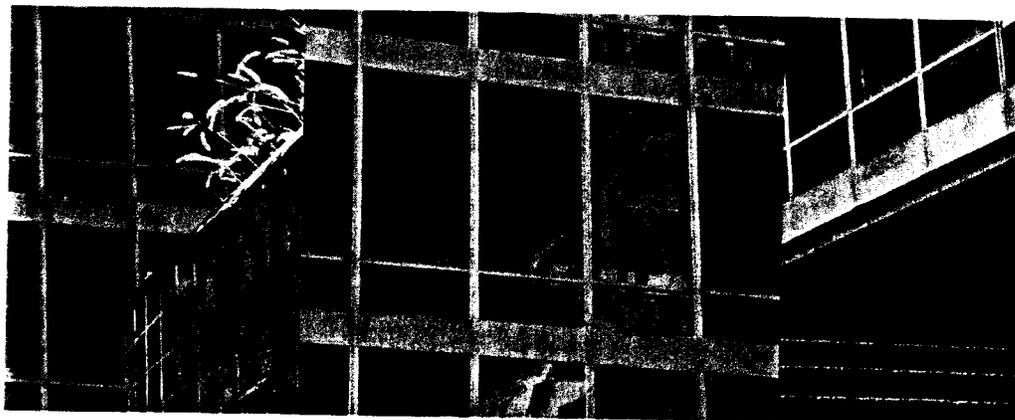




# NEW YORK CITY WRITING PROJECT



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## A NOTE FROM THE Editors

One of the unique aspects of our profession is how regularly teachers cope with change. When one semester turns into another or summer vacations come to an end, we don't simply resume where we left off. There are always new students asking for help or challenging our abilities, and there are always new courses to conceive and plan. Often, there are also new colleagues to meet: old friends transfer or retire and young people join our ranks.

This semester the NYCWP community experiences a major change in leadership. We say farewell to Director Linette Moorman. During her seven years as director (and many years prior to that as co-director), teachers throughout the city and across the NWP network have been inspired by Linette's intelligence, grace and leadership. At the same time, it is with great pleasure that we welcome our new director, Nancy Mintz. A long time Project member and teacher-consultant, a classroom teacher of 28 years, and associate director for the past three years, Nancy brings a wealth of experience, a deep sense of scholarship, and great enthusiasm to her new position. Those of us who have worked with Nancy during these past few years know how much she brings to this new role. We congratulate her and are confident that the NYCWP will continue to flourish under her strong leadership.

With the school year in full swing, the leisurely days of summer vacation seem to be a distant memory. While many teachers throughout the city spent the month of July relaxing on the beach, vacationing and taking it easy, many NYCWP teachers and consultants were hard at work at the wealth of summer institutes offered at Lehman. In this issue, facilitators and participants provide us with an inside view of the engaging and rewarding work they did this summer. Felicia George tells us about the Project's third consecutive summer institute in technology. Tyler Schmidt and Gerianne Scott, coordinators, and Frankie Men, a student at Stuyvesant High School, write about the second year of the Project's exciting new initiative,

*Pass It On*, a summer institute for middle-and-high school student writers. Julie Conason provides highlights of the English Language Learners Leadership Forum, a group of teachers who began meeting this past July to share practice and explore issues facing the ELL students they teach. Tracy Pontin interviewed several enthusiastic participants from the 2002 Summer Invitational. Finally, Laura Schwartzberg describes the work middle school teachers did in our Open Institute focused on literature. We would like to thank the funders that helped make our summer such a success: JP Morgan Chase, WT Grant, the National Writing Project, the New York City Board of Education, and the City University of New York.

As always, this issue also focuses on some of our school-year needs. It seems as though teachers are always looking for good short stories, and there also seems to be a never-ending supply of them! Several times since the birth of the NYCWP listserv, Project members have gone on-line to request help in finding good stories to use with students. NYCWP Newsletter editor Grace Raffaele has assembled a list of the stories Project members have recommended and placed them in a new column we're calling *Resources*. Other good teaching possibilities can also be found in our *Steal These Ideas* column, which offers a new and interesting approach to responding to student work. In this issue's *Listerv Conversations*, we have reprinted excerpts from a lively dialogue on the use of comics in the classroom, an unusual topic that drew considerable interest on the listserv in July.

