

On Common Ground

Strengthening Teaching through School-University Partnership

YALE-NEW HAVEN TEACHERS INSTITUTE

NUMBER 10, SPRING 2005



JASPER JOHNS, MAP, 1961

Establishing Institutes Throughout the Nation

By Senator Joseph Lieberman

I have recently introduced legislation which I believe will strengthen the content and pedagogical knowledge of our K-12 teacher workforce. This measure, The Teacher Professional Development Institutes Bill, provides the necessary resources and incentives to enlist college and university faculties in partnerships with public school districts throughout the nation in an effort to strengthen public school instruction.

My proposal will establish, over the next five years, forty new Teacher Professional Development Institutes in locales in which a significant proportion of the students come from low-income households. Based on the model which has been operating at Yale University for over 25 years, each Teacher Professional Development

Institute will pair one or more institutions of higher education with a local, economically-disadvantaged public school system. These Institutes will strengthen the present teacher workforce by giving participants an opportunity to gain more sophisticated content knowledge and instructional skills, and will provide them a chance to develop practical curriculum units in conjunction with their Institute colleagues.

Since 1978, the Yale-New Haven Teachers Institute has offered five to seven thirteen-session seminars each year, led by Yale faculty, on topics that teachers have selected to enhance their teaching mastery. To begin the process, teacher representatives from the Institute solicit teachers throughout the school district for ideas on how to help meet their perceived needs—for example, improving content

area knowledge, preparing instructional materials, motivating students or addressing accountability standards.

As a consensus emerges regarding seminar content, the Institute director identifies and enlists university faculty members with the appropriate expertise, interest, and desire to lead the seminar. Most importantly, however, seminar topics are ultimately determined by the teachers who participate. In this way, the offerings are designed to respond to what teachers believe is useful and practical for both themselves and their students.

It is, in fact, the cooperative nature of the Institute seminar planning process that ensures its success—rigorous topical instruction and relevant materials are provided based on participants' self-identified needs.

(continued on page 4)

On Common Ground: The Yale National Initiative

By Thomas R. Whitaker

In Number 9 of *On Common Ground*, a special issue on "Urban Partnerships," we highlighted the process and the accomplishments of the National Demonstration Project of the Yale-New Haven Teachers Institute, and we emphasized the need for a coast-to-coast network of Teachers Institutes. In Number 10 we provide an appropriate sequel.

The Yale National Initiative is now moving into its second phase, during which the members of the League of Teachers Institutes will provide collegial advice to new Teachers Institutes as they are established. Funds to help establish new Institutes are being sought from foundations that might provide national or regional support, and several prospective Teachers Institutes are also being encouraged to seek funds from local sources. The Teacher Professional Development Institutes Bill, recently introduced by Senator Joe Lieberman, Senator Chris Dodd, and Representative Rosa DeLauro, would enable a giant step forward in this effort. It would authorize federal funds over the next five years to establish forty new Institutes in locales in which a significant proportion of the students come from low-income households. Our feature essay, "Institutes Across the Nation," appropriately consists of Senator Lieberman's remarks about that legislative proposal.

On our cover, to set the theme for discussion of that major proposal, we have placed Jasper Johns's *Map*. About this painting, Philip Yenawine has said: "Just as any map represents an enormous geographic, political, and social complex, . . . Johns brings up the many sides of representation, from diagrams to words to the painted language of lines, color, texture, and gesture. By acting within a tight framework, he opens the door to a vast nexus of visual possibilities, as well as ideas." We trust that the analogy will hold: within the framework of the Yale National Initiative and a Teacher Professional Development Act, we foresee the unfolding of a vast nexus of possibilities.

In order for a partnership between a school district and an institution of higher education to establish a Teachers Institute that will participate in the Yale National Initiative, it must have a detailed understanding of the principles and procedures of such an Institute. The Yale National Initiative, the Yale-New Haven Teachers Institute, and the other members of the League of Teachers Institutes stand ready to assist with that understanding. The Yale National Initiative has already published a booklet that sets forth its aims and procedures. Its Web site (<http://teachers.yale.edu>) includes much additional material and provides links to the Web sites of Teachers Institutes that are members of the League. These interrelated Web sites contain materials about the Institutes, copies of the curriculum units written by their Fellows, and advisory booklets of various kinds.

In this issue of *On Common Ground* we also provide a survey of what the members of the League of Teachers Institutes have been accomplishing. Articles by seminar leaders and Fellows in Houston, Pittsburgh, and New Haven show how the work in and through Institute seminars has led to fresh curricular planning and increased student learning in the classrooms of the Fellows. These articles also give insight into the motivation of the university faculty members who become seminar leaders and the teachers who become Fellows.

To those accounts we have added a section that focuses on the relations between teacher quality and student learning. It begins with a summary of the evaluations of the National Demonstration Project. It then includes a conversation with a New Haven school administrator who had been an early Fellow of the Yale-New Haven Teachers Institute and an article by a Pittsburgh school administrator who had more recently been a Fellow of the Pittsburgh Teachers Institute. The section is rounded out with two additional perspectives from administrators in Pittsburgh.

The Essays: Some Connections

Senator Lieberman's remarks outline a major impetus for the establishment of additional Teachers Institutes. Those new Institutes would be based on the model that has been successful in New Haven for more than twenty-five years, and that the National Demonstration Project has shown to be successful in other urban partnerships. This federal initiative would parallel the Yale National Initiative and could draw support from its example and its continuing activities. The new Teacher Professional Development Institutes could make use of technical advice, summer "Intensives," annual Conferences, and other opportunities that are open to members of the League of Teachers Institutes and to new Institutes being established through the Yale National Initiative.

The essays from the Houston Teachers Institute suggest something of the topical range of the Institute seminars—including mathematics, architecture, and American history—and also indicate how the work in each seminar can be grounded in the special interests of the teachers and classrooms being served. Mike Field describes how his strategy for leading students to engage mathematics with vigor and delight was developed in classrooms at the University of Wisconsin and the University of Houston. And he shows how his seminars in "Hands-on Geometry" and "Figuring the Odds," which helped him to focus and develop his own ideas on the nature of mathematics and its role in the modern world, provided both teachers and their students with fresh and enjoyable learning experiences. Mary Ann T. Natunewicz describes how she could find in a seminar on home architecture from 1850 to 1970 the basis for a unit on the development of homes in Houston and Chicago. Her unit led students into a fuller understanding of the history of their own city in its national context. And it encouraged them to begin to grasp the complexi-

(continued on page 7)

Contents

Feature

- 1 Establishing Institutes Throughout the Nation
Senator Joseph Lieberman

Editorial

- 2 On Common Ground:
The Yale National Initiative
Thomas R. Whitaker

Seminars in Houston

- 5 Mathematics: Why Get Involved?
Mike Field
- 6 The Development of Homes in Houston and Chicago
Mary Ann Natunewicz
- 8 The Underground Railroad: A Study of the Routes from Texas to Mexico
Georgia Redonet

Seminars in Pittsburgh

- 9 Teachers Institute Seminars on Latin America: A Faculty Perspective
Karen Goldman
- 10 Cooking with Culture
Renee Tolliver
- 12 Defining the Decades with Media Events
Doris Braun

Seminars in New Haven

- 14 An Inquiry into Geography through Film and Literature
Dudley Andrew
- 16 Cultural Snapshots:
Reflections and Illuminations of Francophone Cultures
Crecia C. Swaim

- 17 War and Peace in the Twentieth Century and Beyond
Bruce Russett
- 18 Just War Theory and the Wars of the 20th Century
John Buell
- 20 Asteroids, Comets, and Meteorites: Their Intimate Relation with Life on Earth
Stephen P. Broker

Teacher Quality and Student Learning

- 22 Evaluations of the National Demonstration Project
Thomas R. Whitaker
- 24 From Fellow to Administrator
A Conversation with Verdell Roberts
- 26 Learning from Participation in Teachers Institutes
Verna Arnold
- 27 Renewal Through the Institute: A Principal's View
F. Robert McMurray
- 28 From The Pittsburgh Public Schools
John W. Thompson and William Isler

Book Review

- 30 *Teaching with Fire: Poetry that Sustains the Courage to Teach*, edited by Sam M. Intrator and Megan Scribner
Paul Fry

Credits: Front Cover: Jasper Johns © VAGA, NY. *Map*. 1961. Oil on canvas, 6' 6" x 10' 3 1/8". Gift of Mr. and Mrs. Robert C. Scull. (277.1963). The Museum of Modern Art, New York, NY, U.S.A. Digital Image © The Museum of Modern Art/Licensed by SCALA/Art Resource, NY. **Page 5:** Buckminster Fuller. *Building Construction/Geodesic Dome*. 1951. Screenprint in white ink on clear polyester film overlaid on a Curtis plain blue backing sheet. 30" x 40". Carl Soloway Gallery, Cincinnati, Ohio. **Page 8:** Jacob Lawrence. *Migration Series, No. 18: the migration gained in momentum*. 1940-41. Casein tempera on hardboard. 12" x 18". The Museum of Modern Art, New York/ © ARS, NY. Photograph Courtesy of Gwendolyn Knight Lawrence / Art Resource, NY. **Page 10:** Carl Moon. *Women Baking Bread*. ca. 1937-1943. Oil on canvas. 24" x 30 1/8". Smithsonian American Art Museum, Washington, DC. Photograph © Smithsonian American Art Museum, Washington, DC / Art Resource, NY. **Page 12:** Ken Keeley. *20th Century Newsstand*. 1999. Oil over acrylic on canvas. 50" x 80". © 1999 Ken Keeley. **Page 14:** Unknown Artist. *Watching a documentary film of Amadou Bamba's life*. 1995. Reverse-glass painting. 24.2 x 32.6 cm. Collection of Dr. Allen F. Roberts. Photograph Courtesy of Fowler Museum of Cultural History, Los Angeles, CA. **Page 19:** Tom Lea. *That Two Thousand Yard Stare*. 1943. Oil on canvas. Army Art Collection, U.S. Army Center of Military History, Fort McNair, DC. **Page 21:** Alexander Calder. *La lune et la montagne (Moon and Mountain)*. n.d. Color lithograph. 23 7/8" x 19 1/4". Yale University Art Gallery, New Haven, CT. University Purchase, A. Conger Goodyear, B.A. 1899, Fund/ © ARS, NY. **Page 26:** William Johnson. *Art Class*. 1939-40. Oil on plywood. Smithsonian American Art Museum, Washington, DC. Photograph © Smithsonian American Art Museum, Washington, DC / Art Resource, NY. **Page 31:** William Blake. *Jerusalem: Frontispiece [A traveler wearing a short, belted coat and a flat-brimmed hat steps with his right foot through an open arched doorway in a stone wall.] (plate 1)*. 1804-1820. Relief etching with pen, watercolor and gold printed in orange. 13 ½" x 10 3/8". Yale Center for British Art, Paul Mellon Collection. **Back Cover:** William Henry Johnson. *Ferry Boat Trip*. ca. 1943-44. Tempera, pen and ink with pencil on paper. 16 ½" x 13 7/8". National Museum of American Art, Smithsonian Institution, Washington, DC. Photograph © Smithsonian American Art Museum, Washington, DC / Art Resource, NY.

Establishing Institutes Throughout the Nation

(continued from front cover)

Granted the opportunity to examine and act on their own skills and knowledge, teachers gain a sense self-sufficiency, and are more enthusiastic about their participation. Teachers gain further confidence as they practice using the materials they obtain and develop among their peers, ensuring that the experience not only increases their subject-matter proficiency, but also provides immediate hands-on active learning materials that can be transferred to the classroom. In short, by allowing teachers to determine the seminar subjects and providing them the resources to develop curricula relevant to their classroom and their students, the Institutes empower teachers. Teachers *are* the front line—they are the interface between the educational system and the students it aspires to enlighten—and they know what should be done to improve their schools and increase student achievement. The Teacher Professional Development Institutes promote this philosophy.

From 1999-2002, the Yale-New Haven Teachers Institute conducted a National Demonstration Project to create comparable Institutes at four diverse sites with large concentrations of disadvantaged students. These demonstration projects were located in Pittsburgh, Pennsylvania; Houston, Texas; Albuquerque, New Mexico; and Santa Ana, California. Based on the success of that Project, the Institute has launched the Yale National Initiative to strengthen teaching in public schools. The Yale Initiative is a long-term endeavor to establish exemplary Teachers Institutes in states throughout the nation, just as the legislation I have introduced would do.

Follow-up evaluations have garnered very positive reactions from teachers who have participated in both the Yale-New Haven Institute and the demonstration Institutes. These data strongly support the conclusions that virtually all teachers felt substantially strengthened in their mastery

of content knowledge and that they developed increased expectations for students' achievement. Further, because of their personal involvement in the course selection and curriculum development process, teacher participants have found these seminars to be especially relevant and useful in their classroom practices—in fact, ninety-five percent of all participating teachers reported them to be useful. Finally, study results have found that these Institutes foster teacher leadership, develop supportive teacher networks, heighten university faculty commitments to improving K-12 public education, and create more positive partnerships between school districts and institutions of higher education, something I believe is essential to improving students' readiness for college.

Several studies assert that teacher quality is the single most important school-related factor in determining student achievement. Accordingly, the No Child Left Behind Act requires a "highly qualified" teacher to be in every classroom by the end of the 2005-2006 academic year. Effective teacher professional development programs that focus on content area and pedagogical knowledge are proven means for enhancing the success of classroom teachers and helping to meet the "highly-qualified" criteria. Yet, a 2003 Government Accountability Office Report on Teacher Quality found that many state and local school districts view shortcomings in their current professional development practices as a significant barrier to meeting this requirement. These local agencies are looking for innovative,

109TH CONGRESS
1ST SESSION

S. 990

To provide a grant program to support the establishment and operation of Teachers Professional Development Institutes.

IN THE SENATE OF THE UNITED STATES

MAY 10, 2005

Mr. LIEBERMAN (for himself and Mr. DODD) introduced the following bill; which was read twice and referred to the Committee on Health, Education, Labor, and Pensions

A BILL

To provide a grant program to support the establishment and operation of Teachers Professional Development Institutes.

- 1 *Be it enacted by the Senate and House of Representatives of the United States of America in Congress assembled,*
- 2 **SECTION 1. TEACHERS PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT INSTITUTES.**
- 3 Title II of the Higher Education Act of 1965 (20 U.S.C. 1021 et seq.) is amended by adding at the end
- 4 the following:

research-proven alternatives to their current programs, and this is precisely what Teacher Professional Development Institutes will provide.

Nationwide, projects developed to conform to the Yale-New Haven Institute have proven to be a successful model for innovative teacher professional development. Virtually all teacher participants felt substantially strengthened in their mastery of content knowledge and their teaching skills. My proposal would open this opportunity to many more urban teachers and would provide high quality professional development to educators and policy makers throughout the nation. In this way, we can set high standards for effective teacher professional development as we have done for student achievement outcomes.

