

Alberta VOICES

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Editorial

Margaret L Iveson

Over the years, the English Language Arts Council (ELAC) annual conferences have shaped me as an English language arts teacher; they have affected, moulded and even shaken my thinking. The workshops and talks have shaped my view of English language arts, and I am grateful.

What was obvious to me at that first conference I attended, in Banff, was an amazing sense of community and a desire to refine practice on a ground of theory. So many people already knew each other. I had come with my department head and two colleagues, all of whom recognized and conversed with many people. I knew only my colleagues, but over the weekend a few people were in more than one session with me, and I sat with various people at meals, so I started to feel less young and different and more connected. I presented a session with my department head, and some participants later followed up with me. The keynote speakers were W O Mitchell and James Squire. Hearing Mitchell read some of his fiction was tantalizing, offering me something I could float into my teaching right away. Dr Squire talked about teaching literature; while I had read some of his work in university, I hadn't realized his passion for literature and for ensuring that young people could enjoy literature while they were in school and throughout their lives.

What I didn't know back then was that I was finding my professional place as a teacher of English language

arts. But that's what has happened. Over the years I have learned about practices and experiences very different from my own: teaching in a Hutterite colony, implementing a districtwide literacy initiative, pushing boundaries with literature, working with media.

I remember hearing about learning styles, listening to Thomas Wharton read from his new book, applying new scoring guides, meeting new novels lists. I have come to know many fine teachers and consultants, who have shared aspects of their practice and listened to me question and link ideas. And I still get e-mails from a few of them, showing me a student's work or a project.

Since I moved into university teaching, I want and need that contact even more to keep me grounded in real kids, teachers and schools. But I think what is most important are teachers who care profoundly about students, English language arts learning, our place in it and our own learning. We know so much more after we attend a regional event or conference. Most years I am inspired and sustained by the annual conference. I find some new resources, learn strategies, meet some performance or reading, and reconnect with ELAC friends. And I meet new ones, too.

The ELAC annual conference offers a rich and wonderful circle. Thanks to all the organizers and presenters over the years. Hope to see you all in Banff in May.

Conference 2011: "Celebrating New Heights" will be held May 6–8 at the Banff Centre. For more information or to register, visit the ELAC website (<http://elac.teachers.ab.ca>).

President's Message

Barbara-Lynn Goodwin

So often I hear teachers say, "Why do I need professional development? Can't I just stay in my classroom and do my job?" I agree that too much time spent away from the classroom can disrupt the continuity of lessons for students, and it also creates more work for the teacher, who must prepare for a substitute teacher. Of course, that is assuming that the PD occurs on a regular class day. I too have been frustrated by that scenario, yet I am adamant that professional development is essential for responsible teaching practice.

Despite the time taken away from the classroom, time spent learning how other professionals grapple with and solve challenges in the field will invigorate and recharge a teacher's batteries. To varying degrees, teachers are isolated in their classrooms and can become jaded with the same old, same old. A break away from that sameness can be an amazing lift to the teacher, which naturally spills over to students. Students adjust remarkably well to changes in the routine and, in fact, look forward to something different. We as instructors must realize that we can be replaced and that others are able to carry on the course of studies while we are gone so that we can remain professionally healthy.

Every teacher is unique and is on a different professional journey from his or her colleagues. That is why it is essential for each of us to give considerable thought to the type of PD that would be relevant to our practice. School jurisdictions are mandated to provide professional staff with time for PD. How and when that time is made available is a decision made by the school board, the superintendent and the administration of the school. However, individual teachers have the right to ask for particular training, updates or focus sessions in those areas where they need assistance. It is therefore up to teachers to request the time to attend those sessions. This means that each teacher must stay abreast of what training is available in the jurisdiction, region and province, or if need be, outside of Canada. We are so

fortunate in Alberta to have specialist councils that are committed to providing the most relevant training based on research and experience.

In my school division, we have a forward-looking school board that sees PD as something for which teachers take full responsibility. Teachers clearly state the professional growth they require in their professional growth plans, as well as how they wish to accomplish those goals. Administrators are more than willing to accommodate the goals, within financial reason. Our ATA local has also budgeted considerable funds to assist teachers with mileage to attend PD events. At the division level, we have a PD committee comprising representatives from every staff in the district. At regularly held meetings, these people represent the needs of teachers. Based on those needs, the PD committee then devises a plan that includes how many PD days are required, the topics to be addressed and who will conduct the sessions. This is presented to the board in an ongoing, evolving three-year plan. The board then schedules student-free days during the school year to accommodate the needs of teachers. These days are posted many months in advance so that teachers, parents and students can provide feedback.

Who, you may ask, provides the PD sessions on these school-based PD days? We do. Yes, the experts right at home assist colleagues with learning new and relevant practices. How do we become the experts? Again, our forward-thinking district provides considerable funds for teachers to travel sometimes great distances throughout North America to attend international conferences. These teachers are then obligated to lead others in the district through learning sessions, example lessons, demonstrations and workshops. The camaraderie and respect that grow among teachers are truly gratifying. Even when the sessions are over, we support one another daily to continue good practice and relevant teaching.

At the school level, we have several PD opportunities. Staff members are grouped into professional working teams. These teams meet twice a month for an hour to work on projects, team lessons, common assignments, exams and rubrics. Each semester, the teams are given three hours in an assigned week during student flex-time to work together on whatever activity the team decides is most relevant for them. Students assigned to the team members are looked after by other staff members for the allotted time. In this way, teachers are networking, communicating, forming professional bonds and sharing expertise. The benefits are evident in classroom instruction and student engagement.

How do teachers take control of their professional development? By showing a genuine desire to grow and learn. By taking risks in the classroom. By trusting students to embrace new ideas and run with them. By becoming familiar with the jurisdiction's goals for education (three-year plan) and the school's goals, and by aligning their personal professional goals with those broader goals. This will encourage the powers that be to provide whatever an individual teacher needs to continue to be effective in and out of the classroom.

You do have a voice in your own professional development. Talk to your administration, contact your ATA local for financial assistance and join a specialist council.

Grant-in-Aid Recipients on Conference 2010

In its annual budget, ELAC allocates \$2,500 to be offered as \$500 grants for five first- and second-year teachers, to defray the costs of attending the annual conference. For more information, go to <http://elac.teachers.ab.ca> and look under Awards and Scholarships.

The following reports are from grant-in-aid recipients who attended Conference 2010: “The Story of the Craft,” held April 30 to May 2 at Lake Louise.

Memoirs of an ELAC Newbie: Something Old, Something New, Something Borrowed and Something Blue

Amanda Ellis

Something old.

That would be me. Forty-nine years old and only in my second year of teaching. I didn’t even learn how to drive until I was 43. Seriously, I took the Young Drivers course three times. And I was only young the first time.

Why such late starts? Fear. In my 20s and 30s I was afraid of everything: driving, marriage, teaching, the sasquatch. I was Woody Allen in a woman’s body, ridden with anxiety and convinced that I was genetically predisposed to fail at any activity that required me to say “I do” or “Yes, of course I can parallel park a Buick.”

But in my 40s I’ve been Schwarzenegger (you know, before he was governor of California), terminating my neuroses with style, with guts and, occasionally, with prescription meds. Well, I haven’t rammed my car into a tree yet, and I’m still teaching. As they say, two out of three ain’t bad.

I am thinking about Budge Wilson, a diminutive giant who will loom forever tall in my memory. Learning that she didn’t start writing until her 50s made my eyes water and shine. The truth is that although I have been

qualified to teach since 1995, I was terrified. Now I realize that I feared the fate of Wilson’s Miss Hancock: I feared laying my passions at my students’ feet, saying, “You must understand, these words, these poems, these plays are the things of my life. *I have spread my dreams beneath your feet; tread softly because you tread on my dreams.*”

Something new.

