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Letter to the Editors

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Letter to the Editors

We encourage your letters in response to what you have read in the MRJ. Were you inspired to try a new teaching strategy? Are you in a quandary over a topic recently featured or a current issue in literacy? Is there something in the journal that you haven't seen that you want us to address? Let us hear from you.

MRJ Editors,

Currently I have the privilege of working with several of my grade level teachers in my district. Our assignment is to create a writing curriculum for fourth grade. We have met twice. As the first meeting came to a close, it was suggested that each of us bring five trade books to our next meeting that we use to help teach writing to our students. As the second meeting approached, I felt great anxiety trying to pick just five books. I felt as if I were betraying a friend when I chose one book over another. How could I narrow down my list to five? I grabbed my largest tote bag and filled it up. I am nothing if not loyal to my books. To my surprise I was not alone. All the teachers at the meeting had done the same thing. We introduced our books to the group as if we were proud parents. What a wonderful way to spend an in-service. I left with a list of books that I could use to teach numerous lessons in all content areas.

As rejuvenated as I was after I left the writing in-service, it can only be matched by my enthusiasm after reading the article in the fall 2007 issue of the *Michigan Reading Journal* entitled "Exploring Tough Subjects with Michigan Authors." What an exciting time to be a teacher in Michigan! Gone are the days of textbooks and handouts. We are not only using trade books to teach reading and writing, but we are using them to enhance our instruction in all content areas. I was so thrilled when the article highlighted Michigan authors. As a writer and a lifelong Michigan citizen, I felt the necessity to relay the message of the article to my students. We are surrounded by brilliant authors who are home grown. These authors come from where we come from and write about things we care about. Whenever possible we should celebrate our Michigan authors by using their text in our classrooms. However, we must take the lesson a step further and teach our students about the author. The students will hopefully make the connection, which was suggested in the article, that if these Michigians can write about critical issues of the past and present, so can they. We would be empowering our students by using award-winning text written by people like themselves.

Just as we cheer for the home team, we should celebrate the Michigan authors. My thanks go out to the *Michigan Reading Journal*, for continually giving me new things to contemplate and enhance my teaching repertoire. I will make the suggestion for our next grade level writing meeting that we bring books from our favorite Michigan authors.

Cindy Morris
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