

Learning, Literacy & Living

'Been reading *The rights of the reader* by Pennac. My Head of Department gifted it to me. I was already hooked a few years back on Pennac's 10 points entitled *Rights of the reader* but didn't think to buy the book. Now here it is—a new translation ... a really, really good translation. In front of me. Opened, dog-eared already, sections re-read and I have only had it for a minute!

It reads to my heart and to my mind. Bubbles of excitement effervesce. I cringe at the way he observes us 'teaching' reading—the methods stipulated, agreed, endorsed as learning to read. School endorsed. Curriculum endorsed. And then Pennac releases me to my truths—reading is a right and tireless deconstruction is not reading. It is.. uh.. tireless deconstruction.

And he continues 'the cult of reading is in oral storytelling ... And you're [who me? The TL?] the high priest[ess]'.
When someone reads aloud, they raise you to the level of the book.
They give you reading as a gift ...

Yes that's just it ...the essence of stories, the right to read, to read a bit, to not read at all, to dip and dive, to skip to the end, to read where you want ... and to share with the people we love best.

Pennac notes, 'When a person we like gives us a book, we look for them at first between the lines—for their tastes, for the reasons they thrust it into our hands, for a sign of the bond between us. But soon we're transported by the words ... [but] just a mention of the title is enough to bring back memories of that person...' (Pennac trans. Adams 2006, p.88). Memories of that person—pretty powerful stuff. Begs the question.

He also talks about a great teacher he had and this I think is the essence. Teacher

librarians can nurture the love of reading because 'the most important thing was that he [Pennac's teacher] read everything out loud to us. From the word go, he trusted in our desire to understand... When someone reads aloud, they raise you to the level of the book. They give you reading as a gift' (ibid p.96).

Reference

Pennac D. (trans. S Adams) 2006, *The rights of the reader*. Walker Books, London.

LGL

Sydney's Writers' Festival School Days

May 28-30

Parramatta & Walsh Bay Sydney
stellar line up of writers and illustrators
aimed at primary & secondary students

Contact
88393399 Parramatta
or
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Books. The BIGGER Picture



Nominations are now being called for this prestigious award

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ASLA (NSW) Website
www.aslansw.org.au

Dedicated to teacher librarians who
are making a difference

PLUG IN - LISTEN TO LEARN

We can see the evidence: kids love audio. Just look around to see the extra bits attached to their ears these days. But whatever is going in has them engaged.



Listening to audiobooks can be a scaffold in overcoming barriers to reading:

The Art of Listening

Listening is an undervalued art, perhaps because of its seeming passivity. Listening is an important literacy in our increasingly multi-modal world as evidenced in studies such as Beer's (1998) who identified that fifth grade listening ability is a predictor of high school performance.

We know that our students are 'tuned-in' throughout their daily lives. The popularity of digital MP3 players and the availability of digital audio content offer unprecedented opportunities for teachers to engage students in listening activities.

But would they be meaningful activities? Is listening really of value in the classroom?

The Value of Listening

A review of literature uncovered several points about listening as a valuable learning strategy.

Listening is a medium in its own right for both content acquisition and enjoyment:

- Listening can increase student understanding of subject content (see study by Boyle 2003).
- Listening meets the needs of the 30% of students who have been identified as auditory learners (Dunn & Dunn 1993 in Chen 2004)
- Listening is an especially effective learning tool for boys. Boys' recall after listening and after reading aloud is better than their recall after silent reading (Johnson 1982).
- Listening is a way to enjoy both fiction and non-fiction when unable to read print such as when commuting or exercising .

• Listening can increase motivation. Audiobooks provide a taster of fluent reading by removing the difficulty that poor readers have in moving beyond the mechanics of reading to the enjoyment of the action of the story (Allen 2000). Remember that for older beginning readers the memory of past struggles in reading is hard to overcome (Baskin & Harris 1995).

- Listening can overcome text complexity. Audiobooks can bridge the gap between reading and listening vocabulary, allowing students access to age appropriate literature which would otherwise be beyond their reading ability (Baskin & Harris 1995). By facilitating access to the content of books, audiobooks enable students to participate in class discussions, an important step in their learning (Beers 1998)
- Listening can improve reading strategies. Listening while reading offers older readers the opportunity to hear fluent reading modelled. The active nature of listening (vs. hearing) is seen in an audiobook listener's ability to keep track of characters, settings and plot in a story which may last for hours (Chen 2004) and in the fact that the brain's short term memory works harder in listening than in reading (Varley 2002).

