



SIGMA TAU DELTA

INTERNATIONAL ENGLISH HONOR SOCIETY

Fall 2010

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Beyond Words in Pittsburgh



Sarah Dangelantonio
Professor of English
Franklin Pierce College, NH

As a child, I visited Pittsburgh every summer to see my grandfather and assorted aunts, uncles, and cousins. I have fond memories of the city and the area—the annual Railroad

Picnic at Kennywood Amusement Park, going through the Fort Pitt Tunnel and holding my breath until we got to the other side, watching a Pirates baseball game, the Heinz pickle logo. Many of my memories, however, go beyond words and are the associated feelings that go along with the area. Mention Pittsburgh and my mind goes to thoughts of family, of tradition, of childhood—mention the Allegheny Mountains and my thoughts are of strength, enclosure, adventure. In March of 2011, Sigma Tau Delta will find itself at the Pittsburgh Hilton holding its annual convention, and we are sure those attending will create their own memories of Pittsburgh—both of specific events as well as those feelings and recollections that will go beyond words.

Our 2011 convention features speakers whose writings and lives reflect our theme of “Beyond Words,” so arrive early to one of our keynote addresses and snag a front row seat. We’ll be hearing from Jacqueline Woodson, award-winning Young Adult author; Lorene Cary, author of our convention Common Reader *Black Ice* and founder of Philadelphia’s Art Sanctuary; Kay Ryan, 2008-10 U.S. Poet Laureate; and Dave Eggers, author-publisher-screenwriter-activist. Be sure to make time in your schedule to attend one of our evening events like the annual Bad Poetry contest, Open Mic Night, the screening of *Away We Go* and *Where the Wild Things Are* (movies written by speaker Dave Eggers), or the student leadership workshop.

As the second largest city in Pennsylvania, located at the confluence of the Allegheny, Monongahela, and Ohio Rivers, Pittsburgh is known for being one of those metropolitan cities that retains a small-town feel with plenty to do! Point State Park is just a short walk from the hotel and sits at the merge point of the three rivers. The park features the Fort Pitt museum, the block house, and one of the nation’s highest fountains (275-foot geyser that blasts 6,000 gallons of water per minute fed by an aquifer found 53 feet underground).



Also within walking distance of the Hilton is Market Square—a great place to sit and people watch. Visit Cherries Diner or get one of Primanti Brothers’ signature Pittsburgh sandwiches where even the fries and coleslaw are between the bread.

To experience the visual arts, go to the North Side and take in the Andy Warhol, Carnegie, or Frick Museums or the installation-art focused Mattress Factory. Take a trip over to the South Side and Station Square and enjoy dinner or a comedy show or ride up to the top of Mt. Washington on the Monongahela or Duquesne inclines. Shake your tailfeather or explore a trendy shop in The Strip Warehouse district (live jazz Thursdays at Firehouse Lounge), or if the performing arts are your way to go beyond words, Heinz Hall houses the Pittsburgh Symphony Orchestra, and the Benedum Center for the Performing Arts features the Pittsburgh Opera and Pittsburgh Ballet Theatre. WiFi Pittsburgh will give you two hours per day of free WiFi anywhere in downtown so you can update your Tumblr, Twitter, or Facebook status with ease—and contribute to the convention blog right from your favorite Pittsburgh “finds.”

From Mary Roberts Rinehart to John Edgar Wideman to Rachel Carson, Pittsburgh has produced plenty of literary talent—including some like Pulitzer Prize winner Michael Chabon, whose *Mysteries of Pittsburgh* and *Wonder Boys* are set here. A trio of Pulitzer-winning Pittsburghers of note are August Wilson, Jr., whose plays are set in Pittsburgh; biographer David McCullough, author of *Truman* and *John Adams*; and Annie Dillard, whose *An American Childhood*, her memoir of growing up in 1950s Pittsburgh, is required reading. You can further feed your literary side at one of the local independent bookstores: Jays Bookstall is on Fifth Avenue, and the Caliban Book Shop on Craig Street is the choice for one-of-a-kind items, from first editions to leatherbound sets.

A fabulous convention, a multitude of attractions, and lovely outdoor venues are all waiting for you. Whichever way you choose, move beyond the words on this page and join us in Pittsburgh this March.



Sid Watson
President
Oklahoma Baptist University, OK

Don't worry. This isn't going to be the usual lecture against plagiarism. Though we tend to lump plagiarism and copyright together, they really aren't equivalent.

It's quite possible to avoid plagiarism and still violate someone's copyright. Of the two, plagiarism seems, at least to me, to be ethically simple. On the other hand, copyright, the legal basis for recognizing intellectual property, poses serious questions, not only about one's ethical responsibility, but also about the relationship between creativity and the prior work of others.

Bear with me for a moment while I draw some distinctions between the two. Plagiarism is largely an academic construct, the failure to follow the guidelines that help professors (and their students) play nicely with others. Following citation guidelines gives credit to the proper person and helps later researchers (including student writers) track down useful sources. The guidelines against plagiarism are designed to encourage creative work by providing the structure that makes good research possible. As a Society, part of our mission in Sigma Tau Delta is to "promote exemplary character and good fellowship among [our] members." Plagiarism simply isn't compatible with Sigma Tau Delta's goals.

Few things raise academic hackles as much as plagiarism, yet some of the same academics who are no doubt lecturing against plagiarism in their classrooms have recently begun to question current copyright laws on the basis that they inhibit creativity.

This difference was brought home to me last year when I confronted a student for what appeared to be a deliberate case of plagiarism. As a teacher, I hate plagiarism cases, especially the shift I have to make from being a coach, cheerleader, and editor to being a judge, jury, and enforcer of motherly guilt trips. But while I may fret over a student's guilt or innocence, I never worry that my position on plagiarism is wrong. It seems ethically simple: to deliberately plagiarize the work of others is to cheat oneself of the intellectual growth achieved by doing one's own work and to cheat the original writer, who has lost the recognition he or she is due.

So I went home that afternoon a little disheartened about my student's ethical lapse, but I cheered up when I saw I had a Facebook message from my son, who was away at college. When he's home, we enjoy watching anime together, and he'd sent a link to an AMV (anime music video) he'd found online. A fan had created a clever mix of carefully chosen clips from the anime, precisely edited to fit the rhythms of a popular song. I've seen a number of these fan tributes, some good and some not-so-good. This one far surpassed any I had seen before.

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The President's Corner

Why You Should Care About Copyright Law

But it also seemed clearly to violate the musician's copyright, and possibly the anime's as well. This is not a victimless crime. It's easy to strip the music from online videos, potentially robbing (yes, a deliberate choice of wording) the musician of royalties. And yet, I found myself somewhat in sympathy with the creator of this AMV because it did seem that he or she was a creator of something new, and my day was a little brighter for having watched a couple of minutes of that beautifully orchestrated video. It raised a question that I haven't yet been able to answer: how do we reconcile the need to protect intellectual property with the need to encourage creativity?

That's not an idle question. A recent study reported in *Newsweek* suggests that creativity is declining in the United States, at the same time that executives are labeling it the skill most needed in leadership. It's a concern that is increasingly appearing in the venues frequented by the English teachers who make up the frontline in the battle against plagiarism, some of whom have deep concerns about our current copyright laws.

In the Winter 2010 issue of *Pedagogy*, Danielle Nicole DeVoss draws on a number of earlier sources (which we can track

down and read because she cited them) to argue that traditional lectures on plagiarism are inadequate in a world where modes of creation are increasingly coming into conflict with copyright law, that instead students need to be led to understand the issues so that they can create a set of principles to guide

them through the murky landscape of intellectual property and copyright.

In a perhaps less traditionally scholarly forum, this morning on Twitter a group of English teachers were discussing the relative merits of teaching mashups (such as the AMV my son sent me). Are they the way of the future? A degradation of true creativity? I don't know the answers to these questions. What I am convinced of is that DeVoss is correct. That traditional plagiarism lecture just won't cut it anymore.

We need to educate ourselves about the issues and do some hard thinking about what the relationship between the law and intellectual achievement should be in the 21st century. And remember: Sigma Tau Delta members are not just readers, but also writers. That makes us—automatically under U.S. law—not just consumers but also producers of copyrighted material, creators who need its protection, but also enough freedom to continue to remake the old into the new.

Interested in going to the ΣΤΔ Convention?
Proposals due in November!
See: <http://www.english.org/sigmatd/conventions/>

Executive Director's Report

Being a Member of Sigma Tau Delta

William C. Johnson
Executive Director
Northern Illinois University



Over the years I've been asked, numerous times, "What's the big deal about being a member of Sigma Tau Delta?" Initially I couldn't believe anyone would question the "deal," but I've come to see the inquiry as a great way not only of telling others who and what we are, but to remind myself what a special thing membership is.

Like the little child in Dylan Thomas's "A Child's Christmas in Wales," many people want to know about "useful" things. About these, the answer is plentiful.

