

Canadian Special Interest Group on Literacy

April 2008

Newsletter

Message from the Chairperson

Spring has sprung in British Columbia!

I hope everyone had a successful start to 2008. I hope to see you all in Atlanta at the 53rd IRA Annual Convention, May 4-8. As Linda Gambrell, President of IRA writes, "It is like walking into a vast hall filled to overflowing with your closest friends and colleagues. All around you are people who share the dream of literacy for all". The theme "Engaging Learners in Literacy" as we all know is an important one. If you have never attended an IRA conference please make this your first. This conference provides an opportunity to see what others are doing in reading and to make connections that can certainly make a difference for all students. Please share with colleagues this important conference.

Our Canadian literacy organizations, reading councils, associations and affiliated groups are recognized by IRA as making significant contributions to literacy. Many Canadians present at the annual IRA conferences and show the world how effective our Canadian educational systems are and how they advance the various aspects of literacy.

The Canadian Special Interest Group has been given time during the program to arrange for Canadian content around literacy. This year we have the opportunity to hear Eileen Frolic and Susan Barnaby. Both will present a session on "Motivating Literacy Learners at All Levels". After the CSIG session we will be holding our Canadian Special Interest Group AGM and everyone will be invited. This is a time for us as Canadians to share our literacy issues and to learn from each other at an international conference. We also have the opportunity to network and give a voice to Canadian content for the future conferences.

Dr. Lorna Bennet

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Your Executive

Chairperson	- Dr. Lorna Bennet	l5bennet@shaw.ca
Vice Chairperson	- Arlene Kinden	
Past Chairperson	- Mike Bowden	mbowden@mail.sd91.bc.ca
Treasurer	- Lynda M. Usher	
Membership	- Dorothy H. Morrow	morrow@porchlight.ca
Ass't Editor	- Diane Beettam	
Editor	- Dorothy H. Morrow	morrow@porchlight.ca

The Canadian Special Interest Group is very grateful to Lorna for taking a year of her extremely demanding schedule to provide leadership to our group. As many of us have discovered retirement does not leave us with time on our hands; more often than not, we find ourselves over committed.

We wish Lorna much happiness as she divests herself of one of the demands on her time, energy, sense of humour, and skill.

A great big: **THANK YOU, LORNA!**

Arlene Kinden, our vice chair, also finds herself in a position of needing one less demand on her over booked calendar.

We are grateful for any of the time spent to further the cause of literacy and appreciate that persons of this caliber are willing to provide leadership to the extent of their ability and available time.

Thank you, Arlene

Canadian Special Interest Member

Ms. Hryniuk-Adamov is currently a Certified Reading Clinician, Child Guidance Clinic, Winnipeg

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School Division, the IRA Provincial Coordinator and a part-time Doctoral Student in Language and Literacy at the University of Manitoba. Carol is the former Manitoba ELA Consultant in Program Development for K-8 from 1995-1999 and the Project Leader for the Western and Northern Canadian Protocol (WNCP) which produced The Common Curriculum Framework for English Language Arts K-12. Carol is a former classroom and resource teacher. Ms. Hryniuk-Adamov is an award-winning Manitoba educator who was the recipient of the: Canada Post Literacy Award for Educators in 2006; International Reading Association's Nila Banton Smith Award 2007 for translating research and theory into classroom practice; and the Manitoba CEC Outstanding Achievement Award in 2004 for her service to exceptional children in Manitoba. She is a former president of both the Reading Council of Greater Winnipeg and the Manitoba Reading Association. She is the former Chair of the Canadian Network of IRA Councils (CNIRAC). She has been an active member of countless IRA committees and the IRA Adolescent Literacy Commission. Traveling to Macedonia with an IRA consultant team to support an international project was one of the highlights of her career.

Carol hopes to write in the future and has reviewed many Canadian literacy publications over the years. She is newly appointed by Editors Helen Harper and Tom Bean as the Editor of the Classroom Material Column for the Journal of Adolescent and Adult Literacy.