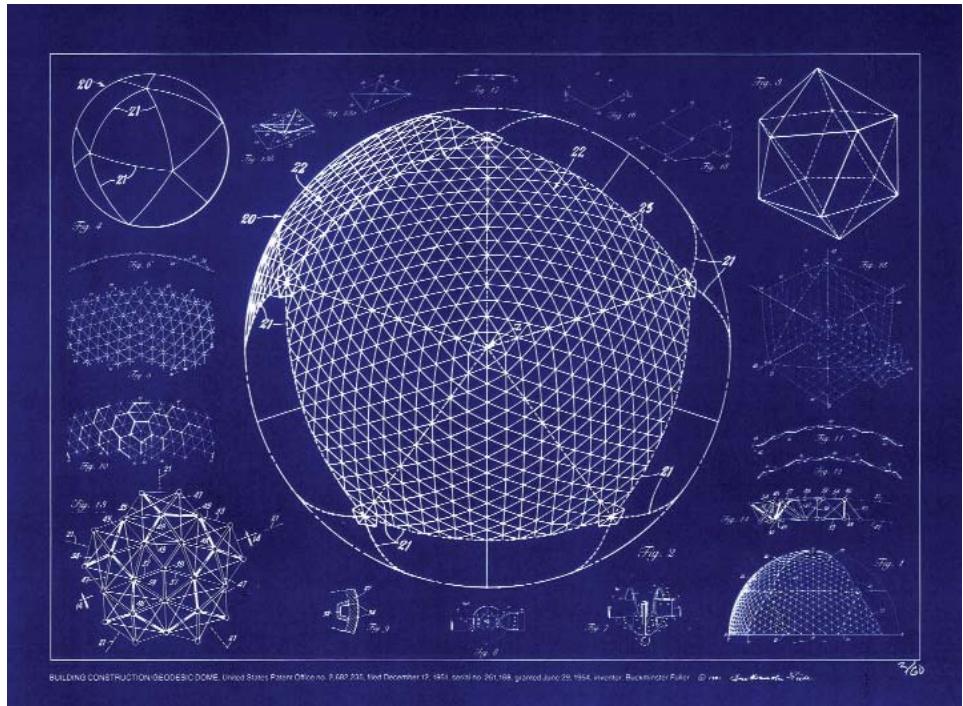
Joseph Lieberman is United States Senator from the State of Connecticut.

Mathematics: Why Get Involved?

By Mike Field

Rather than simply give a summary of my very positive and rewarding experiences leading three seminars in the Houston Teachers Institute, I felt it might be more useful to answer the question of why an active research mathematician might get involved in such a venture. Mathematics teaching is, after all, usually the antithesis of the collegial style promoted in Institute seminars. As a group, mathematicians also have a reputation for having rather inflexible ideas about the importance of mathematical rigor and what should and should not be taught.

I started to develop a serious interest in the way we teach mathematics in schools about twenty years ago. At the time I was at the University of Wisconsin, Madison, on leave for a year from Sydney University, Australia. Before going back to Sydney, I elected to teach a summer session course on geometry. The class consisted of prospective elementary school teachers. All of them were hostile to mathematics and most unhappy at being forced to take this class which they felt was irrelevant to their teaching needs. Hostility and alienation towards mathematics is hardly news for a math professor working at a state university in the USA. In my case, however, this was really a "holiday job" to earn some extra dollars before going back to Sydney. Rather than adopt one of the usual strategies—predicated on the idea that, like cod liver oil, mathematics is good for you—I decided, after talking with my spouse (who was trained as a teacher), that I would attempt to make the course relevant for the teachers and also show some at least of the ideas that underpin geometric ways of thinking. I think it is important to stress that I felt that the class was correct in its attitude to the course: it was largely irrelevant and inappropriate (and, in that sense, I feel typical of many classes in general mathematics that are taught to college



BUCKMINSTER FULLER, BUILDING CONSTRUCTION/ GEODESIC DOME, 1951

students). The course I developed entailed their making classroom materials which ranged from stellated dodecahedra to posters illustrating tilings, tessellations, and various symmetric designs. One part of the course that worked spectacularly well involved making the solid models (this was a seriously challenging activity). As the course progressed, the mathematics office staff got increasingly intrigued seeing the students going to the class with their mathematical models. Eventually, they commissioned the students to make some models for their office. By the end of the course, the attitude of the students towards mathematics had significantly changed (this was backed up by several letters I received from members of the class—in itself an unusual experience for a math professor). To this day, I still feel that this was the most successful and enjoyable university mathematics course that I have ever led.

Several years later, when I had moved to Houston, I was asked to give an interdisciplinary course on "Symmetry, Patterns and

Design" to junior and senior students mainly from the art and design department at the University of Houston (as a hobby, I do a fair amount of art work based on some of the ideas that come from my mathematics research). Apart from the expected fear and alienation from mathematics, I was surprised to find that members of the class—many of whom were specializing in design—had no insight, indeed no language, to describe the various types of patterns and symmetry that one sees everywhere in the real world. How does one see without the concepts and language? I believe that geometry helps one to *see*. Whether it be three dimensional visualization, an appreciation of art, or a sensitivity to pattern and symmetry in nature, I feel that without some exposure to geometry and geometric ways of thinking, a whole richness of experience is lost.

But this has to do with appreciation and enhancing the experience of life. Are parts of mathematics still useful to the average
(continued on page 13)

Mike Field is Professor of Mathematics at the University of Houston.

The Development of Homes in Houston and Chicago

By Mary Ann T. Natunewicz

Editor's Note: This unit was written in a 2003 seminar, "There's No Place Like Home: Architecture, Technology, Art, and the Culture of the American Home, 1850-1970," led by Margaret Culbertson, Chief Librarian of the Art and Architecture Library, University of Houston. It is designed to supplement an eleventh-grade course in United States history that deals with the development and growth of cities. In this Fellow's school, which has students from over 40 countries, many students have a first language other than English. This unit deals with two time periods: from the late 19th century through 1917; and the post-World-War II period (c. 1946-1955). The first was a time of very large immigration to the United States, an aspect of interest to these students; the second included the mushrooming growth of tract housing, particularly important in the growth of Houston. The students study Houston from its initial site to include places such as Houston Heights and Montrose. Similarities and contrasts with the growth of Chicago are emphasized in the context of the historical developments of these times. Lesson plans include the study of urban geography, house plans, architectural styles, relations to the Progressive Era and the Baby-Boom years, and problems of historical preservation. The writer has also used portions of this unit in a course in American Cultural Studies.

I taught this unit as the unit on houses in American Cultural Studies, an elective course in our Humanities Magnet program. Most of my students were juniors and seniors who were either currently taking, or had already completed, a course in

Mary Ann T. Natunewicz teaches history at Lee High School in Houston.

United States History. Students look at some contemporary cultural phenomena and put these topics into cultural and historical context. All the topics complement the required history course, are important in understanding American culture, and are easily understood by high-school age students of varying academic abilities. Housing is such a topic. In learning about the growth of cities, students have read about such things as immigration, political bosses, labor unions, and rising literacy, but, other than a few pictures of tenements, they have little understanding of how people lived and why they lived in a particular place. Chicago and New York City are prominently featured in textbooks because

Chicago and New York City are prominently featured in textbooks, and I thought that some understanding of urban life would appeal more to our students if we looked at what was going on in Houston.

of the significant political events and social advances in these cities, and I thought that some understanding of urban life would appeal more to our students if we looked at what was going on in Houston.

I had originally planned for six 90-minute classes, which focused on the late nineteenth century and the immediate post World War II era. It became apparent that extra days would be needed. As it was, I did not finish everything in the unit.

Houston was originally divided into wards and, although modern council districts have replaced the old wards, older parts of the city are still referred to by their original ward numbers. I was pleasantly surprised to learn that a large proportion of the class was familiar with the number and the location of the wards, so the idea of the growth of the city was more easily implemented than I had expected. Part of my unit centered on the

use of mass transit in the city, emphasizing the relationships between the development of the trolley lines and the establishment of new residential subdivisions. One of the assignments was to locate the routes of the old trolley lines and to find out through what neighborhoods each line ran. Light rail transportation was in the news because Houston opened a new rapid transit line in January, at the time the course was starting. The contrast between the extensive mileage in 1910 and the limited single route of 2004 was obvious.

There were two parts of the unit that the students enjoyed most. First, they had to determine what rooms and facilities in a home were necessary and which were comparative luxuries. Then, after looking at examples of floor plans, they were to list the things they would like in a home and design an appropriate floor plan. Conspicuous consumption was the order of the day with homes designed that had indoor swimming pools and basketball courts, media

rooms, game rooms, jacuzzis, marble patios, tennis courts, gourmet kitchens, and four-car garages; very few were interested in libraries or music practice rooms. Central heating, air-conditioning and indoor plumbing were taken for granted. Because the interest was so high, I added to this section and had them find houses in Houston that had some or all of the features they wanted. To do this they had to learn to read the real estate sections of a paper and some had to learn about Houston suburbs. They were shocked at the prices of homes; it was an eye opener for some to discover that "540" was a shortened form of \$540,000 and did not mean you could get the house for \$540. At this point I asked what sort of job you would need to finance a house that cost this much. Naturally the first answers were "pro basketball player" or "rap star." After determining that most of the people

buying these homes were neither professional athletes nor singers with platinum records, more realistic occupations were considered. Each student had to use the Internet to find average salaries of occupations that would permit her to buy the home. When I use the unit another time I would take this a step further and explore the educational background needed to get the type of job that would allow you to buy the house.

After the students had practiced being consumers, they could more easily understand what people, both in Chicago and in Houston, would want to look for in buying a home. A section that I thought would take more time, the importance of easily accessible transportation, was speedily learned because most of my students rely heavily on public transportation. For them it was no revelation that you would want to live near the trolley line. What did surprise them was where the trolleys used to go in Houston and the much greater number of miles and routes.

The development of the Sears Roebuck houses was examined by looking at changes in rooms and addition of amenities such as improved plumbing. We looked at ads for housing developments in early 20th-century Chicago and compared them to the type of house built in Houston at that time. We read sections of Upton Sinclair's *The Jungle* and discussed the problems of non-English speakers and the danger of being cheated because of not knowing the language. Many of our students are recent non-English speaking immigrants whose families are currently trying to buy their first homes in this country. They discussed whether Sinclair was being too patronizing toward the immigrants of his novel and doubted that the immigrants could be fooled so easily. The consensus was that not speaking English didn't mean a person had lost all his common sense, and that, if the prospective buyer had a person whom they trusted and who could help them over language problems, the immigrant house buyer would be successful.

The second most popular section of the unit was looking at pictures of homes in Chicago and in Houston on the Web. We used many of the sites devoted to the Chicago bungalow. Students were very interested in the types of things you should do to restore and maintain buildings. What they really liked were the pictures that I took and posted on my Web site. For some reason, these were very popular, perhaps because they showed people and cars and were obviously fairly recent. They were able to appreciate and to identify some of the types of styles, but not as many as I had hoped. Many of these Houston houses were in sections they had looked at in the real estate sections.

My students come from all over the city of Houston, and the section on the growth of a post-World War II planned housing subdivision about a mile from our school was not as effective as I had hoped. The students turned out to be as unfamiliar with the churches, schools and colleges in this area as they were of similar places in Chicago. Not surprisingly the part of most interest was the presence of the first air-conditioned mall in the United States, the development of which was a central ingredient of the planned housing area. Although they might not live in the area, everyone knew, shopped at and some even worked at this mall. Because of the complicated Texas politics of the era, this was a time-consuming section to teach.

Generally, I was very pleased with the unit and I think that the students got to know a lot about Houston and its relationship to places that are featured more prominently in the standard texts. They learned about the importance of conserving both architecturally important buildings and natural resources. They had practice in comparing and contrasting buildings in different climate zones. They also learned how to look at their city with more appreciative eyes and to understand why people are now moving back to Houston's downtown area.

(continued from page 2)

ties of mass transit and urban development in a city that has undergone rapid change. Georgia Redonet, in contrast, describes how she has opened up for her students a very fresh topic—the migration of African American slaves from Texas to Mexico. After engaging in substantial research in connection with the seminar on "African American Slavery in the New World," she developed a vivid and pertinent unit for students at Jane Long Middle School, many of whom come from families that had traveled north across the Rio Grande or had arrived from refugee camps in other countries.

The essays from the Pittsburgh Teachers Institute give a yet closer view of the possible relationships between an Institute seminar and the curriculum units that the Fellows prepare. Karen S. Goldman describes her step-by-step discovery of the seminar process in a Teachers Institute, and her delight in the involvement and creativity that the Fellows brought to their curriculum units. She leads us through the development of three seminars on topics pertaining to Latin America, and she notes as well how one of her own recent publications emerged from this experience. Renee C. Tolliver, a Fellow in Karen Goldman's seminar, "Popular Culture in Latin America and the United States," describes the unit on "Cooking with Culture" that she developed for her ninth-grade gifted English class on the North Side of Pittsburgh. Her unit incorporates recipes for ethnic foods, interviews to obtain family anecdotes, and current pop culture topics—as well as lessons in Microsoft Word and digital photography. Doris Braun, a Fellow in James Davidson's seminar on "Media Revolutions," describes how she developed a unit on "Defining the Decades" that worked exceptionally well for her elementary school class. Her students not only learned how the media have been transformed since the 1940s; they also became
(continued on page 11)

The Underground Railroad: A Study of the Routes from Texas to Mexico

By Georgia Redonet

Editor's Note: This unit, written in a 2003 seminar on "African American Slavery in the New World: A Different Voice," led by Ken Brown of the Department of Anthropology, University of Houston, is designed for a middle school class in history and geography. It incorporates problem solving, critical thinking, research, and oral, written, and visual presentations. The phrase "Underground Railroad" is extended to apply here to the routes used by slaves in Texas who were running away to Mexico. The unit, which presents detailed historical accounts based on an extensive bibliography, involves the study of efforts made by African American slaves in Texas to escape southward.

It was while reading a travel article about Acapulco in the *Houston Chronicle* that I first became aware of slaves who sought freedom by crossing the Rio Grande. The author described enslaved African Americans who escaped to Mexico and settled in the coastal areas around Acapulco. She had visited the Museo de las Culturas Afromestizas, a museum dedicated to their culture and history located near the resort city. I was intrigued. Of course slaves from Texas would have gone south. They were too far removed from the Mason Dixon Line to have much chance at a successful escape to the North. I thought each year of adding a detailed account of this information to my curriculum. But with a busy school schedule the opportunity never presented itself. Then I discovered the Houston Teachers Institute. HTI provides teachers with the impetus to explore those areas of learning and enrichment which have been put on back burners.

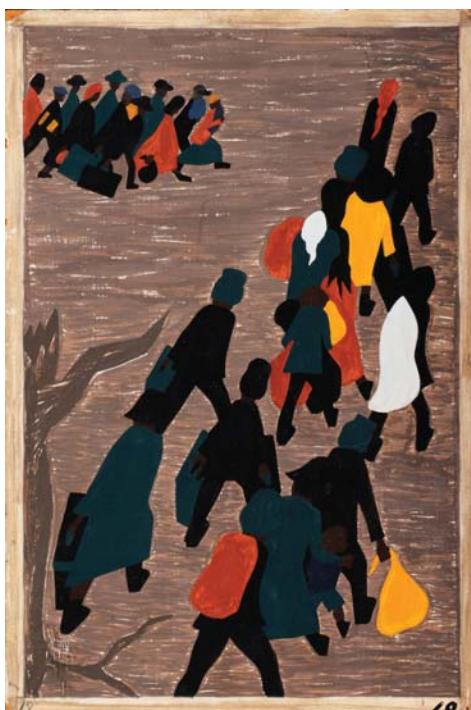
In the spring of 2003, Dr. Kenneth Brown led a seminar entitled "African American Slavery in the New World: A Different Voice." As I began my studies I

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discovered that the writer of the travel article had been completely wrong in her interpretation. This coastal region south of Acapulco was actually settled by the descendants of African slaves brought to Mexico by the Spanish. No matter, the article had opened the door to a new area of information and exploration and I was eager to proceed. Very little has been written in English on the topic of an Underground Railroad into Mexico. The

Long Middle School in Houston, Texas, we usually have students who have come to us from forty or fifty countries. A good number arrive from refugee camps. Others have traveled north across the Rio Grande. Their families, like those of the slaves, had to make plans for escape. They have also gained freedom at a price. Like those who escaped slavery, they too have been separated from family and friends and may never see them again. In comparing their lives to those of the American slaves, they began to see the importance and relevance of their own experiences and were able to relate them to people who came before them.