And many do tread. Some tread with indifference; others, with ridicule or ennui. Some lob paper airplanes they’ve origamied (*origami* isn’t one of those cool nouns you can turn into a verb, but it should be) out of “Do Not Go Gentle into That Good Night.” Some afternoons I’d like to be a patient etherized upon a table.

But, oh my, the others. When you read *To Kill a Mockingbird* to them, their eyes get as big as Buicks. *They* are the stuff that dreams are made on. And so, like Miss Parker’s phoenix, we are reborn out of the ashes of our failed days. We are not alone: literature companions us as it has done since we were children. It grounds us, insisting that we have to let go of our fears because it isn’t about us; it’s about *them*. Someone has to introduce them to Boo Radley and Harold Crick.

It is morning. I blast the Staple Singers’ “I’ll Take You There,” survey my kingdom and teach again.

Something borrowed (from *As Good as It Gets*).

CAROL CONNELLY. OK, we all have these terrible stories to get over, and you . . .

MELVIN UDALL. It’s not true. Some have great stories, pretty stories that take place at lakes with boats and friends and noodle salad. Just no one in this car. But, a lot of people, that’s their story. Good times, noodle salad.

The relationship between story and identity has long fascinated (and tormented) me. When Jack Nicholson, playing homophobic romance writer Melvin Udall, observed that only some people have happy stories,

I was intrigued. Yes, some do, but many have tragic stories, stories that take listeners into the darkest corners of human revelation and history: Elie Wiesel. Survivors of child abuse. War veterans.

How *do* we reconcile story and identity? Do the stories that we never tell burden us like Jacob Marley’s ponderous chain? In telling, do we release our narrative burdens for others to carry? Sometimes I am tempted to lie, to rewrite my stories and thereby reinvent myself, so that I can regale others with noodle salad stories instead of the truth.

By Saturday of the conference even I was tired of my story. Jeez, enough already with the “I feel isolated as a new teacher in a rural school” story. I saw noodle salads everywhere but on my own plate.

It’s time to boil up a pot of pasta. Attending this conference went a long way toward making me feel part of a community. Thank you, everyone. Though I confess to harbouring doubts about what verse I may contribute (will it be a haiku or a ballad?), if you will have me, I am here to stay.

Something blue.

In homage to Thomas Trofimuk and Italo Calvino, who write like sons of bitches but can’t add, I have not actually included anything blue.

I said some words to the close and holy darkness; I put my ass in a chair; and then I wrote.

Reflections on “The Story of the Craft”

Teresa Green

I nestled into a seat outside Chateau Lake Louise, framed by the Canadian Rockies, and waited for “The Story of the Craft” conference to start. The ELAC annual conference was the third conference I attended last year, but the only one intended exclusively for the development of English language arts teachers. I looked forward to the sessions on film analysis and creative writing as I scanned the list of presenters and sessions. I was pleased to see the addition of a creative writing session with Aritha van Herk. I had studied her work in various undergraduate and graduate courses, and was interested in hearing her suggestions on how to teach such an exceptional craft to young people.

Van Herk’s session was an inspirational beginning to an edifying conference experience. She had answers for

all of my students’ creative scapegoats (the gun, the alarm clock, the dream) and useful strategies for opening up students to their own writing potential. Her 88-word assignment is something I immediately used when I returned to the classroom, as it is a concrete way to show students how to create dynamic characters rather than a rambling catalogue of irrelevant distinctions. This was the perfect start to the conference, awakening me to the potential of these sessions to improve my teaching, and that feeling continued throughout the sessions and keynotes that followed.

Budge Wilson’s keynote address inspired me to take the time to write more often and reminded me of her great contributions to Canadian literature. I am excited to incorporate some of her short stories into my courses and to pick up the pen again myself. Her discussion of her previous career will be useful to me in calling forth those students who do not see the joy of creative writing. I can now tell them about people like Wilson who have found that calling later in life, and remind them that they never know how useful these creative sessions might be to them in the future.

Martha Howson’s session on film analysis was everything I needed for developing and scaffolding my own film units more effectively. I left with a list of films to use and, more important, a list of film and novel combinations that will enable me to create more theme-based units. I love the idea of using films and novels to support each other without simply showing the film versions of the novels I teach. I was grateful for Howson’s information on which films can support which novels so that I can help students explore themes through different formats.

These were just some of the highlights of my time at “The Story of the Craft.” This event was filled with inspirational and informational sessions and keynotes. The spirit of camaraderie pervaded every nook and cranny of our beautiful venue. By the end of the conference, I was invigorated by new ideas and useful tips, and ready to take on the rest of my first year of teaching with renewed excitement.

A Wonderful Experience

Shannon Emerson

As a recipient of an ELAC grant-in-aid, I had the privilege of attending the ELAC annual conference, held April 30 to May 2 in Lake Louise. Attending the

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conference was a wonderful experience that I was lucky enough to share with my mother, who is also a teacher. The beautiful setting of the Chateau Lake Louise and the amazing sessions made for a great mother–daughter getaway with, of course, a little professional development mixed in.

My first year teaching English language arts (which was also my first year teaching in general) was quite a learning experience. Even as I entered the last month of the school year, I found myself still looking for resources and innovative ideas to try with my junior high students. The sessions I attended at the ELAC conference provided me with just that: creative, effective and ready-to-use activities.

I had the opportunity to attend the sessions “Living Word Walls,” presented by Janeen Werner-King and Ivy Mitchell; “Teaching Challenging Reading,” presented by Jeanette MacDonald and Diane Casello; and “The Craft of Grammar and Peer Editing,” presented by Deborah Schamuhn. All three sessions were outstanding and provided me with ideas I was able to implement in my classroom Monday morning.

The keynote speakers were also a highlight of the conference. Clem Martini, Budge Wilson and Aritha van Herk presented unique and insightful thoughts on the theme “The Story of the Craft.” I enjoyed the honesty

of Martini’s story of his brother and Wilson’s description of her humble beginnings, and I know that I will not forget Aritha van Herk’s story about the unfortunate placement of a postage stamp.

The resources presented at the conference spanned all forms of media, including a USB stick filled with lesson plans and activities contributed by presenters, ELAC executive members and the conference planning committee. The sessions were complemented by the variety of materials offered at the publisher booths. The publishers were extremely helpful, and many provided samples of the resources to take home and share with colleagues.

There was a welcoming social aspect to the conference. I found it to be an excellent opportunity to share current experiences, past troubles and humorous anecdotes with fellow teachers. The atmosphere was not only welcoming but also incredibly helpful to those of us who are new to the field.

I would like to thank the ELAC executive for providing me with this grant-in-aid. Without this kind gift I would not have been able to attend the conference. I would also like to thank the conference planning committee for putting on a wonderful event. With my first ELAC conference being such a great experience, I look forward to attending next year’s.

Survivor Macbeth

Hayley Leschert

Hayley Leschert teaches English language arts at William E Hay Composite High School in Stettler. She is president of ELAC's Central Alberta Regional.

Background

For my advanced professional term (my nine-week practicum through the University of Alberta in my major, English language arts), I had the privilege of working with Barbara-Lynn Goodwin. Because of my background in Shakespeare, she asked me if I would like to teach the Shakespeare unit. With a mixture of excitement and nervousness, I jumped at the opportunity—until I met my 20-1 English class. Their class was held first period every morning, with a double on Mondays. They seemed lifeless and disengaged. Act 1, scene 1, of *Macbeth*—which has so much potential, excitement and scandal—fell flat at my feet.

I was discouraged when I returned to the U of A for my cohort day. After I discussed my troubles with a few classmates, one suggested an idea she had heard about—Survivor Shakespeare. I did not have any materials to begin with, just my knowledge of Shakespeare and of the TV show *Survivor*, and thus a new unit was born!

Set-Up

- Create a personal tracking sheet or scorecard to keep track of daily points (I've included a sample scorecard at the end of this article).
- Create a scoreboard that can be posted for the class to help with competition. You can make this a challenge, as well, for more points.
- Create a points list based on the criteria you believe are important (for instance, attendance, coming to class prepared and with the text in hand, and handing in assignments on time).
- Provide some basic props or have students supply their own. (Dollarama has some fantastic items!)

