



Is the Sky Really Falling?

According to the National Education Association in early 2010, 300,000 teachers and other school personnel were expected to lose their jobs before the fall of 2010. It's a budget issue. Academic programs, athletics, club activities, libraries, remedial programs are among the areas that will be affected.

In one New Jersey community of 37,000, the school board has identified 96 positions to be eliminated. Ten school librarians have been pink-slipped. Only the position of the high school librarian has been spared. Can volunteers fill the gap? The job is much more than checking in and out books. How will these people get students hooked on books? How can they answer teachers' questions about titles related to what is being taught? Is there money for new titles? Who will evaluate what's out there and order? Who has the answers?

What about the public library? In this same community, there is a main building and one branch. The staff and hours have been reduced, and very little money has been allocated by the town council. The State has cut funding drastically. Now the main building will

be open shorter hours Tuesday through Sunday. The branch will be open only on Monday.

And this is a literate community! What are the implications for the rest of the country? How do publishers assess these developments?

Pique Their Interests

Freedom of choice is essential in developing a love of reading. As an adult, I enjoy visiting bookstores. I browse, looking at the covers and reading the blurbs. A title might grab my attention. *Fly by Night* by Frances Hardinge (HarperCollins, 2006) has this on its cover: "IMAGINE A WORLD IN WHICH ALL BOOKS HAVE BEEN BANNED!" How could I resist this book? The author has crafted a thrilling story, filled with deceptions and lots of action. Students have to browse—pick up books, sample them, and make their choices. Teachers and librarians can do book talks, guide students once they know these young peoples' interests and abilities. But choosing one's own reading matter is the ultimate goal.

I know there are programs such as DEAR (Drop Everything

and Read). The thing that bothers me about this activity is that it is not viewed as being as *real* an academic experience as when students read and study a book in common. Why? Shouldn't any reading experience carry the same academic weight? If one student reads *The Hunger Games* by Suzanne Collins (Scholastic, 2008) and another reads *Raised by Wolves* by Jennifer Lynn Barnes (Egmont, 2010), can't both discuss literary styles, plot, climax, and reasons for their choices? Isn't this what literacy development is all about? Developing independence?

I have always preferred teaching with a thematic approach. I broadly interpret a theme within a book, maybe a subplot, and let students choose a book, classic or modern, that develops that theme. Here are some examples for consideration.

Interesting People

Angel, Ann. *Janis Joplin Rise Up Singing*. Amulet, 2010.

Calcines, Eduardo F. *Leaving Glory-Town—One Boy's Struggle under Castro*. Farrar, Straus and Giroux, 2009.

Fleischman, Sid. *Sir Charlie: Chaplin, the Funniest Man in the World*. Greenwillow, 2010.

Hoose, Phillip. *Claudette Colvin: Twice Toward Justice*. Farrar, Straus and Giroux, 2009.

Jarrow, Gail. *Robert H. Jackson: New Deal Lawyer, Supreme Court Justice, Nuremberg*

Prosecutor. Calkins Creek, 2008.

Levy, Debbie. *The Year of Goodbyes*. Hyperion, 2010.

Tunnell, Michael O. *Candy Bomber: The Story of the Berlin Airlift's "Chocolate Pilot."*

Charlesbridge, 2010.

Fantasy

Abbott, Ellen Jensen. *Watersmeet*. Marshall Cavendish, 2009.

Catanese, P.W. *The Books of Umber: Dragon Games*. Aladdin, 2010.

Coville, Bruce. *The Last Hunt*. Scholastic, 2010.

George, Jessica Day. *Princess of Glass*. Bloomsbury, 2010.

Marchetta, Melina. *Finnikin of the Rock*. Candlewick, 2010.

Ryan, Carrie. *The Dead-Tossed Waves*. Delacorte, 2010.

Yolen, Jane. *Dragon's Heart*. Harcourt, 2009.

Families

Brandeis, Gayle. *My Life with the Lincolns*. Holt, 2010.

Chaltas, Thalia. *Because I Am Fur-niture*. Viking, 2009.

Holt, Kimberly Willis. *The Water Seeker*. Holt, 2010.

Kent, Rose. *Rocky Road*. Knopf, 2010.

Kupers, Alice. *Lost for Words*. Harper, 2010.

Mendle, Jane. *My Ultimate Sister Disaster*. St. Martin, 2010.

Omololu, C.J. *Dirty Little Secrets*. Walker, 2010.

Growing Up around the World

Abdel-Fattah, Randa. *Where the Streets Had a Name*. Scholastic, 2010.

Gray, Keith. *Ostrich Boys*. Random House, 2010.

Lloyd, Saci. *The Carbon Diaries 2017*. Holiday House, 2010.

Nanji, Shenaaz. *Child of Dandelions*. Front Street, 2008.

Paterson, Katherine. *The Day of the Pelican*. Clarion, 2009.

Perkins, Nitali. *Bamboo People*. Charlesbridge, 2010.

Sheth, Kashmira. *Boys without Names*. Balzer + Bray, 2010.

Sports

Gifford, Clive. *The Kingfisher Soccer Encyclopedia*. Kingfisher, 2010.

Heldring, Thatcher. *Roy Morelli Steps Up to the Plate*. Delacorte, 2010.

Koertge, Ron. *Shakespeare Makes the Playoffs*. Candlewick, 2010.

Lupica, Mike. *The Batboy*. Philomel, 2010.

Wallace, Rich. *Sports Camp*. Knopf, 2010.