Other lessons focused on the geography of Texas through the process of planning, the use of problem-solving skills, and research. Geography is usually not a favorite portion of the curriculum with the students or me. The book tends to introduce the state by regions, with a rather mundane description of geographical features followed by a list of the economic factors for each area. In this unit geography was presented as a challenging game. My classes planned an escape by thoroughly studying the environment to be traversed. What types of wild animals would they encounter? Would there be edible plant life and water? How would they obtain that knowledge? What was the weather like? Did the terrain provide places to hide? What about the vegetation in the barren scrub land of South Texas? These questions were assigned to different groups who coordinated their answers and used topographical maps to plan their escapes. The runaways had to factor into all of this geographical information their human limitations and abilities to cope with a given environment. The landscape of Texas came alive and allowed my students to consider the historical impact of geography. My classes have reaped numerous benefits from my participation in HTI. There is also great satisfaction in knowing that I am providing other educators with information which I feel is important and yet not readily available.



JACOB LAWRENCE, MIGRATION SERIES, NO. 18, 1940-41

most valuable sources of information were masters' theses, historical quarterlies, and the accounts of former slaves taken in the 1930s by the WPA Writers Project. Enrollment in HTI included full privileges at the University of Houston Libraries. For a teacher of Texas History access to these rare materials provided a unique learning experience. The result was a curriculum unit which enriched my knowledge of local history, reinvigorated my desire to teach, and captured the imagination and hearts of my students.

My classes compared the lives of the former slaves in Mexico to that of modern day immigrants and refugees. At Jane

Teachers Institute Seminars on Latin America: A Faculty Perspective

By Karen S. Goldman

In the spring of 2001 I led my first Pittsburgh Teachers Institute Seminar. It was called "Latin America: Civilization and Culture." To my delight, the Fellows represented a wide diversity of schools, levels and subjects, from a Head-Start instructor who taught three and four year olds, to high school teachers of English, history, Spanish and art. My seminar was designed to serve as a general introduction to various aspects of life in Latin American countries from early times to the present. Two important objectives were to provide a general understanding of the region's history, and an introduction to the diverse countries and cultures of Latin America. Beyond this, I wanted Fellows to explore the role different categories such as gender, social class, religion, race and ethnicity play in the lives of Latin Americans. In addition, to compensate for the relative dearth of Hispanic immigration in our region, the seminar focused on the impact of increasing Latino populations in the U.S. The early weeks presented a fairly traditional overview of the social and political development of Latin America, including topics such as: the precolumbian civilizations and their cultural legacy; the conquistadores and the colonial period; the independence movements, the twentieth-century dictatorships; the move toward democracy, and the ongoing search for and the definition of a Latin American identity. We then read and commented on a variety of works of fiction and other cultural artifacts such as films, photography, plastic art and Internet resources from Latin America.

I had been teaching undergraduates about Latin America for many years (one of the early ones of which I spent at Yale University sweating through my first lecture class on Latin American Cinema). But this was my first experience leading a PTI seminar, and I had no set expectations of the Fellows. Nor did I know exactly what type of experience I should design

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for the teachers, who were very different in almost every way from my usual all-female 17-to-21 year old audience. I envisioned it as a hybrid between a traditional lecture/discussion format, such as I might teach in an upper-level college course, and a graduate seminar, where participants are responsible for presenting material to the group as well as contributing to and leading discussions. In the end, it turned out to be slightly more seminar than lecture class. Fellows were responsible for reading background on Latin American history and culture, and I began each seminar with a brief review of that material. Additionally, Fellows read novels, stories and other literary works. Fellows themselves were responsible for presenting, summarizing and analyzing these works. As in most graduate-level seminars, discussions were often focused around differing views of the texts, and how these might be relevant to the various curriculum units under way among the Fellows. I was not surprised by the often bewildered reactions of the Fellows to much of the contemporary Latin American fiction, which is notable for its resistance to traditional realist literary conventions. What I did not anticipate was the level of involvement and degree of creativity of the Fellows in the design and execution of their curriculum units. Teachers who had had scant dealings with Latin American cultures before the seminar produced excellently researched and written units on the following topics (to name only a few): "The Myth of Racial Democracy in Brazil," "20th Century Latin American Art: Critical Issues of Influence," "Making Connections: Latino Caribbean Literature," "The Legacies of Mexican Artists, Diego Rivera and Frida Kahlo and Their Influences on Mexican Culture," "Exploring Twentieth Century Latin America through Film" and "Negrismo: A Theme for Improving Self-Image in the Spanish Classroom for Black History Month." Response to the seminar was so positive that I submitted a second seminar proposal for 2002. Realizing that

much of our discussion in the previous seminar had centered on the similarities and differences between the U.S. and Latin America, this time I designed a seminar on comparative cultural explorations. I led the seminar "Latin American and U.S. Popular Culture" in 2003. Twelve spirited teachers and I spent the semester debating, discussing and analyzing trends in film, popular literature, television and other media in the U.S. and in Latin America.

Again, the creativity and diversity of the curriculum units was exceptional, and included, among others, the following titles: "Popular Movements in Latin America," "Popular Culture and Clothing Choices," "The African Influence on Brazilian Popular Culture," "Llévame al Partido: Latin Americans in U.S. Professional Baseball" and "Birthing Rituals across Cultures." In this seminar, one topic that emerged constantly was the representation of women in popular culture and, related to this, the ubiquitous figure of the American Barbie doll and the toy's global reach. The Barbie debate was frequent and often so intense that my own interest in the doll intensified. I began a new research project that examined the ethnic, racial and national representations of Mattel's Barbie doll. In particular, I was interested in the way the Hispanic Barbie doll had been developed and marketed for a U.S. Latino public. Out of this seminar emerged one of my most recent publications: "*La Princesa Plástica: Representations of Latinidad in Hispanic Barbie*." Had it not been for the encouragement and stimulation of the Fellows, I'm quite certain that I would not have pursued this research topic.

My experience leading seminars in the Pittsburgh Teachers Institute has allowed me to share my passion for Latin America with Pittsburgh Public School teachers, and, indirectly, with the district's students. It has also led me to view my own discipline in new and surprising perspectives and enriched my understanding of teaching and the educational process overall.

Cooking with Culture

By Renee C. Tolliver

Editor's Note: This unit, written in a 2003 seminar on "Popular Culture in Latin America and the United States," led by Karen Goldman, Assistant Professor of Modern Languages and Executive Assistant to the President, Chatham College, is designed for a ninth-grade gifted English class. It can be adapted to any grade level and subject area. Students learn about popular culture by creating a multicultural cookbook that has three components: interesting and unusual information about selected cultures; personal anecdotes about rituals, celebrations and other pop culture activities; and recipes that are related to the anecdotes. They enhance the cookbook with pictures, photographs, and designs. They can use a variety of research tools including books, databases, Internet sources, and personal interviews. They take advantage of the school's technological resources by using the digital camera, the scanner, Publisher, Adobe PhotoShop, PageMaker, and PowerPoint to complete the cookbook. They showcase their work to parents and teachers during a presentation and party, where they unveil their finished book, talk about its contents, and serve food made from the recipes in the book. This five-week unit is presented during the second semester after students have learned to use research and technology tools. Its activities meet the eight District Communication Standards specified for this grade. (In 2004 a \$500 Innovation in Teaching Grant from the Pittsburgh Council on Public Education helped to cover expenses for printing the cookbook pages and carrying out the publication party.)

This month's classroom menu features a heaping serving of research skills accompanied by side dishes of planning, technology, popular culture, and family interaction. These are generously seasoned with a zesty mixture of

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CARL MOON, WOMEN BAKING BREAD, CA. 1937-43

creativity and high standards. This fabulous entrée is finished with a scrumptious, exciting dessert consisting of a gala publication party that showcases the group's unique cookbook. One of these unique features is a time capsule section with popular culture topics that will allow students to look back years from now to see what the trends were in fashion, literature, television, and movies. The authors worked tirelessly to prepare for the party by cooking many of the dishes in the cookbook and decorating the dining room with a variety of ethnic designs to impress the parents, faculty members, and special guests. The celebration was a great success, one that tantalized and satisfied both the intellectual and gustatory appetites.

One of the main reasons for the success of this unit was the access I had to relevant and stimulating material and to so many great ideas in the Pittsburgh Teachers Institute seminar, "Pop Culture in Latin America and the United States." Dr. Goldman led us on an engrossing journey through the avenues of pop culture. While the focus was on Latin America

and the United States, seminar participants offered stories and information about their own ethnic backgrounds and family rituals. There was never a dull moment, and I knew that my students would be as motivated to participate in a unit about their backgrounds as I was.

I prepared this unit for a ninth-grade gifted English class at David B. Oliver High School. Oliver is an urban school located on the North Side of Pittsburgh with about one thousand students, who come from predominantly low-income families throughout the city. The racial make-up is eighty-five percent African American and fourteen percent white, with one percent labeled as "other." Our school boasts a strong JROTC magnet as well as a rigorous Law and Public Service Magnet. We also have over two hundred PSE students (Program for Students with Exceptionalities). Like most large cities, Pittsburgh battles many tough social issues including gang violence, teen pregnancy, drug abuse, and dysfunctional families. All of these issues manifest themselves in our schools, particularly in the

diverse abilities and behaviors of our students. I work with students who have high ability but often demonstrate low achievement because they are not interested in the assignments. Developing activities that are rigorous and productive is always a challenge. So, I met the challenge this time with food as the hook. What teenager does not jump at the chance to sample tasty morsels in class, especially while they listen to interesting anecdotes about the teacher's private life?

I started the unit off with, of course, samples of food, food that reflected my own ethnic background. Students are more willing to rise to high standards if I model the activities and assignments effectively. I asked my class if they could figure out

my ethnic background. I got a variety of answers, from Hispanic to Italian to "mongrel." Actually, my father is African American and my mother is Indian (from Calcutta, India). This allowed me to share my parents' enchanting love story and then talk about how popular both Indian curries and fried chicken with collard greens are in our house. Some of the students had never eaten curry or spicy Indian food. So I passed samples of curried potatoes around. It was very spicy, and the reaction was quite funny. The students enjoyed the lesson, and all of them had a story to tell about their favorite foods and family rituals. So the plunge into a unit of research, non-fiction writing, and the use of *Microsoft Word*, *PowerPoint*, and the digital camera had taken off.

The strategies I used were to center the unit around topics to which the students would eagerly relate. I also modeled and participated in all of the unit activities

with the students. Parents and relatives were asked to complete enjoyable tasks, ones that they could be proud of, such as sharing their favorite recipes, which sparked positive memories and anecdotes. They looked forward to seeing their names, recipes and stories in the completed cookbook, and they were delighted to be invited to share in a school project celebration with their children. The students were interested in looking up information about their ethnic backgrounds and interviewing family members about rituals and food.

They felt important as they signed out the digital camera to take pictures at home for the cookbook, and they eagerly collected information about current pop culture topics to include in the

time capsule section. They quickly gained proficiency in the use of various tools in *Microsoft Word* to make pages for the cookbook that they could show off to their families. Creating invitations to the publication party and making lists of guests and menu items added to the excitement. They even stayed after school to decorate the dining room and to clean up afterward. Their enthusiasm became infectious as they insisted that their mothers, fathers, or uncles cook a special dish for the celebration.

While more faculty and guests than family members attended the publication party, the students were still able to show that their families had contributed to the project by providing recipes, cultural information, and anecdotes to the cookbook, and tasty dishes for the party. The students expressed pride in the ownership they had taken in this project and in the accolades they received from those who witnessed their accomplishments.

(continued from page 7)

journalist-historians who did research into their selected decade.

The essays from the Yale-New-Haven Teachers Institute further suggest the interdisciplinary possibilities offered by Institute seminars and curriculum units. Dudley Andrew describes his professional movement from the fields of comparative literature and film studies into the social sciences, particularly geography. He makes clear the importance of films in any study of the geographical in a world now characterized by interdependence and migration. And he outlines how his seminar looked closely at films from Africa, China, and Ireland, exploring the cultures by interrogating the films. Crecia C. Swaim, a Fellow in that seminar, then describes how it enabled her, as a first-year teacher of French, to develop a curriculum unit that would bring French alive as a worldwide language for her students at Betsy Ross Arts Magnet School. Her unit also helped her to create her portfolio for the Beginning Educator Support and Training program. Bruce Russett then describes the international focus of his seminar on "War and Peace in the Twentieth Century and Beyond." He lists the rather astonishing range of topics—just war theory, conflict resolution, the future of Indochina, the artistic response to the occupation of France, African Americans and the military, the effect of war upon children, and how war changed the role of women in the United States—that were covered in the curriculum units. We can easily see why that seminar was for Bruce Russett as enjoyable as any he has taught at Yale University. We then include John Buell's account of his teaching of the unit on "Just War Theory and the Wars of the 20th Century" that he developed in that seminar. Buell notes how his unit succeeded in meeting the needs posed by students with a range of abilities. It was challenging and engaging to those with skills at or above grade level and yet accessible to students whose skills were below grade level. Finally, Stephen

(continued on page 23)

Defining the Decades with Media Events

By Doris Braun

Editor's Note: This unit, written in a 2001 seminar on "Media Revolutions," led by James Davidson, Adjunct Professor of English, Carnegie Mellon University, is designed for the fifth grade. It can be easily adapted for older or younger students. The unit is introduced in conjunction with "Transformations" in the Macmillan/McGraw-Hill reading text *Don't Forget to Fly*. The first story in that section of the text is "New Providence," by Renata von Tscharner and Ronald Lee Fleming, about a visit to a mythical city in 1910, 1935, 1955, 1970, 1980, and 1987. After discussion of the story and the different time periods, students are divided into groups, each of which chooses one of the time periods in Pittsburgh to report on. The second story in the text is "How to be an Inventor," by Barbara Taylor. Because this story ties in with the Foss Science unit

about simple machines, the groups also research and report on the important inventions of each decade. The teacher suggests that students present their reports as the news might have been presented in their time period: newspaper in 1910; radio in 1935; black-and-white television in 1955; color television in 1970; a magazine format for 1980; and a PowerPoint presentation for 1987. Final class presentations include appropriate dress and music from the decades. The activities in this unit meet the requirements of the Standards Based Portfolio and also the District Communication

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Standards, Science Standards, and some of the Citizenship Standards for this grade level.

“Defining Decades with Media Events” was the third of six units that I have completed with the Pittsburgh Teachers Institute. It was the most enjoyable to write, and the most fun to teach. I based the unit on a story that the class read in the standard reading text that traced the history of a mythical town throughout the Twentieth Century. I transferred the main idea of



KEN KEELEY, 20TH CENTURY NEWSSTAND, 1999

that story to focusing on how the history of Pittsburgh changed during that same century. I particularly emphasized how the media reported and influenced the history.

The unit worked exceptionally well for this class, because with very few exceptions they were all multigenerational members of the Pittsburgh community of Lincoln Place, where the school is located. I also had an advantage going in because my previous units had been very successful and I had the reputation of doing something unique. Many of my students and their families had requested to have me as a teacher, and were looking forward to participating in this special unit.

As we read about each decade in the text, I shared my personal recollections and knowledge of each time period. I run a very relaxed class, and the students felt free to ask many questions and have me elaborate on any events that needed further clarification or were of special interest to them. It was then time for each group to choose a particular decade to report on. The children worked in pairs. I gave them each an assignment sheet that explained exactly what was expected. Each pair chose an important event, invention, and personality from their particular decade. Everyone

I knew that all of my students had access to computers, thus making the research easier, but the number who actually recorded or videotaped their interviews surprised me. Somehow the whole project became a family event. Mary Ellen had taped an interview with her grandparents who had been high school sweethearts in the 60s. On the day she

Field: Mathematics: Why Get Involved?

presented her report, her grandmother came to class and was happy to answer questions. Not to be outdone, Jake brought his great grandfather and his collection of model World War II airplanes. They were both able to go into detail about how the planes were made and when and where they were used. (Jake went on to win a model airplane contest which was sponsored by one of the banks the following year.) Matt brought in a video interview of his great grandfather that described in detail the flood that occurred in Pittsburgh in 1936. That one was particularly entertaining because we had to fast-forward all of the expletives. Matt had also prepared a scrapbook of a flood that had occurred by his home that summer, and we could compare the two events.

