

CHESTER COUNTY READING ASSOCIATION

An IRA Honor Council, A KSRA Exemplary Council

Winter 2009-2010 Newsletter

www.ccil.org/~ccra

Jan Pizarro, editor

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To receive CCRA's newsletter by email rather than snail mail, contact Jan Pizarro, as above, to be added to the email list. You will receive your newsletter faster, while saving CCRA the cost of printing and mailing, allowing more money to be spent on programs and outreach. Newsletters can also be more easily shared with friends and colleagues through email. Join the many members who have already elected to be on the email list. Our newsletters are also posted on our website as above.

"Remember that in the end it will be teachers who make a difference in children's lives. It is the teachers who will either lead the change or resist and stymie it. The focus of school change has to be on supporting teachers in their efforts to become more expert and reorganizing all aspects of the educational system so that they can teach as expertly as they know how."
- Richard Allington, 2004

A Letter from Our President...

Greetings to CCRA Members and Friends!

At the beginning of each New Year we make resolutions that focus on personal goals. What are your resolutions for 2010? One of my goals is to continue to work with our CCRA board of directors to provide meaningful professional development for our members. We want all those attending to keep up to date with current trends in literacy.

A survey of literacy leaders by *Reading Today* lists **Comprehension** as a "Hot Topic for 2010". Our next two CCRA workshops will address this hot topic. Dr. Sharon Kletzein will present at an after school workshop on January 28th, and Dr. Mary Beth Allen will speak at our Saturday workshop on March 6th. More information about these speakers can be found in our newsletter.

I encourage you to make one of your New Year's resolutions to attend at least one or even all of the CCRA's workshops for 2010. I wish all of you a happy and healthy New Year and look forward to seeing you on January 28th.

Please note that the election ballot for CCRA Officers for 2010-2011 is on page 17 of this newsletter. We hope you will take a minute to vote!

Sincerely,

Joanne DiSabatino, President

Chester Country Reading Association Meeting Schedule for Winter-Spring 2010

Thursday, January 28, 2010

Speaker: Dr. Sharon Kletzien

Title: TBA

Time: 4:00 PM-6:30 PM

Location: Chester County Intermediate Unit

Act 48 Hours: 2 Hours

Members: Free **Non Members:** \$10.00 **Students:** \$5.00

Saturday, March 6, 2010

Speaker: Dr. Mary Beth Allen

Title: Reading Comprehension Strategies

Time: 8:30 AM-12:00 PM

Location: Chester County Intermediate Unit

Act 48 Hours: 3 Hours

Members: Free **Non Members:** \$10.00 **Students:** \$5.00

Thursday, May 20, 2010

Sponsor: Houghton Mifflin Harcourt

Speaker: Linda Hoyt

Time: 4:00 PM-6:30 PM

Location: Chester County Intermediate Unit

Act 48 Hours: 2 Hours

Members: Free **Non Members:** \$10.00 **Students:** \$5.00

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Membership Renewal Alert...

You can renew your membership in KSRA/CCRA any month of the year at no disadvantage to you, as all memberships run for one year from the date that KSRA receives your check (or credit card information) and membership form. For example, if you join in December of 2009, even though you have missed out on the 2009 programs in September and November, you will be able to attend those programs in 2010 on this membership.

Membership is still just \$30 for this year, and for that amount you can attend at no charge five CCRA meetings and earn almost a dozen Act 48 credits. In addition, food treats are served free of charge at four of our meetings (At the brunch meeting, you can eat a very generous breakfast at a reasonable price). Also, with our reciprocal policy with other local councils, you can attend a meeting of a group such as the Delaware County Reading Association if this group was addressing a topic or having a speaker you wanted to hear.

To obtain a membership form, download one from the KSRA website www.ksra.org If you have any difficulty doing so, Just email me at the email address given below, and I will email you an attachment with a form. Furthermore, if you have any other questions, email me at jakvma3@comcast.net
Thanks so much. - Jean Kerrigan, CCRA Membership

Kaleidoscope of Experience and Ideas



Jen Bryant on Writing

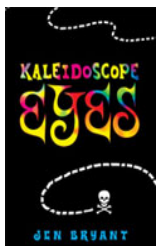
by Susan Caroff

“Writing is about memory. Experiences stored in body.” This was how children’s author Jen Bryant described her own source of ideas when she spoke at our September 23rd program. Using photographs, illustrations and text from her many books, she wove the discussion of her work into useful advice for teachers on how to guide student writers.

In describing her composing process, Bryant explained that writing is “part problem solving, decision making and intuition.” She begins with a situation and setting and follows them wherever they take her. She works at home or goes to the state park and writes in longhand on legal pads. [E. L. Doctorow](#) has been a tremendous influence and she likes to quote him in discussing her craft. Doctorow said of writing, “It’s like driving a car at night. You never see further than your headlights, but you can make the whole trip that way.” Bryant said that she, like many other writers, allows her intuition to take the lead.

Bryant doesn’t pay attention to trends, preferring instead to pursue whatever interests her. She finds “nuggets” of topics everywhere. (See the book covers below for a few sources of her inspiration.) Many ideas come from her childhood experiences and she has insight into ways teachers can help young writers with topics. She says students should be encouraged to write about the visual and sensory images they live through every day. As a child, Bryant collected rocks, postcards and shells, and read *National Geographic*. Her memories of these provide ideas for books and characters. She suggests a free verse poem on a favorite collection as a great place to begin writing poetry. [Acrostics](#) can help young writers who have difficulty coming up with ideas. Picture books are an excellent source of poetic devices. As an adult, Bryant is particularly interested in personal narratives of the past. She grew up in Flemington, NJ, where the Lindbergh trial was held and reenacted for many years. Young authors should look around their communities for topics or find a newspaper article and write a story about it. Like all good writers Bryant is an enthusiastic reader. Other authors’ styles can be studied, imitated, and transformed into the writer’s own style. Current news, art, oral histories of family members, original biographies, historical fiction and travel are other sources of inspiration.