- Divide students into clans instead of tribes. Try to mix shy students with outgoing students, strong students with weaker students. Have them choose their own clan names, and offer points for the best Scottish names.
- Plan clan challenges, such as special assignments and projects or games, to help the clans earn more points.

Break a Leg!

- Each day have students pick which part they want to read. (Try to make it even, in terms of the large parts. For example, don't let one student constantly choose the part of Macbeth.)
- Have students choose how they want to present their part—acting with props and expression, standing or sitting (award more points for acting than for sitting). Assign points per line read.
- Allow the students' creativity to take off and the competition to spur them on. The results are very satisfying to watch!

General and Specific Objectives

The following learning outcomes are from the English Language Arts 20-1 program of studies (available at <http://education.alberta.ca/media/645805/srhelapofs.pdf>).

- *General Outcome 1: Explore thoughts, ideas, feelings and experiences.* Shakespeare can be scary for students, but through having fun with the language in a safe and comfortable learning environment, students will become engaged in the play.
- *General Outcome 2: Comprehend literature and other texts, and respond personally, critically and creatively.* Through a variety of projects, questions and clan challenges, you can incorporate many specific outcomes in this area.

Ideas for the Classroom.....

- *General Outcome 5: Respect, support and collaborate with others.* As clans, students have the opportunity to support one another and compete for the final prize. I constantly reinforced that it would take a team effort to win.

Sample Day-to-Day Activities

Day 1

- Introduce Shakespeare. Provide a brief background to the man and his plays (*Macbeth*, in particular).
- Introduce the game.
- Hand out the rules and the points list. Explain your expectations to the class.
- Explain Exile Island, which is for students who do not bring their texts to class, who are absent without excuse, who do not hand in assignments and so on. At the end of the unit, students who have been sent to Exile Island for not meeting these expectations will not be allowed to partake in the final prize.
- Divide students into their clans and have them brainstorm their Scottish names. Write the names on the class scoreboard.
- Have students begin reading act 1, scene 1, of *Macbeth*. Don't forget to record the lines read for points! (On the back of the daily score sheet, record the characters' names, the students' names, and the lines that they read. Later, count up the number of lines and total them for each clan.) Encourage students to bring their own props and to act out the scenes for extra points.
- Total the points and add them to the classroom scoreboard.

Day 2

- Award points for attendance, preparedness and so on.
- Begin class with a clan challenge: a pop quiz on the background information from the previous day (individual quiz, *Jeopardy*-style quiz, team quiz). Count the points on your daily score sheet.
- Continue the play from where students left off reading.
- Assign questions or activities based on act 1.
- Total the points and add them to the classroom scoreboard.

Day 3

- Award points for attendance, preparedness, homework check and so on.
- Continue reading the play from where you left off.

- Total the points and add them to the classroom scoreboard.

When I felt that students were missing some of the passion or intensity that the play calls for, I would show them scenes from various movie adaptations. My personal favourite is Trevor Nunn's *Macbeth*. I like its simplicity and how it relies on the characters' expressions to convey the plot, and I felt that students would easily relate (as they had a whiteboard for their backdrop and minimal props).

Final Exam

Once we finished the play, I announced the winners—the ultimate Macbeth Survivors! Since I didn't have a million dollars to give away, the prize was an exemption from writing the final exam for the unit. (Winning students could still write the exam if they wanted to, in order to boost their marks.) There was plenty of celebrating by the winning clan!

Other Clan Challenge Ideas

- Shakespearean vocabulary scrambles—provide a list of words and a list of definitions, and have students match them
- “Who Said It?” games
- Pop quizzes—facts, information, key passages
- Translate a passage of the play into modern English or into a specific style (such as cowboy or valley girl)
- Crossword puzzles

Results

A lifeless class came alive with excitement! Even the shyest students in the class participated in an effort to help out their clans. The feedback was very positive, and students told me how much they were enjoying Shakespeare. I think that's the main goal of teaching English language arts: to help students enjoy it. The active participation and engagement of all the students resulted in no one failing the unit final exam—yet another success.

The following semester, Barbara-Lynn used the same unit with her 20-1 class and achieved similar results. She had students bring in their own props and allowed them to sign up for parts ahead of time. The competition was fierce as she divided students into groups that she knew would want to compete against each other (for instance, she put the football players into separate clans, which helped make the competition especially intense).

Date: _____



Everyone here? 200	Everyone here? 200	Everyone here? 200	Everyone here? 200	Everyone here? 200	Everyone here? 200
Assignments?	Assignments?	Assignments?	Assignments?	Assignments?	Assignments?
Brought script?	Brought script?	Brought script?	Brought script?	Brought script?	Brought script?
Questions	Questions	Questions	Questions	Questions	Questions
Reading	Reading	Reading	Reading	Reading	Reading
Class Challenge	Class Challenge	Class Challenge	Class Challenge	Class Challenge	Class Challenge
Exile Castle	Exile Castle	Exile Castle	Exile Castle	Exile Castle	Exile Castle

The Cop and the Criminal

Paul E Robinson

Paul E Robinson attends J R Robson High School, in Vermilion. He wrote this story last year, when he was in Grade 10. Paul got the idea for this story when he discovered the concept in medias res in a book about fiction-writing techniques. One of his teachers encouraged him to submit his story to Alberta Voices.

The cold and forbidding wind blew over the lone figure on the mountain. He was chilled to his marrow, as he balanced on a hard peak. The monastery was about a kilometre away, but he had to stay here until he found his centre. This had proved to be more difficult than he had first expected. Focusing on even a single thought for more than a minute was impossible. His memories were swirling around in his head. There were hundreds of thoughts in his mind, each vying for attention. It was like he was standing in the centre of a full auditorium the size of a small city and all the people in the stands were screaming at him. Happy thoughts, angry thoughts, funny thoughts and sorrowful thoughts, but the sorrowful thoughts were overwhelming. He continued to think. The thought of Lenore kept surfacing in his mind; each time he thought of her, his mind became more and more tormented. If he couldn't find his focus, he knew he would probably go insane. The voices kept screaming.

Newport is a beautiful coastal city. Polite residences, diverse business districts (due to its location on the coast, it has inherited a wide variety of businesses), stunning architecture (due to various cultural impacts and the famous William Van Alen designing the government buildings), a scrupulous and just government, and cleanliness (due to the largest off-shore nuclear reactor in the world) come together to make one of the most idyllic cities in existence. Or at least it was. Now, the residences are rude and obscene. Now, the architecture is covered in graffiti. Now, the government is corrupt and vain. Now, it is disgusting. Everything has deteriorated because of the mysterious depression. Newport was booming, but the value of the dollar lowered to nothing,

And with the depression, came the layoffs. The high number of layoffs led to an increase in the amount of gangsters, who now run the city. The only incorruptible and indestructible area in the whole city is the police department. And the head captain is missing, so it's flailing around like a decapitated snake. In the grim night, a meek gangster walked the streets who could change the city forever . . .

The gangster surveyed the street. He hated cops. He hated other gangsters. Come to think of it, there wasn't much he liked right now. He had to focus. Back to the street. It seemed empty. There was nothing on the street except for the yellow sodium lights illuminating the barren streets. It was absolutely silent. He gingerly stepped onto the street from the back alley. If there was an onlooker (which there was, but he was about eleven inches high with four legs and a tail, and no imagination), they probably would have likened it to a child pretending he was walking on lava. He was tiptoeing across the ground. The gangster was a veteran, but for some reason he felt an engulfing fear. He attempted to skulk, too, but he was more of a lurker, and for an accomplished lurker, skulking looks kind of like the movements of one of those assistants on an old horror movie, hunched over and kind of hopping along because of a degenerative limp. Crossing the block, he scrambled into another back alley. He finally made it to the building. It didn't make him feel any more secure, but the number of ways he could see himself dying decreased from a thousand to nine hundred and eighty.

