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About Language Arts Journal of Michigan

The *Language Arts Journal of Michigan* is published twice a year (Fall and spring) by the Michigan Council of Teachers of English, a nonprofit state affiliate of the national Council of Teachers of English, and is a member of the NCTE Affiliate Information Exchange Agreement. The *LAMJ* publishes articles that discuss issues, theory, theory-based practice, and research in the teaching and learning of the language arts at all levels, kindergarten through college. It publishes articles, interviews, annotated bibliographies, review-essays, research, poetry and classroom practices. The *LAMJ* invites teachers at all levels—elementary, secondary, college—to submit manuscripts for consideration. Articles from many perspectives on the themes are welcome.

Guidelines for Submitting Manuscripts. Manuscripts should be 4-12 pages in length, double-spaced, and use the new MLA style for parenthetical documentation and the NCTE Guidelines for Non-Sexist Use of Language. Send one original and one copy. We request that manuscripts not have been published elsewhere. Manuscripts will not be returned unless requested and accompanied by a stamped, self-addressed envelope. If the manuscript is accepted, a copy on a 3.5 disk will be requested (IBM PC or compatible, Microsoft Word 6.0). The deadline for the Fall 2000 issue is August 15, 2000. See the Call for manuscripts near the end of this issue for further information.

Submit Manuscripts to:

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ABOUT THIS ISSUE

Convinced of the importance of nonfiction in our lives, we devoted this *LAJM* issue to an exploration of the ways nonfiction can enter our classrooms and inspire our students' reading and writing. The contributors present a variety of articles that share teaching philosophies, activities, and resources, celebrating the use of nonfiction in both literature and composition classes.

We begin with Stephen Tchudi who celebrates the essay as a resource for helping our students make sense of their world and shares its many uses and purposes in the classroom. He "boldly [claims] nonfiction as the 'First Genre' based on its value and importance."

The fine line between the genres of nonfiction and fiction is erased in the classrooms of several of our contributors. Instead of dismissing popular nonfiction, Rob Kunik argues for using it in our literature classrooms to help build students' reading interest and ability. Amy Huntley relates how she and a colleague transformed a ninth-grade research unit, incorporating the use of literature circles and fiction as a basis for students' research, and Millie Jackson describes how she uses nonfiction to help students recognize that essays include the same elements of figurative language as fiction.

Selecting just the right piece of writing to use as a classroom model for reflective autobiography is the topic of Amy Solinski. She shares how important our literature selections can be to the success of our lessons. Fred Barton continues the discussion, and writes about how he successfully uses the concept of story to combine fiction and autobiography in his composition class. Martha Kruse shares how she uses a novelistic memoir by Teresa Jordan in her composition class to demonstrate storytelling techniques with nonfiction.

In her poem *Black Lung*, Marianne Peel Forman shares memories of her grandfather and demonstrates just how powerful personal writing can be.

Believing that the art of storytelling applies to both fiction and nonfiction, several contributors discuss how this belief is reflected in their classrooms. Kim Barnes shares techniques for helping our students transform personal writing into literature. Simone Poirier-Bures uses her own writing as an example and shares a technique for teaching creative nonfiction, and Maggie Miles discusses how she uses props and prompts to help her students make their persuasive writing come alive. Laurie C. Kuna describes a successful project where her secondary students blend research, interview, and creative nonfiction through interviewing local war veterans.

Bob Root argues for a change in our perspective of teaching writing to one that values, rather than denies, personal writing. At the beginning of this new millennium, Root advocates using creative nonfiction to reflect on the past and focus on the future.

Mary Ellen VanCamp provides a resource bibliography of high quality nonfiction titles and related websites which can be used in the elementary and middle school classrooms.

And finally, we include the winners of the NCTE Orbis Pictus Awards for Outstanding Nonfiction for Children.

Together, these teacher-authors offer us numerous reasons and suggestions for increasing our use of nonfiction in our classrooms.

Susan Steffel
Jill VanAntwerp