Following are covers of recent books, accompanied by information on the inspiration for them. Bryant said the goal of a book cover is to spark reader interest without giving away the contents. She has never met any of the illustrators for her books, because today’s writers usually aren’t asked to approve or proof illustrations. She recommends teachers have students plan and design a book cover as a way of understanding relationships between text and illustration.



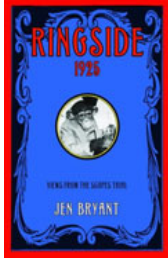
Story about the 60s. Watched news on the Vietnam War and read Richard Zack’s *The Pirate Hunter* and article on the Steamship Arabia found at the bottom of a cornfield in Kansas. Captain Kidd is said to have buried treasure somewhere in NJ before he turned himself in. From these diverse events, comes this verse novel.



Lindbergh baby trial. Grew up in Flemington, NJ, and passed by courthouse where trial was held every day on her way home from school. JB’s aunt and grandmother were let out of school to observe the trial. Researched artifacts on famous case at NJ State Police Museum.



Wanted to introduce three generations of Wyeths in this book. The main character imitates the Wyeths's drawings.



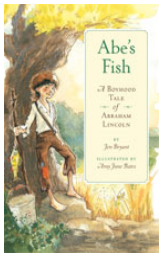
About the Scopes' trial. JB's great aunt survived polio, but didn't believe in evolution until she saw JB and her siblings get flu shots. She later reconciled her religious beliefs with science.



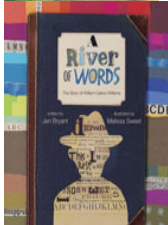
Georgia O'Keeffe, like JB, collected things when she was a child. Collections later gave inspiration for O'Keeffe's art. On a trip to the Philadelphia Art Museum, writer Eileen Spinelli suggested JB make her poem about O'Keeffe into a picture book.

Most of Bryant's recent books have teacher's guides that can be accessed through her website.

<http://www.jenbryant.com/>



From an incident described in an original biography of Lincoln first printed in West Chester. At around age six, Lincoln caught a nice fish, but gave it away to a soldier fighting the War of 1812. JB went to Gettysburg College where Lincoln made his famous address on the square.



Biography of William Carlos Williams. WCW had sense of place, ordinary people and activities, family and vocation. He was a physician who wrote poems on a prescription pad as he worked. He was also a collector. JB uses Passaic River as the central image of the book and a metaphor for language. Short WCW poems can be used in the classroom.



Based on French composer Olivier Messiaen's experience in WWII German prison camp. Main character loves birdsong and composes and plays a piece of music for the entire camp. Illustrator uses yellow as a color of hope.



Main character Jonathan meets the poet Marianne Moore when he returns her hat. JB read Moore's letters at the Rosenbach museum in Philadelphia. Moore's apartment and manuscripts are in the museum.

Good writing is supposed to evoke sensation in the reader - not the fact that it is raining, but the feeling of being rained upon. ~ E. L. Doctorow

Two Points >>

Research to Inform Practice

- Teacher-researcher Cathy Hsu uses **writing partnerships** during the independent writing portion of her fifth grade writing workshop. Hsu conducted her own research on the effectiveness of writing partnerships to solve the problem of too many students needing teacher conferences during independent writing. Hsu found there were two major benefits to the partnerships. First, students rely on one another for support. Second, they have significantly more opportunities to respond to text by critiquing writing and making recommendations to their fellow writers. Mixed-gender partnerships of students of similar abilities seem to work best. Personalities, strengths, weaknesses, organizational habits and ELL needs are other factors considered in matching students.
- Two English teachers in an urban high school use student-generated photographs and reflections as a way of getting students to see the value of writing to their lives in and outside of school. Writing through images and reflections is the **“photovoice” method**, wherein participants document relevant social concerns through the use of visual images. Over a three-year period, about 100 culturally diverse middle and high school students participated in a photovoice project, “Through Students’ Eyes” (TSE). To construct their photovoice projects, students took photos and evaluated them to select those that best represented their relationship to school. They then wrote descriptions of the images to explain what they showed about their school experience. Teachers concluded that writing assignments that incorporate visual literacy give students opportunities to share their points of view and show the relevance of literacy to their lives. For a lesson plan that integrates photovoice and print texts, see the list of links below.

Interestingly, **writing** was listed as a **“not hot”** topic in the 14th annual “What’s Hot” survey of literacy leaders recently published in *Reading Today*. If more IRA members hear presentations from inspiring authors like Jen Bryant, writing will once again be a hot topic!

References

- Hsu, C. (2009). Writing partnerships. *The Reading Teacher*, 63(2), pp. 153–158.
- What's hot for 2010. (December 2009/January 2010). *Reading Today*, 27(3), 1, 8, 9.
- Zenkov, K., & Harmon, J. (2009, April). Picturing a Writing Process: Photovoice and Teaching Writing to Urban Youth. *Journal of Adolescent & Adult Literacy*, 52(7), 575–584.

