



IN THIS ISSUE

CONVENTION SNEAK PREVIEW >> Trista Owczarzak

Save the date and plan to attend

We had so much fun in Wausau last October that we are planning our next WCTE convention at the Jefferson Street Inn in Wausau, October 24-25, 2024. We know this is pretty early and we are still working on detailed plans, but we thought you'd want to put the WCTE convention on your calendar for next October!

With a focus on poetry and verse, we are bringing two teachers/poets as our featured presenters: Sarah J. Donovan and Joy McCullough. This is really a sneak preview; stay tuned for more details soon.

We know that great things are happening in your classrooms across our state, and we are looking to you to share! Our call for proposals will be released soon, and we hope you consider submitting session proposals to present next October. Experienced educators know that many principals and district administrators are more likely to approve time off for conventions if you are presenting at the event. Not all presentations have to focus on poetry and verse, just in case that's not your forte.

For now, put the 2024 WCTE Convention on your calendar and start thinking about how you can be part of this gathering of English teachers. See you in Wausau in October!



Sarah J. Donovan



Joy McCullough

AWARDS >> Trista Owczarzak

It's never too soon to start thinking about award nominations

Each year the Wisconsin Council of Teachers of English (WCTE) gathers in the fall to learn from and recognize greatness in our field.

The **Nancy Hoefs Memorial Award for Outstanding First Year Teacher** recognizes an outstanding first-year teacher of the English language arts. Full-time teachers in their first permanent position are eligible to be nominated. Eligible first-year teachers will have taught during the 2023-2024 school year.

The **Lee Burress Intellectual Freedom Award** recognizes an educator or group who has been an advocate for expression free from censorship and for humane communication.

The **WCTE High School Teacher of Excellence** recognizes and celebrates high school classroom teachers for their excellent practices and contributions in the classroom. The state winner moves on to the NCTE competition.

The **WCTE Award for Diversity and Inclusion** recognizes an educator who creates a safe space for all students; chooses diverse texts, topics and strategies; advocates for inclusion in the community; celebrates and includes cultural values of all students; and/or builds relationship with students and families of various backgrounds.

Stay tuned for official dates/deadlines to be released soon. See more info at <http://www.wcteonline.org/awards-and-grants/>.



A LETTER FROM THE EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR (OR “WHY I’M STILL HERE”) >> LYNN APRILL

In the midst of my first year of teaching in the dark ages of the 1980s, I was drowning, planning with two other brand new English teachers on a week by week basis because there was no curriculum, no scope and sequence, nothing but a stack of textbooks on my desk and a filing cabinet filled with worksheets from the 1950s. I joined WCTE as a member that first year because my department chair at the time expected all English teachers in the department to join, and he made it a priority to send as many teachers as possible to the WCTE convention each year. That convention saved me — I sat through a sectional on British Literature that caused me to toss my entire approach and rewrite my curriculum (a version of which I continued to use until retirement 27 years later). I’m still here, after 35 years, now retired but still an active part of WCTE. I’d like to share with you a few reasons why WCTE has been a vital part of my career and why it should be yours as well.

1. Collegiality - Even though I taught at schools that had an actual English department, teaching can still be a lonely occupation. Once the bell rings and you close that door, it’s all you. WCTE has allowed me to foster amazing relationships with English professionals at all levels, so I have an understanding of what English education looks like in Wisconsin and across the nation. I treasure those relationships, which only exist because of our shared connection with WCTE.

2. Professional Development - There is not one time that I attended a WCTE convention over the years when I did not come back with a lesson, activity, or idea that I could use on Monday.

Between the stellar keynote speakers and the Wisconsin teachers providing FREE sectional content that is time-tested, there are multiple learning opportunities at every convention which are geared specifically to your content area (rather than “PD for all” whether it applies to you or not). If you’re interested in becoming an educational leader, joining the WCTE board allows you to make a real impact on English education in the state while working with other English professionals who are passionate about what they do.

3. Growth opportunities - Once I joined the WCTE board, I not only developed my leadership skills, but I got connected to other English professionals across the nation through involvement in NCTE and the Conference on English Leadership (CEL). It made it much easier for me to convince my district to support my attendance at the state and even national conventions because I was representing our district and our state. Joining the WCTE and CEL boards contributed to my growth as a teacher and made me a better practitioner.

I could go on and on, but the bottom line is that there is still a place for state teacher organizations in this “Teachers Pay Teachers,” post-COVID educational landscape that we find ourselves in. If the pandemic taught us anything, it’s that we can’t live and thrive in a completely virtual environment. We need to connect with others, and WCTE gives you the perfect opportunity to do this while expanding your horizons and promoting your professional growth. **Please join us!**

Admiration for your work

I hope this message finds you in good health and not buried under papers or stress. As we navigate the challenges and triumphs of the first half of the school year, I want to express my deepest appreciation and admiration for the extraordinary work that each of you contributes to the field of education.

As the President of the Wisconsin Council Teachers of English, I am privileged to witness the passion, dedication, and resilience that characterize our esteemed educators across the state during our conference in November. Your commitment to nurturing the minds and hearts of our students was palpable, and I am inspired by the impact you make in classrooms and beyond. You all continue to display exceptional adaptability and creativity. You have risen to the occasion, embracing new teaching modalities and finding innovative ways to engage and inspire your students.

