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Number 1

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ABOUT THIS ISSUE

The contributors to this issue of *LJM* give us an historical perspective of the experience of English/language arts instruction, some by placing their own teaching in the history of the profession, others by examining trends and transformations in classroom practices, curriculum design, and assessment. There are times, unfortunately, when our professional histories recall Fitzgerald's final image in *The Great Gatsby* of boats beating ceaselessly against the current as they are borne backward to the sea. Our attempts to be agents of change can seem at times to be a series of disheartening efforts against political and social forces that, despite expedient avowals to the contrary, have a deeply vested interest in discouraging true change. Our *LJM* contributors, however, show through their analyses and their stories that if our view of the past is as clear and informed as our vision for the future, we can *evolve* as well as change, making our experience the *basis* of our hope, not its destroyer.

In our keynote article, Lois Rosen shows how seizing professional development opportunities can aid in our evolution as teachers able to wed theory and practice in a language-rich classroom. Two tales of response to changing trends follow: Kathleen Carl describes how her adjustment to an increasing number of non-traditional students in her classroom resulted in discovering pedagogies that helped her better teach her traditional students as well; Norma Greco then discusses how she deals with the movement toward a reader-response orientation in the literature classroom in ways that encourage students to take ownership of the text while still achieving critical distance from it. Focusing on a specific laboratory school, Bertille Gallichio investigates some early precursors of today's "whole language" classrooms and finds the same split between process-oriented elementary curricula and content-based secondary curricula that still plagues many school systems today. The lessons of the past have been learned only intermittently in the field of language arts assessment as well, notes Ellen Brinkley, whose article describes the support (even by NCTE) early in this century of simplistic, statistical, and seductive forms of evaluation. Recent calls for a national curriculum by American political leaders give immediacy to Louise Poulson's examination of a similar movement in the United Kingdom and her warning about two particular dangers: consensus without controversy and accepting new curricular mandates because the terms are not as terrible as we feared they would be. Kathleen Blake Yancey concludes this issue by observing that teaching, like marriage, is often a triumph of hope over experience, then urging teachers to seize authority and embrace professional responsibility, for only by doing so can we be, as she is, "still hopeful after all these years."

The Editors