Reading to be a Writer Links

A plan for high school that incorporates photovoice, blogging and print:

http://www.readwritethink.org/lessons/lesson_view.asp?id=1064

Mentor texts, interactive writing prompts, ideas for writers workshop:

<http://writingfix.com/index.htm>

An article on the Japanese phenomenon of cell phone novels by adolescent authors:

<http://www.adlit.org/article/30975>

High school seniors write a poem about who they will be in five years; poem is mailed by teacher five years later:

http://readwritethink.org/lessons/lesson_view.asp?id=943

Alphabiography plan – grade 6-8 students write autobiographies using the alphabet:

http://readwritethink.org/lessons/lesson_view.asp?id=937

Authors talk about their writing and a helpful writer's toolkit for young writers:

<http://www.channel4learning.com/sites/bookbox/home.htm>

Plan that uses fairy tales and storyboard to help grades 1-2 students write their own:

http://www.readwritethink.org/lessons/lesson_view.asp?id=874

Plan for small-group guided writing in grades 1-2:

http://www.readwritethink.org/lessons/lesson_view.asp?id=1149

Shape books as writing frames for primary writers:

http://www.eduplace.com/rdg/hme/k_5/shapebook/toc.html

NCTE's position statement on teaching writing:

<http://www.ncte.org/governance/writing>

For two excellent books on using mentor texts K-8 by our very own CCRA members **Lynne Dorfman & Rose Cappelli**, the most recent, *Nonfiction Mentor Texts*:

<http://www.stenhouse.com/html/home.htm>

What's Hot for 2010!!!

from the International Reading Association's *Reading Today*

14th annual survey reveals some "crumbling pillars" of reading instruction

By Jack Cassidy and Drew Cassidy



[Download the What's Hot for 2010 chart](#)

IRA: www.reading.org

Fourteen years ago, when the "What's hot" surveys began, we had no expectations that they would become yearly events. The first article was only about 500 words long and appeared somewhere in the middle of *Reading Today*.

Despite that less than prominent placement, the article attracted notice. People talked about it; allusions were made to the findings at major conferences for literacy educators. Soon, a decision was made to make the column a yearly feature. Thus, since that first piece, the annual survey has appeared on the first page of *Reading Today* and has more than quadrupled in length.

The annual list has been cited in countless book chapters, journal articles, and conference presentations. It has been translated into Spanish and replicated, in slightly modified form, in the United Kingdom and Romania as well as in many states in the United States. Newspapers such as *Education Week* have summarized the findings and interviewed the authors.

In addition, longer discussions of the results have appeared in many journals and book chapters. For 2010, three longer articles in various educational venues are planned. One of these, an invited commentary titled "Adolescent & Adult Literacy: What's Hot, What's Not," will appear in the March issue of the International Reading Association's *Journal of Adolescent & Adult Literacy*.

The hottest topics and those losing heat

This year, there are eight "very hot" topics, up from five in 2009. Five of the "very hot" topics in 2010 were also the "very hot" topics in 2009: *adolescent literacy*, *English as a second language/English-language learners*, *high-stakes assessment*, *literacy coaches/reading coaches*, and *response to intervention (RTI)*. The other three "very hot" topics were *comprehension*, *early intervention*, and *struggling/striving readers (grade 4 and above)*.

There are no surprises in the list of "very hot" topics. The surprise for this year centers on the topics that have "cooled off": scientific evidence-based reading research and instruction and fluency. We'll talk more about those later in the article. Of the "very hot" topics, RTI is definitely the "hottest" of the "very hot."

Explaining the survey

This survey of literacy leaders has been conducted each year since 1996. During the months of April through September, 25 literacy leaders are interviewed, either in person or by phone. All are read a standard 178-word paragraph defining "hot" and "not hot." It is also explained to respondents that their ratings of "hot" and "not hot" do not necessarily reflect their personal interest, or lack thereof, in a given topic. Rather, the ratings refer to the level of attention that a given topic is currently receiving.

Sometimes we must remind new respondents that "hot" is not synonymous with "important." Our results would be quite different if respondents were asked, "Is this important?"

After hearing the introductory paragraph, each respondent is asked to rate a given topic as "hot" or "not hot." Each respondent is then asked if the topic "should be hot" or "should not be hot." The resulting chart, consisting of how the topics were rated, is then published in *Reading Today*.

Constructing the survey

Each year, the 25 literacy leaders who responded to the list of topics the previous year are sent that year's list and asked to make modifications, additions, and deletions. If some of the literacy leaders fail to respond, they are called or e-mailed again and urged to respond. For the 2010 survey, 21 of the 2009 leaders eventually provided suggestions for additions, modifications, and deletions. Based on those suggestions, we constructed this year's list.

Two of the topics on the 2009 survey were eliminated. One of those topics, *multicultural literature*, had been on the "cold" list for some time. The other eliminated topic, *direct/explicit instruction*, had actually been a hot topic for many years, but last year began to cool off.

Based on input from the 2009 respondents, one topic on the 2010 list was modified, and two topics were added. The topic *new literacies/media literacies* was modified to be *new literacies/digital literacies*. Over the years that topic has undergone a number of modifications. The two topics added were *differentiated instruction* (which was rated "hot") and *intertextuality/reading multiple texts* (which was rated "not hot").

Selecting the respondents

We select each year's respondents based on a number of criteria. The first and most important criterion is that they must have a national or international perspective on literacy. Thus, we often select those who are on the boards of prominent literacy organizations such as IRA, the National Reading Conference, and the Association of Literacy Educators and Researchers.

Some editors of the major journals in the field are usually included. We always try to get at least one editor from each of IRA's most widely read journals, *The Reading Teacher*, *Journal of Adolescent & Adult Literacy*, and *Reading Research Quarterly*.