Summary

Audiobooks are one of the longest standing media available to teachers and have evolved to use the most up-to-date and popular technology available, thus warranting, as Baskin & Harris (1995 p. 373) note, examination into:

how its unique properties could be harnessed to enhance the learning environments of the secondary classroom - not just as an attractive alternative to the usual presentation of literature but as a basic instructional tool.

KNOWING READERS ...

And finally, because young people are quick to uptake new technologies, audiobooks, podcasts and MP3 files merge with powerful classroom potential.

So smile when the kids are plugged in - they are developing an important literacy!

AF

REFERENCES

Allen, J 2000, *Yellow Brick Roads: Shared and Guided Paths to Independent Reading 4-12*. Stenhouse: Portland ME.

Baskin, BH & Harris, K 1995, 'Heard any good books lately? The case for audiobooks in the secondary classroom'. *Journal of Reading*, 38, 4, pp. 372-376, retrieved from ProQuest database 24 November 2005

Beers, K 1998, 'Listen while you read: Struggling readers and audiobooks'. *School Library Journal*, 44, 4, pp. 30-35, retrieved from ProQuest database 24 November 2005.

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Adele's fuller article can be found on ASLA (NSW) website at www.aslansw.org.au.

Susan La Marca and Pam Macintyre's *Knowing readers* (2006, SLAV, Carlton, VIC) is a feast of ideas to get any reading program working well in schools.

The authors caution that 'constructing [reading] activities around texts is an area where adults need to tread carefully, neither over analysing, nor leaving students to find their own enjoyment in reading' (p. 71).

They maintain that we should be, as enabling adults, 'encouraging children to think about the process of reading' (ibid). They stress that we should be knowing adults—so in tune with students' reading preferences, habits and thinking patterns that we would find ourselves at the right place at the right time in a successful exchange of ideas (Lanagan 2006 p.8).

As a knowing adult, we have the skills to have 'sized the child up, to have searched among the books in the memory ... for the perfect one ... to have presented it and had it accepted ... [to have] watched the child become entangled in it ...' (Lanagan ibid). Or as Lanagan (op. cit.) observes [when the child switches on] 'it is quite momentous; deep machinery is grinding into action inside the child's mind and heart; important gates are opening; giant possibilities are coming into being'.

Graphic What?

When does a comic book become a graphic novel to add to your graphic collection or is it your picture book collection and when does it graduate to an illustrated information book or to a short story. And does it really matter how you classify them as long as your students are reading? Recent articles in various literature-based magazines seem to be pretty relaxed about the descriptors for the above formats so perhaps the argument is only sustained at the classification level.

If *Superman* is a comic, *Maus* is a graphic novel, *Sandman* is a short story (it won the Hugo Award for short story) and *Tamai's William Shakespeare's Macbeth* is Shakespeare in a picture format, then what is it we are defining?

BOYS JUST WANNA READ!

Boys & Books is a program that runs once per fortnight for boys in our Middle School, years 7-10. It differs from other reading programs such as DEAR, USSR and Wide Reading because it *actively* promotes reading rather than provide for a prolonged period of silent, sustained reading. Make no mistake, though, there's plenty of time in the program for boys to kick back and get into a good book.

The pillars of the program are a good supply of top quality young adult literature, a crop of boys ready to be inspired and teacher librarians *who know and love the literature*.

One English period per fortnight, the boys and their English teacher come to the library's reading area to be met by an enthusiastic TL. Most *Boys & Books* periods begin with the TL reading aloud to the boys. Everyone loves a good story and the response to *read-alouds* is excellent. The remainder of the time is spent talking about good reading, sharing recommendations and, for as much time as possible, just reading. It's essential that the TL and the English teacher read at this time as well, providing good modelling to the boys.

Visits by famous authors are the icing on the cake and we've been lucky over recent years to have authors such as Matthew Reilly, Anthony Horowitz, Scott Monk, Andrew Daddo and Markus Zusak talk to the boys. These visits have really fired the boys up and the works of these authors just fly off the shelves.