ΣΤΔ, among all the honor societies in the Association of College Honor Societies (ACHS), annually provides the largest stand-alone convention, at which hundreds of members make what, for most, is their first professional paper presentation, meet famous authors, join with almost 1,000 other members from around the world, and participate in workshops, career development and "how-to" sessions on profession-related topics. Prizes are given, friendships made, and everyone knows that something special has happened. Just when you thought you were one of only two people in the world interested in Jane Austen's use of green hats, or C. S. Lewis's platonic imagery, you find a dozen others keen on the subject too. That's a big deal!

ΣΤΔ, among all those 65+ ACHS honor societies, is the only one that not only encourages, but heavily supports through considerable funding, active student involvement on the Board of Directors. Few organizations listen as carefully to the student voice, and students are invited to participate in various Board capacities and on sundry Board committees. That's a big deal, too.

For many members, having a chance to apply for our numerous scholarships and awards is a significant membership reward. Almost every year the Board increases either the number or the amount, and sometimes both, of these funding opportunities. Our publications, both for creative writing and critical analysis, allow members a great public forum for their writing and provide yet another series of financial rewards for outstanding work. Internships with important publishing houses—doesn't that sound like an English major's dream? We've got them. And all of these are, certainly, big deals.

Yes, I'd be closing my eyes to something important were I not to point out that acceptance into an international honor society does have a certain caché. And in fact, it probably has more than many students recognize. Not only is ΣΤΔ membership a mark that one has attained a high level of achievement in the field of English, but it also suggests that the standards are wider, higher, than those established on one's campus.

That is to say, to receive recognition on one's campus is fine, but to know that you are one of a limited number of persons in over 750 chapters around the world, who have competed for and received recognition, makes the recognition that much bigger "a deal." Even the United States government bumps ACHS members up a salary scale or two, in many civil service jobs, because of the prestige of honor society membership.

Now, what about those "less useful" reasons for membership? Aside from the cash and caché, in addition to a once-in-a-lifetime convention experience, beyond the scholarships, awards, internships, and publishing opportunities (all of which are important indeed), why else would anyone be interested in ΣΤΔ membership?

Here's where the real value of membership lies. Sharing the joy of language and literature with like-minded others, students and faculty, obviously is possible without ΣΤΔ membership.

But our Society provides so very many opportunities to facilitate that sharing, so very many opportunities to meet leaders in contemporary literary studies and writers of major literary works (think Neil Gaiman, Sharon Olds, Chris Abani, Ted Kooser, Suzan-Lori Parks, and Azar Nafisi, from just the last 3-4 years of convention programs) that my life would be

overwhelmed just trying to find where and when I could meet, hear, and interact with these persons.

To meet frequently with others who know, merely from the drop of part of a line ("Call me Ishmael," "Bright Star," "April is the cruellest month," "When I consider how my light is spent") precisely what the reference is, and to appreciate it as well, produces a deep human connection. To confess that I cannot read Jonson's "Farewell thou child of my right hand, and joy," without dissolving into tears, and to have my companion admit that she or he experiences the same, allows each of us to share both the beauty of great language and the collective sense of deep emotion. ΣΤΔ membership provides me with countless such experiences; I treasure them all and they have made me a far fuller human being.

And so, is membership a "big deal?" For me, it obviously is. I trust it is, and will be, for you too. You've already received the recognition, already accepted the membership. Be incredibly proud of the honor and do what you can to show others in your chapter, your department, your college/university, what a big deal it is. "Honor" is both a noun and a verb. Be, yourself, the honor. That's a big deal, to be sure.

“Honor” is both a noun and a verb.
Be, yourself, the honor.
That’s a big deal, to be sure.

The Treasurer's Update



Shannin Schroeder
Secretary-Treasurer
Southern Arkansas University

As treasurer, I'm always at my best when I can report how strong our investment portfolio is, how far our money is stretching, and how much stability our dollars bring to our organization. Those are the years when I love my job most.

Last year wasn't that year. You might have expected as much. In fact, while I subtitled my treasurer's report for the 2010 convention "A Love Story," I was being flippant. Yet our losses—28.6% in the year 2009—were actually relatively tame compared to the downturns other organizations and businesses experienced. We Sigma Tau Deltans proved not to be fools: that is, we weren't meant to be parted from our financial security blanket for long. In fact, we have continued to recover at an astonishing rate. Even over the course of what has been a turbulent year for investments, there is every promise that we will finish 2010 with gains overall in our investments; the rosier projections even suggest we'll recover from 2009 before this year is out.

It's true that we have a love/hate relationship with our money. We enjoy having it, adore unexpected gains, delight in adding it up . . . and our love turns just as intensely to dislike when it seems out of our control, when our investments go south. Our struggles last year, and even over the course of the last few months, aren't the happiest of endings, of course. But then, with the continued help of astute financial advisors, our growing nest egg isn't an ending at all; it's a beginning. And a strong beginning is something to love.

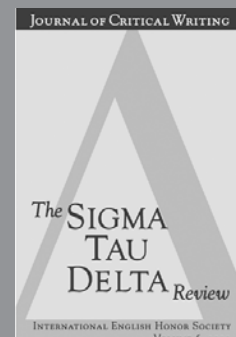
Interested in submitting to the 2012 Sigma Tau Delta Journals?

Look for the call for submissions in March 2011
<http://www.english.org/sigmatd/publications/>

Who can submit? All currently-enrolled undergraduate and graduate members of active Sigma Tau Delta chapters are invited to submit their work to *The Sigma Tau Delta Review* and *The Sigma Tau Delta Rectangle*. Chapter sponsors, faculty members, alumni (including members of the Alumni Epsilon chapter), and honorary members are not eligible to submit. Contributors who win overall awards will receive a monetary prize as well as publication.

- *The Sigma Tau Delta Review* is an annual journal of critical writing that publishes critical essays on literature, essays on rhetoric and composition, and essays devoted to pedagogical issues.
- *The Sigma Tau Delta Rectangle* is an annual journal of creative writing that publishes poetry, fiction, and creative non-fiction.

View complete guidelines for online journal submissions. Note: Journal submissions must be submitted online. E-mail/postal mail submissions are no longer accepted.



2011 Convention Speakers



Dave Eggers

The author of novels, novellas, short stories, essays, non-fiction and screen plays (*Away We Go* and *Where the Wild Things Are*), Dave Eggers is prolific. His works include *Zeitoun*, a nonfiction account a Syrian-American immigrant and his extraordinary experience during Hurricane Katrina; *A Heartbreaking Work of Staggering Genius*, a 2001 Pulitzer Prize finalist; *You Shall Know Our Velocity*, winner of the Independent Book Award; and *What Is the What*, a 2006 National Book Critics Circle Award finalist and winner of France's Prix Medici.

Eggers is founder and editor of McSweeney's independent publishing house, which produces books, a quarterly journal, *The Believer* magazine, and the *Wholphin* DVD of short films and documentaries. In 2002, he co-founded 826 Valencia, a nonprofit writing and tutoring center for youth in the Mission District of San Francisco, which now has sister centers in Chicago, Los Angeles, Brooklyn, Ann Arbor, Seattle, and Boston. He is the co-founder of the *Voice of Witness* book series, which uses oral history to illuminate human rights crises around the world. A native of Chicago, Eggers graduated from the University of Illinois with a degree in journalism.

Kay Ryan



Born in California in 1945, Ryan grew up in the small towns of the San Joaquin Valley and the Mojave Desert. She received both a bachelor's and master's degree from UCLA and has won the Ruth Lilly Poetry Prize, a Guggenheim fellowship, an Ingram Merrill Award, a fellowship from the National Endowment for the Arts, the Union League Poetry Prize, the Maurice English Poetry Award, and four Pushcart Prizes. A four-time selection for *The Best American Poetry*, her poetry collections include *The Best of It: New and Selected Poems*, *The Niagara River*, *Say Uncle*, *Elephant Rocks*, *Flamingo Watching*, *Strangely Marked Metal*, and *Dragon Acts to Dragon Ends*.

Ryan's poems and essays have appeared in *The New Yorker*, *The Atlantic*, *Poetry*, *The Yale Review*, *Paris Review*, *The American Scholar*, *The Threepenny Review*, and *Parnassus*, among others. Elected a Chancellor of The Academy of American Poets in 2006, in 2008 she was appointed the Library of Congress's 16th Poet Laureate. In October 2009, Ryan launched her project "Poetry for the Mind's Joy," an initiative through which she hopes to draw national attention to community colleges, as well as drawing the colleges' attention to poetry.