We also select respondents from various geographical areas in the United States, from Canada, and from outside North America. The percentage of IRA members in a given area determines the number of literacy leaders we interview from that area. For instance, the Southeastern region of the United States has approximately 22% of IRA's individual members. Therefore, we should interview about five literacy leaders from the Southeast; this year we interviewed exactly five literacy leaders from the Southeast.

We also try to see that different job categories are represented on the list (such as teachers, college professors, and administrators) and that it is ethnically diverse. However, the main criterion for inclusion is that the literacy leader has knowledge of trends and issues at the national or international level.

Some people have assumed that "literacy leader" is synonymous with "literacy expert." However, some of those interviewed would probably not refer to themselves as "experts." Still, because of their positions or studies, they have access to a broad range of current information about issues affecting literacy.

Reading the chart

[The chart](#) shows what the literacy leaders think is "hot" or "not hot" as well as what they think "should be hot" and "should not be hot." A square symbol in a column indicates that a majority of those interviewed gave a particular response; we call these topics "hot" or "not hot." Two squares indicate that at least 75% of those surveyed gave a particular response; we call those topics "very hot" or "cold." Three squares indicate 100% agreement; we call these topics "extremely hot" or "extremely cold."

On the chart a (+) indicates that the topic is hotter for 2010 than it was for 2009. A (—) indicates that the topic is colder for 2010 than it was for 2009. An (*) indicates that the topic is new for 2010.

Explaining some topics

Most topics listed on the chart are self-explanatory, although sometimes a given respondent can have his or her individual definition for a topic. However, several terms that appear to be of a distinctly U.S. origin require a bit more explanation.

A *literacy coach* or *reading coach* is a reading professional who focuses on providing staff development in reading/language arts to teachers. Literacy coaches or reading coaches do this by modeling appropriate strategies, observing in classrooms, conferring with teachers, and conducting staff development seminars.

Ideally, the *literacy coach* works in only one school and is a certified reading specialist. Unfortunately, in many instances, this is not the case; the *literacy coach* is not a licensed reading specialist and/or serves more than one school. Several respondents expressed concern that *literacy coaches* might disappear because the term is too closely connected to the Reading First legislation.

Response to intervention (RTI) seems to be another term that is unique to the United States. Like many topics on the list, this term originated with U.S. legislative action.

In order to curtail the number of referrals for special education, legislation now allows for some preventive measures. Thus, a percentage of the money normally allocated for special education can now be used for quality in-class instruction. If that intervention does not work, some short-term, small-group, or individual intervention may be initiated, possibly by a reading specialist. If that does not work, the third level of intervention is more long term in nature and could involve referral to a special education class.

This model is sometimes referred to as the "three-tier model," but it is not the only model. [A more thorough discussion of the RTI issue appears on IRA's website.](#)

Some hot issues

Each year we take particular note of some of the hottest topics in the field. This year no topic received the "extremely hot" designation (i.e., all of our respondents agreeing that this topic was receiving a great deal of attention). Last year, we had the same finding.

Of the eight "very hot" topics this year, five were "very hot" in 2008 and 2009 as well: *adolescent literacy*, *English as a second language/English-language learners*, *high-stakes assessment*, *literacy coaches/reading coaches*, and *RTI*. The other three "very hot" topics for 2010 were *comprehension*, *early intervention*, and *struggling/striving readers (grade 4 and above)*. Both *comprehension* and *early intervention* have periodically slipped off the "very hot" list in the last five years, but they always seem to find their way back.

As noted earlier, the hottest of the "very hot" topics this year was *RTI*, and close behind was *adolescent literacy*. In regard to *adolescent literacy*, the [Alliance for Excellent Education](#) (www.all4ed.org) has done much to make legislators aware of the needs of U.S. high schools and the successful efforts at reform. The organization's report [Reading Next—A Vision for Action and Research in Middle and High School Literacy: A Report to Carnegie Corporation of New York](#) is still widely cited.

A more recent report, [Time to Act: An Agenda for Advancing Adolescent Literacy for College and Career Success](#), identifies adolescent literacy as the key to meaningful educational reform. This report, which was released on September 15, 2009, is a culmination of a five-year study of the literacy skills of students in grades 4 through 12.

Among the characteristics of exemplary schools identified in the report is a *literacy coach* who devotes 100% of his or her time to coaching. Heretofore, *literacy coaches* have been most often associated with the primary grades. Perhaps *literacy coaches* will

continue to be "hot" as more secondary schools make use of them. The attention being paid to adolescent literacy also explains why *struggling/striving readers (grade 4 and above)* is now a "very hot" topic.

Undoubtedly, the attention being directed toward RTI can be attributed to the overidentification of students for special education in the United States and the possibility of using some of the money normally allocated for special education to prevent overidentification. Unfortunately, as several respondents have noted, there is a debate over who will control the funds allocated for RTI and thus who will control the instruction. Should literacy professionals be in charge, should special educators be in control, or should the classroom teacher be in charge? One respondent remarked that he hoped that this debate would not turn into the "new reading wars."

The crumbling pillars: the cooling topics

Based on the report of the [National Reading Panel](#) (NRP), certain areas of reading instruction have been stressed for the last decade. These areas of focus were *phonics, phonemic awareness, fluency, comprehension, and vocabulary*.

The NRP never said these were the only areas deserving attention, nor did it even say that these were the most important components of reading instruction. The NRP report merely said that these were the areas about which there was enough good scientific research to generate some conclusions about instruction. However, many interpreted the NRP findings to mean that these areas were essential to all reading instruction. Thus, these five topics became known as the "five pillars" of reading instruction.