Acute paranoia had its ups and downs (OK, its *up* and downs), and the up was that he was always aware, even if it was a pitiful awareness caused by the sheer fear that around every corner lurked another different monster. At least nothing lived under his bed anymore. Now there were thugs waiting outside his door and cops waiting on every street corner. He really had nothing against cops, as he realized they were just trying to make

a living. It was the risk that accompanied meetings with cops that he didn't like.

He walked through the door of the building and into the concrete corridor. As he walked down the doorless hallway, he realized that it was more of a mausoleum than a building. It took up the whole block, and was completely empty, except for the stolen printing press and bomb in the basement. He reached the staircase and descended to where his boss was waiting.

"Why did it take you so long, Fuggire?" Although the Italian-American gangster cliché is totally obsolete, Fuggire was Italian.

"Crowded streets," saying the first thing that popped into his head.

The Boss gave him a long, appraising look.

Fuggire didn't know anything about the Boss, not even his name.

The Boss continued to give him the long, appraising look. "Oh."

What Fuggire thought of as an awkward silence followed.

The Boss had cold, piercing eyes, and he continued to give Fuggire the appraising look. The Boss knew all the best were a little weird, but this guy was so far off his rocker he was in the trout pond. This guy was afraid of everybody else's shadow. Still, he was the best of the best. The Boss didn't know what was wrong with him, nor did he care. This stupid Fuggire would get his job done, and that would allow the Boss to finish his.

"You infiltrated the mint quite well, Fuggire. I know you have no experience with kidnapping, but you still did a very good job of planning it. You're a good extortionist," the Boss said grudgingly.

"Thanks, I think," replied Fuggire.

Fuggire had only once before met a man who violated the law for his ideals. He was the cold, calculating type, and he was an anarchist. Fuggire was in league with him for a bit, but he left quite quickly when he realized what kind of criminal the anarchist was. He didn't steal or murder or do any of those things for money; he did it because he thought it was for the higher good. He tried to blow up a city hall, but he failed. Fuggire was very glad he had failed. Very, very, very, very, very glad, because if a monster like that ever succeeded in anything like that, the smile on his face would wilt all the plants in a hundred-mile radius. But the most disturbing and ominous thing about him was the gleam in his eye that said he was as innocent as a child while saying he murdered people. As if he was proud. It was disgusting.

Fuggire, at heart, was really just a weaselly, scared little man with questionable morals. He couldn't even pretend to threaten anybody's life, and he would never *ever* sell drugs. But he had a weakness for blackmail, extortion and that kind of thing. In his twisted little mind, he reasoned that he was making the world a better place, in a way, by bringing the buried to the light. In his rare moments of clarity, he did realize he was just threatening to bring his mineral rights to the landowner, and that he was no worse than any other criminal, but those moments of clarity never lasted long.

He was afraid, though. This crazy Boss guy must have been the crazy idealist type, but somehow he was even worse than the anarchist. He had convinced Fuggire to kidnap somebody. Somebody who didn't do anything wrong, just some woman that did her job at a bank. Somebody who was loved by their family, just like Fuggire's (well, Fuggire's family wasn't exactly what you would call loving unless you were clinically insane). Fuggire was terrified of what would happen if he stuck with this disgustingly monstrous creature any longer. He had a moment of clarity.

The moon had risen, a shining opal in the sky. The raging torrents of emotion had subsided to a quiet gibbering at the back of his mind. He could now focus, but not entirely. At least, for the time being, he could focus at all. He was cold, and he couldn't survive this type of cold without his full attention, so he rose out of the lotus position he had been frozen in all day and entered the sleeping bag inside his padded tent. Lenore was still in his mind, but he would never forget Lenore. Lenore with her serene blue eyes. Lenore with her smooth skin. He couldn't get Lenore out of his mind. He remembered the day he met her. He didn't believe in love at first sight, because that was a love that was superficial, nothing but an artificial glamour. But after about a week, he began to love her. The love blossomed, until after three years of dating, he proposed, but that is where the happiness stopped, and unbearable sorrow began.

Fuggire was going to turn himself in. The Boss had a bomb, a hostage and, oddly, a printing press. Fuggire was no genius, but he would have thought you tied the hostage to the bomb to *get* the printing press, but then again, all these idealist guys were, as Fuggire thought, freakin' nuts. Fuggire had to get out of here. And he had to go to the police.

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The Boss just stared right through the back of Fuggire's head, as if he could see the cogs turning behind Fuggire's tiny, rodent-like eyes.

"Uh . . . could I have my money now?" Even in his moments of clarity, Fuggire was a weak man.

"Yes, Fuggire," responded the Boss in cold iron tones.

Another thing that scared Fuggire was that this guy always knew what he was doing. Not confidence, but something more, something sinister. The Boss handed over the money. Fuggire took it and tried to act calmly as he attempted to amble casually out of the building, but the way he did it made a penguin's waddle seem to have more grace than a swan. Fuggire was a very poor actor. As soon as he made it out of the building, he sprinted as fast as he could. Even for somebody that lurks, 20 years of paranoia and the knowledge that gunshots will likely be firing off behind you within five-point-two seconds can really make a man sprint.

Oh God, thought Fuggire, he's gonna kill me! And now he knows that something is wrong 'cause he saw me sprinting out of the building. Why am I such an idiot? God, if you'll let me live through this, I will go to church every Sunday. Or Allah, or whoever the hell—heck will save my guts. I hope he'll just shoot me. I pray—I'm praying here, God (or Allah, or Shiva, or whoever, come on, I am now as devout as they get)—he isn't one of those homicidal maniac guys who kills slowly. No—can't think like that. Five blocks from the police station. Hey, maybe I'll make it. Four blocks. Come on, come on! Three blocks! Thank you, God (or Allah, Shiva, you know what I mean)! Two blocks! I'm gonna make it! I'm gonna—

Fuggire fell to the ground. His foot burned with pain. Fuggire wished he could go back in time and throttle whoever invented the silencer. He opened his mouth to scream, but the scream died in his throat. He couldn't talk. He looked down at his ankle. It was one of those feathered tranquilizer dart thingies they used on animals. *Come on, God, he prayed. He hoped Boss wasn't one of those sadistic killer freaks you heard about on the news. Wait. Maybe he just wants a hostage. Please let him . . . just . . . want . . . a . . . hostaaaggggee . . .*

The lonely figure on the mountaintop could remember the day he lost his sanity well. He had taken Lenore out for a romantic dinner at a fancy restaurant, near Christmas.

Throughout the whole day she had been watery-eyed, so he assumed she suspected he was going to pop the question. He didn't bother with any of that

soppy stuff where you put the ring in glasses or food (his cousin did that and he spent the first five minutes with his new fiancée doing the Heimlich manoeuvre). He waited until after dinner, when he was walking her to her apartment. The night was absolutely perfect. The air was cool and crisp, the air smelt fresh, and distant Christmas carols could be heard. And to put the icing on the cake, there was a very light snow falling. He had believed that it could not be more perfect. They were passing through the city square, and he had stopped to tie his shoe. She turned and looked at him while she was waiting.

Then, before he got up, he brandished the ring in front of her and said, "Lenore, will you marry me?"

Her eyes weren't just watering now; she was sobbing, quite quietly.

"What's wrong?" he asked. He couldn't understand. "Honey, what's wrong? Are you all right?"

"I . . . I . . .," she stuttered. A red dot, like that of a laser pointer, suddenly appeared on her forehead. He had heard of people seeing red when they were angry, but he felt fear and grief, not anger. Suddenly, his whole left eye went red. Maybe he *was* angry, on the subconscious level.

"I c-can't m-m-marry you after what you did," she sobbed.

The red dot disappeared, so he assumed whatever anger he had must have disappeared.

"What did I do? I'm really sorry, whatever it was. Please, I'll do anything for you to forgive. Please tell me," he begged.

