

November 2021

From the Editors...

Meghan Block
Central Michigan University

Carlin Borsheim-Black
Central Michigan University

Troy Hicks
Central Michigan University

Follow this and additional works at: <https://scholarworks.gvsu.edu/mrj>

Recommended Citation

Block, Meghan; Borsheim-Black, Carlin; and Hicks, Troy (2021) "From the Editors...," *Michigan Reading Journal*: Vol. 54 : Iss. 1 , Article 3.

Available at: <https://scholarworks.gvsu.edu/mrj/vol54/iss1/3>

From *The Teachers & Writers Guide to Classic American Literature*, edited by Christopher Edgar and Gary Lenhart, 2001, New York, NY: Teachers & Writers Collaborative. Copyright 2001 by Teachers & Writers Collaborative. Reprinted with permission.

This work is brought to you for free and open access by ScholarWorks@GVSU. It has been accepted for inclusion in Michigan Reading Journal by an authorized editor of ScholarWorks@GVSU. For more information, please contact scholarworks@gvsu.edu.

From the Editors...

by Meghan Block, Carlin Borsheim-Black, and Troy Hicks

As we begin a new year in what we had hoped would be a “post-pandemic” era, our call for proposals had invited authors to imagine – and interrogate – the “new normal,” all while we “build back better.” These words that promised so much in the spring of 2021 seem distant now. Of course, as this issue goes to press, we know that there are teachers and students around our state that are already in quarantine,



Meghan Block



**Carlin
 Borsheim-Black**



Troy Hicks

that the debates around vaccinations and masks remain on the agenda of school board meetings, and that this year will require us all to continue navigating a series of confusing (perhaps even conflicting) recommendations about how best to protect our children and welcome them back to school.

Despite these challenges, this year begins with hope, too. For educators in Michigan, broadly, we are hoping to see the influx of state and federal dollars having a real impact in our classrooms and schools. For MRA, we are hopeful that an in-person conference will be possible in March, and Conference Chair Dr. Leah van Belle provides us with an overview of the conference theme, “Literacy Equity, Justice, and Building Beloved Community.” The artwork for conference poster, “What’s the Scenario” (acrylic paint on a 16x20 canvas) was created by Detroit-based artist Lamarr Sanders, whose work can be found on Facebook by searching for Lamarr Sanders Art Gallery.

We also welcome our new Executive Director, Jeanette Field, who shares her reflections after her first month in this role and moving from the classroom to going “all in” with MRA. Finally, rounding out the front matter, MRA’s president for 2021-22, Jill Erfourth reflects on this time of transition and change for both the field of education and MRA as an organization.

For this issue, we offer a special thanks to Pam Gower who has offered her own artwork, “Begin Again” (acrylic paint, paint pen, pencil, and watercolor on canvas). In addition to being an artist, Gower is also an English teacher at MacDonald Middle School and a book reviewer for this issue.

In our *Bridging Research to Practice* section, we offer two articles. First, Dr. Sara Churchill and Dr. Kathleen Danielson share ideas about important instructional strategies for teaching vocabulary in their article, “Expanding Vocabulary with Children’s Books.” The piece culminates with an annotated biography of children’s books that are useful for vocabulary-focused read alouds in the elementary classroom. Then, in their article, “Toward Pedagogies of Coalitional Liberation,” Rae L. Oviatt and Stephanie F. Reid offer five tenets to support pedagogies of coalitional liberation and illustrate their application to practice by describing an eight-week unit from a secondary English Language Arts classroom.

In our *Voices from the Region* section, Dr. Kathleen Howe and Dr. Teddy Roop underscore the importance of teachers' voices in the formation of policies that will impact their literacy instruction. Their piece offers educators specific suggestions to ensure their voices are heard. And, in, "Building Bridges: Culturally Relevant Teaching with Literature Circles and Multicultural Literature," Amber Lawson shares strategies and examples of culturally relevant pedagogy based on her experiences teaching a "Building Bridges" unit in her first-grade classroom in Detroit Public Schools.

Next, Jenelle Williams and Laura Gabrion take a new look at socio-emotional learning through the "Whole Child" approach, exploring how to "Lift Every (Student) Voice with the Essential Instructional Practices for Disciplinary Literacy." Noting again that we enter another unpredictable school year, Williams and Gabrion "connect the dots" between engagement, socio-emotional learning, equity, and student discourse. Then, in her article, "Using a Ternion of Michigan's Resources to Support a Symbiotic Family/School Partnership" Darreth Rice shares ideas of ways in which school districts can enhance the partnerships between the school and the students' caregivers. Rice identifies common relationship-building practices used in schools and offers suggestions how those practices could be enhanced to achieve more beneficial partnerships to support student learning.

In our *Must Reads* section, we have two reviews. First, Pam Gower brings us into the story of Pong, a child longing to escape the walls of the fictional Namwon prison, set in a fantasy world. She reviews Christina Soontornvat's *A Wish in the Dark* (Candlewick, 2020), considering the role of friendship and persistence from the story itself, as well as the interactions she was able to have with the author in a virtual conference. And, we are grateful for the regular reviews offered by Lynette Suckow. This issue, she explores the theme of change and adaptation in five books, exploring the rites of passage for teenage girls who are first encountering their menstrual cycle, the life of Mary Walker, an enslaved woman who was finally able to learn to read at the age of 114, the possibilities one might find with incredible—and incredibly unique—jobs, and the life of *Apis Mellifera*, or the common honeybee.

Finally, we are pleased to know that our readership has grown through our partnership with Grand Valley State University and ScholarWorks. Since we launched our journal in an openly available format, we have seen consistent growth in readership, totaling over 14,000 article downloads, and an average now of over 1000 downloads a month. Your MRA membership is providing for the distribution of literacy research, quite literally, around the world, and we appreciate the continued support from our regular contributing authors. See more stats on our website: <scholarworks.gvsu.edu/mrj>.

Sincerely,

Meghan Block, Carlin Borsheim-Black, and Troy Hicks
Co-Editors, *Michigan Reading Journal*
mrj@cmich.edu

