



Annual NEATE Conference, 2017

The 115th annual NEATE conference will be held **October 20-21, 2017** at the Holiday Inn Mansfield, MA. The conference theme, **Literacy for Change**, reminds us the power of words to effect change, both within and without: for student, for educators, and for society. NEATE suggests that by providing students with skills and appreciation for reading, writing, speaking, listening, and performing effectively, educators of literacy help their students live in their world and prepare them to make it a better world. The conference features two presenters whose writing and speaking embody the power of words to change lives through advocacy, questioning, empowerment, civic engagement, and transformation. We were grateful to welcome our two speakers, **Gish Jen** and **Taylor Mali**.

2017 NEATE Conference Speakers

Friday's luncheon speaker, **Gish Jen**, has published short pieces in *The New Yorker*, *The Atlantic Monthly*, and dozens of other periodicals and anthologies. Her work has appeared in *The Best American Short Stories* four times, including *The Best American Short Stories of the Century*, edited by John Updike. Nominated for a National Book Critics' Circle Award, her work was featured in a PBS American Masters' special on the American novel.



Jen is a member of the American Academy of Arts and Sciences. She has been awarded a Lannan Literary Award for Fiction, a Guggenheim fellowship, a Radcliffe Institute for Advanced Study fellowship and numerous other awards. An American Academy of Arts and Letters jury comprised of John Updike, Cynthia Ozick, Don DeLillo, and Joyce Carol Oates granted her a five-year Mildred and Harold Strauss Living award; Jen delivered the William E. Massey, Sr. Lectures in the History of

American Civilization at Harvard University in 2012. *In collaboration with NEATE, Gish Jen is generously making copies of her most recent book, *The Girl at the Baggage Claim: Explaining the East-West Gap*, available to the first 50 registrants of the conference.*



Saturday's speaker is **Taylor Mali**, a vocal advocate for teachers and for the nobility of the teaching profession. After working as a teacher for nine years, he decided to step out of the classroom to make his living as a full-time poet and performance artist. Drawing on his experience in the poetry slam movement, Mali combined perseverance, eloquent powers of persuasion and a passion for education to motivate at least 1,000 people to embark on the adventures of teaching. Based on the poem that inspired a movement, *What Teachers Make: In Praise of the Greatest Job in the World*, in his passionate defense of teachers, inspired by his own experiences and those in classrooms he has visited, Taylor writes, "What am I, really, but a propagandist who modifies teachers into accepting the status quo?" I sometimes feel that way when I am worn from the flight. But I always come back to the fact that being a teachers is one of the greatest jobs in the works, and sometimes the people who have chosen to walk that noble path simply need to be reminded that there is a vast army of educated and grateful citizens who have their backs. Someones needs to remind teachers that they are dearly loved. I'm that guy." Mali is the author of two books of poetry, *The Last Time as We Are* and *What Learning Leaves*, and four performance CDs. In 2001, he received the New York City Foundation for the Arts Grant to develop his award-winning one man show about poetry and teaching called Teacher! Teacher!

Books by both authors will be available, and they will sign copies after their keynotes.

Other books recommended by conference presenters will be on sale Friday by Books on the Square. The weekend includes **15 engaging and inspiring sessions** on Friday and **8 more on Saturday**. Popular elements of past NEATE conference will return this year, some with new features. These include **readings** by the finalists for New England Poet of the Year, who will also share strategies for teaching poetry; a **raffle** to support classroom mini-grants that will be awarded at the conference; a free wine-and-cheese **reception** Friday afternoon, followed by a free theater performance by the New Rep theater company; and of course, the **exhibit hall** with representatives from publishers and other education vendors. The Friday luncheon will also include presentations of the Ann Garland West and Marian Gleason **teaching awards**, for new and experienced teachers respectively, as well as the **Charles Swain Thomas Award**, which is given for distinguished service to NEATE.

See the NEATE website neate.org for more detailed information on the Annual Conference.