Carol is married to **Vladimir Adamov**. They have two wonderful girls; **Katya** is a very promising teacher candidate, Winnipeg artist and choreographer who became one of the youngest C-SIG and IRA members. **Stephanie** is a Gr. 11 honour roll student, athlete and promising student writer in Winnipeg. Carol's whole family has been a tremendous support in her IRA endeavors for the last 25 years.

Carol has been a CSIG member for many years. We congratulate her on her abundant achievements and are proud of her for the international recognition she has earned.

Canadian Literacy Leaders Honoured

At the 52nd **International Reading Association Annual Conference**, IRA recognizes the valuable contributions that Canadian Reading Councils have made to Literacy.

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Canada's own Garth Brooks is here being honoured for his many years of dedicated endeavors for literacy through the auspices of
ONTARIO READING ASSOCIATION

Arlene Kinden is being recognized for the extraordinary effort she has extended in Manitoba as president of
Reading Council of Greater Winnipeg.
The council is celebrating fifty years of continuous devotion to Literacy.

These photos appeared in Reading Today. Photographer: Lisa Mandel

Council News

Ontario Reading Association

This provincial Reading Association received the **Horizon Award 2007** (for student membership) and the **President's Cup 2007** (greatest growth with Instructional Staff Over 100,000).

Lorraine Giroux, President

Toronto Reading Council

The Department of Curriculum, Teaching and Learning at OISE/University of Toronto, together with the **Toronto Reading Council**, are hosting a conference on:

A Place for Children and Young Adults' Literature within New Literacies Classrooms
on April 4 and 5, 2008, at OISE/University of Toronto.

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Authors of children's and young adult literature, as well as scholars, teachers, librarians, and school administrators will present workshops and the results of their research on bringing together children's literature, multimedia and computer technologies in K-12 classrooms.

For further information, email Agnes Kieltyka at childrenslitnewmedconf@gmail.com.

Shelley Stagg Peterson, President

Reading Council of Greater Manitoba

This very active council, once again, made a donation to **Cancercare Manitoba** on Friday, February 29th in honour of February's **I love to Read** month. **Kim Johnston-Rempel** reports that at the time she called on the facility to deliver "a large basket filled with an eclectic mix of craft supplies and a monetary gift", she was able to read to the families visiting Cancercare that day. Reading Robert Munsch's **Look at Me** and Lauren Child's **I will Never Eat a Tomato** rewarded Kim with "anticipation, astonishment and laughter by both the children and their parents". The new art supplies were put to good use immediately following the story session and the financial donation will be put toward new subscriptions for children, teens and parents.

Arlene Kinden, President

Manitoba Reading Association

This provincial council, includes over 500 teachers, parents and others committed to the promotion of literacy and to the improvement of reading and writing instruction throughout Manitoba.

Samantha Amaral, President

Lower Mainland Council of the International Reading Association

LOMCIRA invites all parties interested in Literacy to join them for an informal get together to hear David Ward, popular researcher and children's author.

Thursday April 10, 2008, 4 PM to 6 PM Waverly School Vancouver, B.C.

Shirley Choo, Past President

B.C. Literacy Council

This provincial literacy Council consists of nearly 100,000 members dedicated to the improvement of reading instruction and the promotion of lifetime reading habits.

Bonita, Steffler, President

Council News Continued

Saskatchewan Reading Council

Presents its 39th Annual Reading Conference

April 10 -12, 2008

Unlock the Mystery; Find the Treasure

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Saskatchewan Reading Council won in 2007:

Award of Excellence

Membership Excellence Award

Pamela Foy, President

North of 60 Council

Our newest Reading/Literacy Council earned the President's Cup for 2007.

The category was for a Province with Instructional Staff less than 10,000.