The editorial staff is pleased to announce that this year we will produce a third issue of the newsletter. Our next issue will take the form of a journal, a collection of articles about our practice as teachers. We welcome submissions from anyone interested in writing about some aspect of their work. Our editorial staff is eager to support any Project member who would like to write an article as well as assist those of you who have pieces in various stages of development. Please email us and let us know.

A final note: In our continual redesign efforts, we have decided to include on the first page of each issue a photographic image of one or two schools where the NYCWP conducts inservice work. Grace Raffaele has volunteered to be our staff photographer. So, when you leave school one afternoon, don't be surprised if you spot Grace, with a camera in hand, looking for a good angle.

NEW YORK CITY  
**WRITING**  
 PROJECT NEWSLETTER

**MARK YOUR CALENDARS**

**NYCWP'S ANNUAL TEACHER TO TEACHER CONFERENCE**

Lehman College/CUNY

Saturday, March 15

**NWP URBAN SITES CONFERENCE**

Santa Barbara, CA

Friday, April 25th to Saturday, April 26

**NYCWP'S ANNUAL CELEBRATORY READING**

**FOR ELEMENTARY AND MIDDLE SCHOOL STUDENTS**

Lehman College/CUNY

Saturday, May 10

**NYCWP'S ANNUAL CELEBRATORY READING**

**FOR HIGH SCHOOL STUDENTS**

Location to be announced

Saturday, May 17

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On the cover: Martin Luther King Jr. HS  
 Photo by Grace Raffaele

# Summer 2002

## THE 2002 SUMMER INVITATIONAL INSTITUTE

Tracy Peers Pontin  
Editor, NYCWP Newsletter

When the incoming and outgoing NYCWP directors Nancy Mintz and Linette Moorman began planning for this year's Invitational, they couldn't have possibly imagined the impact they would have on the teachers with whom they would work. "They were nothing short of wonderful," Gina Moss, a teacher at Bronx Tech, said of the group leaders. "Nancy and Linette took every opportunity to play an active role in the course."

The institute couldn't have been more perfect for Vanessa Santaga, a faculty member at Kingsborough Community College, who entered seeking opportunities for "engaging in discussion with colleagues and for writing that would be personally and professionally fulfilling." Ensuring that participants had ample opportunity for discussion, writing, reflection and sharing, Nancy and Linette offered a much-appreciated array of academic articles that "inspired conversations and allowed for intellectual connections," according to Denise Bacote, an English special education teacher from Thomas Jefferson High School.

Since 1978, the writing group experience has always been a highlight for participants in the NYCWP Summer Invitational. In many cases, in this year's Invitational, the writing groups brought together people who, aside from being teachers, had very little in common. That didn't seem to matter, though. The groups clicked. For Gina, the writing group experience was more than personally fulfilling; she plans to take what she has learned back to her classroom and hopes that her students can gain as much from the experience as she did. For Louisa Cruz-Acosta, a teacher at River East Elementary School, one of the highlights of the institute was exploring writing. "I even wrote a play," she recalled. "I never thought I would do that," she added. Like most participants, Louisa left the Invitational feeling excited and energized.

As in previous summers, another important component of the Invitational was the individual presentations made by the participants. Under the guidance of Associate Director Ed Osterman, the teachers prepared and delivered presentations on some aspect of their work with students. Some teachers did presentations of work that has been successful with their students. For example, Jonathan Weil of Stuyvesant High School demonstrated how his students learn about craft by

bringing in samples of published work that they admire and then examining it in small groups to identify the outstanding characteristics. Griseldá Guerrero of PS 36 demonstrated how her second grade students learn about science through writing. She shared the variety of ways her students respond to text, such as the point of view writing they did after reading a book about raindrops or the letter writing skills they developed after reading a book about a frog and a toad.

Others used the presentation time to gather colleagues together in a roundtable. These roundtables enabled the presenting teachers to raise questions about an approach they use, a unit they taught, or samples of student work. As a result of the responses and suggestions they received at roundtables, presenting teachers can reconsider some aspect of practice.

The 2002 Summer Invitational was certainly a success. In addition to the extraordinary facilitators, there must have been some magic at work when this particular group of participants was chosen. "The people were at the heart of why it was so good," offered Vanessa. "A more interesting, dynamic group of teachers would be hard to find," she added. Perhaps Denise best captured the feeling of many participants. "This was the best possible way I could have spent my July," she said.

