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2019

## Cover, Front Matter, Editors' Note, Table of Contents

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### Recommended Citation

(2019) "Cover, Front Matter, Editors' Note, Table of Contents," *New Jersey English Journal*: Vol. 8, Article 1.  
Available at: <https://digitalcommons.montclair.edu/nj-english-journal/vol8/iss1/1>

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# New Jersey English Journal

*The Intersection of Literacy and Democracy:  
What role does language arts play in a free society?*

SPRING 2019  
Volume 8



**NEW JERSEY COUNCIL OF TEACHERS OF ENGLISH**



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**What sparked the NJCTE logo?** A NJCTE board member, Pat Schall, who was a professor at The College of St. Elizabeth, New Jersey, worked with a graduate student, MaryAnn St. Jacques, who taught private art lessons and is now an art teacher at Madison High School. While she was in Dr. Schall's classes, they invited art students, ranging from second grade to fifth grade, to design self-portraits based on their own literacy - reading, writing, speaking, and listening - focusing on what was important to them in literacy. St. Jacques had been teaching them about Picasso and the Cubists, and their self-portraits reflect that era in art but also sparked their own interpretations of that era and their reflections on their own literacy.

# *New Jersey English Journal*

## 2019 Issue, Volume 8

*New Jersey English Journal* is a peer-reviewed publication of New Jersey Council of Teachers of English (NJCTE). This journal is intended to serve our members through the sharing and showcasing of research, best practices, and ideas related to K-12 and college English Language Arts education, and to encourage diverse discussions and inclusion.

**Editor:** Liz deBeer, Point Pleasant Beach High School (emerita), Brookdale Community College

**Assistant Editor:** Patricia Bender, Rutgers University-Newark

### Editorial Board

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**CALL FOR MANUSCRIPTS**  
**2020 Issue of *New Jersey English Journal***

*New Jersey English Journal*, a peer-reviewed publication of New Jersey Council of Teachers of English, invites you to share submissions on the theme, **“What’s Next? Embarking Upon a New Decade of English Language Arts.”**

We seek research and practitioner-oriented pieces (1000-2000 words), as well as personal essays (700-1000 words) and other creative responses related to the theme and geared towards an audience of P-12 and postsecondary English Language Arts educators. In addition to submissions that respond to the theme, we also welcome poetry on the topic of teaching.

We welcome single and co-authored submissions from both veteran and new teachers, and we especially invite new writers, pre-service teachers, and graduate students to develop submissions. Writers are urged to read past editions available online at <[www.njcte.org](http://www.njcte.org)> to review past successful submissions.

We invite you to respond to the theme of **“What’s Next? Embarking Upon a New Decade of English Language Arts”** by considering such questions as:

- In what ways has the ELA classroom evolved? How, if at all, will the role of ELA teachers change in the future?
- How and when can ELA teachers make space for new voices, texts, and approaches?
- In what ways might interdisciplinary and cross-disciplinary approaches shape teaching and learning in ELA and beyond?
- How have your teaching methods evolved over time, or in what ways do you anticipate they will evolve? What factor(s) catalyzed these shifts? (e.g, technological innovation, the sociopolitical landscape, learners’ interests and needs)
- How can technology enhance traditional methods and/or create innovative modes for student communication, assessment, and learning? What opportunities and challenges does technology pose?
- What’s next for ELA? Over the next 10 years, how will our students change? How might we need to change? Which traditions and practices will (or should) grow obsolete, and which should be preserved?

Submissions will be accepted until **Friday, December 27, 2019** via <[www.njcte.org](http://www.njcte.org)>. All submissions will be reviewed through a double-blind process by multiple members of the Editorial Board. Submissions should not have been previously published or under review elsewhere. Manuscripts should follow MLA guidelines for citations. All writing should appear in Times New Roman 12 pt. font, and authors’ names and identifying information must be removed from all submissions. Send any queries to <[njenglishjournal@gmail.com](mailto:njenglishjournal@gmail.com)>.

# From the Editors

## ***The Intersection of Literacy and Democracy: What role does language arts play in a free society?***

*Literature allows us to be open, to listen to others and be curious.*

Tracy K. Smith, Poet Laureate of the United States

Reflecting on this journal's theme regarding the intersection of Literacy and Democracy, we may envision Civil Rights Leaders like John Lewis, who remind us about the stringent and often unfair literacy tests which prevented even educated people of color from voting.

Or the famed memoir *Narrative of the Life of Frederick Douglass*, where Douglass stresses that learning to read and write gave him the tools to be viewed as fully human by others – and by himself: “Once you learn to read, you will be forever free,” he wrote.

Or the reports around the world, that the vast majority of illiterates are female. Why? Again, literacy is the means to freedom, and denying others literacy is a blatant form of oppression.