Jacqueline Woodson

Our National English Honor Society (NEHS) sponsored speaker is the author of numerous books for young adults, including *Last Summer With Maizon*, *From the Notebooks of Melanin Sun*, and *Miracle's Boys*. The winner of numerous awards, including two Newbery Honors, a Caldecott Honor, the 2001 Coretta Scott King Award, and the 2006 Margaret A. Edwards Award for lifetime achievement in young adult writing, Woodson says, "I wrote on everything and everywhere. I remember my uncle catching me writing my name in graffiti on the side of a building. (It was not pretty for me when my mother found out.) I wrote on paper bags and my shoes and denim binders. I chalked stories across sidewalks and penciled tiny tales in notebook margins. I loved and

still love watching words flower into sentences and sentences blossom into stories."

Choosing to write about potentially hard to explain or uncomfortable topics that often raise the attention of the censors, she believes she can help the younger generation by giving a voice to outsiders who aren't always visible to mainstream America.

Want to find out more about these convention speakers?
Go to: <http://www.english.org/sigmatd/conventions/>

Lorene Cary



The author of our Common Reader, *Black Ice*, Lorene Cary is a native and current resident of Philadelphia. Holding a BA and MA from the University of Pennsylvania and an MA in Victorian Literature from the University of Sussex in England, she has written for *Time*, *Essence*, *Mirabella*, *Obsidian*, and *Newsweek* and has been an editor for *TV Guide*. She is the author of three books, *Black Ice*, *The Price of a Child* and *Pride: A Novel*, and received national recognition as a writer when *Black Ice* was published in 1991. Currently on the faculty teaching creative writing at the University of Pennsylvania, she received the University's 1998 Provost's Award for Distinguished Teaching.

Her other awards include the Philadelphia Award, a Philadelphia Historical Society Founder's Medal for History in Culture, writing fellowships from Pew Fellowship in the Arts and the Leeway Foundation, and residencies at Yaddo and Civitella Ranieri Foundation in Italy. In 1998, Cary founded Philadelphia's Art Sanctuary. Based in The Church of the Advocate, a National Historic Landmark Building, the sanctuary focuses on regional and national African-Americans in literary, visual, and performing arts. According to Cary, "We're used to creating art. But too often we don't see our artist until the art becomes of economic value, in stores or on television. We want to be the Carnegie Hall in the hood."

Review of Common Reader

Black Ice, by Lorene Cary
A Review of the Sigma Tau Delta Common Reader for 2010-11



Gloria Hochstein
Service Committee Chair
University of Wisconsin-Eau Claire

Black Ice, by Philadelphia-born author and social activist Lorene Cary, is the 2011 Sigma Tau Delta Common Reader. A coming of age novel, a story of search for racial identity, a tale of sexual and gender awakening, a memoir . . . *Black Ice* wears coats of many literary and racial colors as it details the two years Lorene Cary spent at St. Paul's prep school. Cary's parents, both teachers, had moved their family from a West Philly apartment to the predominantly black suburb of Yeadon when Lorene Cary was a child. With parental and community encouragement, young Cary excelled academically. When teenaged Cary learned that smart, black high school girls were being recruited to be scholarship students at a formerly all-white, all-male, exclusive prep school, St. Paul's, all she saw was the incredible access to a world of education and privilege, a world far beyond Yeadon High School and her after school job at Woolworth's: "This education was more than knowledge; it could mean credentials, self-confidence, power. I imagined living away from home, making a precocious launch into the wide world of competition." *Black Ice* shows that the reality of St. Paul's turned out to be much more complicated than Cary's imaginings.

When, in the fall of 1972, Cary's parents and sister make the eight-hour drive to take Lorene to the New Hampshire campus of St. Paul's for her junior and senior years of high school, the contradictions Cary will face immediately present themselves. With painful honesty, Cary tells of her two years at St. Paul's, looking back after many years—after Cary has graduated from Penn State, after Cary has returned to St. Paul's to teach, after Cary has served as a trustee to the prep school, and after Cary has attended the fifteen-year reunion of her St. Paul's graduating class. Despite nearly twenty years between the first visit to St. Paul's and the publishing of *Black Ice*, Cary's descriptions capture in vivid and painful detail the powerful and conflicting emotions of her teenage self.

In those two years at St. Paul's, Cary copes with racial inequities and racial ignorance, gender biases, class prejudices, and her own insecurities about her intellectual abilities. Throughout the book, Cary asserts that race is at the core of the experience. However, anyone who has ever felt as an outsider—because of race, gender, sexual orientation, class, or culture—will recognize and identify with many of the thoughts of a young woman tormented by feelings of not living up to expectations of herself and others. Cary's insecurities seem almost universal. Who hasn't heard that voice inside warning that others will find out that they are frauds and that they lack the intelligence, knowledge, or confidence they are pretending to have?

Teenaged Cary's emotions and thoughts swirl with contradictions as she struggles to find her identity. Immersed in a white and male educational system, young Cary's desire to keep her African-American culture seems to conflict with her desire to become educated to the world beyond her family. She both loves and hates the groomed walks, the well-stocked library, the push to achieve, the opportunities to express her ideas. At the same time that she envies and hates the ease with which the white students accept the elite education, Cary fears that she is failing herself, her race, her family if she doesn't excel and learn to adapt to the culture of St. Paul's. But if she does succeed, is she turning her back on her heritage?

Review Of Common Reader, Continued

Even as Cary struggles with finding the balance between keeping her cultural heritage and gaining an education at St. Paul's, she is angered by her inadequacies. When she earns Bs and Cs in her first term, she is immensely disappointed in herself, but she is also disturbed by thoughts that Bs and Cs and lowered expectations, might be considered "fine" for the black scholarship students. Cary says she could not admit, when she was attending as a student, "how profoundly St. Paul's had shaken me, or how damaged and fraudulent and traitorous I felt when I graduated."

Despite making friends, Cary feels isolated—not just set apart from the white students, but also set apart from the other students of color. Years later, Cary calls the isolation she had felt "an illusion" but says that it took writing the book and much time and effort to "get free of illusions." Instead of illusions, Cary learns to hear the narratives of the "living, breathing people" in her life who "talked honestly about growing up black in America," and Cary learns to become involved in the conversations.

When Cary returns to St. Paul's to teach nearly a decade after her student experience, she reports, "I found my own adolescence, in all its hormonal excess, waiting for me at St. Paul's: old rage and fear, ambition, self-consciousness, love, curiosity, energy, hate, envy, compulsion, fatigue." Coming back to St. Paul's as an adult brings back Cary's suppressed emotions: "I remembered the self-loathing, made worse by a poised bravado, as close as my own skin, that I wore over it. I remembered duty and obligation—to my family, to the memory of dead relatives, to my people."

Cary begins and ends *Black Ice* wanting the students, especially the black students, to learn "that just as St. Paul's was theirs, because they had attended the school and contributed to it, so, too, was American life and culture theirs, because they were black people in America." As a student walking on a frozen pond at St. Paul's, Cary had searched for the perfect ice, the flawless ice: "Black ice is the smoothest naturally occurring ice there is, as if nature were condescending to art." For Cary, black ice serves as a metaphor for a society in which barriers and obstacles are smoothed away: "Black ice is an act of nature as elusive as grace, and far more rare." She has never found the metaphorical black ice for herself, but she hopes when it appears, her children will recognize how "the earth can stretch smooth and unbroken like grace."

Interested in Writing an Essay for the Common Reader Award?

See: <http://www.english.org/sigmatd/conventions/>

What's happening in NEHS?

A Dream Realized

A few months ago, I saw a wonderful production of *A Raisin in the Sun*, a play I taught for many years. This well-known play deals with dreams and aspirations, strength and determination. The epigraph of the play, "A Dream Deferred" by Langston Hughes, is a poem speculating on whether dreams that are deferred explode or dry up. As I watched the play, I thought about the opportunity I have to witness and support a "dream realized," the dream of the National English Honor Society (NEHS) that Dr. William Johnson, Executive Director of ΣΤΔ, and members of the ΣΤΔ Board of Directors had a few years ago.

Their dream now extends across the country and, indeed, around the world, as nearly 400 chapters of NEHS flourish, involving over 17,000 students in activities that promote the English language arts. Community and service projects from a few of the chapters include:

- Adopting a soldier through "Soldier's Angels," sending care packages and letters monthly to "their" soldier (Pen 'n Paw Chapter, Lansing, MI);
- Creating a Wiki page as a resource for students, including an online chat tutoring system available to both high school and middle school students (Loch Raven High School Chapter, Baltimore, Maryland);

- Holding book, toy, and school supply drives for a local elementary school in Washington, D.C. (Ministry of Truth Chapter, Chantilly, VA);
- Organizing a "Don't be a Pawn" critical thinking chess tournament that raised enough money to purchase a goat for the Heifer International Project (Stella Maris Chapter, San Pedro, CA)

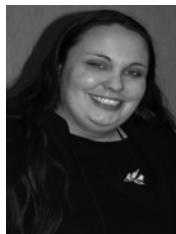


Dave Wendelin
National English Honor Society Director
Northern Illinois University

Chapters across the country engage in similar projects, making a difference for members of the communities in which they live as well as individuals around the world.