## THE 2002 SUMMER TECHNOLOGY INSTITUTE

Felicia George  
Associate Director, NYCWP

*Tapped in, blogging, Netspeak, webquests, lol, moo...* it all sounds like another language unless you were a participant at the Summer 2002 Advanced Institute in Technology, Language and the Internet. For the fourth year a group of seventeen teachers from across the city gathered to talk about how computer technology has changed (or has the potential to change) teaching. This year's focus was the exploration of the language used in four different computer-mediated communication mediums. The group also reflected on the implications of how we incorporate them into our literacy instruction.

For three weeks in July, the group met in the Instructional Technology Center at Lehman College using e-mail, chatting, posting reflections on the *Nicenet* discussion board, blogging with Writing Project colleagues in the Bay Area and West Virginia, and reviewing teacher-designed webquests and web pages. For the

fourth summer, Paul Allison, a teacher at Queens International High School at LaGuardia Community College, led the technology institute. At the beginning of the course, he posed the question, "Okay, so your students have access to the computer. Now what?" Guided by Paul and two other co-coordinators, Felicia George of the NYCWP and Sally O'Connell of High School Redirection, the group sought to answer this question. First, the participants created a hypertext story using point of view pieces based on Isaac Asimov's "The Fun they Had."

The group then ventured off into exploring computer-mediated conversations on e-mail, discussion boards, websites and in chat rooms by reviewing student writing in all four areas and by writing in these mediums themselves. Each participant identified a particular medium that he or she wanted to examine in greater depth and then created an on-line project in or about that medium. Peggy Maslow, Sally O'Connell, Antonio Jacobs and John Moittel, who also participated in previous summer institutes, contributed greatly to the value of the experience by giving presentations on their prior work. In addition, the group read and discussed articles that further supported their exploration of language and technology.

The institute concluded with participants presenting their work. Several participants created webquests around themes in the humanities, history and English classes. Barbara Simon, a first grade teacher in District 8, created a website for sharing classroom information with parents, while Roseann Bayer and Aida Sehic, middle school teachers from IS 143 in District 6, worked on a website about their school's integrated arts grant. Appealing to students' love of games, Dermot Hannon created an on-line "Jeopardy"-like game focusing on questions about literature read in English class. The projects were as varied and complex as the participants, many of whom found the experience invaluable. At the close of the institute, Roseann Bayer stated, "Among the useful things I will take away with me [is] confidence that technology is far from impossible."

To get a glimpse of what the group explored and created this summer, log onto [www.myclasssite.org/sum2002](http://www.myclasssite.org/sum2002). Clicking onto the photos, icons or text will take you to the various venues the group explored and the work they created during the summer.

## YOUTH WRITERS INSTITUTES

*Pass It On* is a three-week summer writing institute where youth writers explore poetry, short stories and dramatic writing with experienced teachers of writing and published authors. They meet and share their work with other youth writers and visit literary organizations and urban sites that inspire writing. This summer we offered two programs, one for high school students and the other for middle school writers. Below, Tyler Schmidt, co-coordinator of the high school program and Frankie Chen, a student at Stuyvesant High School, share their experiences and Gerianne Scott, co-coordinator of the middle school program, describes the activities of the middle school group.

### *Pass It On: A Youth Writers Institute— The High School Program*

Tyler Schmidt  
Institute for Literacy Studies

This year I co-coordinated the high school program with Alison Koffler, a poet and English teacher at Public School Repertory in Manhattan. During the three weeks a variety of poems, short stories and essays were used to explore the themes of self, New York City and "other worlds." These texts provided models for students' own writing of poems, non-fiction pieces and dramatic monologues exploring these themes. Visiting poet Janet Kaplan led students through an exercise designed to break entrenched writing habits in order to create poems with a distinctive new voice. The workshop by Frank Perez, a playwright, introduced students to collaborative scene writing. Students went to Lehman's Instructional Technology Center at the end of each week to expand and revise class assignments and to work on their projects—20-page portfolios due at the end of the program.

Each day included journal writing, a discussion of readings, and a writing exercise. Topics for writing exercises included creating a well-developed protagonist, writing in two voices, writing from visual images, character-based poems, and using maps to create stories about our neighborhoods. In addition to sharing portions of writing on a daily basis, each week students came together to share a longer, completed work. Receiving feedback from peers in writing groups and individual scheduled conferences with the two instructors helped students to revise work and to address specific questions about craft.