Some of the children dressed in outfits germane to their decade when they presented their projects. Many brought food or other objects from their time period. I had a plethora of rubric cubes, silly putty, and hula-hoops on display. Some dressed Barbie and Ken in clothing of their decade. This was fun to display.

I feel that this unit was successful for several reasons:

1. It was tied to our own community, which the children were familiar with.
 2. My model of the 40s gave them a clear idea of what was expected
 3. It was easy to get good information from the Internet and Time-Life books for each decade. These were particularly suitable for this age group. They are simply written, and have excellent pictures.
 4. Parents and other family members were so willing to get involved. Some had the older clothing in their attics. Other moms and grandmas were willing to make the clothing.
 5. It was great for family relationships.
 6. The children had an opportunity to express their own individuality.
- This unit could easily be adapted to other communities. I would certainly be happy to teach it again.

(continued from page 5)

person? Or is it all specialist knowledge, akin to that possessed by a TV repairman?

I would argue that to make sense of data, medical information and news in the contemporary world it is *essential* to have a reasonable grasp of the thought patterns involved in probability and statistics. In fact the understanding of statistics, even at the highest levels of government, is typically woeful. Statistics and probability are not easy subjects to understand. In part this is because they are quite new disciplines, still at the somewhat "magical" stage and far from being successfully incorporated in our patterns of thought and language.

All that I have described above has influenced the way I have approached leading seminars in the Houston Teachers Institute. The three seminars that I have led have comprised quite mixed groups with often a majority of teachers from

outside mathematics. Two of the seminars have been on geometry. The most recent of these, "Hands-on Geometry," had a homework component where the Fellows made mathematical objects (including stellated polyhedra). There was also a workshop on Zometool led by the mathematician, computer scientist and sculptor George Hart. When the Fellows had completed their polyhedron (which had to be large), they would take it to school on the day of the seminar. The reaction of the students on seeing, say, a great dodecahedron was instructive. "What's that?" "Can we make one of those?" The object generated both respect and interest. After seeing the Fellows efforts, the students made dozens of polyhedra, especially stellated polyhedra. Sometimes these were large and decorated with ornate and beauti-

ful designs. A student, quoted to me by a Fellow, said "I didn't know math could be so much fun." Probably the moral needs to be spelt out: making things, especially when considerable effort is required, can provide a great learning experience. Spending five minutes playing with graphics on a computer is a largely worthless learning experience.

The other seminar I have given was on probability and statistics, "Figuring the Odds: Learning to Live with Life's Uncertainties." This was a tough seminar to lead—certainly part of the interest (and difficulty) for me was my effort in trying to develop an accessible approach to the subject that everyone could benefit from. One

high point of this seminar was a visit by a group from Yale. It was near the end of the seminar (mathematics always gets left to last...) and I decided to mention one of the things we had talked about: The Monty Hall paradox in probability. Needless to say, my explanation

to the Yale team was met by puzzlement. But then, as a group, the Fellows started enthusiastically explaining Monty Hall to the Yale team. Somehow that seemed to make all the effort worthwhile.

In conclusion, leading three Institute seminars has been most rewarding. It has helped me focus and develop my own ideas on the nature of mathematics and its role in the modern world. Meeting the Fellows and visiting the schools has enriched my experience of Houston and given me a new appreciation of the contribution made by teachers in the Houston Independent School District. Involvement in the Houston Teachers Institute has easily been the most rewarding academic and teaching experience I have had during my time at the University of Houston.

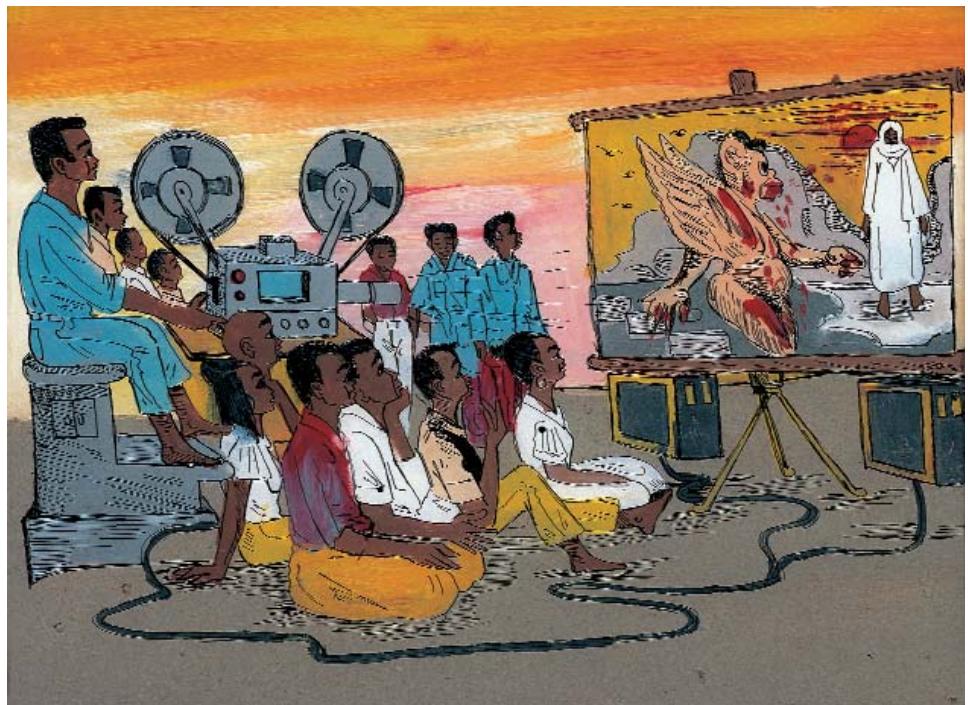
An Inquiry into Geography through Film and Literature: Reflections on an Institute Seminar

By Dudley Andrew

Probably the most exciting development in my career has been the way my academic disciplines of literary and cinema studies have come to embrace the social sphere. Being in a Department of Comparative Literature has helped, for here the issues of "world literature" and "world film" are now at the top of that field's agenda. Language remains crucial, but the social sciences, particularly geography, have become important at the highest levels of analysis. And so suddenly the often lofty (airy) studies of written and visual texts have descended to the earth, indeed to the Earth as a place, linking graduate research to elementary school concerns about how the world has been and should be represented.

Geography is one of the most venerable subjects in the curriculum, hundreds of years old. Film Studies is among the newest, introduced widely in universities only in the 1970s and still offered only in certain high schools and junior highs. Not long ago, geography was thought to have seen better days, replaced by "social studies" or by one of the more specific disciplines that thrived after WWII: psychology, sociology, economics, anthropology. Film Studies has been suspect for quite the opposite reason: too young, too unproven, of uncertain consequence, it has been deemed a hobby. Now they are allies, and are both flourishing.

Students from kindergarten through graduate school need to understand facts about other places in the world; but before learning such specific things, they need to understand two principles: the relation of people to place, and the interdependence among places. In a way, the return of geography came about in tandem with the tremendous popular interest in ecology, a scientific word that would not have been understood by lay people until 1970 or so. Ecology taught us that all "individuals"



UNKNOWN ARTIST, WATCHING A DOCUMENTARY FILM OF AMADOU BAMBA'S LIFE, 1995

(entire species too) depend on each other systematically and that the system, operating in a constantly self-regulating flux, can be altered, skewed, and upset when "individuals" get out of position, when they migrate to new areas or somehow turn up in new places.

The participants in our seminar routinely deal with students (from 2nd grade through 12th) who need to see themselves in a larger world and who need to understand that their health as "individuals" or as members of a group they identify with depends on the health of the system. Geography today is as much a study of migration, adjustment, and interdependence as it is of distinctive difference. From my perspective, films can be an instrument to bring the "geographical" to life, while the cinema *in toto* constitutes a model of what geography is all about.

Let me explain. The availability of films from around the world has allowed the past two generations to thoroughly scan the world, catching glimpses of other places

and noting processes of movement between places. Cinema has actively contributed to the renewed interest in geographical issues. While the movies were international before being national, the exploitation of cinema's worldliness changed dramatically after 1975. In that year Hollywood successfully experimented with new strategies of global marketing (*Jaws*, then *Star Wars*). As an antidote to this Hollywood hegemony, international festivals began to feature films from places previously cinematically invisible. Cannes widened its tiny aperture in search of visions and voices beyond the "selection officiel." FESPACO, devoted solely to African work, was inaugurated in 1969 in Ouagadougou. Montreal's "Festival des films du Monde" began in 1977. It annually screens over 400 films from 75 countries, including Kyrgyzstan, Myanmar, Kurdistan, and Iceland, while less than 10% of films shown there originate in the USA. Of course festivals like these reached a minuscule audience until the videotape

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revolution of the 1980s made them potentially available on a wider basis. And so it wasn't until the 90s that "*world cinema*" could genuinely become a subject of study—when outlying films could make their way into a new market that included the AV holdings on college campuses and in certain school districts.

And so, world cinema as a pedagogical idea and as a research agenda is really but a decade old. It appeals to teachers fascinated by what lies beyond the usual visual surround of their students, and to those who may have become suspicious of the reach and the narcissism of American popular culture. Studying films from hidden corners of the world quickly shows how they are at once distinct from each other and interdependent on a mobile economy of images. Questions of indigenous source and style, on the one hand, and of "image migration," on the other, arise in ways comparable to geographical questions about populations.

In our seminar we looked closely at films from Africa, China, and Ireland, exploring the cultures by interrogating the films. We had to learn cultural history and film history to do this, but the delightful films made this intriguing and pleasurable. Whenever possible we chose films that dealt with school-aged children. Over the weeks, each participant took responsibility for one film and one cultural topic so that we all contributed to a richer sense of what might be gained by using fiction films in the classroom. Africa most forcefully grabbed our attention. We decided to build a little anthology, with every participant agreeing to examine a different African film from Yale's Film Study Center. Reports were written but everyone had a few minutes to flesh out observations while showing an exemplary scene on the VCR. So when we came to examine the three films that we

screened together, our discussions ranged across the dozen other films we had sampled, and we could sense both how life is represented differently on that continent and how different life is there. One teacher read us an African tale she uses in her elementary classroom; another contributed his knowledge of several famous African novels. And we poured over maps and encyclopedias so we could speculate on the importance of trees in the sahel, of cliffs in Mali, and of the Niger River flowing

that the local productions gained tremendously from the subtlety of their understanding of land and people, and that foreigners, despite their resources, are usually intent on marketing a stereotype to sell to an international audience. When it comes to politics, the many partisan films about Ireland's bloody battles among groups of people who look just like one another can be a morality lesson in American classrooms. But should teachers stick with the safer films about the land and its traditions, or should they show the complications of social history that have grown atop that land?

We had time scarcely to sample Chinese cinema. Still, at this point, we had learned that even one film could open up a host of questions about filmmaking and film-going in such a vast country, including the heritage of shadow plays,

Peking opera and other popular entertainments that preceded cinema. The film we focused on, *Not One Less*, allowed us to glimpse questions of family relations, internal migration, and the use and care of the environment through the eyes of a young teacher and her pupils. We had no illusions that we had understood more than a slice of China, but we had a tremendously fertile discussion of this brilliant film, one that all participants were hoping could spill out in their own classrooms.

through several countries. The films could have led us further, into the kinds of trades and languages native to the various peoples in West Africa, and to the way that encounters with one another as well as with Europeans alters, but does not destroy, the delicate cultures that have subsisted there for so long. We discussed the value and dangers of showing American students certain films made in powerful anti-colonial anger.

The fact that we could replicate our African film experience in a nation of five million people (Ireland) or in one with a population over a billion (China) illustrated the pedagogical versatility of cinema. Irish poetry, theater, and story-telling stand behind many of the loveliest films produced there. We observed what happens when foreign filmmakers set their stories in this landscape and draw on its quaint rural traditions, comparing the American production of *The Secret of Roan Inish* to two native films, *The Field* and *Into the West*. Everyone understood

The units prepared by each participant reflected their unanimous ambition to introduce challenging films into the classroom, despite the cumbersome problems of subtitles, long running-times, and shocking images that some students could find difficult to digest. Talking about such problems let us understand the value of the kind of friction that world films create. They definitely can heat up the classroom. Our summer seminar ran on the energy of that heat.

World cinema appeals to teachers fascinated by what lies beyond the usual visual surround of their students. The units prepared by each participant reflected their unanimous ambition to introduce challenging films into the classroom.

Cultural Snapshots: Reflections and Illuminations of Francophone Cultures

By Crecia Cipriano Swaim

Editor's Note: This unit, written in a 2003 seminar on "Geography through Film and Literature," led by Dudley Andrew, Professor of Comparative Literature and chair of the Film Studies Program, Yale University, is designed for 7th- and 8th-grade students of French in a middle-school program that develops and enriches both artistic and academic strength. Authentic films from French-speaking countries serve here as the foundation for cultural knowledge. Augmented by samples of popular music, works of art, selections of poetry, and traditional recipes showcasing dominant crops, the films illustrate key characteristics of each culture. The films and cultures included are: Keita, l'héritage du griot (Burkina Faso, West Africa); La mystérieuse mademoiselle C (Québec, Canada); La rue cases-nègres (Martinique, Lesser Antilles, Caribbean Islands); and Quand les étoiles rencontrent la mer (Madagascar; Africa).

I was fortunate to be introduced to the Yale-New Haven Teachers Institute as a first-year teacher. I was attracted to the idea that as a teacher, I could still take on the role of active learner. My experience in the 2003 Institute reinforced that belief.

The seminar was full of inquisitive, intelligent colleagues from a cross-section of grade and subject levels. Dudley Andrew, head of the Yale Film Studies Program, guided us in developing a curriculum unit that matched our precise needs. He was a true role model in the way a teacher can demonstrate thorough knowledge while exhibiting curiosity with respect to new learning opportunities. He inspired us as he explained the way he watches films, a process that includes locating the action of the film

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on a map and investigating cultural and geographical accuracies and inaccuracies. I wanted my unit to cultivate this mix of wonder, action, and sharing in my students.

Teaching my unit was both a pleasure and a challenge. I had been so compelled by possibilities that I created four sub-units, each one addressing a different area where French is spoken (other than France), each one worthy of its own full unit. I wanted to bring French alive as a worldwide language to my students, many of whom saw it as the least practical or worthwhile language in their lives. During the year following the completion of my unit, I taught two of the four sub-units. Between curricular requisites, time restraints, and the responsibilities of completing the second-year teacher BEST (Beginning Educator Support and Training) portfolio, I felt I had to make a choice between quantity and quality; I intend to teach the other two sub-units in the following years.

I taught the unit on Burkina Faso first, which revolved around a film in which both French and Djula, a West African dialect, are spoken. Students were fascinated to see a movie filmed somewhere so outside of our pop culture realm of film fodder. We explored why French was spoken when it was in the film, and the class demonstrated a keen understanding of the split between modern and traditional, often surprising me with the clarity and wisdom of their observations and responses. We discussed key cultural concepts, plot, and personal reactions to the film; we also learned basic facts about the country, including local crops and musical instruments, both of which hooked students' interest. The film reflected the Sundiata myth, which we explored further in the Disney film *The Lion King* (in French with English subtitles, thanks to DVD!) Students happily made connections between the two films, and we role-played favorite scenes in French as a

class. Toward the end of this unit, the students were thrilled when their Social Studies teacher introduced Burkina Faso, and they got to teach him a thing or two!