Here's a challenge to ΣΤΔ pre-service English education majors and members of Alumni Epsilon Chapter who are currently teaching at the high school level. If you are a student teacher, encourage your cooperating teachers to consider sponsoring a chapter of NEHS and help him or her with the process while you are in that school. Once employed in your own teaching position, introduce the concept of NEHS to your school administrators and start a chapter yourself. If you are currently teaching high school English, won't you consider starting a chapter? Visit www.nehs.us for more information and charter applications.

Student Advisors



Lauren Brandenberry
Student Advisor
University of Central Oklahoma

As summer draws to a close and I start gearing up for the new school year, I realize that this will be a year of lasts for me. This was the last summer that I was able to sit around the house reading and relaxing. I'm heading into my last year of graduate school, my last classes with my favorite professors, and my last year as Student Advisor. Far from getting Senior-itis, however, I find myself excited and anxious about getting as much out of this year as possible.

I am thrilled about the work the Student Leadership committee has been doing to try to improve communications between our members and their elected representatives, and I can't wait to see what new innovations they come up with this year. Anna Morgan, the junior Student Advisor, has already proven herself to be bright, thoughtful and hardworking, and I just know we are going to make an incredible team this year. I'm positively overflowing with things I want my local chapter to do this year, and ideas for my best Convention submissions to date are already flying around in my head. I hope everyone is as fired up about this coming year as I am, and I'm eager to see what everyone else has planned. Make sure to share your chapter's activities, your fundraising ideas, your paper topics, and anything else you can think of with us on Facebook. Together I know we can make this year the best Sigma Tau Delta has ever had!

Anna C. Morgan
Student Advisor
Oklahoma Baptist University, OK



Greetings, fellow wordsmiths, bookworms, expert conversationalists, deep thinkers, epicures of language, and haunters of used bookstores! Another school year is beginning, and as usual that reality is bittersweet. I regret to say, for instance, that once again I didn't reach the bottom of my summer reading list, but I'll give it a go again next summer and the summer after that. In the meantime, there are graduate school applications, the nearly-always enjoyable superabundance of reading and paper writing, and—something I'm particularly excited about—serving all of you as your new Student Advisor.

Because most of us are involved in multiple academic and extracurricular activities, we don't often have time to seek out opportunities we might otherwise enjoy pursuing. Yet sometimes all that we need to motivate us to act is someone proactively offering and reminding us of those opportunities. Sigma Tau Delta provides students with many opportunities, from scholarships to leadership on local and national levels, from service activities to an always-inspiring convention. My fellow Student Leadership Committee members and I look forward to encouraging members to take advantage of all Sigma Tau Delta offers by being that proactive "someone." But we can't succeed without you! Be sure to join your regional Facebook groups to stay tuned to all that's going on both nationally and in your area. E-mail or Facebook us and share your ideas, your activities, and yes, your criticism. And always keep in mind that while being a student of literature and language can be hard work, it's rewarding and *fun*, too!

Alumni Representative



Andrew Moser
Alumni Epsilon
Alumnus of Metropolitan State College of Denver
Alpha Psi Chapter

The Alumni Epsilon chapter of Sigma Tau Delta gives members many opportunities to participate in a like-minded community and share their work. Whether it's connecting with other members from around the country on Facebook, reading about the experiences of other members in the Alumni Epsilon Newsletter, or presenting their creative and critical works at the annual convention, Alumni Epsilon is an essential outlet for members of the English Honors family who have moved on from their inducting chapter. Adding yet another outlet, next year Assistant Alumni Representative Stephanie Schiefelbein and I will be launching an online literary journal just for members of Alumni Epsilon! Sound like something in which you're interested? The deadline for submission is January 15, 2011, and submission guidelines can be found on the Alumni Epsilon website at english.org/sigmatd/alumni.shtml. Have questions or just want to chat? E-mail us at sigmatd.ae@gmail.com.

Who Works in The Sigma Tau Delta Central Office? Get to Know Them!



William C. Johnson
Executive Director

William C. Johnson has served $\Sigma\Delta$, first as Executive Secretary and then as Executive Director, since 1983 (no, that's not a misprint), when he agreed to "help out part time" until a permanent replacement could be found. Somehow, the years slipped by. Based at Northern Illinois University, where he was one of the university's inaugural Distinguished Teaching Professors, he has maintained since 1969 an active scholarly and teaching career, focusing on English Renaissance poetry and prose. He also helped lead $\Sigma\Delta$ through major Board of Directors restructuring, serving as Editor of *The Newsletter* and *The Rectangle*, guiding the Society's move from national to international status, developing the highly successful annual convention, moving $\Sigma\Delta$ into active leadership among the Association of College Honor Societies (ACHS), and nurturing our organization from one of the smaller of ACHS societies to one of the very largest. Along the way he developed Sigma Kappa Delta, the two-year college English Honor Society, and more recently he envisioned, created, and is overseeing the National English Honor Society (NEHS) for high school students and teachers.



Deb Seyler
Director of Communications
and Chapter Development

Deb Seyler joined the Central Office in August 2008 as Director of Communications and Chapter Development. She is thrilled to be "back in English," as she likes to say, after serving many years as director of a Milwaukee non-profit organization. Deb became a Sigma Tau Delta member while she earned an undergraduate degree in English at Northern Illinois University. Although English was her first love, she went on to earn an MBA and work in the non-profit sector. She tells us that her English degree has always been a tremendous asset to her career, and she is honored to be serving a major role in the Society. Deb brings a wealth of experience in many areas of association and convention management, public relations, communications, and association development. Her current responsibilities include coordinating Sigma Tau Delta's annual spring convention, assisting current and prospective Chapter Sponsors, and managing all aspects of Society communication. You can reach Deb at dseyler@niu.edu.



Elfi Gabriel
Website Facilitator

Elfi Gabriel is the Website Facilitator for Sigma Tau Delta and NEHS. She is responsible for coordinating online communications and technologies for both societies. Since joining the Central Office in 2007, Elfi has spearheaded a number of technological improvements, including the redesign of the www.english.org and www.nehs.org websites and development of the Write Away! chapter membership database, visual graphics, and online submissions. One of her next goals is to develop a more dynamic and engaging online environment through social networking and other forms of web based communication. Elfi holds a B.S. from Northern Illinois University and an MBA from DePaul University. Because the possibility for technological improvements is virtually limitless, she encourages members to contact her with their comments and ideas at egabriel@niu.edu.

The Sigma Tau Delta Central Office, Continued



Dave Wendelin
Director of the National English
Honor Society (NEHS)

Dave Wendelin joined the Central Office staff in August 2008, when he became Director of the National English Honor Society (NEHS); prior to that, he volunteered his time helping to launch NEHS. Working with a team of high school teachers and administrators, a team led by Dr. William C. Johnson, Executive Director of Sigma Tau Delta, Dave helped the vision of NEHS become a reality. Due to the rapid growth of NEHS, which now has nearly 400 chapters, including a chapter in China and one in Turkey, the position of NEHS Director was created. With the help of technology, Dave actually works from his "Denver" office, commuting to DeKalb a few times a year. Dave came to the position of NEHS Director after thirty-seven years as an English teacher and administrator for Jefferson County Public Schools in Colorado. Active in the National Council of Teachers of English, Dave brings keen insight concerning secondary education, a valuable attribute for this position. In addition to his work as NEHS Director, Dave also currently supervises English pre-service teachers for Metropolitan State College of Denver. You may reach Dave at dwendelin@comcast.net.



Karen Larsen
Office Manager

Karen Larsen joined the Central Office in June 2005 as the Office Manager for both Sigma Tau Delta and the National English Honor Society. Although her dream was to teach, she absolutely loves working in the Central Office. As Office Manager, Karen wears many hats. Among her duties are processing new member enrollments (over 16,000 in 2009), filling merchandise orders (totaling over \$100,000 in 2009), and handling bookkeeping and financial reports. She also works closely with the Director of Communications and Chapter Development in assisting chapters to maintain their active status and with other chapter matters. She is generally the first contact for Chapter Sponsors and often for student members. Her extensive knowledge, patience, and dedication are readily apparent to all who come in contact with her throughout the year. She welcomes your E-mails at klarsen@niu.edu.



From left to right: William C. Johnson, Karen Larsen, Elfi Gabriel, Deb Seyler, and Dave Wendelin

A Kuwaiti-Western Read-in at the American University of Kuwait



Kathy Nixon
Faculty Advisor
Alpha Rho Eta Chapter
American University of Kuwait

Our goal in creating the 2010 Common Reader event at the American University of Kuwait (AUK) was to combine a traditional American college activity with something from our host country's culture. Thus we rented a traditional Arabic tent as the venue for reading Chris Abani's *Song for Night* cover to cover. AUK students, faculty, and staff guests took turns participating in the read-in while perched upon pillows covered in the red, black, and white pattern cloth familiar to Kuwait in a type of structure that several decades ago may have housed the ancestors of our students who hail from the Arabian Gulf region.