Lawrie McKeith, President

Ed. note: The executive of the CSIG-L is extremely proud of the programs which have been established and fostered by all of the literacy organizations.

If you let us know about the programs which your organization delivers to your community, we shall be happy to brag for you!

Margriet Ruurs

Margriet reports that she is currently doing author visits in Asia: Laos, Thailand, Malaysia and the Phillipines. Margriet will also speak at the East Asian Educators Conference in Kuala Lumpur. Her next book, a sequel to

My Librarian is a Camel,

will be out this summer and will be titled

My School is a Chicken Coop

and will reflect the way children go to school in countries around the world.

From Storytelling to Story Writing

By **Carol Jupiter** and **Shelley Stagg Peterson**

This is an account of what one grade 2 teacher did to support her students in writing entertaining, well-written stories from anecdotes of family experiences that students created following a storyteller's presentation. Carol, the

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classroom teacher, teaches a class of 23 students (9 boys, 1 of whom is autistic, and 14 girls) in an urban upper middle class neighbourhood. While some might argue that her teaching methods led to such successful writing because she worked with children who had vast exposure to stories, books, and nursery rhymes from the outset of their lives, we believe that the teaching ideas are appropriate, perhaps with modifications, for other classroom contexts. We present some possible modifications at the end of our account.

Supporting Students' Writing

A professional storyteller visited Carol's class, demonstrating and coaching students to enable them to tell family stories to their peers. Students and Carol had a week to prepare their stories, knowing that they would later be written up and gathered together in a collection of class stories. Each class in the school was creating its own collection, as this was a whole-school initiative.

Until Carol had attended storytelling workshops, she thought that once the children had told, then drafted and later completed their good copies, the project was complete. Her storytelling instructor informed her that the family stories were anecdotes, not stories. This, of course, meant that much work was ahead to transform these into stories. Carol scaffolded this process by recalling their earlier experiences with story structure and its components, and discussing the key elements of story – character, setting, plot, conflict, resolution, beginning, middle and end—with her students. To that list Carol added character name to eliminate any confusion about pronouns. Her experience had shown her that students often failed to name their characters, which resulted in he's, and she's that not only lacked identity, but also could not be distinguished from one another. This difficulty was easily resolvable with a name. Moreover, a name allowed a character to acquire specific attributes that eluded he and she. Carol voiced her thinking as she modeled how to take an incident and turn it into a story. Based on a real incident that her students suggested, she told a story a day for three days. Then she gave her students a photocopy of their original stories and sent them off to revise.

The stories did not come easily. For two full days, Carol coached the writers to paint a clear picture in their writing. This meant that she asked questions, which varied according to the student and her/his piece of writing, and used prompts such as:

Where is the character? I wonder what the character sees right now?

I think that the character has a feeling, but it's missing.

What would the character say here?"

What does the character hear? Outside him/herself, inside him/herself

What is the character thinking?

Storytelling continued

I think that something is missing here.

For the most part, students were able to answer the questions; they knew what the characters were thinking,

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seeing and feeling, but had not yet included these details in their writing. Carol explained that readers need the details to be able to see and hear the story.

Students did not find it easy to revise their writing by solving the problems of the omissions. They experienced some difficulties slowing down their tales in order to share the character's experience with the reader. When this happened Carol often said, "I feel lost. I don't know how we got here. Can you help me?" or

"I think that there's something the reader needs to know here." or
"Take me through this slowly."

Sometimes to position them in the audience role, she read their story aloud to them. This change in perspective was illuminating for many authors enabling them to realize what the reader needed to know. Over the two days Carol spent, at the very least, thirty minutes with each student. Time was critical. It gave value to each child and his/her story.

Students encountered another hurdle when writing endings for the stories. They felt stymied when they could not apply "They lived happily ever after" to their stories. Carol met with students, asking questions such as the following to get them to see the need for a concluding sentence to tie up the story:

- * How did the character feel at the end?
- * What happened that was unexpected?
- * How did that change things for the character?