Using the book, *The Hate You Give*,
by Angie Thomas in the Classroom
by Dr. Kimberly Parker



I find myself always reading a text with a young person in mind for whom it might be a good fit. I picture that reader, and once I'm done, I suggest the book to the student, connecting what I know about them to why I think they might

like this text. As I read Angie Thomas' debut young adult novel, *The Hate U Give*, I found that I could not neatly envision one or two readers for this novel; instead, I kept thinking of *groups* of young people--of various races, economic backgrounds, and social classes--with whom the book would resonate. While Starr, the protagonist of the novel, is African American, the themes of the book are expansive, inviting entry points for young people in middle and high school, and offering layers of complexity that make it a worthwhile text for inclusion in ELA and Social Science classrooms.

The novel follows its teenaged protagonist, Starr, who witnesses the murder of her friend, Khalil, a young Black man, by a White police officer. While rumors abound about Khalil's background, Starr holds her memory of her friend as nuanced and one untold by the media. The novel easily lends itself to robust connections to contemporary issues: the killings of unarmed Black men by police officers; blight and urban areas and the vitality

and people that persist despite these conditions; and adolescent feelings of fitting in, particularly for Starr who attends a suburban private school where she is one of a few students of color.

What I've found in my work with young people is that they have lots of questions and often need help exploring the answers to those questions. Race and racism are issues that are always present; how we as teachers take up those issues can serve to deepen our work with students or can serve to eliminate opportunities to probe stereotypes, misunderstandings and blind spots (both for them and for us). I also know that the best literature provides a springboard for rich, difficult, necessary discussions that can lead to understanding and the development of empathy--a quality that is much in demand these days. *The Hate U Give* is a necessary addition to classroom libraries, required reading book lists, and one book/one school initiatives. Because of the well-developed characters and the timely nature of the story, this book is an ideal text for broaching difficult conversations that help all readers connect to realities other than their own and that encourage perspective taking, the kind of perspective taking that leads to action about equity and social justice.

For educators looking for resources, please check out the links below to the Storify from the Twitter chat about the book led by Tricia Ebarvia and me; and to the working syllabus I created. Additionally, if you've read *The Hate U Give* and are looking for books that make complementary text pairings, educators might consider Sister Souljah's

The Coldest Winter Ever; Gabourey Sidibe's *This is Just My Face: Try Not to Stare*; and Renee Watson's *Piecing Me Together*. Collectively, these books provide additional insights on understanding what it means to be a young woman of color today and are compelling catalysts for thoughtful discussions with the young people in our classrooms.

Link to Storify: <https://storify.com/triciaebarvia/teachhateugive>

Link to syllabus: <http://bit.ly/2pBJmLL>

A Welcome to Mark A. Fabrizi, PhD

by Lynn Leschke, NEATE President

It is my very distinct pleasure to welcome Mark Fabrizi to the NEATE family in his role as Editor of our official journal *The Leaflet*.

In reading Mark's resume, one thing is certainly very clear – he has dedicated his life to perfecting his writing craft. Not only for himself (his personal body of work is extensive and very impressive) but also to the great benefit of the students fortunate enough to have been taught by him during his career in education.

Mark's first short stories "Escape" and "Snow" were published soon after he graduated from the State University of New York at Potsdam in 1990 where he earned his B.A. in English/Writing. His prose poem "Every Minute" was published in our own *Leaflet* during his first-year teaching English. Mark has a M.S. in Secondary Education, a degree in Educational Leadership and earned his Ph.D. in Education



at the University of Hull, UK. Highlights of his impressive career include teacher and department chair at North Branford High School, consultant for ETS, and adjunct instructor at the University of New Haven. Currently Mark is an assistant professor at Eastern CT State University. He is a well-respected and sought-after presenter who has presented at NEATE and NCTE conferences as well as other national and international venues.