The mortar that held the five pillars together was scientific evidence-based reading research. In the 2010 list, for the first time in a decade, *scientific evidence-based reading research and instruction* is rated as "not hot."

A number of factors have probably contributed to the change. First, results of Reading First programs employing carefully controlled scientific research have failed to demonstrate the dramatic improvements in student learning that advocates predicted. Secondly, the Obama administration has emphasized innovation—not necessarily research-based instruction.

Furthermore, a recent report from the William T. Grant Foundation of New York City entitled *Toward a Research Agenda for Understanding and Improving the Use of Research Evidence* found that administrators and policymakers do not appear to be influenced by empirical research findings. Most of the respondents to the 2010 survey agreed that *scientific evidence-based reading research and instruction* "should not be hot." Apparently, they felt that, in the past, too much attention had been paid to strict scientific research.

Another of the crumbling pillars is *fluency*. For the first time since it appeared on the list, this topic is rated as "not hot." Thus, three of the five pillars are rated "not hot"; furthermore, respondents agree that all three "should not be hot."

The two remaining pillars, *comprehension* and *vocabulary word meaning*, were hot, and respondents generally agreed that they should be. Those in the field of literacy have long argued that these should be the major focus of all good reading instruction.

Goals of the survey

In the early years of this survey, we would often receive communications from readers alleging that publication of such material contributes to a "bandwagon effect" with researchers and teachers focusing only on the hottest topics. We always took pains to make sure that the term *hot* was not synonymous with the word *important*. That distinction became clearer when we added the "should be hot" and "should not be hot" columns in 2000.

However, even the reasons for the "should be hot" and "should not be hot" responses are varied. Sometimes respondents will say a topic "should be hot" not because they are advocates of the practice but because they believe more research needs to be done on that topic.

Unfortunately, a newspaper is not the proper venue to discuss all of the subtleties in the comments of the respondents. The purpose of the survey has always been to acquaint readers with those issues that are receiving attention, thus perhaps encouraging them to investigate these topics in more depth. We also hope that the discrepancies between the "hot" list and the "what should be hot" list will encourage our readers to be more active advocates for the best literacy practices in their own schools and political arenas.

Also, educators can take advantage of the attention focused on some of these issues and make needed changes in their schools. Thus, because in 2010 *adolescent literacy, RTI, and literacy coaches* are "very hot," now might be the time to involve literacy

coaches in the secondary schools to train classroom teachers in the use of the three-tier model before referring students for special education.

A final statement about 2010

Overall, it appears that 2010 will be a year of transition—of change. The "hot" topics that were the cornerstones of the Bush administration's policies on literacy (*phonemic awareness, phonics, fluency, and scientific evidence-based reading research and instruction*) have definitely cooled off—they are "not hot." Furthermore, most of our respondents agree that they "should not be hot."

Could we be moving toward an era where the "hot" topics are those our respondents agree "should be hot"? Let's wait and see.

Survey respondents

Participants in this year's survey were Sherry Alleman, **Stacy Middle School, Massachusetts**; Richard Allington, **University of Tennessee**; Donna Alvermann, **University of Georgia**; Kathryn H. Au, **SchoolRise LLC, Hawaii**; Thomas Bean, **University of Nevada, Las Vegas**; Heather Bell, **Rosebank School, New Zealand**; David Bloome, **The Ohio State University**; Karen Bromley, **Binghamton University, SUNY, New York**; William G. Brozo, **George Mason University, Virginia**; Robert Cooter, **Bellarmine University, Kentucky**; Patricia A. Edwards, **Michigan State University**; James V. Hoffman, **University of Texas**; Barbara Kapinus, **National Education Association, Washington, DC**; Donald J. Leu, **University of Connecticut**; P. David Pearson, **University of California at Berkeley**; Taffy Raphael, **University of Illinois–Chicago**; Timothy Rasinski, **Kent State University, Ohio**; D. Ray Reutzel, **Utah State University**; Victoria J. Risko, **Vanderbilt University, Tennessee**; Lori Rog Jamison, **Toronto, Canada**; Misty Sailors, **University of Texas–San Antonio**; S. Jay Samuels, **University of Minnesota**; Timothy Shanahan, **University of Illinois–Chicago**; Dorothy Strickland, **Rutgers University, New Jersey**; and Linda Young, **Hans Herr Elementary School, Pennsylvania**.

Jack Cassidy, a former president of IRA, is the associate dean and director of the Center for Educational Development, Evaluation, and Research at Texas A&M University–Corpus Christi. Drew Cassidy formerly taught at the same institution. Questions or comments about this survey can be directed to jack.cassidy@tamucc.edu.

What's hot for 2010. (December 2009/January 2010). *Reading Today*, 27(3), 1, 8, 9.



Notable Children's Books of 2009

By THE NEW YORK TIMES BOOK REVIEW

CHARLES AND EMMA: The Darwins' Leap of Faith

By Deborah Heiligman

Holt. \$18.95. (Ages 12 and up)

The unlikely, and happy, marriage of Charles Darwin and Emma Wedgwood comes to life in Heiligman's intelligent and fast-moving book. Emma, a devout Christian but a sympathetic editor, helped make the arguments in "On the Origin of Species" airtight. Meanwhile readers can almost effortlessly absorb Darwin's ideas and the culture in which they developed, along with a portrait of Victorian everyday life.