"Not after what you did." She turned and ran.

Life became too much to stand, and he was already kneeling, so he lay on the ground. He felt like somebody had punched him in the stomach. He cried. For the first time since he was over the age of four, he cried. And he continued to cry while he walked home. The cool crisp air had become a cruel and indifferent wind, blowing away what emotion he had left; the light snow was now falling heavy. He felt like a hollow shell, nothing but the empty remnants of a human. He had always been true to her. He had always given her everything he could give her. And to make matters more confusing, she had given back. And she left him.

When he heard about those people in the movies and plays proclaiming they could not live without their true loves, he thought they were simply soppy morons, but he understood what they felt now (although he still considered them soppy morons).

The lonely figure found the rest of the story almost more unbearable. She disappeared, and her purse was found floating on the top of the river. She was now a missing person, but everyone knew she was dead. He would never know what he had done wrong.

Fuggire woke up. He didn't have the faintest idea where he was. His vision was very bleary. He had got the money, ran and . . . *Hallelujah! I'm alive! Oh, I'm tied up, next to that woman from the mint.*

Fuggire turned to her and said, "I know this means nothing now, especially since you're tied up in front of a bomb, but I am truthfully sorry. When we get out of here, I will give you all the money I made by kidnapping you. If we get out of here, that is."

Wow, thought Fuggire, *admitting something makes you feel better*. Fuggire stared at her. She started to cry. Fuggire felt a little better for admitting. He still felt horrible, though. Twenty years of forgery, extortion and bribing can really weigh down on a man, and now the girl next to him was crying. He was still a jerk, and one truth wouldn't change that. At least not this truth.

Focus flowed into the lone figure's mind like a tsunami. Painfully. He suddenly could focus. The screaming emotions were silenced, and his mind felt numb after months of being ravished by all the myriad thoughts in his mind yelling at once. His name was Jeremy Melinsky. Six feet five inches, twenty-eight years old, brown hair, blue eyes, ninety-ninth percentile in his class, the best cop in a four-hundred-mile radius from his city apartment. A master in kung fu, tae kwon do, jiu-jitsu, judo and adithada. He could disarm someone in one action if they were five feet away from him. When he was five, he was afraid of a spider, but he learned it was just as afraid of him as he was of it, and had not had fear since. He remembered everything. Then the future flowed into his mind. Jeremy Melinsky was special. Jeremy Melinsky had always had the ability to have a premonition of what would happen in the next minute or so, and he had no control over when they happened. But when he did have them, they saved his life.

Now, he had the most detailed premonition he had ever had. He was on something shaking, like a boat, and he had just untied Lenore and a weaselly little man. There was an overweight Caucasian pointing a gun at Lenore and yelling at Jeremy, and there was a foreign

man in the shadows of the room, laughing mirthlessly. Jeremy got out of his tent and sprinted to the monastery.

Boss walked into the room. The girl was still crying, and Fuggire still felt like a jerk, but at least he could get Boss to give him some answers. Most evil villains gloated because they could prove to the dashing young hero that he couldn't do anything, before being thwarted yet again. Fuggire knew people weren't like evil villains, but he knew, as a general rule, that people that had dirt were stupid. That's how he was able to blackmail people. You got them gloating about how cool they were (or hip, or smart, or whatever they were). The few good people who had done bad things by accident, you told them you did something horrible and ask them if they had similar experiences they could draw upon to give you advice, or console you by telling you the thing they did worse. It was underhanded, mean and a little sick, but that was what Fuggire was. *The key word here is* was, Fuggire reminded himself. Fuggire was a devout Christian now. Or maybe a Buddhist. He really didn't know. Whatever he was, he was devout.

"So, Boss, if that *is* your real name, why are you doing this?" he asked.

"You really think I'm stupid, don't you moron?" he retorted.

"Jeez, no need to be rude now. You could hurt a guy's feelings," he replied.

Boss gave Fuggire a look that could have melted iron.

"Sorry, sorry, I'll be quiet," he said. There really was no point in annoying a guy who had you strapped to a bomb the size of a small cow.

"I am not stupid enough to tell you what I am going to do," he spat at Fuggire. "Now, I leave, and Bruno will guard you for a while."

Boss walked out of the room and turned off the lights. Fuggire sat in silence with the girl for a while. He apologized a few more times. *At least she isn't sobbing any more*, thought Fuggire. Suddenly, the door opened and slammed shut. There was deep, mirthless laughter followed by heavy breathing. *Ah*, thought Fuggire, trying not to cry, *we have Bruno. What kind of guy has a name like Bruno anyway?* Bruno flicked the lights on and off quite quickly while laughing. Fuggire got a clear glimpse of Bruno. It wasn't what Fuggire expected. Fuggire was expecting an eight-foot Eurasian, with a cruel face, small pinpoint eyes of fury, hands the size of large bananas and a mind like a razor. What Bruno actually was, was a

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five-foot-eight pale whale. He had beady little stupid eyes in a pug-like face. Bruno walked across the room toward Fuggire, who had been shaking earlier and trying not to cry, but now he was trying not to laugh. This guy was hulking, but not in the way Fuggire was expecting.

Bruno misinterpreted Fuggire's repressed laughter for repressed crying.

"Hey, ya punk? Ya gonna cry? Huh? Oh no, poor liddle loser's gonna cw," he leered at Fuggire, trying to make a baby voice but failing.

Fuggire started to guffaw loudly. Fuggire usually only laughed when he was nervous, and he couldn't remember the last time he had laughed sincerely. Suddenly, the girl next to him started to laugh too. Then Bruno started to laugh. Fuggire couldn't stand it anymore; his sides were splitting, and his face was redder than sunburnt tomato. Fuggire had to close his eyes, they were tearing so much. He felt cold steel on his forehead. Bruno was still laughing, but the girl had stopped.

"Ya know," said Bruno, no longer laughing, "I could pump your head full of lead and I wouldn't give a darn. Wit'out even a second thought. Youse is dirt. Youse is nothing. Hostages is easily replaced, and I don't particularly like rats, neither. So behave now like the good little hostage you are, or else I'll have to get a new hostage."

Fuggire gulped and looked into the cold, malicious little eyes of Bruno, and found no mercy.

Jeremy reached the monastery. It was an amazing sight. Millennia in age, it had survived the empires of every great tyrant (or hero—history is written by the winners). It had been carved into the stone of the mountain by expert artisans, and every detailed carving, every monolithic column, every towering gateway came together to form the most beautiful building in creation. And the one reason that the monastery still existed was its position. Isolated and unknown in the frigid mountains of northern Tibet for hundreds of years. Jeremy walked up to the master of the monastery, Laotze. Laotze was rumoured to be as old as the temple himself.

"Many thanks for allowing me to find my focus in this sacred place," Jeremy said. Laotze looked Jeremy in the eyes. His eyes were glassy white orbs, completely blind. He had a long, thick white beard. He merely nodded at Jeremy and then beckoned to him to come closer. Jeremy respectfully walked forward.

With a voice that had the strength of a tsunami but the serenity of a meandering stream, he whispered, "The girl will be at the dock at the eightieth street. If you

rescue her, your second sight will have a strength unparalleled, but if you fail and she dies, your sanity will depart with your last free thought."

Laotze looked gravely into Jeremy's eyes. Jeremy was thunderstruck. He had heard that the master knew things no other human on earth knew, but he hadn't heard he could read minds. Jeremy looked dazedly into Laotze's eyes.

"Go. Now. While you still have the chance. *Run!*" yelled the master.

Jeremy turned around and ran down the mountain-side, still in his robes, to the small village where he had parked his plane.

Bruno left the room. Fuggire closed his eyes and remembered to start breathing again. *Thank you, God.* He wasn't going to laugh again. The silence was eerie. He turned to look at the girl, who looked back at him.

"So . . . what's your name?" asked Fuggire. He realized he should've known her name, considering he set up the kidnapping.

