



Virginia Association of Teachers of English

Fall 2004

The Newsletter
Volume 24
Number 3

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From the Editor

The conference is right around the corner (October 8-10, 2004) and it is shaping up to be one of our very best. Check out this sampling of sessions you won't want to miss:

- The Tech Savvy English Teacher
- Using Technology to Meet the Needs of Your Diverse Student Populations
- The New Frontier of the 21st Century: Virtual Learning
- Tactile Teaching: Turning Plain Paper into 3-D Lesson Plans
- Lesson Plans for Orson Scott Card's Ender's Game
- Revisiting Orwell's 1984
- Strategies and Tools for Differentiated Instruction
- Iambic What?: Avoiding Poetry Pitfalls
- Reading and Writing a New Genre: E-Texts
- Curiosity Counts: Inquiry Based Learning Strategies That Matter
- The Power of Place: Setting in Children's Books and Student Writing
- Diagramming Revisited
- Teaching Persuasive Writing and Research Through the Lens of Current Events and Social Justice
- Rhetoric and Curriculum
- Planning for Online Instruction
- The Treasure Chest of Web Resources
- Creative Ideas in Teaching Literature
- Teaching Revision Strategies
- Using Imagination and Creativity to Fulfill the Standards
- The Socratic Seminar: Improving Students' Thinking and Writing One Question at a Time
- Navigating the Road to Reading Comprehension: Two Strategies that Guide and Direct

I will be there and I hope you will be too! Bring a friend.

Sharon Hurwitz



Membership Status Pay By Mail Pay On Site Amount Due
 Member * \$50.00 \$60.00

Non-Member	\$75.00	\$85.00	
Student	\$10.00	\$15.00	
* Are you a first year teacher? Yes or No			

Date	Event/Meal Selections	Cost*	Amount Due
Fri-Oct 8	Opening Session/Social Hour @ Ferry Farm		
Fri-Oct 8	Afternoon Tea/publishers	Free	
Sat-Oct 9	Circle one: Yes No Undecided Colonial Continental Breakfast	Free	
Sat-Oct 9	Circle one: Yes No Undecided Presidential Legacy Luncheon/Speaker	Free \$17.00	
	The luncheon will include: biscuite crumb-cruste chicken with corn and red pepper relish, Monticello field cresses with house dressing, Black-eyed pea salad, Jefferson's and Mary		
Sat-Oct 9	macaroni pie, Black walnuts, and green beans, Washington's gingerbread.. Colonial Virginia Banquet Select one: (A) Sugar-Cured Smithfield Ham	\$30.00	
Sun-Oct 10	(B) Smoked Turkey Breast (C)Vegetarian Assortments Virginia Hunt Country Brunch/Speaker (an elaborate Sunday buffet)	\$17.00	
Total costs	Registration Plus Meals		
* Meal selections must be ordered and paid for in advance. (On-site meal orders will not be available.)			

Make check payable to: VATE Conference Registration

Reminder: Mail the two-page registration form and your check NLT September 30th to

VATE Conference Registration
 Deborah J. Neuhard
 35 Greenleaf Terrace
 Stafford, VA 22556

For Registrar's use only: Date Rec'd: _____ Amt Encl: _____ Chk No: _____



VATE Funds Support Henrico Shakespeare Course

Honors Shakespeare students from five Henrico County high schools benefitted from the VATE Mini-Grant awarded for the 2003-2004 school year.

“We had no budget when we started the course,” said VATE grant recipient, Audrey Baylor of Douglas Freeman High School in Richmond, Virginia. “We believed in the course and were willing to try some new teaching strategies, but we were stymied for funds. VATE not only came through with the dollars, but their support let us know we were on the right track in pursuing innovative teaching methodology.”

Something must have worked. The on-line Shakespeare course, championed by Henrico County English Curriculum Specialist Frances Lively, combines on-line testing and an on-line discussion board with face-to-face instruction as well as field trips to live performances. It was offered to twenty students in its premiere season. Over sixty students have signed up for next year’s class.

“Taking the Shakespeare course on-line gave me flexibility but it also taught me how to budget my time,” said Cherelle Upimoh of Highland Springs.

“This course was really about enjoying literature, about seeing Shakespeare come to life. It was incredibly different from other courses because the emphasis was on experiential learning. We would read a play, meet for a [Barnes and Noble] coffee house discussion of what we had read, take an on-line test, maybe attend a film lecture, and then go to Blackfriars to see a live performance,” explained Charles Rousseau of Douglas Freeman. “It was very different from sitting in neat little rows reading one Shakespeare play for the year, not at all as if we were getting a requirement out of the way.”

“Seeing Shakespeare instead of just reading Shakespeare is one thing,” said Sarah Janeski of J.R. Tucker High School, “but seeing lots of Shakespeare is beyond the imagination.

Students took objective (open-notes but timed) on-line tests on fifteen Shakespearean plays over the course of the school year. They also took field trips to Blackfriars Theatre in Staunton, Virginia to see five performances of plays they had studied. Blackfriars is a reproduction Elizabethan Theatre.