Boys & Books is also supported by *Hear & Now*, our Friday lunchtime readings by invited guests from across the school community and by *Fully Booked: A blog to celebrate reading*. As well, we hold a Writers' Weekend, planned and run by the TLs and English teachers, during which boys attend writing seminars, listen to authors speak about their work and have some quiet moments to do their own writing.

For some time, the TLs have felt *in their bones* how popular *Boys & Books* is at the school. And so, late in 2005, it was decided

to conduct some action research to confirm our observations. Sure enough, contrary to global concerns that boys aren't reading, the evidence highlighted a reading culture in which boys enjoy reading and greatly value the opportunity to pursue reading for pleasure within the school curriculum.

The action research into *Boys & Books* was designed to assess the attitudes of boys in Years 7 and 8 towards both reading in general and specific aspects of the *Boys & Books* program. Results of interest included:

In Year 7, 48% of boys read every day, 35% of boys every few days.

In Year 8, 44% of boys read every day, 32 % of boys every few days.

In both years, 99% of boys agreed that they enjoyed B & B.

In both years, 90% of boys agreed that they enjoyed having the teacher librarian read aloud during sessions.

In both years, 80% of boys liked to read fiction and 40% liked to read graphic novels in B & B.

In both years, 70% of boys used B & B as a time in which to select reading material.

In Year 7, 34% of boys used their parents' recommendations to help them choose reading material; in Year 8, this figure rose to 43%.

In response to the request for *one* suggestion as to how to improve B & B, over 40% of boys in both years requested more B & B.

So, forget the conventional wisdom that boys don't read!

These results speak powerfully for boys as readers.

JF & DL

INFORMATION FITNESS TEACHERS— PUT ON YOUR SANDSHOES

Cruising the icvet.tafensw *ezone* can at times bring up some real jewels. The article *Training in Information Fitness: Research Skills* (Grossett & Pollock ICVET 2007 online) brought a refreshing twist to information seeking.

Set in the context of Sport & Fitness, students are asked to consider information seeking and knowledge construction as a warm-up (planning your research), conditioning (locating/ evaluating) and the cool down (presenting and acknowledging information sources).

Pollock (ibid) drew a witty comparison between libraries and gyms—both were once places with a single librarian/ receptionist, filled with equipment/books and no trained staff.

*Information fitness
...consider the process of
information seeking as three
stages—a warm-up, conditioning
and finally the cool down.*

Both are now social sites where ‘customers expect professional experience with a focus on ...[their] needs... where students meet to listen to music, book rooms for meetings, research ... and ask [trained staff]’.

Perhaps when working with PDHPE research students, you might introduce yourself as not their teacher librarian but as their personal trainer!

REFERENCE

Grossett M & Pollock N 2007, *Training in Information Fitness: Research Skills*. ICVET Available < www.icvet.tafensw.edu.au/ezone/year_2007/jan_feb/profile_information_fitness> 26/02/07

A CHALLENGE

Who said that ...

school libraries should be
'cesspools of intellectual discontent'?

He also declared that:

Intellectual messiness is good.
Intellectual conflict is good.
Intellectual discontent is good.
Intellectual activism is good.

BLOGGING INTO LITERATURE

Three interesting blogs on literature can be found at:

<http://informationbook.blogspot.com/>
<http://pmpicturebooks.blogspot.com/>
<http://contemporaryfiction.blogspot.com/>

These blogs are examples of the collaborative and social environment that can be forged between teachers/teacher librarians to discuss literature and between student and student who may wish to develop their own literature blog on your school's intranet. Blogspot is easy to set up but as in most things, boundaries must be set and the blog preferably should be monitored.

Taronga

FOUNDATION POETRY PRIZE

Any profit contributes to preserving endangered species AND endangered literary forms!

Entry Forms for 2007

Available from Nerida Robinson

0244642322

Curiosity—challenging established ideas

SNIPPETS FROM THE INSIDE—LITERATURE ACTIVITIES THAT WORK!

LITCIRCLES @ YEAR 12

Teacher—*Asked a student to reflect on his experience of litCircles as a year 12 English activity. It was an experiment as we had little time to go down the full path of litCircles and I doubted that the idea would work or provide any real benefit. The outcome—the students were competitive and were determined to drive home significant points of departure in each text.*

This stream of consciousness is offered....