"Frankie," she replied quietly.

"Well, Frankie, we'll get out of here, I know it. But in order to, we need a plan. D'ya have any special talents?" inquired Fuggire.

"I can swim fast and hold my breath for a long time. I can also jump far and climb quickly," responded Frankie.

"Well, that should come in useful if we get untied," said Fuggire, "and we probably will, because if they bring us down a street tied up, people will get suspicious. I know we're gonna be moved because he told me that when he hired me. We are going to a boat on the Dock Eighty in town. That's all I know, though."

"How do you know he won't take us in a van?"

"He is one messed-up fruit case. He has some kind of fear of cars and all other vehicles. He won't step inside of them."

"That's odd."

The door suddenly burst open. Bruno walked in.

"Time to go."

Jeremy reached the bottom of the mountain. There was a crude marker erected there. He stopped before it and stared. This was the grave of the man who had helped Jeremy through hard times. Jeremy knew him as Dad. His father had told him about the monastery, passing an age-old secret from one generation to the next. How his father knew, Jeremy would never know.

If it hadn't been for his father, Jeremy would have been lost and he knew it. He stopped for a moment of silence, and then ran to the village.

The village was made of small stone buildings with thatched roofs and insulated with dirt. The village was a small, peaceful village in the middle of the vast, jagged mountain range. *The village is always silent*, thought Jeremy. *I have not once actually seen a person here.* There seemed never to be any people, and the uncanny and disturbing silence was always present. It felt . . . unreal. An illusion. Jeremy never dwelt in this village long because of the feeling.

He reached the flat patch of land which he had used as a runway strip. His beaten silver plane was standing where it had been.

A small red ball rolled in front of him. He kneeled down and picked up the ball. He turned his head to see where it had come from. He saw nothing. He turned his head back towards the plane, and a child was running towards him as if she had materialized out of thin air. She ran up and touched his head.

With a look of urgency she said, "Get her before it's too late. You must do it or she will die. You will die. We will all die."

A loud howl echoed from behind him. He turned his head and saw nothing, and then turned his head back around. The girl had disappeared.

Fuggire was right. They had to walk in front of Boss. Bruno had disappeared, and Fuggire had no clue where he was. Boss was carrying a small bag that jingled, and he was completely quiet. He followed Fuggire and Frankie as they walked out of the cold, empty building. It was early morning, the sun just rising on the horizon, and Fuggire had no clue what day it was. There were a few people on the sidewalks of the empty street, but they all looked tired and had a faraway look in their eyes that suggested that they were listening to the song "Nobody Knows the Trouble I Know" in their heads. They probably wouldn't have noticed if Boss pulled a gun on his captives anyway.

Fuggire put his hand in his pocket. The money was still there. What kind of gangster left the money in your pocket? This guy was definitely an idealist. He gripped the money in his pocket and then shoved it in Frankie's pocket. Boss didn't even twitch. He just continued to watch. They reached a corner.

"Turn left here," commanded Boss.

They walked straight east until they were about two blocks away from the docks.

"Stop. Now," ordered Boss.

Frankie froze, but Fuggire was curious. He turned his head around to see what was happening. Boss took the bag and emptied it on the right-hand side of the empty street. At least Fuggire *thought* it was empty, until he saw a small green van with some kind of bug on top. It came closer, and he read the side. It was a Mantis Mobile, and when it reached the nails, the tires popped like balloons. Boss ran to the van, ripped open the door, and pulled a gun out of nowhere and pointed it at the driver's head.

"Please, I'll do anything; all I do is drive this van for the zoo. I don't mean—"

"Out. Now. Good. Run as far and as fast as you can. Goodbye." An exact replica of the Mantis Mobile pulled up in front of the real one, except ugly was driving it.

"I got the bomb, Boss," Bruno yelled.

"Not so loud!" whispered Boss, livid with annoyance.

"We shall now proceed to the docks, and you two will get in the back of the van with me," commanded Boss.

He opened the back of the van and climbed in behind Fuggire and Frankie. The bomb was there, along with a brown sack. Boss closed the back door and then shut his eyes. He was twitching rapidly like he had ants under his skin. There was something very wrong with him.

The plane landed in the small airport, and Jeremy jumped out through the door. He ran to where he'd parked his car and sped toward the docks. He was ten blocks away. He had to move. There were forces here working that Jeremy didn't understand, but if he didn't get there in time, something was going to happen. And it wouldn't be good.

Boss was awash with fear. He remembered the day he lost his family in a vehicle like this. The North Americans would pay, they would pay dearly!

The van drove up the gangway into the cargo hold of the ship.

"This is the last of the cargo," yelled the clerk. "Pull up the gangway, and lift the anchor."

The massive supertanker left the dock, with half of the Newport zoo inside. Aardvarks to zebras, arthropods to Zosteropidae—they had all been boarded to be part

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of a zoo exchange program. In the bottom of the boat, a real animal was telling Fuggire, Frankie and Bruno his plan.

"In approximately three miles, my plan will be enacted strictly. Then, Bruno will, with the bomb, say . . ."

Approximately three miles later

"All crew into the lifeboats now! If anyone don't c-c-c—" Bruno struggled for a moment—"c-c-comply, I'll blow this boat and all of da liddle animals to kingdom come!" Bruno screamed.

The crew complied while Boss laughed mirthlessly. Fuggire was standing near the edge with Frankie. They both silently watched.

"How far'd'ya say you can swim?" he whispered.

"I could swim the English Channel," she whispered back.

Fuggire winked and tripped forward. His hands flailed in the air, and he hit Frankie off the side of the boat. Fuggire deflated on the ground. Bruno ran to the edge to catch Frankie, but she had already disappeared beneath the waves. He chucked a rope over the edge with a life preserver, but realized it was too late.

"What the heck are we supposed to do now? We only have one hostage, and he's a crook. Hey, why do we even have a hostage, anyway?" Bruno yelled. "Could ya start explaining, I'm confused. And what was with the printing press?"

Boss looked into Bruno's eyes and gave him a look that made Bruno feel cold and hollow inside.

"The extra hostage is in the bag next to the bomb. And if you could remember your own name, you would be aware we have the hostages to get away from the nuclear power plant after we arm the bomb," Boss said coldly. "The power plant is 20 miles away," Boss voiced quietly, "but the boat will be crawling along because one of the crew members smashed the throttle before they left so it won't accelerate. The printing press caused the depression. A sudden increase in the amount of money decreases money's worth. So I printed a lot of money."

Boss turned to Fuggire, his gun raised.

"Now, what shall I do with you?"

Jeremy jumped out of his car faster than light and ran to the docks. The boat was gone. He sank to his knees. All was lost. He shook his head sadly. He never would see Lenore again, and he would live the rest of his days lonelier than a hobo in Antarctica.

"I've failed," he whispered.

He looked up one last time to the sky for help. He lowered his head and then saw the ship. He ran the length of the dock and dove into the water. He swam like a shark, heading toward the ship. He didn't know how he would get on, but when he did, the kidnapers would pay.

"You, Fuggire, are going to go walk down the staircase to the bomb and then sit in front of it, and you won't move while I tie you to the bomb next to the girl."

Fuggire gave up. He knew his life would soon be coming to an end, but at least he saved one person. He walked slowly down the staircase, each step bringing him closer to oblivion. He realized he had totally wasted his life now, but it really didn't matter anymore. He reached the bomb, and sat down in front of it. There was a book on the floor. He read the title. *Hindu for Dummies*. Somebody up high was laughing at him right now. He threw a prayer into the air, anyway. *Let me live*, he thought. *If I live I will be religious, and I will work towards making the world become a better place. Please let me live.*

"Fine."

Jeremy was five metres away from the boat when he saw the shark fin. It was two metres high. That meant it was a great white. Jeremy was in deep trouble. The fin suddenly disappeared beneath the cold waves. He swam as fast as he could towards the ship. There was a red life preserver hanging off the side of the ship, suspended on a rope. He reached the rope and began to climb as fast as he could. Since the shark fin disappeared, the shark had dived down so it could fly into the air. He was hanging off the edge of the ship when the shark flew into the air. It bit the rope and pulled it into the water. Jeremy had escaped with his life.