In the face of any challenges, remember that you are not alone. The Wisconsin Council Teachers of English is here to support you in your professional journey. Whether through resources, professional development opportunities, or a network of like-minded colleagues, our goal is to empower you to continue making a difference in the lives of your students.

As we move forward, let us continue to uplift and inspire one another. Your impact is immeasurable, and your dedication is the driving force behind the success of our education system.

Thank you for your unwavering commitment, passion, and resilience. You are making a difference daily, and your efforts are truly appreciated. Please reach out if you need anything, want feedback, or have new ideas that we can help facilitate.

All the best,

Sarah Rowse-Borrelli

Sarah Rowse-Borrelli
President of WCTE



Sarah Rowse-Borrelli

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Why we attended

For many attendees this year, the motivating factor may have been being able to hear teacher/author Penny Kittle talk about teaching English. But there are plenty of other reasons for attending. Just take a look at the reasons below given by eight of the attendees this year. Networking with other teachers is a significant motivator. Expanding their knowledge and finding solutions to classroom concerns is certainly another. Those who decided to give a presentation reaped additional benefits: confidence about the work that they do, new perspectives about their work and the opportunity to get feedback. Consider being a presenter next year.



Featured speaker Penny Kittle (second from left) enjoys a good comment as she talks with Jessa Turner, Dave Roloff and John Schad after her presentation.



I attended both days of (the convention) because I wanted to get the most valuable experience possible. I'm hoping to gain inspiration and meaningful, effective teaching strategies to use in my classroom!

—Alyssa Hecke, Northland Pines School District, Eagle River



I love to attend the WCTE convention because I leave rejuvenated and full of new ideas. Connecting with my fellow English Teachers also offers a chance to share ideas.

—Marcy Siolka, Bonduel HS



The WCTE yearly convention is a great event by which to re-energize and keep current with best practices in language arts!

—Nick Dobberstein, Hartford Union HS



I'm a teacher for middle school students and teach the writing side of English, so I wanted to find ways to engage students more in the craft of writing and storytelling

—Anna Spears, Swallow School District



Coming from a small district, there aren't always PD opportunities pertaining to English curriculum. The WCTE convention provided me with fresh ideas that not only reinforced my teaching, but also renewed my love of the discipline.

—Whitney Ness, Bonduel HS



Presenting at WCTE is a great way to re-invigorate your love and passion for teaching by allowing the opportunity to share what you do. It also allows you to talk with like-minded and inspired teachers. Our team is already looking forward to next year.

—Heidi Edwards, Muskego HS



I appreciate the speakers' focus on simplifying grammar rules to make it more approachable for students. They also provided specific ideas we can use in our own classrooms. I'm excited to try Comma Golf and Comma Rules One-Pagers.

—Elisabeth Jensen, Chippewa Falls HS



I came to the WCTE conference this year to hear the featured presenter speak: Penny Kittle.

—Sue Guenard, Northland Pines School District

QUICK REFERENCE GUIDES >> NCTE resource



Quick Reference Guides: Written and curated by some of the leading authors and voices in literacy education, these engaging and easy-access trifold guides offer brief, research-based definitions, strategies, tips, activities, and more to address many of the core topics in English and language arts classrooms. With professional learning time harder and harder to come by, the guides offer great prompts for individual instruction as well as jumping-off points for deeper group discussions. Exceptional for both K–12 teachers and college students, the guides are both laminated for protection from stain and wear, and three-hole-punched for easy binder storage and access.

\$10.39 member / \$12.99 nonmember

Here are some examples.



Find more here: <https://ncte.org/resources/quick-reference-guides/>



WISCONSIN LITMAP PROJECT >> Lynn Aprill

Featured Wisconsin author: Norbert Blei

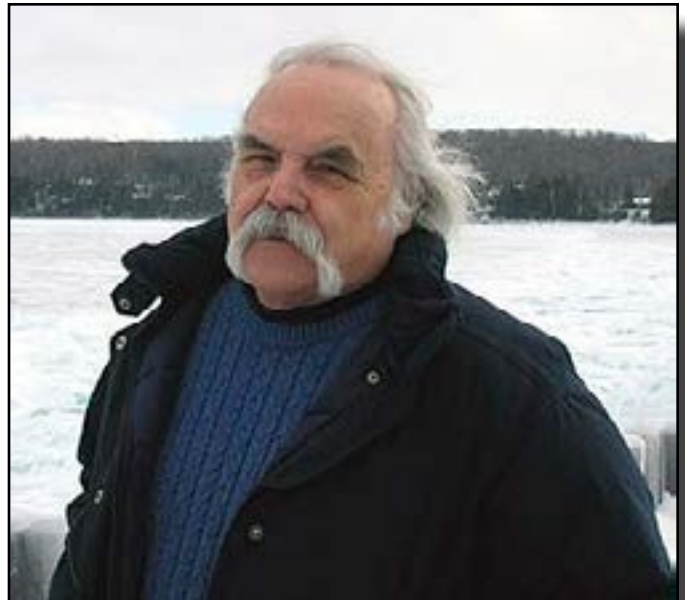
Wisconsin Connection: Ellison Bay, Wis.