Moreover, the intersection of democracy and literacy must contain a generous space for listening, whether it is listening via reading others' memoirs or listening to our students and colleagues. There can be no real dialogue without genuine listening. This may seem obvious, but listening brings its own demand, especially when the speakers and listeners do not agree – initially or ever. Zora Neale Hurston tell us, “There are years that ask questions, and years that answer them.” We are not always in the position to have sufficient time to listen to others, yet as teachers, and in this instance editors, we remain cognizant – even vigilant – about what it means to listen.

We have both been fortunate to work for a number of years as editors and judges – we have listened to a wide-range of voices. Writers have challenged our own perspectives; most often they have broadened them. Liz served as the editor-in-chief of this journal and various textbooks, and Patricia as one of the judges of the Geraldine R. Dodge Poetry Contest for high school students, and Associate Editor of *Peregrine*, a literary magazine; both of us were classroom teachers for more than 20 years and have served as writing coaches, paid or pro bono, for countless scholarships, fellowships, and residency applicants. In these cases, we are listening deeply to the life of another, as we have been trusted teachers, to help the applicant win a prize, secure needed funding, or create time to work on important projects. Without listening deeply, we cannot help. Each one of our voices is important, and we all need to work consistently on ways to make ourselves heard.

We have had the advantage – for 30 years – of a key resource in our work. We are friends as well as colleagues. We have trusted each other enough to listen. Of course, we do not always agree. Our lives have been shaped by very different life experiences and will continue to be. So, what is the common ground? We are not inclined to suggest a recipe but trust and curiosity have to be in the mix.

How does this connect to the theme of *The Intersection of Literacy and Democracy: What role does language arts play in a free society?* Our responsibilities as editors, as teachers, as citizens involve listening even when it is difficult to do so.

The various entries of this journal present opportunities to listen to voices and views we may not have heard before, such as the views of a teacher who is offering ideas for “developing global competencies” or one wondering about graffiti on a desk.

We hear reminders of the ever-present connection between literacy and democracy in Sara deBeer’s poem about teaching poetry to homeless students. We hear it in the speeches and tweets by March for Our Lives student leaders, and depicted on the graffiti board from the 2018 Spring Conference. We hear it in Sheryl Lain’s “Picture Books Teach Empathy and Much More,” where she asserts that picture books’ messages of empathy and tolerance help model a more democratic classroom, because it demonstrates “Listening, sharing words, and working with others [which] not only creates a warm classroom but also works to develop better citizens outside of the classroom.”

This is our last year as editors of this journal; we gratefully and proudly introduce the next editors: Lauren Zucker and Emily Hodge. This tradition of collaboration continues, as Julius Gottilla reflects on his role as a former editor of this journal in his essay: “About Relationships, Not Prerogatives: Editing the *New Jersey English Journal*.” Julius stresses that the most important byproduct of his work is the friendships he developed among the editors and the writers.

We also develop relationships with the readers, some we may never meet. When we listen, when we read others’ words, we often feel some connection, which, with hope, humanizes us and deepens our commitment to learning, to justice, to democracy. While our roles are shifting, we intend to remain involved with this organization and to continue learning from each other. Thank you for being part of our community of learners and teachers.

Sincerely,

Liz deBeer, Editor, and Patricia Bender, Assistant Editor  
*New Jersey English Journal*, 2016-2019

## **OPPORTUNITIES & HONORS**

### **AWARDS:**

NJCTE offers several awards for teachers. Please consider making a nomination or self-nomination. The Marcia Holtzman Pre-Service Teacher Award honors preservice teachers aiming to work at the elementary, middle, and high school levels. The M. Jerry Weiss Early Career Teacher Award honors teachers with one to five years of teaching experience. Our Educator of the Year Award recognizes an exceptional English/language arts educator - a dedicated, innovative, dynamic Pre-K-12 teacher, university teacher, supervisor, or administrator - whose activities have significantly and widely impacted New Jersey English language arts education.

More information about these awards and past award winners are listed on our website: <https://www.njcte.org/teacher-awards>.

### **BLOG:**

Please consider sharing your work - a project, a finding, an anecdote, some words of inspiration, a story of your connection with your students - with our members around the state by becoming a "teacher who writes" in our NJCTE blog. Email [njcteblog@gmail.com](mailto:njcteblog@gmail.com) to share your expertise. Please read our blog: <https://njcte.wordpress.com>.

### **WRITING CONTESTS:**

NJCTE offers several student writing contests. We invite you to encourage your students to submit to them - and consider joining us to judge. For more information, go to <https://www.njcte.org/writing-contest>.

### **CONFERENCES:**

NJCTE hosts two conferences a year. We hope you will join us and consider presenting. For more information, go to <https://www.njcte.org/conferences>.



*The New Jersey English Journal*  
2019 Issue, Volume 8  
**The Intersection of Literacy and Democracy:  
What role does language arts play in a free society?**

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