“The actors at Blackfriars are astonishing,” said Hillary Shayne of Douglas Freeman. “Their performances are as good as anything I’ve seen in New York. We would get so that we would argue over which actor we expected to play Ophelia or who would be cast as Falstaff, how an actor might have played Shylock. We had an entirely different sense of what it meant to read a play because we knew it would come to life. We would get to see Shakespeare’s words become flesh. Shakespeare intended for his work to be seen, not just read. Even when we read plays that we weren’t going to see, we started to imagine specific actors and how we thought they’d say the lines.”

Students posted opinions of the performance they had seen on-line. They argued over casting or staging choices, discussed how directors’ decisions affected understanding of Shakespeare. They came to discussions prepared with the critical opinions of A.C. Bradley, Harold Bloom, and Northrop Frye. About once a month they met at Barnes and Noble to drink coffee or hot cocoa and to discuss the latest Shakespeare assignment.

“The best part of the course,” said Nina Huss of Hermitage High School, “was being mixed with students from other high schools who had the same passionate interest. Before this course I thought I was the only one, a Shakespeare Nerd all on my own. I guess I knew there was maybe one other person at my school who loved Shakespeare the way I did, but this course let me see that it was a cool thing to care about, that there were others who love Shakespeare like I do.”

Nina’s enthusiasm must have been contagious. Two students from her high school took the course this year. Next year, fourteen more Hermitage students intend to join the class.



Enthusiasm is strong across the county. In addition to students from Douglas Freeman, Highland Springs, Hermitage, J.R. Tucker, and Varina, three more high schools will contribute students to the on-line learning experience: Deep Run, Henrico, and Miles Godwin.

“We have all kinds of plans, thanks to VATE,” said Baylor, Shakespeare instructor. “VATE’s support has meant that we can keep innovating our program. I’d like to continue to build community involvement through an extended Elizabethan film series, set up for the Shakespeare students but open to the public, and I think we have forged the beginnings of a partnership with Agecroft Hall to do that.

Agecroft Hall [an English Tudor home reconstructed in Richmond, Virginia] served as a meeting place—in addition to Barnes and Noble—for the students who had no traditional classroom space. In the Spring, some of the students volunteered to return for Agecroft’s Renaissance Fair. They saw it as a way to pay back Agecroft for use of its facilities. They had enjoyed a private tour of the Elizabethan home and returned for a big screen film session in the home’s renovated state-of-the-art film room.

During that particular class, students watched film clips of identical scenes as interpreted by three different film versions of *Hamlet*. After watching Mel Gibson, Kenneth Branagh, and Ethan Hawke carry the title role, students saw how open to interpretation Shakespeare’s famous tragic hero can appear.

“I’d like to do a lot more of that,” said Baylor. There are so many directions to go with Shakespearean films. We can talk about the difference between traditional, eclectic, modern, or period settings. We can talk about film makers’ choices—use of lighting, symbolism, camera angles, characterization, even the efficacy of special effects. We can talk about how soliloquies are handled differently in film than on stage. The possibilities are endless.”

VATE’s support allowed Baylor to expand the film library which she intends to use in a film and lecture series. She intends to coordinate the series with Agecroft Hall’s Melissa Zimmerman, Director of Public Relations, and to make it open to the public.

“[The film series] is just a good thing,” said Baylor, who has added over twenty Shakespearean and Elizabethan films to the course library. “I want as many people as are interested to have access to what we’re learning.”

The auditory and visual element of Shakespeare was a crucial part of instruction.

“Even though I only show clips of films—and always after students have already been tested on content—I often heard students talking about getting together later to rent one version or another. Seeing the bits and pieces whetted their appetites for more. It taught them how to view film critically as well,” said Baylor.

“Taking this course changed the way I think,” said Paten Huges of Douglas Freeman.

“Shakespeare addresses the human condition, makes us see ourselves differently. He has such a range of plays, so many quotable lines, and the exposure I got from this class was incredible. I knew that I was learning something important. It changed my life.”

Shakespeare instructor Audrey Baylor is also working with Henrico County to create a comprehensive British literature web site with resources for teachers and students. The web site will house comprehensive information on literary time periods, authors, British history and monarchy, film lists, as well as virtual tours of England. There is a section on Shakespeare within the site. The entire site will take three to five years to construct but may be previewed at the below listed web site.

http://teachers.henrico.k12.va.us/freeman/guengerich_a/BBL/index.htm



A message from the Executive Secretary

Dear Fellow VATE members,

I recently returned from New Orleans where I had the privilege of representing VATE at the NCTE affiliates leadership conference. There were leaders attending from 22 states in the mid-Atlantic and mid-west regions of the country, and all of them were trying to put their “best foot forward” as they showcased their affiliates’ activities and accomplishments. I would like to thank you, the members of the Virginia Association of Teachers of English, for making my job an easy one. Time and again, the representatives from the other states were impressed by our achievements here in Virginia.