One of our program's objectives was to connect the young writers in *Pass It On* to a larger literary community. Our visit to Poets House, a poetry library in Soho, and a reading by youth writers at the Nuyorican Poets Café in the East Village allowed participants to learn about additional writers' resources and to connect with other writers in the city. A walking tour of Lower Manhattan, including a writing session on the Brooklyn Bridge, and a visit to the New York Botanical

Gardens incorporated writing exercises contrasting urban and natural themes. Above all, *Pass It On: A Youth Writers Institute* offered these teen writers a space in which to write—a place of poems, tall tales, and creative spunk.

Hearty thanks to the William T. Grant Foundation, the Institute for Literacy Studies/New York City Writing Project and Lehman College for their support of *Pass It On*.

Frankie Chen  
Stuyvesant HS

This summer at the Youth Writers' Institute was a truly remarkable experience. Although the program itself only lasted for three weeks, it has helped to change the way I view things. It has now been a full month since the program ended, but I am still reminded of its impact on me. For example, I recently read Toni Morrison's *The Bluest Eye*, after we discussed in class an excerpt from the novel.

One of the highlights of the program was the visit to the Bronx Botanical Gardens. Although I have always loved nature and have also frequently visited the Gardens, going with a group of other writers helped me to notice minute details and more greatly appreciate beauty. This change in perspective is something that stays with me.

After successfully putting together a portfolio of my poetry and prose pieces at the end of three weeks, I have become more confident in my abilities as a writer. Recently, I have started a habit of jotting down observations and doing free writes. I have a renewed excitement about writing.

### *Pass It On: A Youth Writers Institute— The Middle School Program*

Gerianne Scott  
Roberto Clemente Intermediate School

They did it! The New York City Writing Project extended the Summer Invitational to middle-grade students. On July 8, 2002, ten middle-grade students and two teachers began a three-week writing journey. To gain entrance to the program, participants submitted applications with samples of their writing ability. Bryant High School teacher Alette Cabrera and Roberto Clemente Intermediate School teacher Gerianne Scott were anxious to share the opportunity to "touch" and "taste" writing. There have been all kinds of writing camps offered to students of all ages, but this "baby" would be swaddled and cuddled under the unique parenting of the New York City Writing Project.

In addition to calling the teachers by their first names, having professional writer Frank Perez as a guest teacher, and not having to worry about tests, every day the ten students enjoyed a mid-morning break. They were trusted to go see what was cooking in the student cafeteria while they percolated a writing response to the morning activity. Every day they wrote in their journals and created works inspired by a variety of prompts. They chose the genre and length of their responses.

## RESOURCES

### Short Stories

For the past three years, there has been a wealth of recommendations on the listserv in response to calls for successful short stories. We reprint those titles here for all of us to share. Where possible, the notes from the teacher have been included.

Our thanks to the following teachers who recommend the stories and anthologies listed below:

Lopa Basu, Mary Carroll, Julie Conason, Karen Griswold, Denise Gutman, Luke Janka, Jackie Leopold, Carol Levin, SallyMcMahon, Nancy Mintz, Kate Moss, Ed Osterman, Sondra Perl, Grace Raffaele, Sharon Russo, Sue Schaller, Tyler Schmidt, Laura Schwartzberg, Alan Stein, and Ronni Tobman-Michelen.

### Individual Stories:

"Being Mean" by Gary Soto  
The story deals with the conflict that arises when the main character marries someone of a different race.

"The Boy Without a Flag" from *The Boy Without a Flag* by Abraham Rodriguez  
A boy of Puerto Rican background refuses to stand for the Pledge of Allegiance and comes in conflict with his school and his father. This story was effective in discussions post 9/11 that were related to flags, nationality and symbols.

"Caroline's Wedding" by Edwidge Danticat  
The story deals with the changes a Haitian mother and her two daughters go through as the elder sister prepares to marry and the family "breaks up."

"Eleven" by Sandra Cisneros  
This story focuses on a young girl and a humiliating moment in school brought on by a teacher.

"Daughter of Invention" from *How the Garcia Girls Lost Their Accents* by Julia Alvarez  
This chapter depicts the cultural conflicts that can emerge between a child and an immigrant parent. It can be paired with Abraham Rodriguez' "The Boy Without a Flag."

"Mother Tongue" by Amy Tan  
This is a personal essay about linguistic differences between a Chinese mom and her American child.