The act of reading aloud and listening to others do so was so important in this culture where reading a book for pleasure is seldom done and rarely celebrated. We had multiple copies of Abani's novella so that as one person read a page, the next reader could follow along and be ready to continue reading when the previous person finished. Shortly after 10 a.m., a voice could be heard reading, "we are simply fighting to survive the war. It is a strange place to be at fifteen, bereft of hope and very nearly of your humanity" (19). Much to my delight, many participants were so engrossed by Abani's eloquent prose that they continued reading for an additional page or two past their designated stopping point. Consequently, our group read the work twice that day.

Not only did many students read more pages than assigned, some of them returned to the tent at the end of their classes to read a second (or third) time during the read-in, which continued until 4 p.m. The repeat readers skewed our final tally of readers a little, but our best estimate is that 197 people participated in the event. It is difficult to name participants for fear of leaving out people who would like to be named and naming those who would prefer to remain anonymous. And yet, it seems okay to name titles and affiliations. Our readers included the university president, various deans, assistant deans or division heads, professors from all divisions, staff from numerous departments, students from every major, and many university clubs and organizations.

With so many people participating, our Common Reader event was a celebration of diversity as well as the written word. We read a work about the haunting experiences of child soldiers written by a Nigerian-born author as we sat in Kuwait. Our readers came from all countries in the Gulf region as well as from the United States, the United Kingdom, Australia, Egypt, Pakistan, and Trinidad and Tobago. Thinking about the participants that I know personally, I can say that perhaps every continent, except Antarctica, contributed a reader to the event.

Expanding on our focus of multiculturalism, I wore a dara'aa, the traditional dress of the Gulf region. My frock was a semi-sheer black dress with elaborate gold embroidery at the neck, front, and sleeves that I purchased while on vacation in Bahrain. I chose my dress to go along with my role of faculty advisor and event host. It was important to the authenticity of blending the cultures to represent traditional Arabic hospitality in the tent. As our guests finished their reading, I offered them something to eat and drink. We had the Al-Knafany

Bakery deliver its specialty logmat Al-Knafany warm from the oven. The treat is often dipped in a clear, sweet liquid called shera. Usually Arabic coffee is served with such a sweet. However the logistics of our event forced us to compromise. I served water or juice in traditional coffee cups. Nobody complained of the beverages but numerous participants did provide feedback about the event.

Many students asked the honor society members to hold another similar event. It seems that reading Abani's work had a tremendous effect on the AUK participants. Some bought their own copy of the novella. A great many faculty members borrowed a copy from me. In fact, one copy is still in circulation among my colleagues. Perhaps the lasting effect of this event has been on the students who were

not fond of reading prior to the event. I know of two students who refused to read in class out of shyness who consented to read in the tent. After confessing that reading aloud wasn't as bad as she thought it would be, one of the former shy students returned in triumph for a second reading. Other students discovered that choosing to read a book can actually be fun. Maybe some of them are still reading aloud to others or enjoying the act of another person reading to them until this day.



Reading from ΣΤΑ Common Reader



American University of Kuwait students reading from ΣΤΑ Common Reader, Chris Abani's book, *Song for Night*

English Festival: Promoting Sigma Tau Delta Principles, Restructuring the Universe



Kathy Rex
Faculty Co-Advisor
Theta Zeta Chapter
University of Wisconsin-Eau Claire

From Sigma Tau Delta's website (<http://www.english.org/>) Sigma Tau Delta strives to:

- Confer distinction for high achievement in English language and literature in undergraduate, graduate, and professional studies;
- Provide, through its local chapters, cultural stimulation on college campuses and promote interest in literature and the English language in surrounding communities;
- Foster all aspects of the discipline of English, including literature, language, and writing;
- Promote exemplary character and good fellowship among its members;
- Exhibit high standards of academic excellence; and
- Serve society by fostering literacy.

As proud Sigma Tau Deltans, we are all familiar with the above goals. Achievement, inclusivity, service, and a passion for the language arts are at the core of these goals and the core of our honor society. While these aspirations are certainly noble and uplifting, they can also be, in all honesty, hard to hit marks for over-worked, over-committed faculty advisors and their ever busier students, especially when combined with the day to day responsibilities of operating a chapter (recruitment, fundraising, service hours, community outreach, meetings, elections. Why don't you just ask us to restructure the universe while we're at it?

Well, I've had experience with at least one possible (and fun) solution to this conundrum: English Festival. The University of Wisconsin Eau Claire's English Festival (or "Fest" as it is lovingly referred to by those in the know) is one of the largest student-run language arts festivals in the nation. This week-long campus event features key-note speakers, an international poetry reading, live music on the campus mall, and professional, conference-style presentations by students from various disciplines around UWEC. All events are free and open to the entire campus as well as the larger Eau Claire community, and some of the larger events, like the International Poetry Reading or keynote talks, bring in as many as 200 students, faculty, and citizens.

Although UWEC's Theta Zeta chapter of $\Sigma\tau\Delta$ and English Fest are two separate student organizations, they do share many of the same objectives, students, and often the same advisor. Fest, therefore, provides the ideal venue for achieving many of $\Sigma\tau\Delta$'s more philosophical objectives and accomplishing basic chapter responsibilities such as fundraising, providing service hours and leadership opportunities for members, and fostering community outreach. Fest may just be the way to get that universe restructured!

I will be the first to admit that the idea of a week-long festival may seem like an overwhelmingly Herculean task for any faculty advisor (believe me, I know, having had Fest "gifted" to me as a brand new assistant professor two years ago), but English Fest has not always been the mega-event it is today. Fest began sixteen years ago as a one-day celebration of Shakespeare with mostly faculty participating in the event's organization and activities. It grew over time to become the week-long, student-focused festival it is today. Consequently, there is no reason why your own chapter can't start small with a single event or day of events to get into "Festering" like we did at UWEC!

An international poetry reading is a great place to start. This event at UWEC is produced with much help from our foreign language department, but Fest students do the work for it. The event features volunteers reading short poems (40 lines or less) aloud in any language other than English. In the past, we have had as many as 37 different languages featured in a single poetry reading that ranged from American Sign Language to Russian to Hmong. Students attempt to read poems in languages they are currently studying (often for extra credit—yay for faculty support!) and many international faculty members read texts or song lyrics from their native tongues.

Community members also get involved, reading poems and prayers from various parts of the world, often adding fascinating anecdotes from their lives. As a consequence, the International Poetry Reading has always been one of the most diverse, multi-generational, and community-involved events of Fest week.

English Festival, Continued

It is also an event that fosters much Fest member activity. The Festival students have to fundraise, budget for, and plan the reception (food always assures a nice turn-out). They also have to staff the event and, in many cases, they even serve as emcees and/or readers during the event. Prior to the reading, the students have to contact university and community organizations to solicit readers. They visit classrooms, speak briefly at department meetings, and go to various community centers or businesses to hang posters and inform people about the event. They can also ask for donations at this time; I know my students and I have found many local businesses are more than happy to donate items for raffles or cash in exchange for simple recognition on poetry reading materials.

UWEC's English Fest has been fortunate that the foreign language department has always taken care of producing the beautiful program booklets that accompany the reading, but this, too, is an opportunity for service hours and perhaps even fundraising for your chapter. Our poetry reading booklets feature each poem printed in English and its original language on facing pages so listeners can follow along with the rhythm of each text.

While our booklets have always been free, there is no reason why a small fee couldn't be charged or donations requested for the booklets. Additionally, our reading is always video-recorded and attendees have the option of pre-ordering a DVD of the event for a nominal fee. We've never exactly gotten rich from these DVD sales, but the possibility for profit is definitely there.

Hosting any event of a larger scale is stress-inducing, to be sure. However, when that event meets multiple chapter purposes and works to bring students, faculty, and the surrounding community together in a celebration of language, it becomes a multi-tasker's dream. It definitely puts that advisor's universe in sync for a bit. And it doesn't hurt that a really good time can be had in the process.

A Chapter Sponsors a Lecture Series: “Women and Literature”



Michelle Arch
Faculty Advisor
Alpha Zeta Iota Chapter
Chapman University, CA

The Alpha Zeta Iota chapter's 2010 spring lecture series “Women in Literature” explored the roles and realities of women through the lens of literary studies and the narrative. Emily Griesinger, Professor of English at Azusa Pacific University and acclaimed essayist and author, opened the series with her lecture “Sympathy and Feminism: George Eliot's ‘Angel in the House.’” Griesinger is currently researching the letters, journals, and essays of Eliot for her new book, *Sympathetic Imagination: Women Writers and the Victorian Crisis of Faith*, and contends that Eliot dissented from some aspects of the ideal woman Coventry Patmore's poem celebrates while staunchly defending others. What matters most, Griesinger avows, is women's capacity for sympathy.