Such a full curriculum what with speeches, individual projects, intertextual analysis and you want us to do **what**? You are serious? OK! OK! let's get into this role play thing—*Brave New World* and *Blade Runner* are our texts and for good measure *Doppelganger*.

OK the rules! We will be in groups of six in different areas of the Library—the discussion starter has to keep things happening across all the texts and the rest of us have to take on one role specific for the text. Good! I'll be the Language Expert—or the Arguer! Yeah, I like to pull out passages and argue their validity. Hey, what are all these questions you're giving us... man! And we are being filmed as we discuss? To share with the other groups in the class... OK, I can see your point. We will be able to hear and view other ideas on the books by watching another group—sounds fair.

Uh uh—I'm not doing the Discussion Leader... I am? Geeeez.

5-4-3-2-1.

Hey what an invigorating time that was. I really didn't think the guys would stay in their roles nor would they have so much to contribute—I've actually altered my view on the whole innocence thing of human nature and *Doppelganger* was a great wild card.

I thought that giving us focussed roles like the Arguer, the Literary Lover, the Image Maker really enhanced this discussion—we took control of our learning, didn't we.

Teacher—*The students were told about this activity prior to summer break so they had guidelines to follow. The litCircles (3 of them) were in the school's library in open view of anyone passing by. Students sat in couches, relaxed and soon just got into their own world of discussion. A certain level of maturity and commitment was observed. It was also hard to wind down but we simply ran out of time. A magic hour. Worth the investment at this level of their studies. The filming needs more thought—sound was an issue—but the discussions were energetic and the students remained focussed throughout.*

WRITE A BOOK IN A DAY?

Sounds *bold*, perhaps *courageous*, maybe just *ludicrous*. But why not get the kids to decide on an idea, explain that each student should be given a different part of the 'book' to write, give them a time frame—an hour before recess to get started and then throughout the day as they complete tasks. And then give them the last hour of the day to share the parts they have written and to work out how to *seam up* the book.

Can it work? Yes! But a few hints will help. Start with your very capable writers—the ones who can get the ideas down into a fluent storyline. Larger groups tend to work fairly well [I was surprised] if given a specific area on which to concentrate. Stay out of it—it's their book. Encourage illustrators and wordsmiths—and scaffold from a class novel—a good first start.

And then have them submit the book and it's over to you—the editor and/or publisher.

Get them reading ... get them critically thinking... get them engaged... WHEW! But they hate reading ... they love to argue and tell you whose right... they are opinionated... but they won't read.

Dear Editor

Kids are faced with media comment every day. So try this ...gather the morning newspapers. Have the kids scan through a section of the papers that comment on the news of the day.

Then challenge them to write a Dear Editor 'letter' either agreeing or disagreeing or adding more thoughts to the report. Then (and be sure you do have a quality control check) have them copy and paste into email their Letter to the Editor to the appropriate newspapers, send ...and check the next day's

*To read is to empower
To empower is to write
To write is to influence
To influence is to change
To change is to live.*

Letters to the Editor.

The kids could be in for a surprise that may just be the hook they need to continue their interest in reading for information.

Dear Editor

Critics don't fix problems

It is all well and good for society at large to want to fix the current drought but we seem to be almost against everything. Someone suggests recycled water... NO! Someone suggests a desalination plant... No! How can we be so against the solutions to our drought and yet still we want to fix it. If all the outspoken...

Food for thought

BOOKS FOR LAOS www.colincotterill.com/booksforlaos.htm

If as Shakespeare reportedly said of the Arts, 'There is nothing new under the sun' is true, then why write? Cotterill, author and activist, has many reasons for writing but his most powerful is to enable children everywhere to have something good to read. Simple? A facile comment? He believes that demand does not meet supply and he is doing something about it. Read his story, inspire your students to make a difference in the lives of less fortunate children, support a teacher training program in Laos and a *Toys for Laos* program and send *Where is the Green Sheep* (Mem Fox) to Jane Burren for shipping to Colin in Laos.

Cotterill knows what he can do to make a difference in the lives of children in this politically sensitive country. Why not instill this idea into the hearts and minds of your students. A great **Learning, Literacy, Living** project!

DON'T ABANDON THE KIDS!

Those of you who attended Dr Ross Todd's seminar on *Guided Inquiry* earlier this year would recall his statement that 'the research process is not an opportunity to abandon children'.