*continued on facing page*

## RESOURCES continued

"Mrs. Sen's" from *Interpreter of Maladies*  
by Jhumpa Lahiri

In this story, a South Asian immigrant woman and a young American boy she looks after are the main characters. It raises some serious issues about displacement and cultural memory.

"Noel" by Michael Plemmons

It takes a while to figure out what's going on, but at an orphanage, the kids sit all day on Christmas waiting as couples arrive to choose a child to adopt for the day. The teens are the only ones not chosen. This story is only 2 pages long!

"On the Sidewalk Bleeding" Ethan Hunter

This is a story about gangs, from the author of *Blackboard Jungle*.

"Samuel" by Grace Paley

This short, stark story about an accidental death on a subway always stirs a lively student discussion.

"Say Yes" by Tobias Wolff

A marriage is forever changed when a wife provokes her husband to say he wouldn't have married her if she were black.

"17 Syllables" by Hisaye Yamamoto

This story focuses on a conflict in a Japanese immigrant family told from the point of view of the teenage Japanese-American daughter.

"Snow" from *How the Gracia Girls Lost Their Accents*  
by Julia Alvarez

This chapter describes a young Dominican girl's first day of school in 1950's America. It's great as a starter for discussions about names and personal perspective – and only 2 pages!

"Sunday in the Park" by Bel Kaufman

A blissful wife's view of her husband turns from admiration to disgust.

"The Jacket" by Gary Soto

This story can be used in a unit put together on the theme of "fitting in" and can lead to memoir writing.

"The Somebody" by Danny Santiago

The protagonist is a Latino high school student from LA who uses writing to make his mark on the world by scrawling his name around the neighborhood. It works great as a point of view assignment.

*continued on page 7*

When asked, "Where are you?" Robert expressed amazement at being a student on a college campus with a swimming pool. Meanwhile, Sophia was delighted to be viewing earth from her side of the moon.

The theme of many of the readings was self, culture and community. With that theme in mind, the group made a trip to The Museum of the City of New York. Although Jay claimed he did not like to write, he was mesmerized by the video *New York: Past and Present*. He admitted that he might be inspired to write about it, which he did. After reading Virginia Driving Hawk Sneve's short story, "The Medicine Bag," the group was inspired to write poems and memory pieces. They even created medicine bags (time capsules) of their own.

By the end of the institute, the group succeeded in producing a fine collection of their writing entitled *Write On*. The students and the teachers are very proud of the work the group accomplished during this valuable experience.

## ENGLISH LANGUAGE LEARNERS LEADERSHIP FORUM

Julie Conason

*Teacher-Consultant, NYCWP*

Practically since its inception in 1978, the New York City Writing Project has worked with teachers of English language learners. With the goal of strengthening the participation of such teachers in the Writing Project and developing more on-site teacher consultants with experience in ELL and bilingual education, the NYCWP applied for and received an ELL Network Mini-grant from the National Writing Project this year. The grant funded a three-day summer institute, as well as six Saturday sessions to follow up on and continue the work begun this summer.

The forum was coordinated by Halima Touré, of the Department of Language and Cognition at Hostos Community College, and Julie Conason, an on-site teacher consultant currently working in District 10 middle schools who has worked in the past as both a bilingual and an ESL classroom teacher. The initial goals for the institute were to give participants the opportunity to discuss the context of their schools and communities and to identify some of the political, educational and social issues surrounding English language learners. They hoped to share aspects of their practice and consider how to address issues of language learning and literacy for peer forums.

During the seminar, the nine participants spent time sharing stories about language learning experiences. The participants created visual maps and wrote descriptions of their schools and then used these "living documents" to help think about what their schools are like as places for language learning. The participants were also given an opportunity to identify concerns germane to both learners of English and to their teachers in school communities that are not always adequately

sensitized to the issues that may arise in this work. The participants shared resources, including texts both for teachers and learners, organizations, websites, and curriculum ideas. They also began to create presentations geared to sensitizing school personnel to some of the problems faced by English language learners. All of the teachers involved in the forum look forward to the follow up meetings during which they intend to refine their presentations and continue the dialogues begun during the summer institute.

## OPEN SEMINAR FOR MIDDLE SCHOOL TEACHERS

Laura Schwartzberg

*Teacher Consultant, NYCWP*

Building on the success of the advanced summer seminars on literature that were offered to high school teachers from 1996 through 1998, in 2002 the NYCWP decided to transform our Open Seminar into a 3-week advanced seminar on literature geared specifically toward middle school teachers.