DOWN, DOWN, DOWN: A Journey to the Bottom of the Sea

Written and illustrated by Steve Jenkins

Houghton Mifflin Harcourt. \$17. (Ages 4 to 8)

Through a magical use of cut paper, Jenkins takes the reader on a voyage to the deepest part of the ocean. Multilayered and multicolored, bizarre

creatures almost seem to move on the page: flying squid, cold-eyed mackerel and lacy, bioluminescent siphonophores (lighted up like Broadway bulbs). Helpful descriptions both inform and entertain.



GENIUS OF COMMON SENSE: Jane Jacobs and the Story of “The Death and Life of Great American Cities”

Written and illustrated by Glenna Lang and Marjory Wunsch

Godine. \$17.95. (Ages 10 and up)

This engaging book shows how Jacobs (who never went to college) developed her revolutionary ideas on urban design by walking around observing city streets. Later, she challenged Robert Moses and won.

THE LAST OLYMPIAN: Percy Jackson & the Olympians, Book 5

By Rick Riordan

Disney Hyperion. \$17.99. (Ages 10 and up)

In Riordan’s universe, Greek mythology — along with its vividly imagined heroes and monsters — is alive and well in New York City. Percy, short for Perseus, here concludes his adventures (for the moment) with great humor and inventiveness, not to mention nearly world-ending mayhem.

MARCELO IN THE REAL WORLD

By Francisco X. Stork

Arthur A. Levine/Scholastic. \$17.99. (Ages 12 and up)

This brisk and brilliant novel tells the story of Marcelo, who knows he’s different, but not “abnormal or ill” (for people who need labels, he says his condition resembles Asperger’s). A summer job his father forces him to take in the “real world” plunges him into a legal mystery, a moral dilemma and a deepening friendship with his boss, the beautiful Jasmine.

THE VAST FIELDS OF ORDINARY

By Nick Burd

Dial Books. \$16.99.(Ages 14 and up)

Set among the fields of Iowa, what could have been a standard last-summer-before-college drama is instead packed with insights and memorable characters you want to know better, chief among them a young gay protagonist who plays against type in gratifying ways. Burd’s nuanced storytelling and metaphor-rich writing lift his debut novel far above the ordinary.

WHEN YOU REACH ME

By *Rebecca Stead*

Wendy Lamb/Random House. \$15.99. (Ages 9 to 14)

Stead's novel is a thrilling puzzle: a complex mystery, a work of historical fiction and a story of friendship, with a theme of time travel running through it. After Miranda's apartment key disappears and strange notes begin appearing, clues pile up on the way to a moment of intense drama. From then on it is nearly impossible to stop reading.

YUMMY: Eight Favorite Fairy Tales

Written and illustrated by *Lucy Cousins*

Candlewick. \$18.99. (Ages 3 and up)

In "Yummy," the superbright palette of Lucy Cousins (of "Maisy" fame) meets the art of the fairy tale. Along with the wolves, hens and little girls in primary colors, outlined by the artist's characteristic black brush strokes, the jaunty humor irresistibly pulls you in. Chosen as a New York Times [Best Illustrated Children's Book of 2009](#).

The 10 Best Books of 2009

By THE NEW YORK TIMES BOOK REVIEW

After so many years, and so many lists, you might think the task of choosing the 10 Best Books would get easier. If only. The sublime story collections alone created agonies of indecision. So did the superb literary biographies we read — and deeply admired. But in the end the decisions had to be made.

Not that drawing up the list — or rather, whittling it down — was a wholly painful exercise. One of the pleasures it afforded was the chance to resample the sometimes surprising chemistry of reviewers and authors, particularly when it came to fiction. Jonathan Lethem, whose "Chronic City" made our list, reviewed Lorrie Moore's novel "A Gate at the Stairs," which made it too, while Curtis Sittenfeld, whose novel "Prep" was one of the 10 Best in 2005, reviewed Maile Meloy's story collection "Both Ways Is the Only Way I Want It," a winner this year. Any book review editor will attest that persuading fiction writers to assess other people's fiction can be a struggle. These were heartening exceptions to the rule. May more novelists review for us in 2010!

FICTION

BOTH WAYS IS THE ONLY WAY I WANT IT

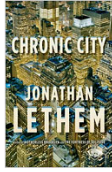


By *Maile Meloy*

Riverhead Books, \$25.95.

In an exceptionally strong year for short fiction, Meloy’s concise yet fine-grained narratives, whether set in Montana, an East Coast boarding school or a 1970s nuclear power plant, shout out with quiet restraint and calm precision. Her flawed characters — ranch hands in love, fathers and daughters — rarely act in their own best interests and often betray those closest to them.

CHRONIC CITY

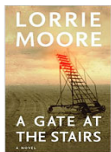


By Jonathan Lethem

Doubleday, \$27.95.

Lethem’s eighth novel unfolds in an alternative-reality Manhattan. The crowded canvas includes a wantonly destructive escaped tiger (or is it a subway excavator?) prowling the streets, a cruel gray fog engulfing Wall Street, a “war free” edition of The New York Times, a character stranded on the dying International Space Station, strange and valuable vaselike objects called chaldrons, colossal cheeseburgers and some extremely potent marijuana.

A GATE AT THE STAIRS



By Lorrie Moore

Alfred A. Knopf, \$25.95.

Moore’s captivating novel, her first in more than a decade, is set in 2001 and narrated by a Wisconsin college student who hungers for worldly experience and finds it when she takes a job baby-sitting for a bohemian couple who are trying to adopt a mixed-race child. Meanwhile, she drifts into a love affair with an enigmatic classmate and feels the pressing claims of her own family, above all her affectless younger brother, who enlists in the military after 9/11.