Well, the same might be said for the reading process. Just as Todd emphasised the need for intervention by teacher librarians throughout the entirety of the research process in order to facilitate deep learning in the students, so too is such intervention required in the reading process. It is not enough to assist students with the location of reading material and then, without providing

Selection intervention

- Maintain a current & diverse collection
- Make the collection accessible and available. Evaluate library opening times and borrowing procedures.
- Promote the collection via book displays, newsletters, posters, blogs, wikis and book talks.

Reading intervention

- Give students time to read.
- Negotiate the development of reading

One of the most effective tools ... to promote reading is programming.

We cannot overcome these challenges by simply booking a speaker to talk on a topic near and dear to [students'] hearts. We must apply all aspects of the programming, from public relations, to content, to follow-up and outreach, to address the problem. In many cases, this will mean rethinking our approach and maybe doing a little soul-searching as to how we really feel about our work and our audience.

M Sullivan 2003, *Connecting boys with books*, ALA, Chicago, p xiii

further guidance and support, expect those students to develop the reading habit and a lifelong love of literature. What is required to achieve this outcome is the intervention of an 'enabling adult' at various stages throughout the reading process or 'reading circle'. According to La Marca and Macintyre¹, the teacher librarian is ideally positioned to be that enabling adult.

So what are the possible points of intervention for teacher librarians in the reading process and what strategies can they employ at these points to facilitate engagement in reading? In the 'reading circle', Chambers identifies three main points where the enabling adult can intervene to enhance student engagement in reading .

SELECTION READING RESPONSE

For each of these intervention points, why not consider some of the following strategies for promoting student engagement in reading.

1. *Chambers' Reading Circle* in La Marca S. & Macintyre P. 2006, *Knowing readers* SLAV, Carlton, Vic.

for pleasure within the curriculum.

- Read aloud to students.
- Invite colleagues to read aloud at lunchtimes events.
- Encourage free voluntary reading of material that interests students.
- Make reading 'no strings attached'. Students read purely for pleasure— no mandatory associated tasks.

Response intervention

- Invite kids to talk about 'read alouds'.
- Create discussion blogs/wikis for shared reading experiences.
- Invite authors.
- Hold writing 'events' in which students discuss their reading.
- Have a lunchtime book club.
- Conduct a literature circle.

DL

STORYTELING TO RESEARCH

Good reading is not your average review magazine—it is a little different and that difference allows me to roam along pathways that spark my imagination. I love the articles such as *Night's Black Agents* (March 2007) which was inspirational in the development of one of the themes for our year 7 and year 8 StoryLines Program.

Bearing in mind our clientele is a fine balance of readers and non-readers, highly visual learners and information consumers, the idea of developing four lessons based on this theme became less daunting. Who doesn't like a ghost story? Who isn't intrigued by the paranormal? How many young people love the horror genre, especially when delivered in short, short stories or eerie snippets of rhyme.

GETTING STARTED

Our Storylines Program is implemented on a one lesson per 10 day cycle (about 4 sessions per term for 18 classes). Each lesson is divided into 3: a stimulus, an activity and a closure. Realising that we would need to be tight with our planning, committed to our vision and be excited about reading and literature and ideas and books, we had to rethink our approaches and read, read, read in both theory and practice. And we needed to share that enthusiasm with young minds—students timetabled in for our sessions mostly on the last period of the day. Yup—we had to have the energy to boost the lagging energy of our students—to enliven 6th period.

COLLECTING DATA IN NON-INVASIVE WAYS

From the very onset of this program, we were aware of the rich data we could collect as evidence for our reading program. Establishing a reading profile on each student was a good start toward identifying some aspects of the data we were after.

We chose a fun activity that would have them investigating their own response to stories through their own choice of headings. We provided some suggestions but overall the choice was theirs. They could also choose to use technology, paper and crayons, or perhaps write their profile. And we offered to laminate their efforts and to display them

as posters.

We also set location skills into their StoryLines experience but in an informal way—more a game than instruction. Again, we will gather data to help determine if knowing how the resources are organised helps in empowering the reading habit.

We have many ideas still circling around in our heads but we are clear on one thing—we will integrate a data collecting session for each theme. Each data collection instrument will be non-invasive and creative.