The second unit I taught pertained to Martinique and the Caribbean Islands; I taught it for my BEST portfolio. With a large population of students of Puerto Rican descent, I found it important to demonstrate the relevance of French in the Caribbean; this shocked many students. We did not view the film around which I had created the unit, as I had developed a sense that another film-oriented unit would lead my middle-schoolers to see film less as an invaluable tool and more as an escape from the rigors of the daily grind. I focused on cultural vocabulary and created an offshoot to the unit based around the market, jobs, cultural identity, and the relationship between Martinique and Haiti, both Francophone islands, one independent and one not.

In both units, the file folders I required students to maintain resulted in a compilation of information, observations, language skills, and cultural interaction. They were graded according to rubric criteria that gauged the amount of work completed and retained, as well as degree of involvement with the material. By allowing students to use the contents of their folders for assessments, I rewarded full attention to assignments and note-taking.

In teaching the units, I capitalized on differences and similarities my students would recognize between themselves and the cultures explored, as well as between different portions of the same culture. Students are captivated by that which is very different, just as they are amazed at how similar those so-different places or people are to themselves; that will always serve as a worthy hook to learning, as will a teacher's enthusiasm for exploration. It worked for me in the YNHTI just as it did for my students.

War and Peace in the Twentieth Century and Beyond

By Bruce Russett

This seminar looked at the experience of major international conflicts in the past century. It was in part a historical overview, but not in the sense of history as "just one damned thing after another." The group aimed to be analytical, asking why the conflicts occurred, and in what ways they shaped later events. The purpose was to use knowledge of the past to deepen our understanding of current and future conflicts in international relations, and enable us to share that understanding with our students. These were some of our fundamental questions: How did use of the atomic bomb against Japan, and then reliance on nuclear weapons for deterrence, affect all international relations? What purposes can justify decisions to go to war, and what restraints on the use of violence in war may be possible or necessary? What contributes to the rise of international terrorism, and how can it be dealt with? And what are the times and areas of the world where peace has been maintained—for example between prosperous democracies—and why?

This general orientation led to a variety of individual class sessions. Some were devoted to specific events, and others to more general issues of why wars happen and how they are fought, using several events as illustrations. The topics ranged widely:

- Is international politics different from politics within countries?
- World War II: Why did it happen, and how did it end?
- The Cold War begins: How and why?
- Nuclear deterrence and the rise of limited wars: Korea and Vietnam
- The remarkably peaceful end of the Cold War
- Gulf War: In defense of oil and sovereignty

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- The ethics and morality of war and deterrence
- Civil Wars: Enemies inside and out
- Terrorism and how to fight it
- The United Nations: What is it good for?
- A hope for peace: Some countries don't fight each other.
- What can Fellows take from our seminar back to their own teaching conditions?

The Fellows' curriculum units reflect this mix of focus on single events and more general phenomena. Most of these units are

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intended as sub-units of more general courses for students in grades 9-12, though two are for younger children. The unit writers identified films, videos, Web sites, simulations, and other educational materials to supplement readings and discussions. A simple listing will indicate the range of topics that can be covered by the curriculum units in a seminar of this kind.

John Buell's unit on "Just War Theory and the Wars of the Twentieth Century," about which he writes in this number of *On Common Ground*, addresses the origins and development of just war theory and its implications for teaching history, analytical reasoning, and expository writing.

Russell Sirman's unit, "Questions of War and Peace: Using Case Studies to Teach the History of American Foreign Policy," similarly reflects this desire to stimulate vigorous discussion by asking students to debate and argue the merits of difficult choices involving war and peace, through historical case studies.

Ralph Russo's unit, "Investigating Conflict Resolution through the United

Nations," follows a more topical than event-oriented approach. He gives students a broad picture of what the UN can do to help resolve violent conflicts, and the limits to its abilities. The unit includes role-playing and simulation, especially through materials available from the popular Model UN exercises.

David DeNaples' unit, "Ethnicity, Nationalism, and Conflict in the Early 20th Century," gives students of European and world history a background to the ethnic wars that have plagued much of the world in subsequent decades.

Other units are more narrowly focused on specific issues, events, or geographical areas. Elisha Danford's unit, "Debating the Future of Indochina in 1945: Making Your Case," is designed to sharpen students' analytical and expository skills by engaging the decisions by

Vietnamese leaders who were pursuing their own interests against those of involved great powers (China, France, the United States) at the end of World War II. Kristi Shanahan's unit, "Expression under Suppression: The Artistic Response to the Occupation of France during World War II," reflects her special interests in art history and French language and culture. She combines a history of French art (including that of refugees to France before and during the years of the Vichy regime) with methods of teaching students how to interpret a painting and understand the artist's intent. Burt Saxon, in his unit, "African Americans and the Military," confronts two conflicting perspectives on African Americans' experience of racial discrimination in the military, and in American society as a whole. In a critical review of several writings, he traces the history of discrimination, from the days of severe segregation to the contemporary degree of equality, asking how the military followed or led the wider society.

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Pedro Mendoza-Landa's unit for elementary classes, "History and War: What about the Children?" addresses the effect of war on children. It uses as springboards three Dr. Seuss stories, and a focus on the experience of Mendoza-Landa's own ethnic group, the Basques, in their struggle for greater independence from French and especially Spanish control. Joyce Bryant's unit, "How War Changed the Role of Women in the United States," also for elementary classes, focuses on societal changes wrought by the need for female labor in the factories during the two World Wars, and how women's employment outside the home helped to empower them. She also addresses opportunities opened up for women in the military services, and how that changed the military, women, and the whole society.

I found myself enjoying this experience greatly. The seminar derived from my own research, and I have taught related courses to Yale undergraduates and graduate students. But this had to be done differently. The Fellows had great experience in teaching students younger than I ever had. They therefore brought a keen sense of what those students might find engaging, and how to make the material attractive; for example, how to find good teaching materials on the Web. Moreover, they brought their experience in addressing students' personal concerns, such as the implications for city 17-year olds of enlisting in the military service—with substantial opportunities for training and economic advancement, but at the cost of perhaps risking their lives. Some of the Fellows also were rethinking their own attitudes toward war, shaped decades ago under the influence of previous U.S. wars. Typically they were smart and deeply committed to their teaching under sometimes difficult circumstances. These qualities, and the breadth of interests represented in the seminar, made leading it as enjoyable as any I have taught at the university.

Just War Theory and the Wars of the 20th Century

By John Buell

Editor's Note: This unit, written in a 2002 seminar on "War and Peace in the Twentieth Century and Beyond," led by Bruce Russett, Professor of History, Yale University, is designed for a high-school course in 20th Century history, at a small inter-district magnet school with a hands-on marine education program that prepares students both for the workplace and for college. It seeks to enable students to identify and articulate a basic set of ethical principles upon which the "rules of war" can be based; to identify and evaluate the basic elements of just war theory; to explain how these concepts and principles apply to three historical examples from the 20th Century; and to use just war theory to develop and defend moral judgments on specific decisions and actions. The three historical examples considered are the use of strategic bombing in World War II including the use of the atom bomb, the decision to defend South Korea, and actions by U. S. soldiers in the Vietnam War—emphasizing the engagements at My Lai and Thuybo.

In most high school curriculums, wars tend to be covered as a list of causes, outcomes and reasons why one side was victorious with a few key battles and military facts mixed in. For students who find the subject boring or distasteful some courses seem like one war after another. For those that are fascinated by wars (and I must count myself in that number) too many of the interesting details are left out as the needs of over-stuffed curriculums force teachers to move on quickly. War certainly dominates the popular perception of history (just turn on the History Channel and see) and it is often the essential facts of particular wars that students tend to retain years later. I have found, however, that we as teachers rarely take on the essential facts

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of war itself in a way that attempts to understand its ethical justifications.

One important and often overlooked reason for the teaching of history is to transmit essential shared moral values. We often refer to the lessons of history without acknowledging that these lessons often concern questions of morality. The heroes of history are held up as worthy of our respect because they acted in ways that served the greater good and opposed the forces of evil. The crimes of history are acknowledged as such so that we may avoid them in the future. Rarely however are the moral questions explored in ways that can help students to understand why a person or an event is morally wrong or right. The shared values are assumed without being fully explored and analyzed.

The unit on just war that I wrote for the Teachers Institute is an attempt to encourage students to explore moral concepts as they relate to war. The approach tends to engage students regardless of their level of interest in war as a topic. It has the further advantage of involving students on all academic levels. At its core just war theory is based on such simple and essential moral principles that all students are able to grasp and even apply them. Ask when a country is justified in making war or taking military action and students of all interests and abilities will have answers. In part this is because many of the precepts of just war are based on the same moral principles that define all interpersonal relationships. For teenagers who are usually confronting questions of their own relationships, these questions are compelling.

I teach the just war unit in my course on the 20th Century. The course is thematic rather than chronological in its structure, which allows me to explore significant developments of the century in depth without concern for being all-inclusive. Since war dominates the time period, wars do play a prominent role in the course. World War II, the Cold War, Korea, Vietnam, and (by way of comparison) the war in Iraq all are covered to some degree. The essential

aspects of Just War theory are introduced as part of the unit on World War II, but are returned to repeatedly with all the others. Just War is therefore not a separate unit, but an overarching theme that establishes a conceptual vocabulary to be used with increasing sophistication as students become comfortable with it. A wide range of circumstances and actions can be analyzed to figure out to what degree they comply with the precepts of just war. I have found that even the unit on the Civil Rights movement of the 50s and 60s can be subjected to a similar type of analysis. Morally justifiable actions taken within the context of a political struggle must pass a similar test based on certain universally acceptable moral precepts. What has been a surprise to me and to my students is the degree to which we can agree on what those precepts are and should be. Applying them to specific actions and events can be very tricky, but when students feel confident of what they should be, they are more than willing to engage in spirited and worthwhile debate over their application.

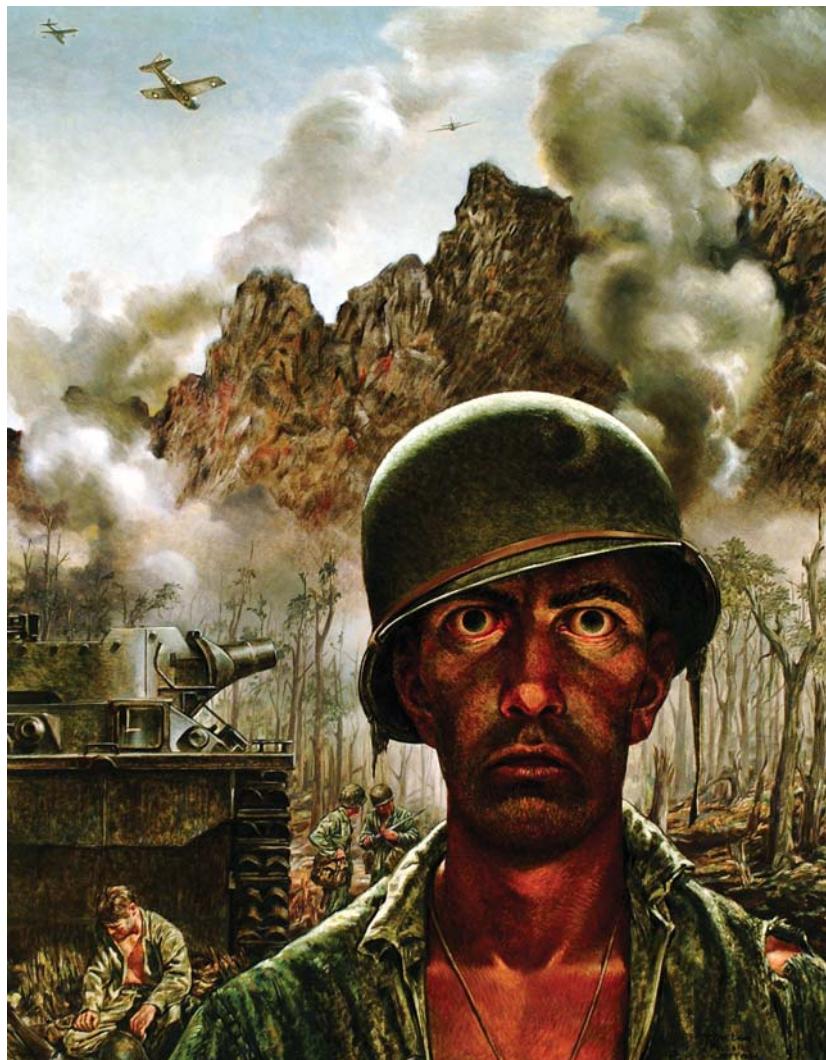
The school where I teach is a small regional magnet with a specialized curriculum. Because of the program requirements and the need to track students by ability in certain courses such as math and languages, the history courses are scheduled last and are always made up of students of mixed ability. Curriculum must be designed therefore to be challenging and engaging to students with skills at or above grade level and yet still be accessible in a meaningful way to students whose skills are below grade level.

Two students from my classes last year provide a good example of how students of wide ranging abilities and interests can become equally engaged when the topic is just war. Michael is a marginal student with low motivation whose skills in reading and

action with great suspicion. While not quite a pacifist he assumes that war only serves the interests of the powerful and wealthy. Both students became equally involved when confronted with the question of whether the bombing of Germany in World

War II was justified according to the precepts of just war. In most textbooks the bombing is presented as an unfortunate necessity of modern war. Michael, however, came to understand that the indiscriminate slaughter of civilians from bombing was no more defensible than some of the atrocities carried out by the Nazis. Valin was able to accept the validity of the argument that factories involved in the production of war material are legitimate targets if every effort is made to avoid civilian targets. The writing that each student produced on the topic differed in quality, but not in essential intellectual integrity.

Students of all abilities can and will learn to think critically and gain from each other's differing perspectives and experience if they are provided with concepts which they perceive to be vital and relevant. Moral



TOM LEA, THAT TWO THOUSAND YARDS STARE, 1943

writing are below grade level. He is fascinated by war, however, especially the details of weapons, tactics and battlefield events. He views war as a kind of sports event in which the best team is justified in winning. Might makes right and all's fair in war as far as he is concerned. Valin is at the opposite extreme. He is a highly capable student who views any type of military

questions relating to war along with a basic structure by which they can be analyzed fit the bill. Now more than ever is it important for these questions to be understood by an educated citizenry. The war in Iraq has elevated these issues to the level of national debate. It is vitally important that students understand the essential elements of that debate.

Asteroids, Comets, and Meteorites: Their Intimate Relation with Life on Earth

By Stephen P. Broker

Editor's Note: This unit, written in a 1996 seminar on "Outstanding Problems in Contemporary Astronomy and Cosmology" led by Sabatino Sofia, Professor of Astronomy, Yale University, is designed for high-school chemistry, biology, and environmental science classes at general, college, and honors levels. Much in its subject matter and lesson plans can be adapted to middle-school and elementary-school instruction. The unit aims to integrate astronomy, earth science, and ecology; to describe the dynamic nature of our solar system; to distinguish among different types of meteorites; and to introduce asteroid extinction theory. In doing so, it develops strategies for using the resources of a university natural history museum, computer technology, and current events in science instruction, and gives students and teachers direction in using the popular and professional scientific literature in astronomy and ecology.