Survivor contestant and inspirational speaker Austin Carty presented the second lecture in the series, “When the Spiritual Essay Gets Dirty: The Pioneering Work of Anne Lamott.” Carty credits Lamott's straightforward and provocative style for the impiety in his own writing. His first work of nonfiction, *High Points and Lows: Life, Faith, and Figuring It All Out* (2010), puts an irreverent spin on reverent topics and traces his faltering journey into adulthood and faith.

Rei Magosaki's lecture “Mothers in the City, Poets in the Kitchen: Politics and Poetics of Urban Neighborhood Writing” addressed contemporary women's writing, which envisions the city as a vibrant site of matrilineal empowerment, creative connections, multicultural catalytic energies, and diasporic homecoming, even as it grapples with new problems of globalization in the postindustrial American city.

Chapman graduate and advanced Ph.D. candidate at the University of Southern California, Laura Fauteux concluded the series with her lecture on Mary Robinson's final novel, *The Natural Daughter* (1799). By juxtaposing Robinson's own scandalous reputation with that of her painfully faithful heroine, Robinson calls into question the stability of the novel genre in an effort to free it from conventions that had become too inhibiting by the end of the century. Fauteux's lecture is the basis of her dissertation “Living Her Narrative: Eighteenth-Century Women Writers, Writing Heroines, and the Developing Novel.” In the end, our ΣΤΔ sponsored lecture series was a provocative and enlightening experience.

2010 Jumpstart's "Read for the Record"

Bringing Children and Adults Together to Read



Jocelyn Lamonday
Lota Omega Chapter
Franklin Pierce College, NH

Children. According to many people, they are the future of our country and therefore education and literacy play an important role in their potential to become something great. Events like Jumpstart's "Read for the Record"

have been established in order to give children of the future a chance to enhance their early literacy and knowledge.

Regardless if it's a fairytale or last year's book, *The Very Hungry Caterpillar*, children all over the country and world alike who participate in the "Read for the Record" are given something that seems so easy to provide. According to the Multnomah County Library website, "There is a direct connection between reading aloud and later reading success." This event aims not only to be a fun activity for children, but also to provide an opportunity to expand children's early education, so that in the future they will hopefully be more likely to pick up a book and attempt reading for themselves. Just by hearing a book being read aloud, before starting school, a child has more of a chance of learning to read.

Jumpstart's "Read for the Record" began in 2006 and according to their website is, "an international campaign to bring preschool children together with valued grownups in their lives to read the same book, on the same day, in communities all over the world." During last year's October "Read for the Record" event, "2,019,752 children around the world simultaneously experienced the joy of reading with an adult in their life." Efforts like that of Jumpstart attempt to combat this National Adult Literacy Survey statistic: "Children who have not developed some basic literacy skills by the time they enter school are 3-4 times more likely to drop out in later years."

It is amazing that in a world with so many new advancements in technology that the education and empowerment of children can be left by the wayside. As mentioned before, many people across the globe believe children are the future, yet many adults do not have the "time" to sit down with a child they know and spend a few minutes reading him or her a book. "Read for the Record" gives every child the ability, even for a few moments, to have a book read to him or her.

Whether the person reading the book is a celebrity or college student, millions of people are joining together for a day to read to the children of the world. Jumpstart is attempting to not only bring people together, but also to raise awareness that early childhood education is as important as ever. Jumpstart has a model for the promotion of education in today's children. With the help of community volunteers and college students, like those involved with Sigma Tau Delta, this program is setting new records each year. Outside of the "Read for the Record" event, these volunteers and students are spending on average 10 hours per week in the classroom trying to help students build the skills needed to have a successful education from pre-school

through high school and maybe college afterwards. College students and other volunteers help to spread the word about this very important crisis in society, but in 2009 more initiative was taken. More sponsorship helped Jumpstart break the record for most people to read at once across the world. It was with the help of the volunteers and sponsors like the *NBC Today Show's* Matt Lauer and Meredith Vieira, as well as the author of last year's book, Eric Carle, that the word was spread and a record was broken.

With the help of the Pearson Foundation, the sponsor for Jumpstart's "Read for the Record," many of the books featured in last year's event were donated to help share the gift of knowledge with the children of the world, especially those in lower-income homes. These efforts give children a chance to succeed, a chance to provide the world with informed citizens. Regardless of how short the story, giving a child the opportunity to read gives him or her an opportunity to succeed and build a better, brighter future.

Along with the power of sponsors and the spread of Jumpstart's initiative, this year's "Read for the Record" event will hopefully break last year's record. A vote by people all over the country chose *The Snowy Day* by Ezra Jack Keats as the book to be read this October. This year aims to share the power of words with not just the children of the world, but the educators, volunteers, and the many more who want the best for the youth of today.



Is your Chapter Interested in "Read for the Record"?

Go to: <http://www.readfortherecord.org/>

Learn how to sign up to read *The Snowy Day*!

Confessions of a Literary Blogger

From the 2010 Sigma Tau Delta Blog Award Winner



Asheritah Ciuciu
Alpha Kappa Delta Chapter
Cedarville University, OH

I am not a professional literary blogger. That I won the 2010 Sigma Tau Delta Blog Award amazed even me, as I am sure it will you too, in a moment.

My Romanian Novel blog began the summer after my junior year of college as a means of recording the close readings required of me in an independent study. I needed an easy way for my professor to access and comment on my thoughts, and a blog proved to be the perfect medium for just that. Each post was time-stamped (ensuring that I honored the syllabus we had established beforehand) and recorded in the order it was posted (eliminating the confusion that accompanies e-mail attachments).

By the end of the summer I was a blogger-holic—not that I posted every day, but rather that I was won over by the blog's user interface and its convenience. Having finished my independent study, I continued my blog as a place to develop my senior topic ideas. By posting new developments on the blog, I created a record of my progress from "Liviu Rebreanu's *The Uprising* seems to have a lot of potential" to "I am currently surveying primary documents regarding the Romanian feminist movement from the late 19th and early 20th century" to "I have a tentative thesis statement" to "I just turned in my thirty-page masterpiece!"

Though I wanted to promote interest in Romanian literature through my blog, the narrow focus of my posts kept others from joining the conversation, and at times I was tempted to abandon the blog altogether. But the public nature of Romanian Novel kept me accountable to work hard on my senior project and to post fresh material on a regular basis, a drive which helped in more ways than one.

I had invited a couple of my friends to view my blog—and received valuable feedback from them—but was not particularly aggressive about promoting it online. After all, it was more of a record of personal musings on the topic of Romanian literature than anything else. But friends e-mailed friends who e-mailed friends, and one day I was congratulated for my "fine work on your Romanian literature blog" by my mother's friend from high school who I had not suspected even knew about it. Not too long afterward, I received notification of the award from Sigma Tau Delta (an entry I had almost forgotten about) and enjoyed my five minutes of fame within the university's English department.



Asheritah Ciuciu, Personal Photograph,
Pasture in Bihor Countryside, Romania

But as with all good things, senior papers come to an end, and so I faced the conundrum of what to do with Romanian Novel. Though I wanted to continue it, I was exhausted by the amount of reading necessary in order to post new close readings

several times a week. For all the attention the blog received, it still lacked a faithful readership, and as much as I valued Romanian literature and wanted to promote it among my literary peers, I lacked the stamina necessary to maintain the blog long-term.

Shortly after graduation, I temporarily relocated to Romania. Though I had access to more books and commentaries, I was still overwhelmed by the magnitude of posting several close readings a week. And then it dawned on me: I needed to revamp my blog to make the most of my physical location, exploring topics linked to Romanian literature that may not necessarily be written on the pages of a twentieth-century novel.

I reduced the number of mandatory posts to one a week, making its maintenance less intimidating; I began interviewing Romanian students in literature-related programs, posting stories about writers that I found in the Romanian news, and translating tidbits of literature here and there. I experienced a renewed sense of purpose and interest in blogging about Romanian literature. I still continue the series of literary notes on Romanian novels, but now it is just that: a series within the grander scope of the blog, not the sole content of it. What started as a personal record of close readings has become a public database of all things related to Romanian literature.

I may never become a household name, but if Romanian Novel causes even a handful of people to reconsider the value of Romanian literature and join the conversation, then I have achieved my goal. And who knows—perhaps the third edition of Norton's *Anthology of World Literature* will feature literary greats like Mihai Eminescu, Liviu Rebreanu, Mihail Sadoveanu, Ioan Slavici, and Mircea Eliade. And maybe, just maybe, my little blog will have something to do with it.