HALF BROKE HORSES: A True-Life Novel

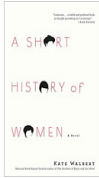
By Jeannette Walls



Scribner, \$26.

In her luminous memoir, [“The Glass Castle.”](#) Walls told of being raised by eccentric and unfit parents. Now, in a novel based on family lore, she has adopted the voice of her maternal grandmother, Lily Casey Smith — mustang breaker, schoolteacher, ranch wife, bootlegger, poker player, racehorse rider and bush pilot. The result reanimates a chapter of America’s frontier past.

A SHORT HISTORY OF WOMEN



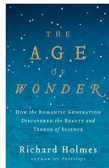
By *Kate Walbert*

Scribner, \$24.

The 15 lean, concentrated chapters in this exquisitely written novel alternate among the lives of a British suffragist and a handful of her Anglo-American descendants. The theme is feminism, but Walbert is keenly alert to male preoccupations and the impressions they leave on the lives of her female cast. Walbert's prose, cool and intelligent, captures the many ways we silence and are silenced, the ways we see and hear as we struggle to grasp hold of meaning.

NONFICTION

THE AGE OF WONDER: How the Romantic Generation Discovered the Beauty and Terror of Science

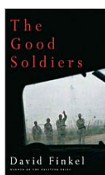


By *Richard Holmes*

Pantheon Books, \$40.

Holmes harnesses the twin energies of scientific curiosity and poetic invention in this superb intellectual history, which recreates a glorious period, some 200 years ago, when figures like William Herschel, Humphry Davy and Joseph Banks brought “a new imaginative intensity and excitement to scientific work,” and literary giants like Coleridge and Keats responded giddily to these breakthroughs, finding in them an empirical basis for their own faith in human betterment.

THE GOOD SOLDIERS



By *David Finkel*

Sarah Crichton Books/Farrar, Straus & Giroux, \$26.

Finkel, a Pulitzer Prize-winning writer and editor at The Washington Post, gives full voice to his subjects, infantry soldiers from Fort Riley, Kan. (average age 19), posted in the lethal reaches of Baghdad at the height of the “surge.” Finkel's own perspective emerges through spare descriptions — of a roadside bombing or the tortured memories of a single soldier — that capture the harrowing realities of war.

LIT: A Memoir



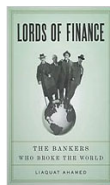
By Mary Karr

Harper/HarperCollins Publishers, \$25.99.

This sequel to [“The Liars’ Club”](#) and [“Cherry”](#) is also a master class on the art of the memoir. Mordantly funny, free of both self-pity and sentimentality, Karr describes her attempts to untether herself from her troubled family in rural Texas, her development as a poet and writer, and her struggles to navigate marriage and young motherhood even as she descends into alcoholism.

LORDS OF FINANCE: The Bankers Who Broke the World

By Liaquat Ahamed



The Penguin Press, \$32.95.

The parallels with our own moment are impossible to miss in Ahamed’s narrative about four members of “the most exclusive club in the world,” central bankers who dominated global finance in the post-World War I era. Ahamed, a longtime investment manager, evokes in glittering detail a volatile time of financial bubbles followed by busts, all of it guided by players wedded to economic orthodoxy.

RAYMOND CARVER: A Writer’s Life

By Carol Sklenicka

Scribner, \$35.

Ten years in the making, this prodigiously researched and meticulous biography sympathetically and adroitly integrates its subject’s work with the turbulent life — marred by alcoholism, financial turmoil and family discord — that brought it into being. Sklenicka shrewdly deconstructs Carver’s fraught relationship with Gordon Lish, the editor who played an outsize role in the creation of Carver’s stories, the most influential of a generation.

From the West Chester Public Library...

In an effort to save on printing costs and some paper, WCPL has published its latest newsletter online! Read about our volunteers, a fun children’s program, the book discussion group’s fall-winter reading schedule, and more. We hope you enjoy it.

Click here to find the newsletter on our website: http://www.wcpublilibrary.org/images/newsletters/wpc1_summer2009_newsletter.pdf

- Victoria Dow, Director, West Chester Public Library 610-696-1721

PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT

Act 48 UPDATES



PPID (Professional Personnel ID)

In order to make personal information more secure, PDE will no longer use Social Security numbers (SSN) to access information on teachers, such as certification information, ACT 48 status, etc. Instead, certified professional staff will be issued a 7-digit Professional Personnel Identification number (PPID). If you have not already received your PPID number, please complete the following steps as soon as possible:

- go to PDE website
- follow step by step directions provided on the site
- record your 7-digit ID number in a handy place for future reference

CCRA, an ACT 48 provider, is now required to use your PPID to report your ACT 48 hours earned at our programs, workshops and presentations. You will need to provide your 7-digit PPID at upcoming CCRA programs when you sign in to receive ACT 48 hours beginning with the September 19th program.

- Deb Dinsmore, ACT 48 Liaison

Please Save Books and Magazines..

One of Chester County Reading Association's literacy projects is to fill a magazine rack for the Career Center in Coatesville. We collect gently used magazines and small children's books and deliver them from time to time. Little Golden Books are an ideal size, as the space is limited. You may help support this by bringing some to any CCRA program meetings.

- Carol Bremner

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CCRA Launches Newest Community Literacy Initiative

This fall, our county reading association created and successfully launched a new community outreach program to provide literacy opportunities to the neediest of family situations. Our Chester County has only one Women's Shelter facility. We clearly saw the literacy need at such a facility when the executive director herself shared her "dream wish": to be able to provide three brand new books for each child in a departing family, to own and read together, at the time the client family is departing the shelter and transitioning into its own new, independent housing.

