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Special Focus:

**BEYOND BINDINGS
AND BOUNDARIES**

Volume 6

Number 2

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ABOUT THIS ISSUE

Classroom teachers often feel constrained by circumstances, forced by assigned textbooks and curriculum guides to teach certain ways, perform certain kinds of classroom activities, and "cover" certain material. But as the articles in this special focus issue of *LJM* show, no matter where they may teach, creative teachers can generate a range of inventive, imaginative practices to take their students beyond the bindings of prescribed textbooks and beyond the boundaries of classroom walls. The exciting and innovative practices presented here by an adventurous group of contributors confirm that English language arts teachers are not prisoners of their curricula or texts. Those with doubts need only consult this issue.

In the opening article Marybeth Tessmer describes how she transformed her classroom into a writer's workshop, taking upon herself the responsibility for her classroom by extending it beyond bindings and boundaries. Sally Dorenbusch then shows how she encourages her creative writing students both "to turn inward" through journal writing and "outward" through publication, performance, and contest submissions. Examples of ways to take students beyond textbook bindings follow: Elizabeth Spatz develops a project in which members of one gender interview members of the other gender in order to examine their own preconceptions and prejudices; Sarah Henderson uses a familiar classic by Charles Dickens as an exploration of folklore and custom; and Terry Blackhawk explores the gifts of story telling to create a multi-dimensional exploration of the language arts. In a cluster of articles offering ways to move students beyond classroom boundaries, Margaret Tebo-Messina and Doris Blough explain a penpal project between seventh-graders and college students that fostered growth in writing ability for both groups; Eleanor Wollett describes a project in which fifth graders interview senior citizens and write biographies; William Palmer and Carol Bender show how to bridge the generations by having college students write articles on senior citizens and publish them in a local newspaper; and Marguerite Helmers demonstrates ways students can invite professionals into their classroom. Mary Dekker then tells us how her students invite others into their classroom by reporting on dinosaurs and creating a dinosaur museum, while in his capstone article Stephen Tchudi discovers a resource for thinking and writing in every kind of museum and extends museums themselves beyond display cases and protective walls.

The articles collected here, in the words of Tebo-Messina and Blough, "encourage others. . . to negotiate their own 'how to's', to adapt rather than adopt." Those who do will move their classes beyond bindings and boundaries.

The Editors