WIDENING THE GENRE—BEYOND HORROR STORIES

So what's out there that can work with advanced reading ages and maturity and those who struggle to get enthused about reading for pleasure.

Firstly, it's true. The students do judge a book by its cover, by its smell, by its blurb and if it has a website, if not dedicated to the book, than at least an image of the writer and a few comments. So we searched our titles, bought new titles across all genres that suited this theme of darkness, fear, ghosts and their accompanying companions of ghouls, paranormal, humorous twists in otherwise scary stories, old classics—like Poe—in fresh dressing, highly visual texts, poetry of old and poems today and a casual reference or two to Henry James, Roald Dahl and their counterparts.

BOTTOM LINE

A sustainable StoryLines program is our objective—one in which the years 7 and 8s view as a special time in their academic 10 day cycle and one in which relationships between teacher librarian and student is clearly free from angst or indifference.

And that is another piece of action research begging to be begin.

LGL

*Fiction is like a spider's web,
attached ever so lightly perhaps but
still attached to life at all four
corners.*

Virginia Woolf

ASSERTIVE COMMUNICATION

As teacher librarians, we are in constant communication with all levels of the school community. Knowing how to express positive and negative feelings in honest and direct ways without sounding aggressive or bullying takes some sound understanding of assertive behaviour and a big dose of self-analysis and self-control. I would even go so far as to include a well-developed sense of empathy.

As Hopkins (2007 online) notes, 'It [assertive behaviour] allows us to take responsibility for ourselves and our actions without judging or [naming] or blaming other people'.

He continues (ibid) that:

all of use assertive behaviour ... quite often when we feel vulnerable or unsure of ourselves we may resort to submissive, manipulative or aggressive behaviour.

However, understanding how to develop assertive behaviour/ communication can make all the difference in winning the hearts and minds of others and can even be a powerful influence in implementing change. There is often a fine line between assertive communication and aggressiveness.

Communication is now more than ever socially connected given the rich opportunities afforded through digital networks—networks often devoid of body language and facial cues.

And here is where assertive communication becomes an important skill to develop. The burgeoning growth of non face-to-face digital communication is full of mine fields including the ability to hurt or alienate people, remove people's rights to not be judged and to push your viewpoint at the expense of others. Learning assertive communication can help here.

But what defines assertiveness? Eye contact? Body posture? Gestures that add emphasis? A convincing and well modulated voice? Timing in maximising receptivity and impact including choice of how, where and when you choose to comment (Hopkins op. cit.)?

All rather difficult in an non face-to-face communication world.

However Hopkins, a management psychologist, does warn that assertive communication is a skill to be used in appropriate contexts. As online forums and blogs, e-mail and chat become more and more the choice for social discussion or comment, understanding and using assertive communication becomes increasingly important if we are to avoid confusing others, hurting others, angering others and plain just not getting our point across due to our target audience tuning out

DEMYSTIFYING THE TERMS

Hopkins describes four behavioural choices:

Direct aggression—bossy, arrogant, bulldozing, intolerant, opinionated, overbearing.

Indirect aggression—sarcastic, deceiving, ambiguous, insinuating, manipulative, guilt-inducing.

Submissive—wailing, moaning, helpless, passive, indecisive, apologetic.

Assertive—direct, honest, accepting, responsible, spontaneous.

Which behaviour do you feel is more like you? Which behaviour is worthy of cultivating in a digitally connected world?

Reference

Hopkins, L 2007, Communicating more assertively: 6 tips for clearer contact. *PSnews* 57, 6 February 2007. Available < <http://www.psnews.com.au/PTalkingPoint30January07.html>

LGL

Contributions Welcome
for our next newsletter focussed on

**Learning & Teaching in the
Web 2.0 World**

E-mail your contribution to

Editor
aslainfo@ozemail.com.au

REMEMBERING BIBLIOTHERAPY

Found a website with an interesting name *momblogs* (http://fasttimes.clubmom.com/fast_times/middle_school/index.html) and began following a story on Barbara Feinberg's *Welcome to Lizard Motel: Children, stories and the mystery of making things up*.

It took me to a review by Diane Ravitch, a Research Professor of Education, New York University who applauded Feinberg's right to criticise the advocates of problem novels—remember producing bibliotherapies?

...bibliotherapy consists of the selection of reading material, for a child or teen, with special relevance to that young person's life situation.