Weaver, Will. *Checkered Flag Cheater*. Harper, 2010.

Williams, Suzanne Morgan. *Bull Rider*. McElderry, 2009.

Make Way for Laughter

Behrens, Andy. *The Fast and the Furriest*. Knopf, 2010.

Crawford, Brent. *Carter's Big Break*. Hyperion, 2010.

Dionne, Erin. *The Total Tragedy of a Girl Named Hamlet*. Dial, 2010.

Gephart, Donna. *How to Survive Middle School*. Delacorte, 2010.

Law, Ingrid. *Scumble*. Dial, 2010.

Rennison, Louise. *Are These My Ba-soomas I See Before Me?* Harper, 2009.

Soup, Cuthbert. *A Whole Nother Story*. Bloomsbury, 2010.

On School Time

Barnes, Derrick. *We Could Be Brothers*. Scholastic, 2010.

Brody, Jessica. *The Karma Club*. Farra, Straus and Giroux, 2010.

Draper, Sharon M. *Just Another Hero*. Atheneum, 2009.

Franklin, Emily, and Brendan Halpin. *The Half-Life of Planets*. Hyperion, 2010.

Lynch, Janet Nichols. *Addicted to Her*. Holiday House, 2010.

McGowan, Anthony. *The Knife That Killed Me*. Delacorte, 2010.

Quinter, Sofia. *Efrain's Secret*. Knopf, 2010.

Supernatural/Gothic

Cast, P. C., & Kristin Cast. *Burned*. St. Martin's, 2010.

Fantaskey, Beth. *Jekyll Loves Hyde*. Harcourt, 2010.

Henderson, Jason. *Alex Van Helsing: Vampire Rising*. Harper, 2010.

Mead, Richelle. *Vampire Academy: Spirit Bound*. Razorbill, 2010.

Plum-Ucci, Carol. *Fire Will Fall*. Harcourt, 2010.

Rowen, Michelle. *Demon Princess: Reign Check*. Walker, 2010.

Schreiber, Ellen. *Love Bites*. Katherine Tegen Books, 2010.

Historical Fiction

Cushman, Karen. *Alchemy and Meggy Swann*. Clarion, 2010.

Gleitzman, Morris. *Once*. Holt, 2010.

Gonzalez, Christina Diaz. *The Red Umbrella*. Knopf, 2010.

Kephart, Beth. *Dangerous Neighbors*. Egmont, 2010.
Lasky, Kathryn. *Ashes*. Viking, 2010.
Preus, Margi. *Heart of the Samurai*. Amulet, 2010.
Watts, Irene N. *No Moon*. Tundra, 2010.

Friendships

Carbone, Elisa. *Jump*. Viking, 2010.
Ehrenhaft, Daniel. *Friend Is Not a Verb*. Harper, 2010.
Elkeles, Simone. *Rules of Attraction*. Walker, 2010.
Finn, Daniel. *She Thief*. Feiwel, 2010.
Frank, Hillary. *The View from the Top*. Dutton, 2010.
Pearson, Mary. *The Miles Between*. Holt, 2009.
Sheinmel, Alyssa, B. *The Beautiful Between*, 2010.

Mystery and Suspense

Abrahams, Peter. *Bullet Point*. Harper, 2010.
Cooney, Caroline B. *They Never Came Back*. Delacorte, 2010.
Grisham, John. *Theodore Boone: Kid Lawyer*. Dutton, 2010.
Peacock, Shane. *The Secret Fiend*. Tundra, 2010.
Schrefer, Eliot. *The Deadly Sister*. Scholastic, 2010.
Sedgwick, Marcus. *Revolver*. Roaring Brook, 2010.
Wynne-Jones, Tim. *The Uninvited*. Candlewick, 2010.

Graphic Novels

D'Errico, Camilla. *Burn*. Simon Pulse, 2009.
Guibert, Emmanuel, Didier Lefevre, & Frederic Lemercier (Alexis Siegel, Trans.).

The Photographer. First Second, 2009.
Hague, Michael. *In the Small*. Little, Brown, 2009.
Hale, Shannon & Dean Hale (Nathan Hale, Illus.). *Calamity Jack*. Bloomsbury, 2010.
Kneece, Mark (Adaptor) (Anthony Spay, Illus.). *Rod Serling's The Twilight Zone: The Midnight Sun*. Walker, 2009.
Novgorodoff, Danica, Benjamin Percy, & James Ponsoldt. *Refresh, Refresh*. First Second, 2009.
White, Tracy. *How I Made It to Eighteen*. Roaring Brook, 2010.

Search for a New Editor of *English Journal*

NCTE is seeking a new editor of *English Journal*. In July 2013, the term of the present editor, Ken Lindblom, will end. Interested persons should send a letter of application to be received **no later than August 15, 2011**. Letters should include the applicant's vision for the journal and be accompanied by the applicant's vita, one sample of published writing, and two letters specifying financial support from appropriate administrators at the applicant's institution. Applicants are urged to explore with their administrators the feasibility of assuming the responsibilities of a journal editor. Do not send books, monographs, or other materials that cannot be easily copied for the search committee. Classroom teachers are both eligible and encouraged to apply. The applicant appointed by the NCTE Executive Committee in February 2012 will effect a transition, preparing for her or his first issue in September 2013. The appointment is for five years. Applications should be sent electronically to Kurt Austin, Publications Director, kaustin@ncte.org, or by mail to Kurt Austin, *English Journal* Editor Search Committee, NCTE, 1111 W. Kenyon Road, Urbana, IL 61801-1096.

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