

4-2014

## **Review, *Tend Your Garden: Nurturing Motivation in Young Adolescent Writers* by Mary Anna Kruch**

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### **Recommended Citation**

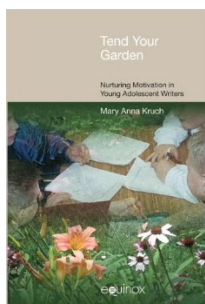
Sipe, Rebecca (2014) "Review, *Tend Your Garden: Nurturing Motivation in Young Adolescent Writers* by Mary Anna Kruch," *Language Arts Journal of Michigan*: Vol. 29: Iss. 2, Article 15.  
Available at: <https://doi.org/10.9707/2168-149X.2019>

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# REVIEW

*Tend Your Garden: nurturing motivation in young adolescent writers* by Mary Anna Kruch. Equinox, 2012.

Review by Rebecca Sipe



It is not uncommon to find a good professional book filled with insights and invigorating ideas, nor is it difficult to find

a good narrative that sweeps a reader into a story. It is uncommon, however, to find both between the covers of the same book. In *Tend Your Garden: Nurturing Motivation in Young Adolescent Writers*, Dr. Mary Anna Kruch, veteran teacher and teacher educator, carries the reader through the odyssey of a teacher's development from novice to master, sharing highly successful strategies and skills developed within a framework of her Young Adolescent Motivation Model (YAMM).

In *Tend Your Garden*, Kruch demonstrates the power of placing young adolescents at the center of curricular planning. She describes the YAMM as resembling a flower with the learner in the center and the eight components of the YAMM as the petals. Each of the eight components provides a focus for a chapter in which she offers a review of pertinent, broad-based literature that contextualizes the writing pedagogy she describes. In each chapter she explores the core concepts essential to the practices being introduced; provides a sample lesson of instruction that is then

deconstructed to allow the reader to get “inside” the lesson; and concludes with reflection to help the reader move to broader applications of the ideas and theories presented.

*Tend Your Garden* essentially organizes around four major themes: establishing the theoretical and pedagogical framework of the Young Adolescent Motivation Model in Chapters 1-3, applying and expanding the model in Chapters 4-6, exploring the possibilities of assessment in Chapter 7, and extending and personalizing teacher development in Chapter 8. The text concludes with a rich set of bibliographic references that are helpful for further exploration by individuals or teacher learning communities.

In an overview of her own learning journey in Chapter 1, Kruch describes the development of her theoretical framework for teaching writing, before moving seamlessly in Chapter 2 to a consideration of the importance of establishing a sense of community to achieve successful literacy learning environments. In doing so, she draws from a wide range of professionals in the field, weaving a cohesive, personalized approach for her own classroom.

In Chapter 3, Kruch considers the importance of conscious, careful planning as she explores the roles of intrinsic and extrinsic motivation within the framework of achievement motivation (McClellan, 1972), establishing six keys to nurturing motivation in “relevant, high-interest classrooms.” Particularly helpful for veteran as well as novice teachers is the exploration that unpacks research related to engagement and motivation related to English Language Learners and gender equity issues. In each of the

six sub-sections of Chapter 3, Kruch draws upon a broad range of research to develop specific and carefully synthesized recommendations for the classroom.

Chapters 4-6 discuss ways to link process writing approaches to the arts, writing for critical thinking, and writing and the web. In Chapter 4, Kruch explores lessons that reflect whole class, small group, and individual writing instruction while also investigating the various roles that writing may take for individuals and for groups. Chapter 5 offers explicit and specific ideas for using writing to encourage “the two C’s: Critical Thinking and Choice” and provides three detailed unit plans that are immediately accessible for use. Chapter 6 anchors writing instruction for adolescent learner to the internet, taking advantage of skills students bring with them and extending those skills to include digital research for projects described in the chapter. In each of these chapters, Kruch shares both personal insights and a plethora of pertinent research to extend the conversation.

Assessment is virtually omnipresent in educational conversations in the United States today. Chapter 7 describes the many benefits to be realized from various formative, authentic assessments that help teachers design instructional models that work for all students. In her argument for formative assessment, Kruch cautions about many current assessment practices, including standardized assessments, and encourages teachers to help students understand the process of assessment as a means of reducing the stress and threat they often bring. She wisely urges fellow educators to be involved in all aspects

of district decision-making regarding assessments because doing so will allow them greater opportunity to argue for learner-centered practices.

Throughout *Tend Your Garden*, Kruch highlights maxims that reinforce key points. In her final chapter, she takes advantage of the maxims that have been presented in chapters 1-7 and discusses each through the lens of master teacher and theorist, further demonstrating how each can be realized in any classroom. Her final chapter—like the book as a whole—provides an optimistic and passionate message about the importance of the individual child and the individual teacher.

Veteran teachers will identify with the narrative that shares the journey of a lifelong learner who entered the teaching profession with passion and kept that passion growing throughout a career. Novice teachers will hear encouragement and specific strategies that are carefully developed against a backdrop woven of theories and research from various disciplinary experts. For all of us in the profession, this book offers a moment to stop, reflect, and plan as we continue to strive to place the child in the center of the curriculum.

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# Two Issues That Matter

## And Two Chances To Write for the LAJM

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### Fall 2014: Mental Illness

Deadline: July 15, 2014

The National Institute of Health defines mental illness as “a health condition that changes a person’s thinking, feelings, or behavior (or all three) and that causes the person distress and difficulty in functioning” and estimates that at least one in four people is affected by mental illness either directly or indirectly. This issue seeks to address mental illness/disorders in ELA teaching. We welcome articles on the following:

- Pedagogy and methods that address the needs of students diagnosed with mental illness or living with mentally ill family members. How can ELA/literacy pedagogies and curricula promote the acceptance of the mentally ill within the classroom and the community?
- Original or ongoing research in ELA teaching and mental illness.
- Examinations of the representation of mental illness in the literary works that we teach or should be teaching.
- Related issues concerning mental illness, including school support systems, definitions of mental illness, and methods to combat the stigma of mental illness.
- Please submit manuscripts through Scholarworks.([www.scholarworks.gvsu.edu/lajm](http://www.scholarworks.gvsu.edu/lajm))

### Spring 2015: LGBT in Michigan

Deadline: March 15, 2015

It has been nearly two decades since Gerry Crane was forced to resign from a West Michigan school for being gay. In the years since his dismissal, there has been a cultural shift toward acceptance of LGBT individuals and a corresponding push for full legal equality. Despite this progress, however, many challenges remain for LGBT teachers, pre-service teachers, students, parents, and administrators. This issue seeks to explore how English language arts teachers in Michigan can address these challenges. Authors may wish to answer one or more of the following questions:

- What works of young adult or adult literature have you used to address issues of sexual orientation and gender identity?
- What writing assignments have you used to foster understanding and respect between lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender, and straight students?
- What pedagogies or policies have you enacted to ensure that LGBT students are respected and heard?
- If you are an LGBT teacher, how does your school community support or fail to support you?
- How can elementary students be introduced to differences in sexual orientation and gender identity?
- Please submit manuscripts through Scholarworks.([www.scholarworks.gvsu.edu/lajm](http://www.scholarworks.gvsu.edu/lajm))