When students wrote their conclusions, they ended up creating imaginative endings in relation to the original family event they were writing about. They found it necessary to embellish or change reality in order to conclude the story satisfactorily.

Assessing Differences between Students' Original Anecdotes and their Revised Stories

Both Carol's students and Carol were very pleased with the stories that students wrote. She analyzed the stories to see what students had changed between the first anecdotal report and the final story to get an idea of what she could do in future to help students become better story writers. She added a further dimension to her analysis, looking at gender differences.

Carol noticed that students used their imaginations and their knowledge of storytelling language to a greater degree in the revised stories. The original stories, based on family events, were all true and many were written about the students, themselves. The revised stories were either true or based on true stories, as the students used their imaginations to go beyond the simple recounting of events and created other characters with names other than their own. A consistent and significant change occurred in all the revised stories. Each student used story language, and included a beginning, middle and end in the revised version. Story language was absent in the originals. In some cases middle and ends were absent in the originals.

Students tended to use the first person to a greater degree in the original anecdotal writing and tended to use the third person in the revised stories. This switch of perspective is consistent with what we know about narrative writing

Storytelling continued

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from published authors (Copeland, 1996; Hodgins, 1993; Lukeman, 2000). The first person presents a limited perspective for readers and might not create the distance that the students needed in order to write the descriptive elements that create pictures that readers need. The third person is more story language like (most story books that students read are in third person).

Table 1: Analyzing Students' Writing: Subject and Perspective

	Girls		Boys	
	Anecdote	Revised Story	Anecdote	Revised Story
About the student	64%	79%	56%	67%
About others	36%	21%	44%	33%
First person	71%	14%	56%	22%
Third person	29%	86%	44%	78%

As shown in Table 2, there is little difference in the numbers of girls and boys who used fictional characters and names. However, fictional events were widespread. All the girls employed fictional events. The boys were not far behind with 88% of their stories containing fictional events.

Table 2: Analyzing Students' Writing: Elements that were Fictionalized in Revised Stories

	Girls	Boys
Character	7%	11%
Name	7%	11%
Events	100%	88%

It is clear that students readily employed fictional events to enhance their stories. Most often these were used to complete the story. In other words, the authors needed to tie up the narrative. This compulsory element was not easy for the majority to dredge up. As a result of my questions and urgings to conclude the story, virtually all of the writers opted for an imagined ending consistent with the story.

From our analysis of the two versions of students' stories, we conclude that mini lessons or student-teacher conferences guiding students to think about how the use of third person or first person will affect their story writing would be helpful to writers who do not have a lot of experience with literature. These mini lessons could start with

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students' noticing that the stories they read in picture books tend to be written in third person with characters who are named. We also feel that young students should be given permission/encouraged to create endings for personal narratives that they write.

Supporting Writing from Storytelling Experiences in Other Classrooms

We present suggestions for teachers whose schools do not have resources to bring in storytellers in order to replicate Carol's teaching experience. Teachers could use books about storytelling to guide them in teaching students to tell stories (see our list of such resources below). We also feel that it is important for teachers to be storytellers and tell stories to their students. In Shelley's children's literature class in OISE/University of Toronto's pre-service program, one assignment involves telling a folktale to the class. Folktales readily lend themselves to the oral tradition. They are simply structured, usually three major incidents, and readily remembered. Beginning teachers use this storytelling experience as a foundation for learning other stories and developing a repertoire of stories to tell their students. The teacher's own storytelling could replace the storyteller's visit.

In addition, it is possible for schools with limited resources to bring storytellers in through the Canadian Children's Book Centre's Book Week in November of each year. See the CCBC's website for further information: http://www.bookweek.ca/Home_English.htm.

