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LAJM

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Fall 1993

*Focus:
Winds of Change*

The Michigan Council
of Teachers of English

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LAJM publishes articles which 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, and classroom practices. 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 two copies to: The Editors, *The Language Arts Journal of Michigan*, Department of American Thought and Language, 272 Bessey Hall, Michigan State University, East Lansing, MI 48824. If you wish your original returned, include a self-addressed envelope with first-class postage. All manuscripts will be acknowledged. The deadline for the Spring 1994 issue is January 15, 1994.

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ABOUT THIS ISSUE

During last year's presidential campaign, the word change was used often by candidates, the press, and the voting public. Every issue, every political stance, every notion about American society seemed destined for change in the near future.

This year the word change has come to be associated with significant and all too real events that are now taking place in areas such as America's global obligations, health care, economic policy, and education. We selected "Winds of Change" as the focus of the Fall 1993 issue to invite our contributors to address some of the most vital issues presently facing educators in the language arts.

The theme of "Winds of Change" also seemed appropriate since **LAJM** is now under the new editorial direction of three teachers who, we hope, reflect the membership of the Michigan Council of Teachers of English. Fred Barton teaches literature and writing at Baker College and participated in this summer's Red Cedar Writing Project at Michigan State University's Writing Center. Diana Mitchell, who is a co-director of the Red Cedar Writing Project, teaches English at Sexton High School in Lansing. John Smolens is an assistant professor in the Department of American Thought and Language at MSU, and is currently Guest Writer in the M.F.A. Writing Program at Western Michigan University.

In this issue our contributors address a broad range of changes occurring in our classrooms. Stephen Tchudi and Stephen Lafer discuss the experimental PACE program they developed at the University of Nevada-Reno and how "examining the 'accepted' quite naturally led to questions of what was true." They write of involving students in their own process of learning instead of telling students what learning is. Gloria Nixon-John discovers new uses for journal writing by exploring how it relates to creating one's own literature. She finds that having students write from the third person about their own experiences changes the way they view their writing about the experience.

Al Weber illuminates the fine art of the student-teacher conference by focusing attention on the roles of both student and teacher. He works at helping students change their view of the teacher as the one in charge of a writing conference. Bonnie Newcomer looks at the scope of literature we are willing to teach and encourages us to chart a new course by studying about and teaching Japanese literature. Martha M. Vertreace discusses her students' discovery that poetry journals are places to tinker with and revise language, not simply to free write.

Further underscoring our theme is a change from prose to poetry. Trilby Plants takes us on a personal journey into some of the memories that make up her past.

In an article that previously appeared in *Advocacy for English*, a publication of the Southeastern Ohio Council of Teachers of English, Ellen Brinkley describes MCTE's response to the Michigan legislature's mandate to develop a writing component for the proposed high school proficiency test. Jill Van Antwerp considers how the teaching of literature has changed even since she began her career.

Finally, Fred Barton addresses the question of why we as teachers don't change. He also asks what the politics of America have to do with producing students who don't think. Additionally he discusses why research findings haven't found their way into the English classroom.

Changes abound here at **LAJM** as well. Assuming editorial responsibility allows us to work with a remarkable community of educators and writers throughout the state of Michigan, and beyond.

We wish to thank our editorial predecessors, John Dinan and Bob Root, for their invaluable assistance during this period of transition, as well as the MCTE Executive Board, which has provided considerable moral support. As the new editors of **LAJM**, we are committed to providing MCTE members with a journal that is informative, responsive, and dedicated to the language arts teachers of Michigan.

Fred Barton

Diana Mitchell

John Smolens