[Link](#) to Wikipedia Page

[Listen](#) to Patty Murry's program about Blei on WPR

Born in Chicago, Norbert Blei is the author of a trilogy concerning that city and its people — “Chi Town,” “Neighborhood,” and “The Ghost of Sandburg’s Phizzog.” He lived in Door County, Wisconsin, from 1969 until his death in 2013. His Wisconsin writing includes the award-winning trilogy “Door Way,” “Door Steps,” and “Door to Door,” as well as “Meditations on a Small Lake” and the controversial “Chronicles of a Rural Journalist in America,” dedicated to the preservation of the rural landscape. During his last 40 years, Blei worked out of a converted chicken coop near Europe Lake in Ellison Bay.

Want to learn more about Norbert Blei and another 133 Wisconsin authors? Visit the Wisconsin Lit Map website at <https://www.wisconsinlitmap.com/>



Works by Norbert Blei

Novels

The Second Novel: Becoming a Writer (1978)
Adventures in an American’s Literature (1982)

Non-fiction

Door Way: The People in the Landscape (1981)
Door Steps (1983)
Door to Door (1985)
Neighborhood (1987)
Meditations on a Small Lake (1987)
Chi-Town (1990)
Chronicles of a Rural Journalist in America (1990)
Winter Book (2002)

Poetry

Paint Me a Picture/Make Me a Poem (1987)
The Quiet Time: Door County in Winter (1997)

Collections & Anthologies

Wisconsin’s Rustic Roads: A Road Less Travelled;
Photographs by Bob Rashid, Text By Ben Logan, George Vukelich, Jean Feraca, Norbert Blei and Bill Stokes (1995)
Rooted: Seven Midwest Writers of Place, by David Pichaske, University of Iowa Press (2006)



Wauwatosa West High School students at the State Capitol on Dec. 5 for the Senate hearing on the New Voices bill, which would guarantee free press rights to high school students.

Student press rights bill moving through legislature

Thank you to everyone who offered support or sent in statements to senators heading into the Dec. 5 public hearing on **the New Voices bill**. Thank you, especially, to adviser Chris Lazarski from Wauwatosa West High School, who brought several of his students to speak in favor of the bill and cover the hearing! Thanks also to junior Simon Mehring of Stoughton High School, former Stoughton adviser Laura Streyle and Jonathan Gaston-Falk from the Student Press Law Center. They did an excellent job illustrating the effect this bill could have and how it would work. The hearing is available to watch at [Wisconsin Eye](#) (our portion of the hearing starts at about 53:30 and continues for quite awhile).

The bill already passed the Assembly unanimously and this public hearing started the movement through the Senate.

The senators seemed largely supportive of the bill and spoke a lot about wanting to support publication speech rights. They did seem a bit unclear on some details (such as whether the bill would handcuff advisers from providing any feedback/

suggestions on student work at all and, thanks to somewhat confusing testimony from the representative of the UW System, whether universities should be pulled out and given

their own bill). These issues were addressed during our testimony, but it is tough to tell what they took away from the hearing on these topics. My gut is that the legislation is still moving forward fine, but they seem to want to keep adding amendments that are making it needlessly wordy/complicated and may make it harder to get fully approved if it ends up having to head back to the Assembly in some way.

The changes being requested by the UW System, in particular, are possibly watering it down a bit. I cannot wrap



Key players in creating the Student Press Rights Bill: Laura Streyle (Stoughton High School journalism teacher), Simon Mehring (her student who did all the legwork to find sponsors for the bill), Jonathan Gaston-Falk (Student Press Law Center), and Matt Smith (Fond du Lac High School journalism teacher).

my brain around the argument that they already support student rights enough and that this bill might force them to actually be more involved in student publications. The representative from the SPLC did a good job debunking that theory at the hearing, but it still seems that the legislators put a lot of stock in what the UW System representative has been saying. If you work at the university level and have any insight or input, that could be helpful.

In the meantime, we wait to see if the committee will vote to send the bill forward to the full senate with or without amendments. They could do so soon, but it could also not be until January.

TMJ4 out of Milwaukee addressed the hearing and the bill on their newscast and the Milwaukee Journal Sentinel published a story on the bill and experiences students have had with censorship in the state.

Censorship in Pewaukee
In early December, student journalists at Pewaukee High School were censored. Read the Milwaukee Journal Sentinel story [here](#).

JOURNALISM FOR YOUR CLASSROOM >> Allison Reeder

Effective openers, called ledes, draw readers into stories

Teaching journalism students to write effective ledes provides the basis for strong news stories. This lesson scaffolds background information, tips, and practice identifying and writing authentic ledes.

Download the Google Doc here:

https://docs.google.com/document/d/1H9_d21O8mtkIDhQT2vyqgWbOk5oLWicmjum6QxigXyU/edit



Allison Reeder is the Upper School Head at University Lake School, where she also teaches Journalism and Contemporary Literature. She has a master's degree in Curriculum and Administrative Leadership, a bachelor's in English Education, and a specialized certificate in College Counseling. Originally from the Chicago area, Allie spends her time reading, traveling, and wandering farmers markets with her 4-year-old.

SPEECH >> Linda Barrington

Quick directions for giving an informative speech

For this speech, we will use three different categories of presentations, as outlined by the Wisconsin High School Forensic Association.