We cannot over emphasize the importance of reading to your students. This combined with the opportunity to discuss story structure; your sharing of your thinking about the text as you read; ample practice with retelling (with guidelines – beginning, middle, end, character, setting, problem and resolution); and daily opportunities to write are critical. We recommend that during this daily writing teachers encourage students to write like writers, i.e., not all ideas result in a story. This experience is invaluable in teaching children about the perseverance that is required to carry through. In sum, this background will build a bank of skills, familiarity with story and a sense of possibilities, before we raise the bar.

Storytelling Resources

Barton, B. (2000). *Telling stories your way: storytelling and reading aloud in the classroom*. Markham, ON: Pembroke Publishers.

Booth, D., & Barton, B. (2000). *Story works: How teachers can use shared stories in the new curriculum*. Markham, ON: Pembroke Publishers.

Champlin, C. (1997). *Storytelling with puppets*. Chicago: American Library Association.

Copeland, A. (1996). *The ABC's of Writing*. Story Press

De Vos, G., Harris, M., & Lottridge, C. (2003). *Telling tales: Storytelling in the family*. Edmonton, AB: University of Alberta Press.

Hamilton, M., & Weiss, M. (2005). *Children tell stories*. Katonah, NY: Richard C.Owen Publishing.

Hodgins, J. (1993). *A passion for narrative*. Toronto: McClelland & Stewart

Lukeman, N. (2000). *The first five pages*. New York: Simon & Schuster

Magure, J. (1991). *Creative storytelling: Choosing, inventing and sharing tales for children*. Cambridge, MA: Yellow

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Moon Press.

Mason, H. (1996). The power of storytelling: A step-by-step guide to dramatic learning in K-12. Thousand Oaks, CA: Corwin Press.

Zipes, J. (1995). Creative storytelling: Building community, changing lives. Oxford: Routledge.

At the conference, you will find that there are many sessions of interest to
Canadians concerning
Engaging Learners in Literacy

Canadian Special Interest Group Presentation:

Motivating Literacy Learners at All Levels:

Effective Strategies for Change

Presenters: Susan Barnabe

Eileen Froehlich

Please joins us for this inciteful presentation by two of
Manitoba's most stimulating instructors.

Tuesday, May 6, 2008

9:00 A.M. - 11:45 A.M.

Georgia World Congress Center

Room B310

A CSIG-L Planning Session

The executive of CSIG-L invites all Canadians to join us
and plan for the up coming year and to contribute to a wider vision for our Special Interest

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Group.
We need and value your input so please join us!

Wednesday at 9:00 A.M.
Omni Hotel in the Red Room

IRA General Sessions

The Opening General Session features

Jamie Lee Curtis

Ms. Curtis will charm the audience as she relates her roles as mother, wife, friend, photographer and, of course screen actress. All these roles have inspired her stories, told with humour and compassion, in a way that children of all ages can understand.

Second General Session

Andreas Schleicher

Mr. Schleicher is an expert on International Assessments. He will provide a global perspective on assessments across the world with examples from the best performing countries.

Third General Session

Rafe Esquith

Mr. Esquith will share his innovative methods for making a difference in the life of every child. "Despite language barriers, poverty, and all the challenges of today's classroom, Esquith's amazing techniques, exercises, and vision make a lasting and critical impression".

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Fourth General Session **Alice Walker**

The Pulitzer Prize winning Author of *The Colour Purple* will discuss her work, her passions and her philosophies as they apply to the gamut of today's issues.

MEMBERSHIP FORM

- * We welcome you to the CSIG-L
- * We value your membership
- * We invite you to share your activities and ideas in the newsletter
- * Membership in the CSIG extends from May to May
- * Time allotted to the CSIG for Presentation of "Canadian Perspectives" depends on our membership numbers

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Name:

Address:

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City: _____ Province/Territory:
_____ Postal: _____
State Zip

Email Address:

Send electronically _____ (Yes, No) IRA #

Mail to: Dorothy H. Morrow
Box 3172, Prince Albert
ONTARIO L9L 1C2

Membership fee
Five Dollars Annually