The narrative section of my curriculum unit covers a broad range of topics, including biogeoplanetology (today the term astrobiology is in wider use), the early solar system, the solar system today, asteroids, comets, and meteorites, collisions between Earth and asteroids and comets, asteroid extinction theory, and the theory of panspermia ("the inoculation of Earth by extraterrestrial life"). The teaching strategies include a slide set supporting unit objectives, a class trip to the Yale Peabody Museum of Natural History to view its extensive meteorite collections on public display, an examination of current events in astronomy, and the study of astronomy on the Internet. A fairly extensive teacher bibliography, a student reading list, and descriptions of classroom materials accompany the unit, as does a classroom

set of pertinent *New York Times* and *Christian Science Monitor* newspaper articles, beginning with the year of publication of the unit.

The unit narrative consists of a series of questions to the reader, with unit content presented in the form of responses to these questions. Thus, for the section on asteroids, I ask, "Why is there no planet between Mars and Jupiter?" and for the section on meteorites and meteor craters, I ask, "Why can't the real extraterrestrials get any respect?" I use a similar approach in discussing the unit here.

What experiences have I had in teaching this unit? In the first years of its use, I taught Advanced Chemistry, College Chemistry, and Environmental Science. The unit has been used most recently with my students, primarily juniors and seniors, enrolled in two Wilbur Cross High School science electives, "The Dynamic Earth: An Introduction to Physical and Historical Geology," and "Advanced Placement Environmental Science" (each offered since the 2000-2001 academic year). I have found the unit equally applicable for these several science curricula. The color slide set includes my own photographs of details of Rudolph Zallinger's "Age of Reptiles" mural, which fills the 110 foot east wall of The Great Hall of the Yale Peabody Museum, also several Peabody Museum photos of the former temporary exhibit on the Wethersfield, Connecticut meteorite, and photos of mine from Mayan ruins in the Yucatan Peninsula of Mexico. The reliance on current events topics available in the newspaper, on television news spots, in the movies, and in the scientific literature requires that I stay current with developments in the fields of solar system astronomy, extinction theory, and ecology. Since I first wrote the unit, I also have needed to update the lists of recommended Web sites and to be selective in their use. The weekly NetWatch column in the journal *Science* has been particularly helpful in suggesting good Web sites. In

the eight years that I have taught revised forms of this unit, I have found that students become actively engaged in the learning process if they feel that the science is current, that they are seeking answers to important questions about the natural world and themselves, and that they have the opportunity to participate in the processes of science, including observation and description, experimentation, and theorizing.

How have my teaching strategies worked, and how have they changed? I continue making the transition from reliance on slide projectors to the use of computer projection systems. The benefits of laptop presentations are numerous, and the blending of still and motion pictures, text, main talking points, and assessments far exceeds the capabilities of the slide projector. Some of my preparation time is now devoted to adapting this and other Teachers Institute units to current classroom technologies. Unit content is updated from year to year. Teaching strategies continue to be modified to further enhance methods of presentation. I have also made some changes in my use of the Peabody Museum resources, following the lead of the museum's Public Education Department docents. In visits to the Peabody Museum, I combine time for free exploration of museum exhibits with highly directed written and spoken activities. My students begin with structured, focused work, and then they move to self-guided exploration as they so wish. I find that this blending of task-oriented work with a turn-them-loose strategy satisfies the need for structured learning as well as cultivating the desired traits of self-expression and creativity. I suspect that the greatest changes I have made in this unit deal with strategies for assessment, as I continue to be influenced by current research into how students learn. My own pursuit of new material for this and other curriculum units is one of the features of teaching that continues to drive me.

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What are some of the responses and accomplishments of the students using this unit? My students often affirm that they are participating in the study of science as new developments unfold in the field. Those who are the most effusive about their learning process are the ones who can make a connection between their own awareness of contemporary studies and the material that is introduced in the classroom. Their comments range from, "Have you seen the movie about an asteroid smashing into Earth?" to, "I saw the same story described by you on the news this week." The unit's introductory slide set is well received by my students. Dinosaurs, falling meteors, and sacrificial sinkholes have a lasting appeal to inquiring minds. Current events topics also are generally successful in eliciting interest. My students seem at home with multimedia inputs. The present generation is developing genuine skills in surfing on the World Wide Web, but students need assistance in being selective about the sources of information that they find. The most frequently voiced student response to the unit is to ask when we can go back to the Peabody Museum. This is gratifying to me, as I feel that a museum is best used as an educational resource by making repeat visits. This fabulous museum offers a great example of how a local educational resource can have a profound impact on a science curriculum. Most of my students have visited the Peabody Museum as younger children and find that return visits as teenagers rekindle early memories and provoke new modes of thinking and understanding. We have a wonderful direct link with the Peabody Museum, as several of the employees there who are highly visible in the public exhibit halls are graduates of Wilbur Cross High School and take delight in establishing the educational connection with my students.

AP Environmental Science students have

an additional stake in the learning process, the responsibility of taking a national examination as part of the Advanced Placement program, and the opportunity to receive future college credit and/or exemption from required college introductory courses. This unit helps prepare my students for the APES test and build their confidence by providing important concepts in

for Using Mathematics and Science Education Standards" (1999), "Inquiry and the National Science Education Standards" (2000), and "Educating Teachers of Science, Mathematics, and Technology: New Practices for the New Millennium" (2001). The American Association for the Advancement of Science (AAAS) initiated Project 2061 in the late 1980s and published "Science for all Americans" in 1989 and 1990. Project 2061 also has given us "Benchmarks for Science Literacy" (1993), "Resources for Science Literacy: Professional Development" (1997), "Designs for Science Literacy" (2000), and "Atlas of Science Literacy" (2001). I had the "Benchmarks" as well as a pre-publication copy of "National Science Education Standards" available to me when I first wrote my 1996 curriculum unit, but I have benefited more fully from NRC and Project 2061 materials since the unit first was developed.

The original objectives of the unit continue to be relevant today: interdisciplinary study, observation and descriptive information about the solar system, developing theory in science, and the use of local resources (such as a university natural history museum), computer technology, current events, and the popular and professional scientific literature. I have endeavored to heed the recommendations of the national science education standards articulated in recent years, especially the placing of "greater emphasis on the process of science and less emphasis (and less time) on the specific blocks of subject matter which have been the mainstay of previous decades of science education" (NRC 1996). New Haven's district science standards are, in fact, based heavily on those standards. I also continue to adapt the "Asteroids, Comets, and Meteorites" unit in keeping with current research on the most effective methods of teaching and learning in the sciences.



ALEXANDER CALDER, *LA LUNE ET LA MONTAGNE* (MOON AND MOUNTAIN)

Earth history and the geologic time scale, Earth dynamics, atmospheric history (including global changes), and the evolution of life (including extinction).

What future modifications will be made in this curriculum unit? The national science reform movement since the 1990s has been driven in part by the National Academy of Sciences, National Research Council publication, "National Science Education Standards" (1996). The NRC has since published volumes on "Selecting Instructional Materials: A Guide for K-12 Science" (1999), "Designing Mathematics or Science Curriculum Programs: A Guide

Evaluations of the National Demonstration Project

By Thomas R. Whitaker

Every Teachers Institute needs to understand the importance of continuing evaluation of its principles, practices, and results. The Yale-New Haven Teachers Institute has long made use of both internal and external evaluations, and it continued that process with respect to the National Demonstration Project in which Institutes in Pittsburgh, Houston, Albuquerque, and Irvine-Santa Ana participated.

The internal evaluations were based partly on observations in site visits and conferences, the results of questionnaires, published curriculum units, and Annual Reports from participating Institutes, and they were embodied in Annual Reports to the funding organizations. The external evaluations were of several different kinds. The DeWitt Wallace-Reader's Digest Fund commissioned an external evaluation by Policy Studies Associates. During the Preparation Phase of the Yale National Initiative, the Pittsburgh Teachers Institute commissioned an evaluation of its previous work, using focus groups, carried out by Allyson Walker, of Cornerstone Evaluation Associates, and Janet Stocks, Director of Undergraduate Research at Carnegie Mellon University. The Houston Teachers Institute likewise commissioned an evaluation of its previous work, using focus groups, interviews, surveys, and both quantitative and qualitative analysis, carried out by Jon Lorence and Joseph Kotarba of the Department of Sociology, University of Houston. That was supplemented by a further evaluation by Paul Cooke, Director of the Institute, based on interviews and observation of teaching. The Yale-New Haven Teachers Institute also commissioned an evaluation of the entire National Demonstration Project by Rogers M. Smith of the Department of Political Science, University of Pennsylvania, and his research assistants. This evaluation relied primarily on the analyses in New Haven of Fellows' ques-

tionnaires and of a survey of the use of curriculum units by Fellows and non-Fellows.

These various evaluations support a number of important conclusions. At all Demonstration sites, there were positive results similar to those obtained in New Haven over many years. Both Policy Studies Associates and Rogers M. Smith concluded that the National Demonstration Project had "succeeded in reaching its goal" of replicating the Yale-New Haven model within a relatively short period of time in four sites that are considerably larger than New Haven. At each site, new Institutes involved roughly 900 teachers and 60 college or university faculty members in 75 seminars over the course of the Project. Smith noted that these seminars produced results that were remarkably similar to each other and to experiences in New Haven, and markedly better than those reported by most existing forms of professional development. These results occurred despite significant demographic differences among the cities. Major variations were correlated rather with structural departures from National Demonstration Project guidelines and with certain administrative difficulties in the partnering districts and institutions of higher education.

As Smith pointed out, recent research indicates that the single most important factor in student performance is teacher quality. The consensus of researchers and teachers is that many existing forms of professional development are cursory, dreary exercises that leave teachers bored and resentful, not informed or inspired. The approach of the Yale-New Haven Teachers Institute, however, significantly strengthens teachers in all five of the major dimensions of teacher quality. It helps to produce teachers who really know their subjects; who have good basic writing, mathematics and oral presentation skills; who expect their students to achieve; who are enthusiastic about teach-

ing; and who can motivate all children to learn.

According to Smith's analysis, teachers in the new Institutes chose to participate out of desires to improve themselves in exactly these areas. At each site, teachers participated out of desires to obtain curriculum suited to their needs, to increase their mastery of their subjects, and especially to obtain materials to motivate their students. According to the research in Pittsburgh, teachers "find the Institute to be the best professional development they ever had." Its seminars increase their knowledge, emphasize content, have direct applicability to their classrooms, encourage them to be creative, and are spread over sufficient time to allow them to master the content. These teachers were attracted to the Institute by the independence they enjoyed in suggesting seminar topics and then selecting seminars in which they would participate without regard to the subject or grade levels at which they taught. According to the research in Houston, the Institute program "cultivates a significant increase in skill level for those many Fellows who were never really trained earlier in the design and implementation of a very workable, thought-out, substantively well-informed curriculum unit." Teachers therefore "take ownership of big corners of the fields of knowledge in which they labor and take that possession over to their students."

Ninety-five percent of all participating teachers, according to Smith, rated the Institute seminars "moderately" or "greatly" useful. Similar percentages said the seminars increased their knowledge, improved their skills and morale, and raised their expectation of students. Both teachers and principals in the Pittsburgh study reported that the Institute experience boosts the teachers' positive attitudes toward teaching and learning. It excites teachers about learning, and their excitement is transferred to their students; it enhances teachers' self-image and sense of

direction; it augments teachers' sense of professionalism; it encourages collaboration among teachers; and it provides teachers with a network of resources. Smith also found that the Institutes served to foster teacher leadership, to develop supportive teacher networks, to heighten university faculty commitments to improving public education, and to foster more positive partnerships between school districts and institutions of higher education.

The Houston study concludes—on the basis of interviews with Fellows, a survey, and observation of students—"that students of HTI Fellows benefit from instruction informed by solid scholarly values, not simply bureaucratic curriculum requirements." It concludes also that the "students benefit from the presence of teachers who can serve as role models of intellectualism, commitment, and excellence."

According to Smith, two-thirds of all participants, after teaching their curriculum units, rated them superior to all other curriculum they had used. Roughly sixty percent of all participants rated student motivation and attention as higher during these units, producing substantially greater content mastery. The teachers and principals who participated in the Pittsburgh study also reported that the students learned new ways of thinking, questioned what they read and saw, made connections among various subjects, eagerly learned content set within a familiar context, and acquired and implemented research skills modeled by the teachers. These curriculum units, as Smith noted, emphasized teacher-led discussion, writing exercises, activities designed to strengthen speaking, listening, vocabulary, reasoning skills, and mathematics skills. The research in Houston indicated that "all categories of students benefit from teachers who have completed a Houston Teachers Institute seminar: skilled and unskilled; English speaking and ESL; Anglo and minority; and gifted, mainstreamed, or special education students."

All four studies do suggest that it would be fruitful to engage in yet further research concerning ways of assessing student learning in classes where Institute units have been taught. The DeWitt Wallace-Reader's Digest Fund, which supported the National Demonstration Project, had excluded such research because of its belief that the most significant factor in producing increased student learning is teacher quality. With regard to that factor, the detailed studies in Pittsburgh and Houston confirm and extend the positive conclusions reached by Policy Studies Associates and by Smith in their broader analyses.

According to the report from Policy Studies Associates:

Large majorities of Fellows were unequivocal in saying that their experience in the Institutes, especially the preparation of a curriculum unit, gave them a real sense of accomplishment and rekindled their excitement about learning. As one Fellow put it: "To be teachers, we must also be learners." When asked in interviews to compare their experience in the Institutes with their experience in other kinds of professional development, teachers agreed that the Institutes are vastly superior.

The report by Rogers M. Smith concluded:

No single program can overcome the enormous obstacles to educational achievement faced by economically disadvantaged students, usually from racial, ethnic, and linguistic minorities, in large American cities today. But if recent researchers are right to contend that the single most important factor in student achievement is teacher quality, and if quality teachers are indeed knowledgeable, skilled, and enthusiastic, with high expectations for their students and the means to motivate students to reach those expectations, then the National Demonstration Project provides strong evidence for the value of the Teachers Institute approach.

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F. Broker describes his broadly interdisciplinary unit, written in a seminar on "Outstanding Problems in Contemporary Astronomy and Cosmology," led by Sabatino Sofia in 1996. Broker aimed to integrate astronomy, earth science, and ecology by focusing on asteroids, comets, and meteorites, and their relation to life on earth. He takes us through the questions posed by this unit and the resources on which it draws. He also shows us how a unit can develop further over the years in which it is taught—and he ends by speculating on the future of this curriculum unit, in the light of current research on the most effective methods of teaching and learning in the sciences.

We then turn to broader questions about the educational benefits to be derived from an Institute program. "Evaluations of the National Demonstration Project" summarizes the internal and external evaluations that have been carried out. The internal evaluations were embodied in reports to the funding organizations. The DeWitt Wallace-Reader's Digest Fund commissioned an external evaluation by Policy Studies Associates. During the Preparation Phase of the Yale National Initiative, both the Pittsburgh and the Houston Teachers Institutes commissioned evaluations of their previous work. And the Yale-New Haven Teachers Institute commissioned an evaluation of the entire National Demonstration Project by Rogers M. Smith of the Department of Political Science, University of Pennsylvania, which draws in part upon questionnaires and data collected from the entire Demonstration Project. These quite various processes of evaluation agree that, if "teacher quality" is the most significant factor in producing increased student learning, the Teachers Institute approach offers a superior means of professional development. And that verdict has been shared by the teachers themselves.

(continued on page 29)

From Fellow to Administrator: A Conversation with Verdell Roberts

Editor's Note: As a teacher at Jackie Robinson Middle School more than twenty-five years ago, Verdell Roberts became a Fellow of the Yale-New Haven Teachers Institute during its first year. She soon became Assistant Principal of Jackie Robinson, then Principal of that school, and then Associate Superintendent of the New Haven Public Schools. She has also served informally and formally as a liaison between the Teachers Institute and the Superintendent's office. A recent conversation with Director James R. Vivian included these comments.

JRV: When you were a teacher at Jackie Robinson School twenty-six years ago, how did Reginald Mayo—who was then the principal and later became the Superintendent—encourage so many teachers to take part in things like the Institute?