Our first Middle School Institute offered twelve participants from various subject areas and grade levels an opportunity to read and discuss fiction and non-fiction with which they were not familiar, to learn new reading and writing strategies, and to develop an annotated bibliography of all the works that they read. Laura Schwartzberg, an on-site teacher-consultant working in District 8 elementary schools coordinated the seminar with Sharon Rosenberg, a teacher-consultant who works as a staff developer in District 27 in Queens. The goal was to support teachers as they moved into independent reading programs and away from prescribed reading programs. We offered participants the opportunity to read and discuss a range of literature and helped them plan ways to use those new works in their classrooms. We demonstrated a variety of strategies for helping students connect with and respond to different genres and difficult texts, paying particular attention to students who have difficulty reading or are reluctant to read.

The participants explored young adult fiction and non-fiction. They immersed themselves in literature in a variety of ways. For example, the entire group shared the experience of reading the same book. In addition, they met in smaller special interest groups to share other works while also pursuing their individual reading interests. We also gave the participants the opportunity to browse through our book collection and create categories for sorting books, such as author baskets, historical fiction, and the immigrant experience. In addition to enabling them to recognize their own interests, this activity helped teachers see the importance of choice for children.

The end result of all this hard work is an annotated bibliography of which the group can certainly be proud. The participants plan on taking copies of the bibliography back to their schools, and look forward to sharing many new works of literature with their students.

# LISTSERV CONVERSATIONS

"Much of my learning, I confess, has been through comic books," wrote Antonio Jacobs when he signed onto the listserv at the close of the last school year. Concerned with not letting "this valuable resource go to waste," he suggested some summer reading for anyone interested in using comic books in the classroom. Almost instantly, the listserv was buzzing as people chimed in to share their opinions, successes and concerns regarding the use of comic books in the classrooms. What follows are some excerpts from this lively exchange.

**Antonio Jacobs,**  
**Queens Gateway to Health Sciences Secondary School:** I have three suggestions for "summer reading" for educators. First try reading *Reinventing Comics* by Scott McCloud. His book, in graphic novel form, discusses the future and evolution of the comic book in the 21st century, and how that evolution affects society, media and technology. A second suggestion would be *The Ring of the Nibelung*. It is a good way to look at Nordic mythology without the German opera and laborious text. It is in graphic novel format and is published by Dark Horse comics. It is available at specialty stores. Or try reading a comic book adaptation of a movie, either the ones based on the comic, like *From Hell*, *Road to Perdition* or *The Crow*, or comics based on movies, like *Star Wars* or *Indiana Jones*. Hopefully, I plan to see if a nice comic book on The Living Environment, Calculus or Regents Physics can be produced. I got dibs on the illustrated version of *A Brief History of Time*!

**Grace Raffaele,**  
**Institute for Collaborative Education:** I think it's important for us all to remember that comics are a great way into reading for reluctant readers. Of course, when it comes to reading comics in school, traditional administrators tend to be more reluctant than the kids. I have brought some in for kids to read during our silent reading time with great success.

**Kate Moss,**  
**CUNY Writing Fellow, Lehman College:** Have you ever seen the "Introducing..." or "... For Beginners" books? They are two separate series of educational comics that are nonetheless quite similar. The first was *Marx for Beginners*. They have everything from *Judaism for Beginners* to *Introducing Quantum Physics*. I find them helpful when learning about a new topic. They provide a nice overview and are an easy read.

**Len Schiff,**  
**North Shore High School:** *Maus* is a regular part of my 10th grade curriculum. This summer, my seniors are reading *Comic Book Nation* and the first *Ultimate Spider Man* graphic novel as a prelude to a study of the history of pop culture in America. The problem, or maybe just the situation, is that there's not an awful lot of literature out there on HOW to use comics. Aside from how cool it is to have comics in the classroom, and aside from the inherently higher interest texts that comics almost inevitably become, what does studying the marriage of text and image give us? And what methodologies can we develop that are universal?

**Ed Osterman,**  
**Associate Director, NYCWP:** I suspect most parents, teachers and administrators frown on the idea of comics in schools. Antonio and Len raise interesting issues and questions about the potential of comics in schools and in today's society. As Len wonders: How does one read such texts? What skills do they require? Are they skills worth acquiring? What about the marriage of text and image? Often these days, I think the entire world, largely due to computer technology, is rapidly moving in a sense back to a reliance on the visual for information and idea. What does that mean for us as teachers?

