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ABOUT THIS ISSUE

On the occasion of publishing an *LJM* issue that has no "special focus," the editors are sometimes challenged to find the links among the articles. Still, we usually do, through an almost predictable serendipity that occurs whenever English language arts teachers bump into each other and start talking shop. This issue is no exception. Its separate ingredients blend into a distinctive offering that we know you will enjoy.

Robert Root sets the tone for the issue as he describes what "writing in the real world" is like for working writers and stresses the importance of treating our young student-writers with the respect we generally afford to "real writers." Alice Gillam then focuses on the experiences of two teachers in a writing workshop to demonstrate how "the belief that students . . . are already writers" begins in teachers' belief in their "own writing capacities and in the power of peer response."

The articles which follow are interrelated by their shared interest in the real world of history—current events, personal history, regional history, children's historical literature—but each is based in the author's acceptance of students as "real world writers." Mary Dekker describes a second-grade writing project in which her students became pen pals with Persian Gulf military personnel and found that not only were they "writing for a particular purposes to an authentic audience, but they were affecting the lives of other people." While Dekker has her students participate in contemporary history, Pamela Gates-Duffield sends her students back into time and their own heritage by giving them an oral history writing assignment that asks them to research older family members and friends about historical periods and events. Taking a more geographical slant, Ann Ransford turns her students attention toward the study of Michigan history and utilizes field trips, library research, and extensive reading to make Michigan a content area for writing. Finally, Miriam Bat-Ami argues for the use of children's literature as an approach to the study of history and suggests that history can be part of a whole language environment that uses reading and writing to connect personal history to the context of historical study.

Two long-standing *LJM* features return in this issue. Our *LJM* Bibliography by Miriam Bat-Ami and Amy Birman supplements Bat-Ami's article with an annotated list of multi-cultural sources for the study of historical fiction and non-fiction. Diana Mitchell's *LJM* Resources contribution is an enthusiastic, personalized annotated bibliography of recent young adult novels that work in the classroom.

Special focus issues of *LJM* are a multi-course gourmet meal; general issues such as this are a rich mulligan's stew, no less flavorful for being unexpected, no less nourishing for ignoring recipes. Pull up to the table. Have as many helpings as you like.

The Editors

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