ROBERTS: There was something about Principal Mayo that brought people together. His expectations were high, but he could make everyone understand that they were actually part of a process. When he encouraged teachers to become part of the Institute, just about everybody wanted to be a Fellow. And we all worked after school with our units that we were excited about.

JRV: Why did you want to become an Institute Fellow in 1978?

ROBERTS: I think it was my own professional growth. I was in a school with a leadership that I knew would support my professional development, and I knew that what I did could be used in the school. Another exciting advantage of the Institute was that you gained so much knowledge from the different professors and the lectures.

JRV: Do you recall the student response to teaching the curriculum unit you developed on the Amistad Affair and the Black Panther trials?

ROBERTS: I got a lot of support from the students because it was real for them, here in New Haven. They could come down to the Green and say, "Ah, this is where the slaves were kept." And it was not many years after the Black Panther trials were held here. After I left Jackie Robinson, I found several other teachers had used that same unit and developed it. It will probably always be relevant to New Haven's history.

JRV: Do you recall why you selected the topic? This was well before the Amistad Committee was formed in New Haven—and years before the statue of Cinqué was erected in front of City Hall.

ROBERTS: When I first came to New Haven, I taught at the old Welch School. That was the time of the Black Panther trials in the 'sixties. I felt that if these things were going on, the students needed to know about them. I made connections with some of the Black Panthers in the Hill area. They came into the schools, did food programs in the schools, and met with the Parents and Teachers Organization. Then I was introduced to Charles Davis, Professor of Afro-American Studies at Yale, who talked about the early Amistad trials years ago. He helped to crystallize for me the parallels between the Amistad trials and the current Black Panther trials.

JRV: Was it controversial to teach your unit? Did the curriculum at that time contain much material dealing with race and topics of the sort that you were developing in the seminar—and that other teachers developed with Charles Davis?

ROBERTS: Principal Mayo was open to that. At Robinson we looked at issues in Black history. We integrated them with the district's direction in social studies. Perhaps because of my southern roots, I always wanted to understand the issues of civil rights in the context of the development of American history. The Institute allowed that—and it allowed for much discussion.

You don't always get that in other kinds of staff development. The Institute also let you come up with your own conclusions, and enabled you to hear about things that you could then challenge students with.

JRV: What caused you to decide to remain in teaching, and in New Haven?

ROBERTS: I believe it was that experience at Jackie Robinson. And I think it was the involvement of resources like the Institute that got you excited about doing things in the classroom. The kind of leadership that Principal Mayo provided, and continues to provide as Superintendent, is so critical to supporting what teachers want to do to help students.

JRV: Most New Haven schools now have either a principal or an assistant principal who has been an Institute Fellow. Do you think that kind of first-hand experience has resulted in changes in the way in which schools regard the Institute?

ROBERTS: Absolutely—because teachers are going to follow the direction of the leadership. When administrators have had first-hand experience, they support a project because they know what is actually involved. It's different to see principals like Joe Montagna or Carolyn Kinder stand up and talk because of their own positive experience.

JRV: When you became Associate Superintendent, the Superintendent appointed you as the liaison between the district and the Institute for our daily work. As I recall, you organized a series of meetings among Institute Fellows and school administrators, which helped to give subject-area supervisors a more accurate view of teachers' experience in the Institute.

ROBERTS: Yes, and as we look to the development of more Institutes, I think it is critical that these Institutes' resources become an integral part of the superintendent's agenda, or the curriculum agenda. In

this district we were able to move to the point where we had this on the Planning and Management Team agenda. It's very important that new teachers see the Institute as an opportunity. And it's important that the district's partnership with the Institute is integrated into every facet of the school structure. Schools need to see it as a resource. An Institute provides a connection to the libraries in the colleges and universities, and it enables interaction with university professors. I think it takes professional development to a higher level.

JRV: How can a district go about improving test scores for all groups of students? And how can an Institute contribute to that?

ROBERTS: As schools develop their individual plans, the Institute's efforts need to be integrated with that process. For example, integrating the Institute's efforts with the district's goals can't help but help to improve reading scores. But I think superintendents will want to know immediately just what research-based reading skill is incorporated in a curriculum unit. That needs to be highlighted at the beginning of the unit, or integrated into an initial statement, in a preface to a unit that would speak to the research-based reading skill.

JRV: What do you think really matters most in good teaching?

ROBERTS: Teachers must have a desire to teach. They must like kids. I think that they should be continuous learners, because that brings excitement to the classroom. Continuous learning, to me, is having the desire to know more about a subject area, to learn new things, and also a desire to have strategies that will turn kids on. We must find ways of incorporating what's happening every day into what children are learning. And the Institute helps the teacher learn how to do an in-depth study and find ways to expand on something—to learn good questioning skills, and to make important kinds of connections.

JRV: What, through the years, have been Superintendent Mayo's views on the Institute?

ROBERTS: He said early on that he would like to see the kind of excitement and commitment that Institute Fellows had for their work spread more widely in the school district. He has appreciated the professional development that has come from Institute Fellows, the excitement that has occurred in their learning. He has seen how classrooms became involved in that excitement. I think he has also been able to see how teachers have integrated their units with what was happening in a school. I have heard him say that the Institute should never be seen as a tack-on. The Institute is therefore now a part of the professional development for the district.

JRV: Did the Institute have any influence upon the changes that Superintendent Mayo has made in administrative structures within the schools?

ROBERTS: I think there was a switch from administrators as strong disciplinarians to administrators as curriculum leaders. The Institute may have contributed to the view that you should look for people whose management skills were tied into curriculum growth, continuous academic growth.

JRV: What then are the most important lessons we've learned from the Institute?

ROBERTS: We've learned how important in-depth professional development is to teachers, and how it can benefit from scholarly work with university professors. That is a key lesson. We've learned that Institute work cannot stand alone. There must be a liaison at a high level in the central office with the director of the Institute. We've also learned that a university needs to understand where schools must go, what their needs are, and how they can be met. And we've learned how important building leadership is to the movement of the Institute's work.

JRV: What advice would you give to funders about why they should support the establishment of new Institutes?

ROBERTS: I think they shouldn't see it as just funding an Institute, but as funding a higher quality of professionalism for our greatest resources, which are our kids. They are supporting bringing people to the level that they would want to have in their own agencies. And because they are supporting professionalism, they are also supporting higher student achievement.

JRV: And what advice would you give to educational leaders in other cities about why they should establish an Institute?

ROBERTS: They should consider an Institute as a resource to be integrated into what they are doing. They should see it as a way to improve professional development, but also as a way to bring some creativity into the classroom. And a district needs the right people around the table to strategize on how to integrate this with the district's goals.

JRV: You've advised the New Haven superintendent for more than ten years. What would you advise another urban superintendent to be prepared to do in undertaking an Institute?

ROBERTS: The superintendent should believe that this is something important for the staff development in his or her district. The superintendent should designate a contact person who is connected to curriculum in the district, and who will be seen as a resource to the district's curriculum efforts. Then, I think, the superintendent should hear on an on-going basis—every three months or so—what is happening. It's very important also that a superintendent personally and visibly make known his support for teachers being involved in an activity like this. It should be part of his yearly messages to staff about the things that should be included in producing effective schools.

Learning From Participation in Teachers Institutes

By Verna Arnold

When I responded to a school district posting for a summer position to work in collaboration with a local college and a university to develop a new program for teachers, I did not know that I was to embark upon an experience that would be the most significant highlight of my professional career. In the summer of 1998 two colleagues and I were selected to serve on a planning team to assist Dr. Helen S. Faison, the Chair of the Chatham College Education Department, prepare an application for an Implementation Grant from Yale University to become a demonstration site of the professional development model that had been established between Yale and the New Haven Public Schools 20 years before. As part of our work we traveled to Yale to participate in a July Intensive Session. We knew that there would be meetings to define the work of the YNHTI and the policies and procedures that were to be followed if we were successful in receiving a grant, but the actual hands-on experience of participating in a seminar was the most rewarding surprise of the trip and my professional career at that point.

I chose to participate in a seminar on Astronomy that was led by a professor who had actually worked with NASA. To think that I was at the historic Yale University participating in an abbreviated seminar on a topic that most would consider high above the intellect of kindergarten-to-third-grade students! Yet I attended eight sessions, researched the topic using the vast resources of the University, and completed a curriculum unit that I was able to use in my primary science classroom the next fall.

I came away from that experience on a professional high! All of us in the Session had experienced at first hand how engag-

ing in relevant conversations and exchanging suggestions and ideas on teaching and learning with colleagues from every level of instruction could be intellectually stimulating. Energized as professionals, we left with increased hope that we might become highly qualified teachers committed to providing our students with accurate and meaningful instruction. We agreed that any teacher who could engage in this level of professional development would feel re-energized to do the work of their chosen craft.



WILLIAM JOHNSON, ART CLASS, 1939-40

When the Pittsburgh Teachers Institute was established, I participated in one of the four seminars that it first offered, and then traveled to Yale for a second July Intensive Session in 1999. This enabled me to complete a two-part curriculum on Energy. Both seminar experiences had left me with a feeling of great satisfaction with the new knowledge that I had gained and a desire for more professional development of this caliber.

When I entered the ranks of school administrators in the fall of 1999, I became ineligible to be a seminar Fellow. I now consider myself a PTI cheerleader.

In that role I have had the opportunity to speak before school district representatives and local funders about the great work of not just the Pittsburgh Institute but all the Teachers Institutes. I share my experience yearly with the teaching staff under my administration and have succeeded in encouraging many of them to participate in PTI.

In the face of No Child Left Behind all school districts are confronted with the task of improving the quality of instruction for all students. Teacher practices are being closely scrutinized for effectiveness; teachers must demonstrate that they know and understand the content of their subject area; and they must know how to connect student learning to everyday life making their instruction meaningful. Teachers must get better at understanding and assessment, and they need to know that assessment should be embedded in every learning experience.

What school districts and community stakeholders must understand is that teachers get better and more effective through ongoing and meaningful professional development as modeled in the Teachers Institutes. I will always be grateful for my experience with the New Haven and Pittsburgh Institutes. It was the most significant professional development experience of my career. It showed me that I did not want to settle for just being a good teacher, but I had the ability to be a great teacher. That Teachers Institute experience has stayed with me through my past five years as a school administrator and has helped me provide meaningful professional development for my faculty.

I would highly recommend to school districts that they seek local and national funding in order to establish partnerships with local universities and colleges that can bring about the professional development experiences that can only be provided by a Teachers Institute.

Verna Arnold is Principal at Fort Pitt Elementary School in Pittsburgh.

Renewal Through the Institute: A Principal's View

F. Robert McMurray

"To create and sustain for children the conditions for productive growth without those conditions existing for educators is virtually impossible."

— Seymour Sarason.

The Predictable Failure of Educational Reform: Can We Change Before It's Too Late? (1990)

Traditional programs of professional development are often perceived as irrelevant, intrusive, and non-productive. In fact, many teachers have found a variety of creative ways to avoid such "development."

When the Pittsburgh Teachers Institute was formed as a part of the National Demonstration Project launched by the Yale-New Haven Teachers Institute, I did not immediately realize the impact that it would have on Taylor Allderdice High School and on many of its faculty members. James H. Stronge in *Qualities of Effective Teachers* (2002) states that professional development activities "must be collegial, challenging, and socially oriented, because learning itself entails these characteristics." The Pittsburgh Teachers Institute mirrors these criteria. Its seminars, led by faculty members from Chatham College or Carnegie Mellon University, include a rigorous research component and the expectation that each Fellow complete a coherent and relevant curriculum unit articulated with the standards being addressed. The seminars also provide for collegial interaction with others in various levels of the profession. Overall, I was impressed with the mission of the Institute and felt that it could have a lasting influence on those who participate—an influence that would transfer positively to their students. Therefore, I was pleased when many of the staff began submitting applications for me to validate

in the hope of becoming Fellows at the Institute. Their involvement began paying dividends almost immediately. The intellectual atmosphere and the focused structure of the Institute noticeably increased their satisfaction in teaching. They were discussing among their peers aspects of the Institute's seminars and were feeling pride in their ability to develop relevant curricula of high interest geared to the particular subject they were teaching.

When Pennsylvania adopted a set of academic standards and the school district of Pittsburgh worked to articulate curricula to appropriately address them and to prepare for forthcoming assessments, it became necessary to ascertain that the "high interest" units being developed were compatible with both Allderdice's and Pittsburgh's mission. As I challenged the proposals of the prospective Fellows of the Institute, I was impressed by the care that had been taken to address the standards in creative ways, often combining disciplines, and always attempting to engage, to "enthral" students in applications relevant to the community in which they live.

It is clear that teachers who hold high expectations for their students, maintain their enthusiasm throughout the process, and establish appropriate sets and activities to instill motivation produce greater results. Research conducted by Rogers M. Smith of the University of Pennsylvania, presented in *To Motivate My Students* (2004), appears to confirm what I was witnessing in the classroom. For example, student interest seemed to increase when the units developed by the Fellows were taught, primarily because of the relevance the teacher had established. Teachers felt that students were more attentive and exhibited greater understanding of the inherent concepts throughout the period the units were being used. Likewise, teachers themselves appeared to have increased enthusiasm that transferred to their students when presenting the units.

The professional growth was noticeable. It seemed to renew in many of them the desire for more content knowledge and a passion for seeking new opportunities for enrichment. One teacher who developed a unit on Chilean culture was so intrigued during her research that she arranged a year-long Fulbright exchange with a teacher from Chile. Another expressed satisfaction in his accomplishment when teachers from other districts throughout the nation began communicating with him to inform him that they were using his unit. This experience was shared by many others who had participated as Institute Fellows and heightened their sense of professional awareness. Several began using their units as the foundation for seeking certification from the National Board of Professional Teaching Standards.

I was fortunate to be invited to two National Teacher Institute Conferences, one being the 25th anniversary of the Yale-New Haven Teachers Institute, where I witnessed the quality of dialogue, the intensity of reflection, and the passion that drove most of the participants. The Ivy League setting added to the intellectual ethos in ways that instilled renewed pride in the profession of teaching. The experience broadened my own understanding of the importance of the Institute and its mission in the lives of many faculty members at Taylor Allderdice High School and subsequently in the lives of their students. Each fall, I encourage faculty involvement as Fellows at the Institute and am pleased that so many participate, often returning year after year. Yet, it is the result of those efforts on the day-to-day achievement of the students that I eagerly await. It is apparent in their classrooms that the combination of enthusiasm and content knowledge creatively applied aids students in gaining the understanding necessary to realize achievement in the atmosphere of accountability facing public schools today.

F. Robert McMurray is Principal at Taylor Allderdice High School in Pittsburgh.

From The Pittsburgh Public Schools

by John W. Thompson and William Isler

The Pittsburgh Public Schools constantly face challenges with regard to ensuring that our students are provided with the most rigorous, world-class education that is possible. It is essential that we hire the most highly qualified teachers with a commitment to urban education, and also provide them with numerous opportunities to engage as colleagues in reflecting on how to provide rigorous academic and challenging instruction to meet the changing needs of the youth whom we serve.

The Pittsburgh Teachers Institute is a key resource for us in meeting these professional development needs for our teachers.

Over the past seven years, the Pittsburgh Teachers Institute has grown in its scope and capacity to serve over 202 individual teachers who have developed 333 units across all disciplines, encompassing a myriad of broad seminar areas such as:

History: e.g., European, American, African American, and Special Topics
Contemporary Issues: e.g., World Trade Organization, European Union, Peace Movements

Cultural Studies: e.g., Religion, Gender Studies, Race, Social Class

Arts: e.g., American History through Art, African American Literature and Art

Humanities: e.g., Literature, Writing and Rhetoric, Ethics, Philosophy, Logic
Science: e.g., Energy and Environmental Issues, Everyday Science, Learning Science by Doing Science

Mathematics: The Great Problems of Mathematics, Looking at Everyday Mathematics

Social Sciences: e.g., Psychology, Sociology, Political Science, Health and Fitness

John W. Thompson until recently was Superintendent of Schools; William Isler is the Board President of the Pittsburgh Public Schools.