Asheritah Ciuciu, Personal Photograph,
Historical Library in Oradea, Romania

Getting into Graduate School:

Top 10 List of the Best Books to Help you Get in and Stay in Graduate School



Jody Kolter
Alpha Tau Chapter
St. Norbert College, WI

Senior English majors know the sleepless nights from worrying about getting into graduate school, wondering how to go about getting into graduate school, and convincing themselves that graduate school will be an investment. For many students, researching the process of getting into graduate school can be an obsession, a daunting task, and/or a way of avoiding undergraduate assignments. To ensure that you do not become overwhelmed by the plethora of books just about the process of getting into graduate school, you may want to check out this helpful list of the most useful books to guide you on this journey.

1. *Getting What You Came For* by Robert L. Peters: This book tells you the questions you should be asking about graduate school. Peters anticipates the challenges that arise from the application process to the defense of your dissertation. You will find how to finish graduate school with the best experience possible.
2. *Graduate Admissions Essays: Write Your Way into the Graduate School of Your Choice* by Donald Asher: Asher elucidates the application process by providing the best and the worst sample essays that have helped students get into many competitive programs. In addition, he offers sample letters of recommendation and scholarship and fellowship essays, as well as postgraduate applications to aid you in the process from beginning to end.
3. *The Smart Way to Your Ph.D.: 200 Secrets From 100 Graduates* by Dora Farkas: So you got into graduate school—now what? Farkas provides a compendium of advice from successful scholars from thesis topics to advisers. This book discusses how to plan a research proposal, write a thesis, and find a job.
4. *How to Survive Your PhD: The Insider's Guide to Avoiding Mistakes, Choosing the Right Program, Working with Professors, and Just How a Person Actually Writes a 200-Page Paper* by Jason Karp: This book details how to choose your adviser and school, study for qualifying exams, and writing your thesis. With his advice, you will learn how to avoid taking eight years, rather than four, to complete your Ph.D.
5. *Is a Ph.D. for Me? Life in the Ivory Tower: A Cautionary Guide for Aspiring Doctoral Students* by Yuval D Bar-Or: This book proves useful for both the aspiring graduate student as well as the already-accepted graduate student. In helping you anticipate the challenges of graduate programs, he encourages you to see for yourself if you possess the commitment and understanding of the academic world.
6. *From Student to Scholar: A Candid Guide to Becoming a Professor* by Steven M. Cahn: *From Student to Scholar* is a quick read with enough humor to keep any graduate student entertained through his practical advice on how to hold tenure. His discussion of topics such as interviews, teaching, service, and research helps soon-to-be graduate students become professors.
7. *Graduate Study for the Twenty-First Century: How to Build an Academic Career in the Humanities* by Greg M. Colon Semenza: This witty guide details how to become a professional scholar and teacher. Semenza offers samples of course syllabi, job letters, and teaching portfolios. This book helps graduate students and prospective graduate students learn how to balance the committee and conference work that comes with teaching and publishing.
8. *Surviving Your Academic Job Hunt: Advice for Humanities Ph.D.s* by Kathryn Hume: This realistic survival manual trains readers to find success in the humanities. This book offers advice on interviews and academic politics. Hume also includes examples of application letters and other helpful documents required when applying for positions.
9. *Writing Your Journal Article in Twelve Weeks: A Guide to Academic Publishing Success* by Wendy Laura Belcher: This workbook will help inexperienced writers in the humanities struggling to get a journal article published. Belcher's research about student success stories guides this book's focus on writing in a productive and manageable way.
10. *Write to the Top!: How to Become a Prolific Academic* by W. Brad Johnson and Carol A. Mullen: This pithy guide advises you on how to produce publishable scholarly work. Johnson and Mullen outline key steps to becoming a prolific academic writer in spite of the academic politics and professional demands along the way.

Storytelling with Art and Words: The Graphic Novel in the Classroom



Sherrie Craig
Faculty Advisor,
Xi Rho Chapter
Southeastern Louisiana University

Comic books have come a long way since the golden age of Batman, Superman, and Captain America. Many universities now offer Graphic Novels as Literature classes and Sequential Art classes, and even high schools and some primary schools are introducing this type of literature. Graphic storytelling is an academic term for creating paneled art stories, better known as comic strips or comic books. Historically, the terms “comic book” and “comic strip” have not held much substance in the academic world.

The rise of the graphic novel, specifically the graphic memoir, was a turning point in the academic world and put this genre on the track to acceptance. More recently, a movement has been made to incorporate graphic narration into composition classes, allowing for students to become better readers and writers.

A major figure in the world of sequential art is Scott McCloud. His book *Understanding Comics* is a comprehensive guide to understanding how the artwork and words work together. *Understanding Comics* is appropriate for any classroom and is good for understanding how to read comics and how to create them. Using this book in any classroom that will be incorporating graphic novels or graphic storytelling is highly recommended. It gives students the proper dialogue needed to discuss this genre as well. It is written and drawn in comic form to give students a taste of the medium.

McCloud’s main source, Will Eisner, coined the terms “graphic novel” and “sequential art” and is considered the main proponent in the idea of this medium becoming legitimate. To sell his short story collection, *A Contract with God*, Eisner billed it as a “graphic novel” in hopes that publishers would take it more seriously, and thus the first graphic novel was born. *A Contract with God* is graphic in both senses of the word. It is a story told with pictures and words, but it is also a gritty representation of life in a tenement house in Depression-era New York. It is a collection of four semi-autobiographical stories. Students are often surprised with the novel once they are introduced to it in a graphic novel class. It does not have the typical panel layout associated with comic books and there are no brightly-clad heroes. It is a stark black and white representation of Will Eisner’s childhood vision of New York.

Those who have never been exposed to this type of literature comment on how quickly they were able to get through the entire book, even the admittedly slow readers, but many are often shocked at the content. There are no happy endings in

this book. The depressing nature of the stories in this collection are challenging for some readers. However, the one thing that is inspired is discussion. Eisner’s short stories are a great springboard into discussion of literary elements, art styles, history, psychology, and philosophy.

While *A Contract with God* received a lot of praise in the art and comics scene, it did not get much mainstream attention. Art Spiegelman’s biographical/autobiographical novel *Maus* catapulted the genre into academic and mainstream awareness. *Maus* is a story about Spiegelman’s parents, Vladek and Anja, who are Polish Holocaust survivors, but it is also the story of Art coming to terms with living in the shadow of that tragic time period (and the shadow of his brother, who was killed during the war), the suicide of his mother, and, during *Maus 2*, the death of his father. The novel won a Pulitzer prize, and the academic world took notice. High schools began to use the novel in both history and literature classes. Students are able to understand not only the horrors of the Holocaust in a personal way, but the challenges that faced the survivors and their descendants.

Spiegelman’s work presents students with real emotions and perspectives, but uses simple, cartoon-y anthropomorphic animals in the place of people. The Jews are mice and the Germans are cats. Oddly enough, many students feel the animal representations make the horrible details of Auschwitz a bit easier to stomach.

The culmination of the usefulness of this genre is that the graphic novel or graphic memoir is becoming a popular way to get students writing. With the books mentioned used as examples in the classroom, many students are inspired to tell their own stories in this medium because they have such an easy time reading and comprehending these texts (for many, it is the first time that they have been able to do so in one sitting). Students can also follow Spiegelman’s lead and create facades of themselves for their own stories, often making them easier to tell. This pedagogical approach is being used from kindergarten to college.

Many students who feel that they are not stellar writers often produce graphic memoirs they are very proud of. Taking the emphasis off of writing alone and giving them a new perspective on telling a story allows students to find a comfort zone in narration. Once the students become comfortable as readers and as storytellers, they are more receptive to learning the basics that are going to make them better writers.

Scholarships

Tens of thousands of members. Thousands of dollars. Hundreds of applications. Several minutes of your time. A handful of winners. One organization. It’s the kind of math that even an English major can do. More details at www.english.org/sigmatd/awards

The GRE? No Sweat



Stephen Heiner
Alumni Epsilon Chapter
St. Louis University, MO

Standardized testing is a blight on our educational system. It exists simply because of the overwhelming number of applications to undergraduate and graduate programs. When grades, personal statements, portfolios, and letters of recommendation fail to winnow, admissions committees look to a timed multiple-choice exam. They need a tiebreaker and this is the “best” the system has come up with. It’s deplorable, but

I’m here to offer you advice about how to do better on the GRE, not to complain about things we can’t change.

Before you start worrying about this test, make sure the schools you are looking at actually require it. If they do, ask if they care only about the verbal score or about both the math and the verbal. You will also want to know whether they require you to write the two preliminary essays in front of the test. Some schools rely on your portfolio and allow you to simply skip those essays when you are testing.

Make sure that you ask about the relationship of those scores to admission as well as funding; for example, some schools may only care about your verbal score for admissions, but if you want money, your math score will matter, too.

The verbal section, then, is almost an afterthought for an English major. There are four components to it: sentence completions, analogies, reading comprehension, and antonyms. Thus, vocabulary is the dominant skill tested. Now, everyone knows that you develop great vocabulary by reading, but that doesn’t mean the occasional arcane word won’t make it in to your particular exam. That’s because each exam is different.