Your choices will be

- Six Minute Speech
- Demonstration Speaking
- Moments in History (a very specific kind of informative speech)

The purpose of this speech is to develop the skill of speaking informatively on any significant issue. The challenge to the speaker is to present well-developed material which has the primary intent of informing, although persuasive elements may be present. The speech is to be coherent, unified, and clear. A range of support materials and devices are to be used which can include quotations, statistics, examples, comparisons, and analogies.



Linda Barrington is a retired Speech and English teacher. She taught at Wauwatosa East High School and Mount Mary University. She served for a time as a Forensics judge in the Milwaukee area.

RULES FOR SIX MINUTE SPEECH

1. The speech must be original with the speaker.
2. Auxiliary visual materials are permitted. (This is different from forensics.)
3. Maximum time limit: 6 minutes. A 30 second grace period is allowed, after which one point will be deducted from that evaluation item dealing with rate.
4. The use of both sides of one 4x6 note card is optional.
5. The use of a speaker's stand is optional.

CRITERIA FOR EVALUATION:

1. The extent to which the topic and ideas of the speech were worthy of being heard.
2. The extent to which the organization of the speech (introduction, body, conclusion) was characterized by an objective presentation of accurate, well-developed and unified information.
3. The extent to which the presentation reflected effective language skills, including such items as use of transitions and clear, vivid and appropriate word choices.
4. The extent to which the vocal presentation was clear and appropriate to the subject, including such items as articulation, pronunciation, volume, rate, pitch and voice quality.
5. The extent to which the physical presence contributed to the clarity and effectiveness of the presentation, including such items as facial expression, eye contact, gestures and bodily movement.



KEMPA

WINTER ADVISORS RETREAT



KEMPA

| Kettle Moraine Press Association

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Warm up your mind listening to talks from keynote speakers and industry professionals at the Winter Advisors Retreat.

Join colleagues from around the Midwest this winter to share stories and inspire one another to keep up the good work of teaching and advising students in media.

Spark your passion with workshops in areas like recruiting, staff training, maximizing Excel, increasing finances, getting administrative support, learning new classroom activities and more



Scan the QR Code to learn more and register

FRIDAY, FEBRUARY 2 AND SATURDAY, FEBRUARY 3, 2024



University of Wisconsin
Whitewater

Camps and Conferences



DPI WCTE Liaison Report: December 2024

As we come to the end of 2023, I would like to thank the many educators who diligently serve Wisconsin communities. Your work has not gone unnoticed and is an inspiration to the Wisconsin Department of Public Instruction as we continue to work toward our mission “...to advance equitable, transformative, and sustainable educational experiences that develop learners, schools, libraries, and communities in Wisconsin.” As we head into the new year, there are several staff changes that I would like to update the English language arts community on; after many months of vacancies, the Literacy and Math team welcomed two new reading consultants this year, Robin Bendrich (Literacy Consultant) and Stacy Gray (Early Literacy Consultant). Robin comes to the department from the Fond du Lac School District, and Stacy is from the Brown Deer School District. They are exceptional additions to the DPI literacy leadership team. As many of you may be aware, our former literacy consultants, Barb Novak and Laura Adams, have moved on to serve in other leadership positions in DPI. Barb is the Special Education Team’s Equitable Multi-Level Systems of Support Consultant. Laura is a Policy Initiatives Adviser with the Office of the State Superintendent. The Literacy and Math team has also grown over the last year to include several content area specialists and a new Assistant Director. In the next few weeks, we will formally change the name of our team to express the totality of the mission and vision as a newly formed team.



Bianca Williams-Griffin

Assessment

The 2024 State Forward assessment is aligned with the Wisconsin 2020 ELA and Math standards. With an additional change in format to the writing section of the test, formerly known as the Text Dependent Analysis (TDA), the new writing portion of the forward assessment, [the Short Writing Task](#), is designed to collect a short writing sample from students to see how well they can communicate in writing in relation to the grade-level expectations of the Wisconsin Academic Standards. For more information on State summative assessments, please continue to check the [DPI Assessment Webpage](#). The DPI Assessment team has convened a CESA work group to create a professional learning opportunity for Wisconsin districts to support teacher growth in assessing student writing. The launch date has yet to be announced; however, after a review, the sessions’ structure and design align with the Wisconsin Writing standards and include the opportunity for educators to learn and practice assessing authentic, culturally responsive writing tasks.

Act 20

Wisconsin’s new reading statute, Act 20, was passed on July 19, 2023, and implementation has begun. Several Literacy and Mathematics team members met with the [Governor’s Early Childhood Advisory Council](#) (ECAC) on Wednesday, December 6, where an [overview of the components of Act 20](#) was presented. Presenters at the meeting:

- Shared a description of the [Reading Advisory Council](#) and Early Literacy Curriculum Council;
- identified impacts of Act 20 on 4K, mainly related to screening twice a year;

Continued on next page

DPI ENGLISH NEWS >> *continued*

- discussed examples of how early childhood spaces are already supporting the development of early literacy and oral language through play, wide and varied reading, and literacy-rich environments;
- and were invited by ECAC to collaborate around early literacy and supporting Act 20 as the work unfolds DPI ELA Consultant

DPI ELA Consultant Work

The formation of an ELA Advisory Group will begin in January. This group will be a “think tank” of English language arts educators across Wisconsin. If you are interested in joining this group, please check the DPI ELA webpage during January for details regarding the application process. CESA literacy staff and DPI Literacy and ELA consultants are revising the WIS Explore reading survey. This survey is designed to support schools and districts in identifying strengths and challenges within their literacy program. The survey will be out for feedback in the spring of 2024.