He lifted his eyes just over the edge to see if there was anybody. There wasn't. He flipped himself over, onto the deck, and landed quietly with catlike grace. He slipped onto the boat and slipped inside an open door. He saw the ratty man from his vision. That meant that the foreigner and the fat man would be waiting. He walked down the staircase quietly.

There was only one light on in the middle of the room, but hostages and bomb were clearly visible. The ratty man looked like he had given up on life, and Lenore was tied up on the other side of the bomb, unconscious. He looked around.

He could see the overweight Caucasian hiding in the shadows trying to look inconspicuous, but his gut was hanging out. The foreigner was much more difficult to see, but he was still visible. Jeremy had no weapons except for his hands and feet, but that would be all he needed. Jeremy fell to the ground and slid toward the hostages. He wasn't seen but he would be soon. He untied them both and then stood up. That overweight man took two steps toward Jeremy, pulling himself out of the shadows. Unfortunately, as head of the police department, everybody knew Jeremy Melinsky's face.

"I'm going ta shoot you if you make a move, punk." The foreigner started to laugh. It was a cruel, mirthless laugh.

"Nobody needs to get hurt here. All we need to do is work this out. Now, put the gun down, and you won't even have any charges. They can be dropped. Nothing needs to happen," said Jeremy in a soft, soothing voice.

The overweight one's face was wracked with indecision. He wasn't going to shoot. Jeremy knew it. If Jeremy got one foot closer, he could disarm the overweight guy.

"Shoot him now, Bruno," commanded the foreigner.

Bruno's indecision faded from his face, and he shot Jeremy in the shoulder. Searing pain shot through his arm from his elbow. *Oh*, thought Jeremy, *he shot me. He actually shot me. Oh man, oh man, it hurts, it . . . Focus. There is pain, and I am aware of this pain, but it will not interfere with my judgment.*

Jeremy took two steps while Bruno stared, astonished at the fact that Jeremy wasn't on the ground crying. Jeremy jumped into the air and kicked the gun out of his hands with his left foot, and kicked his head with his right foot. He then pirouetted into the air, kicked off of the wall, and knocked the foreigner out with his right foot, too.

They were home free. Lenore was still unconscious, so he carried her up the staircase with the ratty man following.

"Thank you so much! If there's anything I can do, just tell me," Fuggire said.

"Go downstairs and tie up the two thugs while I turn this ship around. That would be great," replied Jeremy.

Three hours later, the boat reached the docks, and Jeremy let down the anchor. Fuggire was laughing, he was so happy. Jeremy was a little scared because Lenore was still unconscious, but he was just happy she was alive.

"Fuggire, could you go down the stairs and check on the thugs, please?"

Fuggire went down the stairs, but he didn't come back up. At least not alone. Boss walked back up the staircase with a gun to Fuggire's head, with Bruno following in behind.

"Come close and I will shoot!" yelled Boss. "Let Bruno tie you up or I will shoot Fuggire."

Bruno walked forward and tied up Jeremy and Lenore. Then, suddenly, Boss gave the gun to Fuggire. A malevolent glint formed in behind Boss's eyes. He had lost everything to these North Americans, and now they would suffer.

"Shoot them, and I will let you go. Don't shoot them, and all three of you will die."

Fuggire stood still. His face was completely impassive. He turned the gun toward Boss.

"No." Boss knocked the gun out of Fuggire's weak hands, and kned Fuggire in the stomach. Fuggire fell to the ground. He saw a black book next to his head. It was a bible. Fuggire's memory of the voice saying "Fine" snapped into his head. Fuggire prayed one more time. He prayed that he would make it out alive. And that the cop and the girl would live, too. Boss pointed a gun at Jeremy.

A laser sight turned on. Jeremy couldn't see because his whole eye went red with the laser pointer. Lenore had said no because she was under gunpoint. At least he would die knowing Lenore had loved him.

Suddenly a meteorite came flying out of the sky and hit Boss in the head with the force of ten steam locomotives. Bruno started to cry and put his hands on his head. Lenore's eyes began to open. She stared at Jeremy blearily.

"Where am I?" she asked.

"It doesn't matter now. You're safe," Jeremy replied.

"Thank God, it's you, Jeremy. It's really you. I knew you would come through for me," she said.

"Lenore," Jeremy said, "will you marry me?"

"Yes."

Newport is a disgusting coastal city. Rude residences, a crumbling business district, buildings covered in graffiti, a corrupt and vain government, and a high crime rate with rampant gangsters come together to make one of the most horrible cities in existence. Or at least it was. Now, the residences are polite and kind. Now, the architecture is clean. Now, the businesses are diverse and flourishing. Now, the government is just and scrupulous. Now, it is idyllic. Because now, Fuggire Filipelli is the mayor.



***Teaching Writing That Matters:
Tools and Projects That
Motivate Adolescent Writers***

Chris W Gallagher and Amy Lee
Scholastic, 2008

reviewed by Kimberly Epp

The best way to highlight this book—easy to read, feels good in the hands, 170 pages of insight—is to simply provide a taster of the engaging projects suggested by the authors. Many of these activities have been exploded into full plans.

Students could be asked to do the following:

- “Compose an essay that explores different nicknames they have had and explains how these names communicate something important about their experience and identity” (p 71).
- “Write three versions of the same family story, as three different people would tell it” (p 71).
- “Write a play or a dialogue that puts two authors . . . in conversation with one another” (p 86).

Or they could do the activity called “You Are What You Wear,” in which they are asked to “‘read’ a particular item of clothing or type of clothing for what it ‘says’ about you” and then write a familiar essay (“a short, very intimate, and conversational form of writing”) (p 87).

Tasty, eh! Want a second helping? You’ll have to get the book for many, many more projects, tips and tools.

***Yellow Brick Roads:
Shared and Guided Paths to
Independent Reading 4–12***

Janet Allen
Stenhouse, 2000

reviewed by Kimberly Epp

The author of *Yellow Brick Roads* likens herself to Dorothy of *The Wizard of Oz*, searching for the illusory wizard to show her how to teach. Like Dorothy, Janet Allen finds herself in a place inhabited by people unfamiliar to her from her past experiences both as a student and as an intern teacher—in her first very own classroom. Perhaps you can relate to this feeling?

Allen cautions us to be wary of attributing reading successes or failures to a program, a text, a well-known speaker, an administrator, community support or the students who enter our classrooms, all of which are mostly out of our control. Blaming can lead to learned helplessness. She acknowledges that these factors can scale the ease or difficulty we experience, but we ultimately have choice. Allen challenges us to choose the way of professionalism, with its responsibilities and rewards. Her book challenges us to learn how to

- choose effective resources and methods, or create our own instead of wishing for those we don’t have;
- use time in a way that has a lasting effect on students instead of wishing for more preps; and
- work with and develop assessment for/as learning strategies to provide effective feedback and interventions instead of blaming.

Book Reviews

When we stop looking for the wizard, we free ourselves to create our own magic in the classroom.

This easy-to-read, 305-page resource provides insight into our students as readers. Allen includes a vast array of reading strategies clearly illustrated with sample lessons, templates and student exemplars, thereby supporting the choices she encourages us to make in order to avoid learned helplessness.

It's been said that there are two ways to get to the top of an oak tree: climb the branches, or sit on an acorn and wait. This book is the oak tree you need to climb. Each of the 13 chapters takes us one branch higher toward a clearer understanding of how students learn to read and the strategies that facilitate this learning.

Recent Resource on Writing Instruction

Taking Initiative on Writing: A Guide for Instructional Leaders is a resource published in 2010 by the US National Council of Teachers of English (NCTE). The guide provides research-based resources for principals who want to develop effective programs of writing instruction in their schools.