These standards-based lessons have been shared and implemented not only across our district, but also across the nation and the world, affecting many teachers worldwide, including a Fulbright scholar from Chile who participated in our 2004 seminar "U.S. Latino Literature and Culture." The PTI Web site with its electronic index of lesson plans has become an invaluable tool for expanding the conversation that begins in the seminar atmosphere.

While we find that the small seminar

We see the Institute as a valuable resource, also, in ensuring that our teachers are enabled to deepen the instruction for our aligned district-wide curriculums in the areas of mathematics, science, and literacy in particular. Each year, PTI collaborates closely with our curriculum officers here in our Division of Instructional Support in order to identify those key curricular needs that must be addressed by our staff. Through this creative partnership, we have been able to identify many lessons that have considerably enhanced our student achievement in core content areas. With the advent of the No Child Left Behind Act, we are concerned even more that these key content areas be taught by truly expert teachers, especially for those students who most need careful and challenging instruction.

The Institute works in concert with other professional development initiatives here in our district, including the National Board for Professional Teaching Standards (NBPTS). In fact, many of the requirements for NBPTS can be, and have been, fulfilled through the inclusion of PTI-developed units as part of the NBPTS portfolio.

It is notable that both the NBPTS effort and PTI are supported fully by the Pittsburgh Federation of Teachers. The Federation joins the district in applauding the work of Dr. Helen Faison, an educational leader for whom all of us have the greatest respect and fealty.

We see PTI as an important cornerstone of our future work here in the district. Therefore we express our full support of additional program efforts by PTI. We will continue to make our staff, along with ourselves, fully available to Dr. Faison in her continued efforts to assist Pittsburgh Public Schools' teachers in better serving the educational needs of urban youth.

Whitaker: Yale Initiative

(continued from page 23)

We add to this summary the testimony of two school administrators who have themselves been Fellows—Verdell Roberts in New Haven and Verna Arnold in Pittsburgh. Their double experience might seem unusual; but it is in fact the case that over the years in New Haven a large number of administrators have come from the body of Institute Fellows. Verdell Roberts and Verna Arnold point to the energizing effects of the Institute upon teachers, and they emphasize as well that an Institute is a program designed for long-term improvement of public school education. We are therefore delighted to round out this section with a statement by John W. Thompson, who until recently was Superintendent of Schools in Pittsburgh, and William Isler, the Board President of the Pittsburgh Public Schools. They pay tribute to the Pittsburgh Teachers Institute, which has grown over the past seven years until it has become "a key resource for us" in meeting the "professional development needs for our teachers." They are particularly interested in how the small seminar atmosphere and design of the Institute "meet the needs of those teachers who have left the novice stage of their career but who have not yet hit their stride." And they also see the Institute as a valuable resource "in ensuring that our teachers are enabled to deepen the instruction for our aligned district-wide curriculums in the areas of mathematics, science, and literacy in particular."

Our review of *Teaching with Fire: Poetry That Sustains the Courage to Teach*, edited by Samuel M. Intrator and Megan Scribner with an introduction by Parker J. Palmer and Tom Vander Ark, also bears upon the major questions posed by this number of *On Common Ground*: What energies and resources will enable teaching and learning of the highest quality? What do teachers themselves say that they need? Our reviewer, Paul Fry, has led Institute seminars in poetry, and he will be leading a National Seminar for the Yale National Initiative in the summer of 2005 on "Reading Poetry of All Kinds."

His probing review of *Teaching with Fire* concludes that it is "both an ideal companion for teachers and, for us outsiders, a wonderful window onto the emotions that are inseparable from their work." We might add here that we respond heartily to the comments that Tom Vander Ark has made in conjunction with the poem he has chosen for this volume, Rainer Maria Rilke's "I Believe in All That Has Never Yet Been Spoken": "We want to lift and speed a movement—an effort of thousands taking many shapes, an effort to create effective and humane learning environments that prepare young people for the world they will inherit. . . . Spirited teachers, inspiring principals and deans, visionary system heads—they are the leaders of this movement."

The Images: Some Perspectives

With Mike Field's essay, "Mathematics: Why Get Involved?" we have chosen to include an image that embodies what he calls "geometric ways of thinking" that relate to "three dimensional visualization," "an appreciation of art," and "a sensitivity to pattern and symmetry in nature." Buckminster Fuller's *Building Construction/Geodesic Dome* illustrates the culmination of his inventive career devoted to "the geometry of thinking" in behalf of "the needs of all humanity." The drawing renders the basic principles of an artifact that has universal space-enclosing application. Originally intended for human shelter, Fuller's domes have also been much used for scientific, industrial, and military purposes, and in projects for environmental control and resource management.

To accompany Georgia Redonet's "The Underground Railroad: A Study of the Routes from Texas to Mexico," we have chosen No. 18 from Jacob Lawrence's *Migration Series*. This is, of course, a bold image of the exodus of African Americans to the North between 1916 and 1930, but it evokes as well the pre-Civil War migration of slaves that we usually associate with "the Underground Railroad." And we can extend that image

to cover the flight of slaves from Texas southward into Mexico that Georgia Redonet has excavated from historical documents and charted for her students—students who are often, like Jacob Lawrence himself, the children of migrants.

With Renee C. Tolliver's "Cooking with Culture" we include Carl Moon's *Women Baking Bread*. The painting depicts Pueblo bakers in native dress, using a traditional dome-shaped adobe oven. But it is already, in fact, an image of cultural transmission rather like those to which Renee Tolliver's unit is devoted, for the adobe oven had been adapted from that used by early Spanish settlers. Doris Braun's "Defining the Decades with Media Events" invites a very different image, and a different artistic style. Ken Keeley's *20th Century Newsstand* seems most appropriate here—because of its subject, the past century's fixation upon the media, and because of the creative process from which this painting has emerged. Keeley's research includes many photographs for potential paintings; his final paintings, however, are not faithful translations of any single photographic image but fresh reconstructions devised by the artist. This one is obviously, like the work of Doris Braun's students, a compendium of media events.

Dudley Andrew has chosen to accompany his essay, "An Inquiry into Geography through Film and Literature," an image by an unknown artist, *Watching a Documentary Film of Amadou Bambas's Life*. This reverse-glass painting, like its subject, testifies to the existence of the interdependent and technologically shaped system of cultures that world cinema can render for us. With Bruce Russett's "War and Peace in the Twentieth Century and Beyond," we have included Tom Lea's *That Two Thousand Yard Stare*. Lea, who was primarily an illustrator and muralist, was hired by *Life* magazine as a combat artist during World War II. His almost photographic style easily lent itself to this task. After his experience with the Marines during the battle of Peleiu, a

(continued on back cover)

Book Review

Samuel M. Intrator and Megan Scribner, eds., *Teaching with Fire: Poetry That Sustains the Courage to Teach*. (Introduction by Parker J. Palmer and Tom Vander Ark) San Francisco, CA: Jossey-Bass, 2003, 225 pages, \$14.95. Reviewed by Paul H. Fry, William Lampson Professor of English, Yale University.

Of the four seminars I have been privileged to lead over the course of more than a decade in the Yale-New Haven Teachers Institute, two have been on poetry. The response was always positive, and it seemed effortless to sustain the enthusiasm for poetry we all shared in the first place. I look forward, therefore, to leading a National Seminar for the Yale National Initiative in the summer of 2005 on "Reading Poetry of All Kinds: Pictures, Places and Things, People." Of course enrollments in our seminars are self-selecting, but one can still confidently assert, after such experiences, that teachers as a group don't bear out the widespread perception that nobody reads poetry except professors and the poets themselves. I myself had thought that teachers shy away from poetry in the classroom, preferring the more direct access to materials for discussion that prose affords. Not so. Public school teachers at all levels turn to poetry for its rhythmic urgency, for the enhancement of memory and the incitement to learn vocabulary that its repetitions make possible, and for the pathos or humor with which it brings its themes to life. Recently a Yale student of mine interviewed public school teachers who told him that the widespread appeal of rap and the new vogue for poetry slams had sold them on the pedagogical advantages of teaching poetry, albeit poetry of a fairly simple kind. My student found that private school teachers by contrast do shy away from teaching poetry (though they enjoy reading it themselves) because they feel an obligation to teach the more difficult

poets and quickly find the effort of interpretation to be more trouble than it's worth.

But even the somewhat surprising results of this survey show that many teachers in every setting enjoy reading poetry themselves. Anyone who has been around teachers knows how much they like to post poems or scraps of poems or prose on a bulletin board, the back of a desk, or the corner of a computer screen. *Teaching With Fire* is the result of soliciting teachers nationwide for their favorite inspirational passages, poetry for the most part, to be sent to the editors with two or three paragraphs explaining their preferences. Royalties from the book will fund scholarships for teachers under the auspices of the Fetzer Institute's Courage to Teach Program. While there is perhaps only one underlying theme—fight the good fight!—contributions are grouped under eight headings, ranging from vocation ("Hearing the Call") to desperation ("Holding On") to rededication ("Daring to Lead"). It's impossible not to notice the religious overtones, despite the broad secular appeal of the undertaking, with an appropriate emphasis on passing thorough the dark night of the soul—otherwise known as burnout! Hence the fire imagery.

Before turning to the poems and the way in which these teachers read and make use of them, one should report that to the two traditional sorts of disillusionment among teachers—recalcitrant students and staff friction born of too many meetings—a third has now been added. At least among this sample group, there appears not to be a single teacher who thinks that the new mandated tiers of testing are a good thing. Perhaps the sample group does skew things a bit. Who knows, maybe people who draw on poetry for inspiration are more likely to prefer spontaneity and organic growth in the classroom than people who don't; no doubt even among teachers themselves there is a fairly wide-

spread belief not represented here that the supervised regimentation of knowledge really does prepare children best for adulthood despite the loss of short-term opportunities for serendipitous growth. Probably the losses and gains of the present emphasis tend to reverse the losses and gains of the "classroom without walls" atmosphere of the sixties and seventies that it's meant to counteract. One suspects that it may be a different kind of child who's now reaping the benefits of education. Be that as it may, the voices we hear from in this book are those of teachers who feel that the sources of spiritual energy in teaching are threatened by recent educational trends.

Hence many of the poems, similar in tone to the voices of the sixties and seventies (Gary Snyder, Adrienne Rich, and nikki Giovanni are here, for example) are about the courage to be different, a maverick, a rough diamond—exhortations that appeal to teacher and student alike. The most popular choices are those writers who make the dignity-in-difference theme as straightforward and accessible as possible: Marge Piercy, Mary Oliver, William Stafford, Langston Hughes. Not that there aren't plenty of interesting choices from poets who complicate things a bit—among them Milton, Rilke, Eliot, Wallace Stevens, Seamus Heaney, Maxine Kumin—but in all the poems appearing in this book the inspirational is not far to seek. The poet who stands out admirably in a setting of this kind is Billy Collins. I'm tempted to say that for present purposes "First Reader," that amusingly urbane poem about Dick and Jane that shows how a child's habit of feeling makes an uneasy truce with the strange new habit of reading, is the best poem in the book. Or look at "On Turning Ten," with its closing spoof of Shelley: "But now when I fall upon the sidewalks of life,/ I skin my knees. I bleed." That's the way inspiration should sound, moving but with one's sense of humor intact. Worthy

also of a Post-it are poems by Li-Young Lee, Lucile Burt, and Judy Brown. Rilke's "Archaic Torso of Apollo" reads very well in this setting, Wallace's Stevens's "The Poem That Took the Place of a Mountain" rather less so.

Why? Because to make Stevens's poem fit into this volume it needs to be drawn away from its main purpose. The teacher who sent it in stresses the exhilaration of mountain climbing—rightly enough from his own point of view, but thereby slighting Stevens's signature preoccupation with the advantages and disadvantages of substituting the imagination for reality. It is a pity that on a few occasions the poems submitted or cited need to be misunderstood in order to seem serviceable. Most startlingly, the authors of the Introduction suppose the notorious lines from Eliot's "Little Gidding" beginning "The dove descending breaks the air" are about doing things as it were with fire in the belly, whereas those lines in fact controversially compare World War II dive bombers with the descent of the Holy Ghost. Hardly a good example.

I am bound to say, indeed, that any frustration I may have felt in leading my two seminars on poetry stemmed from a tendency sometimes evident among the Fellows to feel that the interpretation of poetry is neither necessary nor important, that to seek the full or even the probable basic meaning of a poem is a pedantic distraction from enjoyment. There is a similar mistrust of discussions that linger over poetic form. The notion that form shapes sense is sometimes greeted with bemused skepticism. I cannot share these views, which a few of the commentaries in this book would seem implicitly to share, as my enjoyment of poetry increases the better I understand it. Perhaps one sees in this divergence of interest the very conflict between discipline and spontaneity in the classroom that has aroused the frustration of these teachers in the first place—in which case I suppose I must be embar-

rassed to find myself at least in this instance on the side of the folks who set standards and guidelines. A teacher in the more recent of my poetry seminars was preparing her high school seniors for their SAT test in literature, and she, almost uniquely among her colleagues, was receptive to connections between form and meaning in poetry because she knew her students would have to be ready for such questions on the test. I know that considerations of this kind can only be expected to

play a role at the fourth of the four stages of a child's reading development. Fair enough, but we teachers are all in the fourth stage, are we not?

In the present context, however, none of these reflections can amount to a serious criticism. The book as a whole fairly glows with its value, like the fire on the dust jacket. It is both an ideal companion for teachers and, for us outsiders, a wonderful window onto the emotions that are inseparable from their work.



WILLIAM BLAKE, JERUSALEM: FRONTISPICE, 1804-20

On Common Ground

Strengthening Teaching through School-University Partnership

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The Yale-New Haven Teachers Institute is an educational partnership between Yale University and the New Haven Public Schools designed to strengthen teaching and learning in local schools and, by example and direct assistance, in schools across the country. Through the Institute, teachers from the university and the schools work together in a collegial relationship.

Founded in 1978, the Institute is the first program of its type to be permanently established as a unit of a university. In 2004, the Institute announced the Yale National Initiative to strengthen teaching in public schools, a long-term endeavor to establish Teachers Institutes in states throughout the nation.

Whitaker: Yale Initiative

(continued from page 29)

speck of coral in the western Pacific, he captured the horror-stricken face of a young man who—as James Jones put it in *World War II*—has had "all, or more than, he could take." As a stylistic contrast, we have chosen to accompany Stephen P. Broker's essay on "Asteroids, Comets, and Meteorites" a semi-abstract evocation by Alexander Calder, *Moon and Mountain*. It may suggest for us the almost unimaginable events that have shaped life on our planet.

The work of teaching and learning, on which the last section of this issue focuses most generally, may be exemplified by William Johnson's *Art Class*, which accompanies the essay by Verna Arnold. The style of Johnson's later work, with its flat designs and its patterns of brilliant color, is appropriate to its subject here. And indeed, in his *Ferry Boat Trip*, which we have placed on the back cover, that style evokes—with its images of flag, bridge, city, and journey—the entire project to which this issue is devoted: Teachers Institutes across the nation. But so, too, does the image by William Blake that we have chosen to accompany Paul Fry's review of *Teaching with Fire*. This plate from Blake's *Jerusalem* depicts Los, the figure of poetic imagination, carrying a fiery solar lantern as he begins to explore and transform the fallen world. It is a great romantic image of the poet's task—and the teacher's.

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