At their departure, each family child is given a CCRA gift book bag, containing three, new books, at the child appropriate grade level, with an inspirational and motivational message from CCRA, to promote the child's love of reading through these gift books. To date, CCRA has provided twenty-one new books to children departing the shelter with their families to embark on building a new family-centered life, with \$250.00 seed money from our CCRA treasury.

Our KSRA affiliate association, at the state level, found our new community literacy initiative innovatively worthwhile to award CCRA a KSRA literacy grant of an additional \$300.00 to continue our new project through this year.

Since CCRA's initial implementation of our new community literacy project, the shelter itself has been successful in doubling its housing quarters for client families. With the shelter's expanded facility addition, CCRA will have additional access to provide our neediest children with the opportunity to foster literacy for them in their new family lives. We are currently purchasing a second round of book bag gifts for the shelter children, as we publish this newsletter.

The executive director and your CCRA executive board extend our heartfelt appreciation to all of our CCRA members for your continued dedication to and support of county-wide literacy through CCRA initiatives, such as this one.

One avenue for each of you members to personally participate in our new literacy project is to donate good, used books to facilitate an "in-house" reading library for mothers and children to read with each other during their stay at the shelter. We will be accepting any good, used-book donations at each of our next three program meetings. Why not plan to become involved and bring your own book donations to the January 28th Reading Program.

Gratefully,
Carole Valentine, Carol Bremner, Dorothy Janofsky, Jean Kerrigan

Celebrate Literacy Award 2009

During the November 14, 2009 meeting of CCRA the Celebrate Literacy award was presented to this year's recipient – Diane Thomson. This award is presented annually to a person, group, or organization in Chester County who promotes the growth of literacy throughout the community, region or world. Diane is the program development and support coordinator at the Chester County Intermediate Unit and was the person who started the Reading Olympics in Chester County seven years ago. Diane had seen a similar program elsewhere but recognized the need for children in Chester County to have an opportunity to “showcase” their reading abilities and skills and love of books. After discussion with local librarians, teachers, and other IU personnel she developed the format and planned for the first event to take place. Through the years more and more students have formed teams at the elementary and middle school levels to participate in this yearly event. As the Reading Olympics concludes students leave with an award of participation and the accomplishment of sharing their knowledge and love of reading with others. Diane accepted the award with her assistant, Sarah Vone.

By Tina Faccioli

CCRA Board of Directors

Carol Bremner, CASD ret.
Dr. Susan Caroff, WCU
Rose Cappelli, WCASD
Joanne DiSabatino, WCASD
Debbie Dinsmore, WCASD
Jane Dulin, KCSD ret.

Tina Faccioli, DASD
Dr. Cynthia Haggard, WCU
Carol Harris, GVSD
Alicia Kelly, WCASD
Carolyn Kelly, WCASD
Glendia Kennedy, CCIU

Jean Kerrigan, VMA
Mary Ann Mallory, OJRSD
Jan Pizarro, WCASD
Susan Rodebaugh, PASD
Jane Schultz, DASD
Carole Valentine, CCIU

Chester County Reading Association Officers Ballot 2010-2011

President: Mary Ann Mallory _____

President Elect: Carol Harris _____

Vice President: Glendia Kennedy _____

Treasurer: Jean Kerrigan _____

Secretary: Rose Cappelli _____

Corresponding Secretary: Carole Valentine _____

Vote with a check on line and return to Carolyn Kelly at carolynkelly928@verison.net , or by USPS to: Carolyn Kelly, 928 Thorne Drive, West Chester, PA 19382 - by February 10, 2010.

*****PLEASE CONTINUE TO SCROLL DOWN FOR OUR PROGRAM FLYERS AND
REGISTRATION INFORMATION...*****

Chester County
Reading Association

An IRA Honor Council, A KSRA Exemplary Council

Presents

Dr. Sharon Kletzien

Professor Emerita West Chester University

**“PUT IT IN YOUR
OWN WORDS”**

4:00-6:30 PM Thursday, January 28, 2010

****Chester County Intermediate Unit****

2.0 Act 48 Hours

Members - Free

Nonmembers - \$10.00

Students - \$5.00

RSVP by Friday, January 22, 2010

to Mary Ann Mallory: mmallory65@gmail.com

When responding please provide PPID#

Check www.ccil.org/-ccra for cancelations due to weather

Chester County Reading Association

Presents

Dr. Mary Beth Allen

East Stroudsburg University

“Reading Comprehension Strategies”

8:30AM -12:00 PM Saturday, March 6, 2010

Chester County Intermediate Unit

3.0 Act 48 Hours

Members - Free

Nonmembers - \$10.00

Students - \$5.00

RSVP to Mary Ann Mallory by Friday, February 26, 2010

mmallory65@gmail.com or 610-873-6396

When responding please provide PPID#

Check www.ccil.org/-ccra for cancelations due to weather.

Chester County Reading Association

An IRA Honor Council, A KSRA Exemplary Council

Presents

Linda Hoyt

*Internationally Renowned Author, Staff Developer,
Curriculum Specialist*

Sponsored by Houghton Mifflin/Harcourt

Topic To Be Announced

Thursday, May 20, 2010

4:00-6:30 PM

Chester County Intermediate Unit

2.0 Act 48 Hours

Members - Free

Nonmembers - \$10.00

Students - \$5.00

RSVP to Mary Ann Mallory

by Friday, May 14, 2010 at

mmallory65@gmail.com or 610-873-6396

When responding please provide PPID#

Check www.ccil.org/-ccra for cancelations due to weather.