The idea of bibliotherapy seems to have grown naturally from the human inclination to identify with others through their expressions in literature and art.
<<http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/bibliotherapy>>

Ravitch asks of those pundits of problem novels what their credentials are in 'foisting these novels of adolescent alienation on an entire generation of American children?'

She continues that these writers of such books 'believe that children need to read books that upset them' and counters that:

...there is no social science evidence that children need to cry or be frightened by the books they read. Some of the professoriate embrace the bizarre idea of bibliotherapy, believing that children will feel better about themselves if they read about a child with similar problems (for instance, the child of an alcoholic parent should read about the child of an alcoholic parent). However, these claims are based on assumptions, not evidence.

What do you think?

- Is the problem novel an essential genre for adolescent reading?
- Does it present alternative life styles and alternative views of society?
- Does a diet of realistic novels deaden imagination?
- Has Web 2.0 social networking such as Second Life become the new problem novel—the ground in which kids can work out their anger or concerns or fears?
- Is realistic fiction representative of kids' lives today?
- Is today's realistic fiction just another cover for moralising?

Reference

See review by Diane Ravitch on *Welcome to Lizard Motel: Children, stories, and the mystery of making things up*. Available <<http://www.hoover.org/publications/ednext/3219106.html>>

LGL



John H Lee Memorial Award

Nominations are now being called for this prestigious award.

Contact Awards Coordinator

aslainfo@ozemail.com.au

or visit

ASLA (NSW) Website
www.aslansw.org.au

Innovation in using technology to enhance information literacy in our students.

IN THE REARVIEW MIRROR

All My Own Work (a compulsory course for all students entering HSC)

Monday after hours has been a busy time for our President and Treasurer.

Not only are they volunteers in running our Association but they are also volunteers in bringing to members and other educators a series of workshops focussed on the Board of Studies All My Own Work (AMOW).

Anne Lockwood reports—

In August 2006, ASLA (NSW) ran a Professional Learning Day on the new All My Own Work course prior to the BOS schools' launch late 2006.

Following this full day Professional Learning event, your Association has run eight after school sessions this year, across Sydney and in Newcastle. The sessions demonstrated how three very different schools (Muirfield High School, Riverview College and Tara Anglican School for Girls) have implemented this course.

Thought provoking discussions ensued amongst the many participants as they worked through issues that may affect their schools, such as timing of the five modules within the academic year, integration of the modules into learning and teaching and the transferring of these skills into students' ethical behaviour.

It was pleasing to see that Deputy Principals, Curriculum Co-ordinators, Year Advisors and Careers Advisors joined with their Teacher Librarian colleagues to participate in these workshops which ran across all school sectors.

The implementation of AMOW has been taken up by many different people in our schools, all sharing a more positive outlook about AMOW due to the variety of approaches demonstrated in these workshops.

One session was even attended by representatives from the Board of Studies, who expressed an interest in how our schools

were implementing their course and congratulated the presenters on ASLA (NSW)'s initiative in running these sessions.

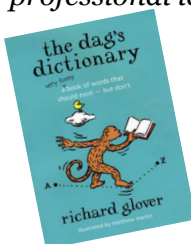
Feedback has been very positive. Attendees not only engaged in spirited discussions but received valuable handouts and resources to help them successfully implement AMOW in their school.

Encouraged by the demand for more of these workshops, a further four courses will be run in Term 2—three in Sydney and one in Wollongong.

If you wish to host a AMOW session, please contact us at alsainfo@ozemail.com and let us know.

ASLA (NSW) will come to you! **AL**

The success of these short and practical workshops bear testimony to the formula that short and practical feed the professional learning needs of our members.



REWIND YOUR READING

Just bought a new book.

Full of words that made me laugh. It also had me remembering Richard Glover's afternoon show on the ABC in which each week he invites listeners to give a name to a situation or issue... a bit like the Mensa Invitational run by the Washington Post - take any word and alter just one letter to make a new word and give its definition.

This is a great way to *challenge your creative students for a word of the week*. And in the laughter and awe of their creative talent... literacy improves.

Some examples from Glover's book include:

Wedgetarian—kid who lives almost wholly on... wedges.

e-Elation—feeling of excitement when you turn on your computer to discover 20 e-mails in your inbox.

e-Espondent—disappointment that follows discovering those 20 emails are all spam