If you have any questions, my contact information is
Wishing you a safe and happy holiday season!

Bianca Williams-Griffin
Department of Public Instruction
English Language

✉ bianca.williams-griffin@wi.dpi.gov

FROM THE ARCHIVES >> Jessa Turner

1963 WCTE Committee meets in Wausau

Did you know that this year wasn't the first time the WCTE has met in Wausau? In 1963, educators from across the state came together for a committee meeting there. Archivist Jessa Turner found minutes from a meeting of the Committee on the Accreditation and Certification of Teachers of English. Coming from state colleges across Wisconsin, 21 English professors met on May 4, 1963, in Wausau.

Among other things, they met to discuss English language, composition and grade point averages for prospective teachers for English. The [group](#) decided to “exercise discretion regarding elementary teachers.” They would focus on English majors and minors.

Members of the committee included several prominent founders of the WCTE: **Lee Burris** of Stevens Point State College (for whom WCTE has named its Intellectual Freedom Award), **Robert C. Pooley** of University of Wisconsin (considered an expert in grammar and English usage), **Sister M. Chrysostom, SSND**, of Mount Mary College (English chairperson), and **Virginia Burke** (pioneering scholar of composition and Black literature at UW-Milwaukee).

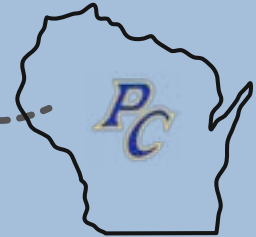


Jessa Turner, archivist



Website Coordinator

Adrian
Hook



✉ ahook@plumcity.k12.wi.us

Greetings --

I am Mr. Adrian Hook, the recently appointed council Website Coordinator. I just completed my third year teaching high school English and Speech at Plum City High School (in Pierce County).

I am a second career teacher with a diverse work history. I have been employed in health insurance, adult and juvenile probation, and behavioral health. The functionality and usability of an organization's website is incredibly valuable.

My goal as the website coordinator for WCTE is to help make the council's webpage an incredible asset for all of our educators, a landing spot for professional development, and a great advocate for the profession in Wisconsin.

I graduated high school in 2004 from Griggs County Central (Cooperstown, ND) and joined the state's Army National Guard as a dental specialist as my goal was to become a dentist. This was entirely financially motivated. Though I was always a good student, my love for education and learning continued throughout my twenties, even if I was somewhat rudderless, so at thirty-one, I returned to my original college, Valley City State (Valley City, ND) to finish my English education degree. At the same time, my wife (Megan) and I were transitioning from Fargo, ND to the Twin Cities, ultimately landing in Baldwin, WI. I completed my student teaching in schools' first semester back in-person post-COVID. What a welcome to the world of public education, right?

Thanks to my extensive job history, I have been able to communicate with students beyond the ELA curriculum. This (sort of) helps me (and them) answer the question, "Why do I need to know this, Mr. Hook?" My love for reading is also something I try to foster with my students and for them to see how important it is to *everything*. At Plum City Schools, my service to the district goes beyond the classroom as I coach both basketball and track, serve as a class advisor, and am the National Honor Society advisor. As such, I have never been happier to wake up and go to work!





Student Poetry Contest...deadline Feb. 1, 2024

Wisconsin Fellowship of Poets calls for student poems for middle and high school students. Winning poems are announced on our contest results page and will appear in the 2025 Wisconsin Poets' Calendar.

All winning poets (including honorable mentions) will receive a complimentary copy.

JUNIOR DIVISION (grades 6 - 8)

SENIOR DIVISION (grades 9 - 12)

Cash prizes in each division:

1st place \$75

2nd place \$50

3rd place \$25

Deadline: Feb. 1, 2024. Poems arriving after 11:59 p.m. on Feb. 1, 2024 will not be considered.

Submission Guidelines

- Students may enter ONE original poem
- **Maximum length:** 24 lines (which includes stanza breaks, but not the title).
- **Line length:** 60-character limit, including spaces and indents.
- We cannot consider longer poems, multiple entries, or collaborative

poems (written by more than one student).

- Students need to be attending a school (or be home-schooled) in Wisconsin.

How to Submit:

Poems must be submitted via **e-mail** submissions. In the subject line, write: "WFOP Contest Lastname Firstname" – for example: WFOP Contest SmithJoan. In the body of the email, include:

- The student's name, home address, e-mail address if available, telephone number, student's current grade in school, and the title of the poem.
- The teacher's name, e-mail address, the school's name, school's complete mailing address, and school phone number (homeschoolers: indicate homeschool association, if applicable).
- Important! At the bottom, include the following statement: "This is my original work" followed by the student's name typed.

Send the poem as an attachment: rtf, doc or docx. Name the attachment the same as the title of the poem with no identifying information.

The attached document must contain only your poem and its title. Do not put your name or any other information in the document.