I don’t mean different just because it’s on a computer. It’s different because the test is adaptive. As a CAT (computer-adaptive test), the test responds to your right or wrong answers and gives you more difficult or easier problems, respectively, based on your answers. The catch? Difficult problems are worth more, so if you are doing well, it should feel challenging all the way through. So, when you are looking at that more difficult problem, and you have it narrowed down between two or three answers, remember to stop focusing on those answers and go back to the problem and think about what word you would use if you weren’t looking at the answers. When you have that firmly in your mind, only then go back to your answers. At that point you will hopefully be leaning more one way than the other.

As for the reading comprehension, try not to fall into old habits. Look at the question presented before you feel the need to read or skim the passage. If the question is about line #12, read the context and then answer. Reading the whole passage may make you feel psychologically better, but with a ticking clock, it doesn’t really help. If, on the other hand, the question is about “the author’s tone,” then of course you have to read/skim the passage.

As far as the math goes, the handicap is not that the math is difficult. It is that many English majors didn’t have to take too many math classes in college so they are rusty, to say the least. There are resources that cover the math that you will need. The Princeton Review puts out a great series called Math Smart, which has two volumes. If you know the math covered in these books you will have the raw material in order to do well.

Before you even start studying for the test, you should visit the websites of either Kaplan or the Princeton Review. They offer free practice GREs, and you can take one to see how you would do and also to figure out what you need to study. If you choose the self-study route (you are a disciplined nerd), then pick up *The Official Guide to the GRE, 10th edition*. It’s the only book put out by the test makers and it offers answer explanations to questions that have actually appeared on past GREs. You will also want to take the free practice GREs provided here: <http://www.ets.org/gre/general/prepare/powerprep/download/>. For those of you less-disciplined nerds, or those who feel like a test prep course might help, make sure that you get a referral from a friend or colleague. Test prep does help, but at the graduate level, it’s very dependent on the quality of the instructor, and that is uneven throughout this great land of ours.

Finally, if you do not prep at all, have the good sense to at least take a practice test before you go in there. English majors may procrastinate, but hopefully, we don’t resist good advice.

Stephen Heiner has, for the last six years, owned a test prep company currently based in Kansas City and St. Louis. He earned his BA in English Literature at Rockhurst University. He was the Midwestern Region student representative for 2009-2010.



Top 10 Oscar-Winning Adaptations of Great Novels

Gretchen Panzer
Alpha Tau Chapter
St. Norbert College, WI



You've read the book—now watch it come to life on the silver screen. Each of the following films is notable not only for its literary source, but for its success at the Academy Awards. Whether you're looking for an accurate adaptation to show in the classroom or just want your movie night to reflect your love of classic literature, these ten films are sure to be a hit.

10. *Doctor Zhivago*

Novel by Boris Pasternak (1957); film dir. by David Lean (1965)

With its stunning visual effects, realistic sets, and unforgettable musical score, this film adaptation captures all the drama and romance of Pasternak's novel. Oscars: 5

9. *Forrest Gump*

Novel by Winston Groom (1986); film dir. by Robert Zemeckis (1994)

Tom Hanks stars as the title character, who unwittingly participates in the making of history. Brilliant technical effects insert Hanks directly into historical footage, and his performance brings out the story's warmth, humor, and humanity. Oscars: 6

8. *Dances With Wolves*

Novel by Michael Blake (1986); film dir. by Kevin Costner (1990)

Unlike many depictions of the American West, this film provides a wealth of detail regarding frontier and tribal life, rather than simply glorifying the conquerors. Oscars: 7

7. *Out of Africa*

Novel by Isak Dinesen (1939); film dir. by Sydney Pollack (1985)

In addition to the title novel, the film draws on biographies of Dinesen and her other literary works for material. It is a window into Dinesen's Africa—a subjective view, but beautiful nonetheless. Oscars: 7

6. *Schindler's List (Schindler's Ark)*

Novel by Thomas Keneally (1982); film dir. by Steven Spielberg (1993)

Intense and emotionally overwhelming, Spielberg's artful adaptation confronts viewers with the horror that was the Holocaust—and the mystery that is Oskar Schindler. Oscars: 7

5. *From Here to Eternity*

Novel by James Jones (1951); film dir. by Fred Zinnemann (1953)

Zinnemann's adaptation tones down some of the harsher aspects of Jones' novel, but maintains its essential grittiness. Five of the biggest classic film stars deliver exceptional performances as the main characters. Oscars: 8

4. *Slumdog Millionaire (Q & A)*

Novel by Vikas Swarup (2005); film dir. by Danny Boyle and Loveleen Tandan (2008)

Alternately vibrant and violent, this story of an orphan who struggles to free himself and his childhood sweetheart from recurring dangers is as gripping visually as it is emotionally. Oscars: 8

3. *Gone With the Wind*

Novel by Margaret Mitchell (1936); film dir. by Victor Fleming (1939)

If the breathtaking quality of its scenery, costuming, musical score, and storyline aren't enough, this film will win you over with the craft of its actors. Clark Gable and Vivien Leigh are brilliantly cast as the roguish Rhett Butler and the indomitable Scarlett O'Hara. Oscars: 8

2. *The English Patient*

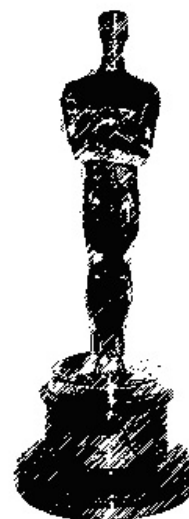
Novel by Michael Ondaatje (1992); film dir. by Anthony Minghella (1996)

Minghella does much to maintain the poetry of Ondaatje's writing, focusing on the love story that lies at the heart of the novel. As a result, the film is a very emotional experience, with the intensity of love matched only by the intensity of death. Oscars: 9

1. *The Lord of the Rings Trilogy*

Novels by J.R.R. Tolkien (1954-55); films dir. by Peter Jackson (2001-03)

Advancements in CGI, the stunning New Zealand landscape, and Jackson's attention to detail bring Middle Earth to life in these three Oscar-winning films. The Return of the King alone is responsible for 11 of these awards—more than any other movie to date. Clearly, the fantasy world that captured our imaginations is equally spellbinding on the silver screen. Oscars: 17





Kathy Rich
Author
Sigma Tau Delta Head Judge
Journals, 2011

Katherine Russell Rich is the author of *Dreaming in Hindi* (Houghton Mifflin Harcourt, 2009), a memoir about a year she spent living in India learning to speak Hindi, and *The Red Devil* (Crown). She has written for a number of publications, including *The New York Times*, *The New York Times Magazine*, *Vogue*, and *Slate*. Rich is the judge for the 2011 Sigma Tau Delta journals and has generously allowed us to reprint and excerpt from her recent work.

Excerpt from *Dreaming in Hindi*:

The whole year in India, I was never confused, though often, for days, I thought I was. “Vidhu-ji,” I asked the teacher with the angular face, remembering to attach the “ji,” an honorific that could also mean yes or what?—point of bafflement right there. “Vidhu,” I repeated, promptly forgetting to. “How do I say ‘I’m confused?’”

“Main bhram mein hoon,” he said: “I am in bhram,” and for the rest of the year, I used that sentence more than any other.

“Vidhu-ji! Wait! I am in bhram,” I’d say, flapping my hand, interrupting Grammar, Dictation, till he must have wished I’d yank myself out of it, must have regretted the day he ever told me.

I was in bhram, off and on, at the school and beyond: when I’d try to ask a shopkeeper in Hindi if he had this thing in blue, while he stared at me with his mouth half open, as if he were watching a trick. When India later on became like an opiated dream; when the poet Nand-ji bent my senses using words; when I sat and watched the deaf school boys flash language on their hands—all those times, too. And in bhram, but a dark, pernicious kind, when soon after I arrived, the world was exploded; when months after that, India went up in flames; when people by the hundreds then were slaughtered. Many times throughout that year, I was in full-press brahm, in nonstop confusion, or so I thought. It wasn’t till I returned to the States that I learned the exact meaning of the word. Illusion. The whole year in India, I’d been in illusion.



2010-2011 Writing Awards for The Sigma Tau Delta Review and The Sigma Tau Delta Rectangle

Judson Q. Owen Award for Best Piece Overall
Stephanie Murray,
“Lot’s Wife”

Frederic Fadner Critical Essay Award
Dylan Phillips,
“Listening to Reason: Swift’s Simultaneous Awareness of a
Literal and Fictional Audience in ‘A Modest Proposal’”

Eleanor B. North Poetry Award
Stephanie Murray,
“Lot’s Wife”

Herbert Hughes Short Story Award
Kelsey Yoder,
“At Your Service”

Elizabeth Holtze Creative Nonfiction Award
Sarah Badger,
“Tio Terry”



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