart and Hansen-Thomas assert, “Paula cannot be defined as a citizen of just one country, a speaker of one language, or a member of one cultural group. Nor is she the sum of two separate citizenships, languages, or cultures. As her life, literacies, and poetry demonstrate, translanguaging represents her complete transnational being” (p. 465). Importantly, the fact that Paula’s transnational identity and translanguaging practices shatter easy binaries has ramifications for the teaching and learning of Englishes: the authors suggest that teachers should beware the effects of the Common Core State Standards on translanguaging students in the ELA classroom and work to ensure that the classroom becomes (or remains) a space for the creative and critical enactment of complex translanguaging practices.

Finally, the Forum piece in this issue provides a wonderful context for our engagement with the creation, maintenance, and effects of borders in the teaching and learning of Englishes, especially in a globalized world. In this essay, Melanie Sperling and Anne DiPardo argue that the articles featured in RTE during their tenure as editors can be framed as a manifestation of the ways in which the field was expanding its understanding of the teaching of English as well as its methodological and theoretical approaches to research in the teaching of English. They note that during their tenure, the journal saw an increase in three methodological approaches: the qualitative case study, mixed methods, and the conceptual essay. During this time, the journal covered an expanding variety of topics, from the teaching of writing in different genres to different tools for teaching literature to what it means to be a struggling reader to students’ self-efficacy beliefs with regard to literacy. Finally, the authors describe how critical theory emerged as a central theoretical underpinning of sociocultural research in the teaching of English.
Sperling and DiPardo frame the expansion of methodologies, topics, and theoretical underpinnings as a response to new demands on the teaching and learning of English. These demands, they argue, are themselves a manifestation of “rapid social and cultural changes” (p. 474). We see the theme of this issue resonating with this assertion. Indeed, the present issue’s focus on how nation-state and other borders are constructed and crossed in the teaching and learning of English emerges at a time of rapid globalization, when some boundaries—both real and imagined—have become calcified and others have become more porous. Writing technologies, like those described in Vieira’s article, have made it easier to communicate and share literate practices across boundaries, including those of the nation-state. At the same time, ideologies, whether colonialist and white supremacist as in Yenika-Agbaw’s study or neoliberal as in Choo’s work, have created problematic boundaries that do harm to those named “noncitizens.”

The illumination of these problematic boundaries on a global stage invites new questions about the relationships among real and imagined boundaries, citizenship(s), and the teaching and learning of English: What, if any, new conceptualizations of citizenship—beyond that of the nation-state—might be more helpful and inclusive? Can understanding how the teaching of English functions within and across the borders of a given nation-state offer new directions for teachers, teacher educators, and scholars? How might the English classroom be a space for crossing or even shattering real and imagined boundaries? For example, teachers might (as in Choo’s study) push for a literature curriculum that invites ethical and humanizing border crossings and that conceptualizes persons, via ethical cosmopolitanism, as citizens in the global community of humankind. Or they might (as Stewart and Hansen-Thomas recommend) make spaces for translanguaging practices that encourage students to break free of nation-state and language boundaries in creative, critical, and personally meaningful ways.

Thus, this final issue of the 50th volume year of RTE embodies the pattern that Sperling and DiPardo identify in their essay. Indeed, the rapid change of today’s world shapes the questions that the field is asking in this issue and the new possibilities for teaching and learning that emerge out of these questions. In this 50th volume year, not only have previous editorial teams reflected on trends and themes that emerged over the past 20 years of the journal, but authors have also responded to changing times by innovating new genres and forms for the making and sharing of scholarship; by considering English teaching and learning—and literate practices more broadly—beyond the borders of the United States; and by grappling with the issues and questions of equity that shape languages and literacies.