For more information, go to <https://secure.ncte.org/store/taking-initiative-on-writing>.

Kimberly Epp is a former beginning teacher liaison on the ELAC executive. She has taught widely and is currently assistant principal at École Coloniale Estates School, a middle school in Beaumont. She is always interested in locating good professional books.

Which should I do?

Contribute to ELAC's website or write for *Alberta Voices*?

	Website (http://elac.teachers.ab.ca)	Journal
Purpose	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ✓ Assist teachers with program implementation ✓ Share and celebrate best practice 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ✓ Offer to ELAC members in-depth ideas in ELA
Reading Audience	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ✓ Members-only pages <ul style="list-style-type: none"> —beginning teachers —experienced teachers ✓ Public pages <ul style="list-style-type: none"> —students and parents —administrators —international educators —potential ELAC members 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ✓ ELAC members ✓ Scholarly communities (including libraries) ✓ Education students and grad students
Contributing Audience	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ✓ ELA teachers (including student teachers) ✓ Conference presenters <ul style="list-style-type: none"> —session materials (to reach those who did not attend the annual conference) ✓ Regional voices (including presenters) 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ✓ ELA teachers ✓ Keynote speakers <ul style="list-style-type: none"> —reflections, interview or article (to reach those who did not attend the annual conference) ✓ Education and grad students
Situation	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ✓ Attract new readers and contributors ✓ Keep current readership and contributors 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ✓ Increased membership necessitates e-copy to members
Genre/Text	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ✓ Internet links ✓ Notices/announcements ✓ Contest info ✓ Lesson plans and other teacher-authored materials ✓ Illumination of the five general outcomes ✓ Reviews of books and materials ✓ Reports 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ✓ Articles <ul style="list-style-type: none"> —research —argument —issues —exposition of a practice —reflective essay —book review ✓ Reports <ul style="list-style-type: none"> —regionals —president ✓ Cartoons

Why not contribute to *both*?

Guidelines for Contributors

Alberta Voices is a professional newsjournal for English language arts teachers in Alberta. It is published to

- promote the professional development of English language arts educators and
- stimulate thinking, explore new ideas and offer various viewpoints.

Submissions are requested that have a classroom rather than scholarly focus. They may include

- personal explorations of significant classroom experiences;
- descriptions of innovative classroom and school practices;
- reviews or evaluations of instructional and curricular methods, programs or materials;
- discussions of trends, issues or policies; and
- short literary and imaginative pieces of writing.

Manuscripts may be up to 2,500 words long. References to works cited should appear in full in a list at the end of the article. Photographs, line drawings and diagrams are welcome. To ensure quality reproduction, photographs should be clear and have good contrast, and drawings should be the originals. A caption and photo credit should accompany each photograph. The contributor is responsible for obtaining releases for use of photographs and written parental permission for works by students under 18 years of age.

A cover page should include the contributor's name, professional position, address, and phone and fax numbers. The Copyright Transfer Agreement should be completed and attached to the manuscript.

Contributions will be reviewed by the editor, who reserves the right to edit for clarity and space. Send manuscripts for future issues to Marg Iveson at marg.iveson@ualberta.ca.

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Thank you.



The Alberta Teachers' Association

\$3,000 Project Grants Available

The ATA Educational Trust is a charitable organization dedicated to the professional growth of Alberta teachers. The Trust awards a number of grants of up to \$3,000 to help Alberta teachers or others involved in education and teaching to develop innovative resources that support curriculum, teaching or learning. Individuals or groups planning to undertake a project or conduct research must submit a detailed proposal on or before May 1, 2011.

In January of each year, the Trust posts application forms for grants and bursaries on its website. For details, go to www.teachers.ab.ca, and click on For Members; Programs and Services; Grants, Awards and Scholarships; and ATA Educational Trust.



The ATA Educational Trust

AR-ETF-25 2010 09

\$300 ATA Specialist Council Grants

The ATA Educational Trust is a charitable organization dedicated to the professional growth of Alberta teachers. For this grant program, interested teachers may enter their name into a draw for \$300 towards the cost of an ATA specialist council conference.

In January of each year, the Trust posts application forms for grants and bursaries on its website. The deadline for conference grants is September 30, 2011. For details, go to www.teachers.ab.ca, and click on For Members; Programs and Services; Grants, Awards and Scholarships; and ATA Educational Trust.



The ATA Educational Trust

AR-ETF-23 2010 09

\$500 Bursaries to Improve Knowledge and Skills

The ATA Educational Trust is a charitable organization dedicated to the professional growth of Alberta teachers. The Trust encourages Alberta teachers to improve their knowledge and skills through formal education. The names of 40 (or more) eligible teachers who apply for this bursary will be entered into a draw for up to \$500 to be applied toward tuition.

In January of each year, the Trust posts application forms for grants and bursaries on its website. The deadline for bursary applications is May 1, 2011. For details, go to www.teachers.ab.ca, and click on For Members; Programs and Services; Grants, Awards and Scholarships; and ATA Educational Trust.



The ATA Educational Trust

AR-ETF-24 2010 09

English Language Arts Council Executive 2010/11

President

Barbara-Lynn Goodwin
Bus 403-742-3466
barb-goodwin@shaw.ca *or*
blgoodwin@clearview.ab.ca

Past President

Sharalynn Anderson
Bus 403-578-3661
shanderson@clearview.ab.ca

President-Elect

Lynda Jeans
Bus 403-500-2091
lynda.jeans@cssd.ab.ca *or*
lynda.jeans@shaw.ca

Secretary

Bill Howe
Bus 780-426-3010
bill.howe@epsb.ca *or*
dalthowe@shaw.ca

Treasurer

Cat Turner
Bus 403-280-6565
cjturner@cbe.ab.ca *or*
catzmeow@telusplanet.net

Journal Editor

Margaret Iveson
Bus 780-492-3658
marg.iveson@ualberta.ca

Writing Contest Coordinator

Sandra Kahn
Bus 780-479-0155
sandra.kahn@shaw.ca

Conference Codirectors 2011

Kathy Goldberg
Bus 780-489-5100
kathy.goldberg@epsb.ca

Karen Lupul
Bus 780-471-4218
lupulk@ecsd.net

Conference Codirectors 2012

Carrie Mitchell
Bus 780-674-5333
cmitchell@adlc.ca *or*
carrie.m@telus.net

Geoff Parker
Bus 403-347-1171
gparker@rdpsd.ab.ca *or*
wgparker@shaw.ca

Website Managers

Cam Fahlman
Bus 780-433-0627
cfahlman@shaw.ca *or*
cam.fahlman@epsb.ca

Bill Howe
Bus 780-426-3010
bill.howe@epsb.ca *or*
dalthowe@shaw.ca

University Representative

Jackie Seidel
jseidel@telusplanet.net *or*
jlseidel@ucalgary.ca

Beginning Teacher Liaison

Carrie Mitchell
Bus 780-674-5333
cmitchell@adlc.ca *or*
carrie.m@telus.net

Alberta Education Representative

Jenny Bushrod
Bus 780-422-0624
jennifer.bushrod@gov.ab.ca

PEC Liaison

Jason Schilling
Bus 403-345-3383
jason.schilling@teachers.ab.ca *or*
jschilling@pallisersd.ab.ca

ATA Staff Advisor

Gaylene Schreiber
Bus 780-447-9447 *or*
1-800-232-7208
gaylene.schreiber@ata.ab.ca

Regional Presidents

Calgary and District

Lynda Jeans
Bus 403-500-2091
lynda.jeans@cssd.ab.ca *or*
lynda.jeans@shaw.ca

Central Alberta

Hayley Leschert
hleschert@clearview.ab.ca *or*
hleschert@gmail.com

Edmonton

Lori Chmelyk
Bus 780-489-5490
lori.chmelyk@ecsd.net *or*
lori.chmelyk@gmail.com

ISSN 1705-7760
Barnett House
11010 142 Street NW
Edmonton, AB T5N 2R1