**Georgia Christgau,**  
**Middle College High School at LaGuardia Community College:** After reading many versions of *Frankenstein* to prepare kids for the original text by Mary Shelley, I decided to copy a cheap pocket-sized comic book version that I found tucked away in our dusty school library. It presented the clearest retelling of the original story and was most sympathetic to the Creature, which the kids saw immediately. I used it as a study guide after we read the book and in preparation for final projects... As an advocate of using popular culture, though, I feel comfortable saying that before we get too excited over the "possibilities" of using comic

books in the classroom, let's not forget how sexist they are. I can't buy comics for my daughter without bypassing the huge selection of stories with female characters whose chief virtue is the size of their breasts. You don't know how profoundly challenging it is for an already sensitive-about-her-body 14-year-old girl to walk through aisles of that stuff. Comics are great, if you remember they're mostly male and about men, with women as fixtures, props, or worse.

**Julie Merker,**  
**Teacher Emeritus, High School of Telecommunications:** I attended a workshop about Hindu mythology at the Met while I was teaching humanities. My favorite take-away was a comic based on the Ramayana. The students were really intrigued by it, although I confess I used it as entry to the "laborious text" that I wanted them to read. I also loved the comic-style renditions of acts from Shakespeare that I would assign students to create in order to monitor comprehension. I recognize, though, that in both these cases I was using comics as a means to an end and not as a genre unto itself.

**Luke Janka,**  
**Humanities Prep:** This past year I taught *Othello* to my seniors. Unfortunately, my school did not have enough copies of the play in book form, but we did have a set of the comic book version. A lot of the students really enjoyed using it and seeing the characters in action, but there were a handful who returned their copies and bought their own copies of the Folger Institute edition. They really wanted the side notes and the stage directions. They also wanted the feeling that they were reading a book, challenging themselves, and not reading a comic book. I assured them that it was word for word the same text, which it was, and that it was also harder than what students in my other classes were using since it lacked the side notes and directions. My point: comics are good. They were a friendly approach to Shakespeare, and they really helped the visual learners. However, just like you'll have kids who want the comics and not the books, you'll have kids who want the books and not the comics. The solution: have copies of both versions, if you can, to keep your students happy and wanting to read.

## RESOURCES continued

"The Strong Man" by George Garrett

This is a good story though it takes a while to figure out what is going on. A wife, with a cheating husband, is empowered by watching a man struggle free of various binding devices (rope, chain, etc).

"War" by Luigi Pirandello

Three fathers discuss their differing views on how much is lost during wartime. This story can be used during a study of WWI to understand multiple perspectives on war.

"Who's Irish?" by Gish Jen

A story about different beliefs about childrearing told from the point of view of the Chinese grandmother. This story raises issues of both cultural and generational differences.

### Anthologies:

*A Summer Life* by Gary Soto

*America Street: A Multicultural Anthology of Stories* edited by Anne Mazer

*Baseball in April and Other Stories* by Gary Soto

*Boy Without a Flag* by Abraham Rodriguez

*Drown* by Junot Diaz

*El Bronx Remembered* by Nicholasa Mohr

*Growing Up Asian-American* edited by Maria Hong

*The House on Mango Street* by Sandra Cisneros

*How The Garcia Girls Lost Their Accents* Julia Alvarez

*Interpreter of Maladies* by Jhumpa Lahiri

*Krick? Krack!* by Edwidge Danticat

*Living Up the Street* by Gary Soto

*Points of View: An Anthology of Short Stories* edited by James Moffett and Kenneth R. McElheny

*Sixteen: Short Stories by Outstanding Writers for Young Adults* edited by Donald Gallo

*Sudden Fiction and Sudden Fiction International* edited by Robert Shapard & James Thomas

## PROJECT NOTES

Congratulations to **Nancy Mintz** and **Alan Stein** on the publication of their articles in the National Writing Project's At Work Monograph Series, Volume 1, "Models of Inservice." Nancy's article, "Developing Collaborative Relationships in a School Setting: Taking an Inquiry Stance in Professional Development," describes the work she did with **Grace Raffaele** at IS 143 in Manhattan. Alan's article, "Whole School Reform: A Collaboration Between a Teacher-Consultant and a Principal," is an account of his collaboration with Principal **Carolyn Wagner** at the Erasmus Hall Campus High School for Humanities and the Performing Arts. The introduction to the monograph is written by **Marcie Wolfe**. Nancy's and Alan's pieces can be viewed and downloaded from [www.writingproject.org/Publications/other/monographs.html](http://www.writingproject.org/Publications/other/monographs.html).