One item that constantly caught people’s eyes and garnered their praise was this year’s VATE Conference, which as you know, will be held October 8-10 in Fredericksburg at the Holiday Inn Select. If you have not registered yet, I urge you to do so right away. Also, share information about the conference with your colleagues. The conference that we sometimes take for granted is the envy of folks in other states.

Throughout the leadership conference, I was asked over and over again, “How can Virginia put on such a high quality conference at such a low cost to those who are attending?” Indeed, for just \$124 (the cost of registration and the three meal functions), VATE members have the privilege of hearing two of the “hottest” YA writers out there today (Sharon Draper and Orson Scott Card), attending their choice of 45 other sessions (including many sessions led by other authors), enjoying a social and a performance by storyteller Rob Ruffin at Ferry Farm, and feasting on some elegant cuisine (not your typical hotel fare!).

Of course, conferences like ours do not just happen. Virginia can put on such a high quality conference because of the hard work and dedication of a lot of people. President Jan Suppa-Friedman and her local arrangements team have been busy planning and organizing for over a year to make the 2004 VATE conference the best ever.

Another way Virginia can continue to put on high quality conferences at low costs is by having the membership turn out and support the venue in which the conference is located. Though conferences are about sharing ideas and networking with colleagues, they also are about economics. For the hotel, the bottom line is “heads in beds” and “plates on tables” at meal functions. For VATE, the bottom line is the happier the hotel, the better rates we get for meeting room rentals and other conference costs. If VATE saves money on costs, we are able to invest that money in future conferences and other VATE programs.

So don’t delay! Register for the conference. Plan to stay for an evening or two at the Holiday Inn Select. (Remember: you must make reservations by September 14 to ensure that you receive conference rates and for VATE to get “credit” for your stay.) Sign up for the meal functions. (After all, they are the best way for you to have an opportunity to interact with Sharon Draper and Orson Scott Card.) When it comes to conferences, we “have it made” in Virginia, so do yourself and your professional organization a favor and join your fellow VATE members in Fredericksburg October 8-10.

Sincerely,
Chuck Miller
VATE Executive Secretary

Board Openings

Contact Jan Suppa-Friedman for more information.

State Coordinator for the Promising Young Writers Program - We are looking for a State Leader in Virginia to receive student papers, select judges, and direct the work in judging the papers. TimeLine:

Dec. 20 - Submits a list of judges to be invited (NCTE will provide a list of past judges and will help locate new judges.)

Jan. 14 - Receive the students' papers and verify from the list provided by NCTE that those students were nominated.

Jan. 30 - Distribute the entries to the judges.

Feb. 28 - Tally the results from judges and break any ties to determine the students who will receive certificates of recognition or participation.

March 28 - Notify NCTE Awards Office of the results.

VETAC Liasion - We are looking for a member of VATE who is interested in technology and how it is used in the English/Language Arts classroom. This person will represent VATE at the meetings of the Virginia Educational Technology Advisory Committee, which meets in October, February, and May, usually in Richmond.

Needle's Eye Editor - The editorship is a two-year commitment that involves putting together four newsletters a year and sending the finished product to the printer. Experience with Pagemaker is highly recommended.

Special Publications Chair - Coordinates special publications as directed by the President of VATE.

Affiliate Chair - The Affiliate Chair serves as a liaison between the VATE Executive Board and VATE's local affiliates, chairs the VATE Service Award Committee, and plans/hosts the Affiliate Presidents' Luncheon at the VATE Fall Conference.

A Celebration of Life

Susan L. Kulesher, 62, a former VATE president, who served from 1991-1993, succumbed to cancer on May 22 at Georgetown University Hospital. Sue taught eight years as an English, journalism and creative writing teacher at Thomas Jefferson High School for Science and Technology. Prior to that, Sue had taught 23 years at Fairfax County's Thomas Edison High School in Alexandria, where she served as chairman of the English Department.

Sue received one of VATE's most distinguished awards, the Foster B. Gresham Award, which stands for excellence in teaching English. Sue was a dedicated teacher. One of her students wrote that she "taught many of [them] how to write, how to live, and most of all, she taught [them] by example how to be a good person amid all that life throws at us."

VATE grieves the loss of a former president and friend. To be awarded the Foster B. Gresham award is an honor for a Virginia teacher who has distinguished herself in the commitment and service to her students. Sue Kulesher achieved this in her long service to the English profession in Virginia.

A Celebration of Life



SUSAN L. KULESHER
JULY 4, 1941 - MAY 22, 2004

The Needle's Eye
Sharon Hurwitz, Editor
7612 Bridgette Lane
Norfolk, VA 23518

Non-profit Organization
U.S. Postage Paid
Blacksburg, VA
Permit No. 180

“The Needle’s Eye doth supply the thread that runs so true.”

Call for News items

If you have news items related to teaching English and language arts that you would like to share with fellow English teachers, please send them to shurwitz@cox.net