Please format poems in Times New Roman 12.

Email address for submissions is wfopstudentcontest@gmail.com.

Email acknowledgements of submissions will be sent. If an acknowledgement has not been received within two weeks after submission, please contact the contest coordinator at the above email address.

Winners will be notified via email and posted at: wfop.org/contests-results.

Projected publication date of 2025 Wisconsin Poets' Calendar is Sept. 2024.

Wisconsin Fellowship of Poets (WFOP) is dedicated to promoting awareness and appreciation of poets and poetic heritage in the state, mentoring and supporting local poets with regular readings, workshops, conferences and other events and advocating for the study of poetry in our schools.

Looking for a good book?

Check out these titles, shared by the WCTE Board



After I Do by Taylor Jenkins Reid

When Lauren and Ryan's marriage reaches the breaking point, they come up with an unconventional plan. They decide to take a year off in the hopes of finding a way to fall in love again. One year apart, and only one rule: they cannot contact each other. Aside from that, anything goes.

Sarah Rowse-Borrelli
New Berlin
Eisenhower HS

Lauren embarks on a journey of self-discovery, quickly finding that her friends and family have their own ideas about the meaning of marriage. These influences, as well as her own healing process and the challenges of living apart from Ryan, begin to change Lauren's ideas about monogamy and marriage. She starts to question: When you can have romance without loyalty and commitment without marriage, when love and lust are no longer tied together, what do you value? What are you willing to fight for?

– *Goodreads*

When Lauren's marriage is in shambles, she shifts to a year of self-discovery. It will be interesting to see what learning takes place and how the story unfolds. . – *Sarah Rowse-Borrelli*



Maame by Jessica George

It's fair to say that Maddie's life in London is far from rewarding. With a mother who spends most of her time in Ghana (yet still somehow manages to be overbearing), Maddie is the primary caretaker for her father, who suffers from advanced stage Parkinson's. At work, her boss is a nightmare and Maddie is tired of always

being the only Black person in every meeting.

When her mum returns from her latest trip to Ghana, Maddie leaps at the chance to get out of the family home and finally start living. A self-acknowledged late bloomer, she's ready to experience some important "firsts": She finds a flat share,

Shannon Lagore
Prescott HS



Lessons in Chemistry by Bonnie Garmus

Chemist Elizabeth Zott would be the first to point out that there is no such thing as an average woman. But it's the early 1960s and her all-male team at Hastings Research Institute takes a very unscientific view of equality. Except for one: Calvin Evans; the lonely, brilliant, Nobel-prize nominated grudge-holder who falls in love with—of all things—her mind. True chemistry results.

Tonya Sponholz
Prescott HS

But like science, life is unpredictable. Which is why a few years later Elizabeth Zott finds herself not only a single mother, but the reluctant star of America's most beloved cooking show *Supper at Six*. As it turns out, Elizabeth Zott isn't just teaching women to cook. She's daring them to change the status quo.

– *Goodreads*

Elizabeth Zott is not the typical woman of the 1960s. She has no desire to get married or have children, and she certainly won't be standing by her man. She is first and foremost a chemist and that comes through in everything she does. Like all lives, Elizabeth's life takes a few turns, and she ends up as a single mother and the host on a cooking show! Read this one! You'll love it!. – *Tonya Sponholz*

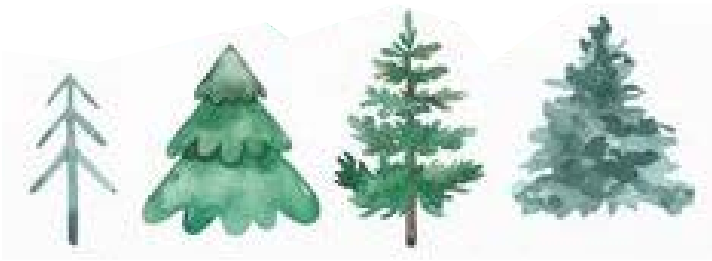
says yes to after-work drinks, pushes for more recognition in her career, and throws herself into the bewildering world of internet dating. But it's not long before tragedy strikes, forcing Maddie to face the true nature of her unconventional family, and the perils—and rewards—of putting her heart on the line..

– *Goodreads*

Each chapter takes the reader to a different kind of darkness—blindness, underground caves, cloudy nights, the dark night of the soul. The author explores our fears, our faith, our courage and invites each of us to "go dark" and walk with the eyes of the blind. The most challenging chapter for me was the deep cave exploration. – *Shannon Lagore*



Look for more good book recommendations in the spring WCTE Update.



Wisconsin English Teachers' Calendar of Events, Deadlines



January

Jan. 31 Submission deadline for **NCTE Edwyna Wheadon Postgraduate Training Scholarship**, which provides funding for professional development experiences for English/Language Arts teachers in public educational institutions. The scholarship supports postgraduate training to enhance teaching skills and/or career development in teaching. http://www.ncte.org/library/NCTEFiles/Sections/Secondary/Wheadon_Guidelines_and_Application.pdf

February

Feb. 1 Entry deadline for **Student Poetry Contest**, Sponsored by the Wisconsin Fellowship of Poets. More information on the website: <https://www.wfop.org/student-contest>

February

Feb. 2-3 **Winter Advisers Seminar** for journalism teachers: "Building a Legacy" To be held at the Fairfield Inn & Suites by Marriott in Whitewater. More information, [here](#).