Recently, the United Federation of Teachers published a curriculum guide for English Language Arts. On-site teacher-consultant **Lona Jack-Vilmar**, who works with teachers at the 850 Grand Street Campus in Brooklyn and at Wadleigh HS in Manhattan, was one of the contributing writers to the high school curriculum guide for the 9th grade.

This fall the NYCWP is thrilled to welcome several long-time Project members to our group of on-site teacher-consultants. **Amanda Gulla** and **Linda Margolin** are serving teachers in middle schools while **Angie Pruitt**, **Katherine Schulten**, and **Patsy Wooters** are working with teachers in high schools. It is a pleasure to have each of them with us. They bring a wealth of both classroom and/or professional development experience to their new roles.

Many thanks and good wishes to **Linda Farrell** who, after two years of working as an on-site teacher-consultant at the George Washington High School Campus, has decided to spend more time enjoying her status as a retired teacher. As many of us know, Linda brought enormous energy and commitment to her work with teachers and students. In these past two years, she shared her many years of expertise as an ESL teacher with younger and less experienced colleagues, helping them to deepen their practice and to value the riches that students bring to the classroom. All of us at the Project shall miss her presence.

We are pleased that **Louisa Cruz-Acosta**, taking a year's sabbatical from her work at River East, is participating in the NYCWP's Sabbatical Study Program. Louisa has been a long-time participant and coordinator of the Elementary Teachers Network and was a Summer Fellow in the 2002 Summer Invitational. As part of the sabbatical study program, Louisa will write about her teaching, do Even Start/Family Literacy work in District 9, and serve as an intern alongside teacher-consultant **Laura Schwartzberg** at PS 36 in District 8.

## STEAL this IDEA

**Steven Strauss**, of Evander Childs High School in the Bronx, decided to take a different approach in responding to the first compositions he had his special education classes do. At the end of each piece he gave each student a detailed list of each skill that had been mastered in this piece of writing. In doing so, he hoped to give them confidence. After their initial surprise and confusion, that is exactly what it did. The second piece he assigned brought longer, more detailed writings. This time he had them evaluate their own strengths, using his responses on the previous piece as a guide. His plan is to continue this approach, waiting until he is asked about a weakness before beginning mini-lessons on improving their skills.

**PRESENTING  
OUR WORK NATIONALLY**

**NATIONAL WRITING PROJECT**

Each year the NWP hosts several major meetings that bring together Project directors and teacher-consultants from around the country. In the previous issue we inadvertently omitted one of the workshops presented by NYCWP members at the NWP's Annual Meeting in November 2001. We apologize for this omission.

**Supporting Student Reading  
in the Urban Classroom**

**Donna Mehle** of Vanguard HS, **Gina Moss** of Bronx Coalition Community School for Technology, and **Grace Raffaele** of the Institute for Collaborative Education presented the work they have been doing in their classrooms to support independent reading. Donna showed how she uses read alouds and think alouds with her students, Gina demonstrated activities to boost decoding skills, and Grace shared the ways in which she uses visuals to introduce students to double-entry note taking. **Barbara Martz** served as facilitator for the session.

**Are you still a member of the NYCWP?**



**Have you paid your membership dues for the current school year?  
Call the office and update your membership today! 718.960.8758  
\$20 Membership is tax-deductible.**

**Share your thoughts and professional experiences by writing  
for the NYCWP Newsletter!  
We will work with you! Just get started!**

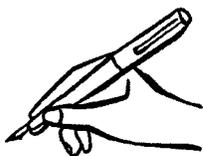
- What have you tried in the classroom recently and what was the result?
- What instructional challenge did you face and how did you handle it?
- What's changed about your teaching or your classroom? How and why did it happen?
- What successful lesson or approach might you share with colleagues?
- What have you read or seen recently that other colleagues might want to know about?
- What have you been thinking about lately with regard to teaching and learning?
- What student or class has raised issues for you that you might want to explore in writing?

**You can submit your pieces by mail or e-mail  
(osterman@alpha.lehman.cuny.edu).**

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**NEW YORK CITY WRITING PROJECT**

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