Feb. 15 Online submission deadline for **Promising Young Writers**: This school-based writing program emphasizes the importance of writing skills among eighth-grade students. For more information, see <http://www2.ncte.org/awards/promising-young-writers/>

Feb. 15 Online submission deadline for **NCTE Achievement Awards in Writing**: This school-based writing program encourages high school students in their writing and recognizes publicly some of the best student writers in the nation. For eleventh-grade students. For more information: <http://www2.ncte.org/awards/achievement-awards-in-writing/>

April

April 3-6 CCCC Annual Convention, Spokane, WA. **Theme:** Writing Abundance: Celebrating 75 Years of Conversations about Rhetoric, Composition, Technical Communication, and Literacy. **Registration:** <https://cccc.ncte.org/cccc/conv>



WCTE Update December 2023		
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Using AI in Both Creative and Technical Writing

A nice, light-hearted, fun lesson I like to do prior to winter break centers around Dungeons & Dragons (D & D), creative writing, technical writing and the use of AI. The AI comes into play to help students with some creativity, yet they are to establish the parameters first. As many are not familiar with the classic game, some leg work is needed to start off the unit to help familiarize the whole class.

The eleventh grade English class in our high school – a small, one-section school in western Wisconsin – has no specific theme: i.e. “American Literature” or “British Literature” among others. However, the challenge to incorporate a curriculum that covers many different themed literatures, reading, writing and more is welcomed. One aspect that is covered extensively is technical writing. Whether it be memos, infographics, technical descriptions/owner manuals, or as simple as an Email, there is value in exposure and practice in them all. Blending some technical writing activities into assessments and creating writing activities has proved helpful, and the students have welcomed the activities too (which can be assumed doesn’t happen often).

Again, at this lesson’s center is D & D. A majority of my students were relatively unfamiliar with the game. Therefore, a classroom discussion was posed to the class via Google Classroom. It was encouraged that students glean information from multiple sources, but, at any rate, the following was posed to the class with the expectation that they reply to each other to expose themselves to different sites, sources, and inputs:



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1

Directions for students

Our next reading will be a play from the 1990s titled, “She Kills Monsters.” The popular simulations game, Dungeons and Dragons, will be at its core, yet the play goes beyond that. We will not be playing Dungeons and Dragons, but this is where the time with your play will begin.

Do some digging. Find out why people play Dungeons and Dragons. What about it is important to its players or what makes it so enticing/so addicting?

Please offer a paragraph without using personal pronouns — I, me, my, etc. — and without personifying articles — e.g. “this article talks about” — and summarize what you’ve found. Pull from *multiple sources*. Include hyperlinks in your sources as well.

After you’ve composed your response, please respond to two peers for full credit.

2

As in the directions above, students will read the play, “She Kills Monsters,” written by Qui Nguyen that debuted in 2011. I was introduced to the play during my student teaching at a Twin Cities high school. It is a humorous play, but even more so, it is really heart-warming. The pre-reading activity above introduces students to the “why” the game is played by its players, as well as opinions, background to the game, and more. Hopefully, the students are able to shift into an open mindset with these discussions.

A quick summary to the play is that Agnes, a school teacher, is now alone as her family – mom, dad, sister – died in a car accident. Agnes hardly knew her little sister Tilly, who was a D & D dungeon master, a legendary one at that. To get to know who her sister was, Agnes decides to play a module that her sister created about herself, ultimately revealing her true self. In playing the module, Agnes learns that her sister was part of the LGBTQ community, as were most of her friends, and that she did not feel welcomed both in her home and in school. Agnes is overwhelmed by the revelation but finds a sort of closure to her grief by playing the module.

I will advise readers that the play does have harsh language, and, due to its mid-1990s setting, it has some derogatory comments towards LGBT characters. The representation of LGBTQ characters is also something to be celebrated. Ultimately, however, the play proves to be supportive of their community.

So, how in the world is this both a technical writing and creative writing activity? After reading the play, students are encouraged to reflect on how the play’s characters used their D & D characters to

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FOR CLASS >> Continued

be their true selves. Many saw similarities and comments in their pre-reading work of how players find it to be a chance to be themselves. The students are then asked to create their own D & D persona, reflecting on their own weaknesses and strengths, failures and successes, and their future goals.


The technical aspect is that this project will be completed using slides (Google Slides, Powerpoint, Prezi, Canva, et al). The creative aspect is developing a name, character class, weapons, defenses, and more. The depth and requirements of what all is required for the character or persona is wholly up to the teacher and/or student. For my class' intents and purposes, I simply asked for their name and description, character class, weapons and defenses.

In my classroom, the expectation for slides presentations is that no pre-made themes are used. Students are to create their own themes (background, font choices, elements and colors). Furthermore, text is to be limited as when one presents, the objective is to not exclusively read from the screen but to offer context beyond what is on the screen. I teach speech, too, so I really try to stress that a picture says a thousand words, ones that are in your possession.

3 Teacher modeling is something many of us do by default, but I'm also a geek and love creating slides and such. Plus, I wanted to exhibit my own vulnerability. These are hyperlinks to my entire presentation and the expectations handed out to students.

https://docs.google.com/presentation/d/138w-t2EgQIRk3AcikQjCO3FMU6Y5X6_O6cqrydhwaLo/edit?usp=sharing

<https://docs.google.com/document/d/10aUWKMotDAFuGK12-FheTCfdiknb7Fefw5LNn4WThQM/edit?usp=sharing>

 But Adrian, you said AI. Where does that come in? Full disclosure, my name was derived from my character on FIFA for Xbox, Adriano, and, as a teacher who grades essays and loves to lean on my experience to advise students, I am a sage pedagogue with a red pen, no? Students may need encouragement for anything from their names, to their weapons, to their shields, and such. Students should start with choosing their class. Our beloved Wikipedia has a wonderful page defining each class. Students can then follow hyperlinks to other pages on the internet encyclopedia for further depth on the classes. If they choose a character class they are not familiar with, AI has proven to be an incredible tool to help fill the gaps!

ChatGPT was encouraged to be used for these intents and purposes as it was the one I had the most success with; however, others may feel otherwise. Therefore, the images below are screenshots from ChatGPT. For my examples, I will use my father's name, Robert. First, I asked AI to create a D & D ranger class name incorporating Robert. The AI's suggestion is below:

YOU
Please generate a D&D ranger name incorporating Robert.

ChatGPT
How about "Robert Thornshade," a skilled and elusive ranger who navigates the wilderness with a combination of smart archery skills and a deep connection to nature?

Oddly enough, my father is a hunter, so it was kind of eerie that it generated this. At any rate, let's say that his most valued possession is a Chevy Silverado. This could be his steed or inspire an idea for a weapon. Many high schoolers' favorite thing is their car anyway, right? The AI's suggestion is below:

YOU
Please generate a weapon for D&D ranger that incorporates a Chevrolet Silverado.

ChatGPT
Certainly. Here's a creative and fantastical weapon idea for a D&D Ranger that incorporates a Chevrolet Silverado:

Name: Silverado Arbalest

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FOR CLASS >> Continued

The AI will offer a ton of context. Students can do with it what they wish, but the context should be retained for their ultimate presentation. Both the description and appearance for the “Silverado Arbalest” are below:

Description: The Silverado Arbalest is a powerful ranged weapon that combines the ruggedness of a Chevrolet Silverado with the precision of the arbalest. This magical crossbow is crafted from enchanted Silverado parts, melding the strength of the truck with elven craftsmanship.

Appearance: The Silverado Arbalest resembles a compact crossbow with intricate carvings and details reminiscent of the Chevrolet Silverado. It has a bedazzled grille, a magically enhanced exhaust system and tires that serve as both ammunition holders and stabilizers.

Additionally, the AI will offer abilities as seen below:

Abilities:

1. **Vehicular precision:** the Silverado Arbalest is incredibly accurate, allowing the ranger to make precise shots over long distances. The vehicle-inspired design grants advantage on attack rolls.
2. **Four-wheel drive reload:** The crossbow features a magical, automatic re-loading mechanism inspired by the four-wheel drive system of the Chevrolet Silverado. This allows the Ranger to reload the weapon swiftly, even in the heat of battle.
3. **Off-Road Arsenal:** The Silverado Arbalest can be loaded with a variety of specialized magical bolts, each with unique effects. For example, the Thunderbolt Tire can create a shockwave on impact, stunning enemies in its radius.
4. **Truck Transformation:** Once per day, the Ranger can invoke the power of the Silverado Arbalest to summon a spectral Chevrolet Silverado, granting them temporary protection and increased mobility. The spectral truck disappears after a short duration or when its hit points are depleted.
5. **Toughness of Steel:** The Silverado Arbalest is exceptionally durable, resistant to damage. It can endure harsh conditions and remain functional in situations that would render ordinary weapons useless.

4

Students can repeat this process for whichever aspect they need help with for inspiration. However, their own reflection matters, too. If one were to view my example, my weapons were inspired by me being a teacher (red quill pen and intellect), a former discus thrower/current coach (flying disc), and an inability to show my real emotions to family/spouse (mood shield).

Okay, okay. So, we can use AI. We can be creative and technical and practice our speaking and, and, what now? What standards are used? Below are some anchor standards from Wisconsin DPI’s website that are assessed, yet rubrics can be created however one wishes to support their own classroom or expectations.

Anchor Standard W3:

Select and utilize tools and strategies to develop effective writing appropriate for purpose, mode and audience.

This would be the students’ use of slides and AI, meeting technical requirements outlined by the instructor.

Anchor Standard W5:

Plan, revise and edit to make informed and intentional decisions to produce clear and coherent multimodal writing

in which the development, organization and style are appropriate to task, purpose and audience.

This would be the students’ writing process, meeting technical and creative requirements outlined by the instructor.

Anchor Standard W6:

Use print and digital technology to produce and publish writing . . .

Again, this would be the students’ use of both slides and AI.

Anchor Standard SL5:

Make strategic use of digital media and visual displays of data to express information and enhance understanding of presentations.

Beyond the use of slides and AI, students are to present their slides and offer context beyond what is on the slides, thus “[expressing] information and [enhancing] understanding of presentations.

I would love to see what you come up with or derive from this activity. Please share with me at my Email address below!

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