Recently, Mark has been devoting his writing to his scholarly interests. The article "Sports stories and critical media literacy" (Fabrizi, M. A. & Ford, R. 2014) was published in the *English Journal* and "A flair for sports: Teaching journalistic writing using a 3-2-1 column approach" (2016) and "Reading the cool stuff: Students respond to *Pet Sematary*" (1997) were published in other NCTE publications. He also has chapters published in *Fantasy Literature: Challenging Genres* including "Introduction: Challenging fantasy literature" and "You're a prince, Harry: The politics of oppression and self-interest in J. K. Rowling's Harry Potter series."

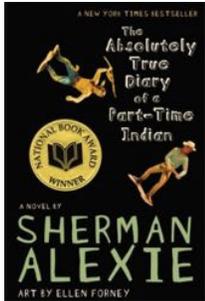
In addition to his published work, Mark has also co-written four feature-length screenplays and two novels. Most recently, Mark edited *Fantasy Literature: Challenging Genres* on the teaching of critical literacy skills through fantasy literature published by Sense Publishers.

Mark has shared with me his vision for *The Leaflet*. Having heard not only his ideas but also his obvious passion for the project, I am very confident that you will be as excited as I am with the new and improved product! In fact, Mark has already implemented a new submission process which you will find on the publications page of our website, and he is currently accepting submissions for *The Leaflet*, Winter 2018.

Please join me in welcoming Mark to NEATE and start thinking about your submissions for *The Leaflet*. Remember, this is YOUR journal! As we encourage our students to think big and stretch beyond their comfort zone writing wise, so should we encourage each other! That's my personal goal for *The Leaflet* as well as our other programming: personal and professional growth through collaboration and peer support. Now get writing!

Young Adult Book Reviews

contributed by teacher, Sarah LeFebvre's students



The Absolutely True Diary of a Part-Time Indian by Sherman Alexie is an exciting and interesting read which will keep you entertained from start to finish. Alexie's book is an example of young adult fiction. The book has won the prestigious National Book Award for Young People's Literature. Sherman Alexie has published several other books which deal with life on an Indian Reservation, using his experiences growing up with Native American ancestry to write immersive books.

The Absolutely True Diary of a Part-Time Indian follows a young boy named Junior who is growing up on an Indian reservation. As Junior explains, life can be rough enough growing up Indian, but to compound his troubles he also has a condition which leaves him with too much fluid in his brain. Alexie brilliantly uses illustrations which are 'drawn' by Junior to serve as a visual aid in his day to day struggles. Trouble appears to be on the horizon when Junior makes a decision which leaves his relationship with his best and only friend in jeopardy. Junior must discover how he can balance his family, school, and social life, all while being a Part-Time Indian.

From the second I picked up *The Absolutely True Diary of a Part-Time Indian*, I was totally gripped by the story, and the likeable and unique characters which Sherman Alexie crafted. You can't help but feel downright bad for Junior when things turn sour, and you cheer with him when he wins his battles. One can draw parallels with Jeff Kinney's *Diary of a Wimpy Kid* series, although *The Absolutely True Diary of a Part-Time Indian* deals with more mature topics such as racism, death, and love. While the illustrations present in the book do serve as a visual aid, they occasionally manage to remove the reader from the immersion and storytelling. The story is the classical underdog story, with the odds seemingly stacked against Junior, which makes him a likeable and understandable character. Overall, I would give the book a 4/5 star rating, as it is a great read through and through, with occasional flaws. I would be willing to read other books by Sherman Alexie, as he has definitely demonstrated a true talent for storytelling. I would recommend *The Absolutely True Diary of a Part-Time Indian* to any young reader, although older readers will likely still enjoy the book.

Do you have student reviews of books?

Submissions happily received at buffy8671@gmail.com

The Impossible Knife of Memory is a realistic fiction novel written by Laurie Halse Anderson. The novel is written from the point of view of a teenage girl named Hayley Kincaid. She lives and attends high school in the present day society of Albany, New York. The most important people in her life are her father, Andy, her boyfriend, Finn, and her close friends Gracie, Brandon and Jona.

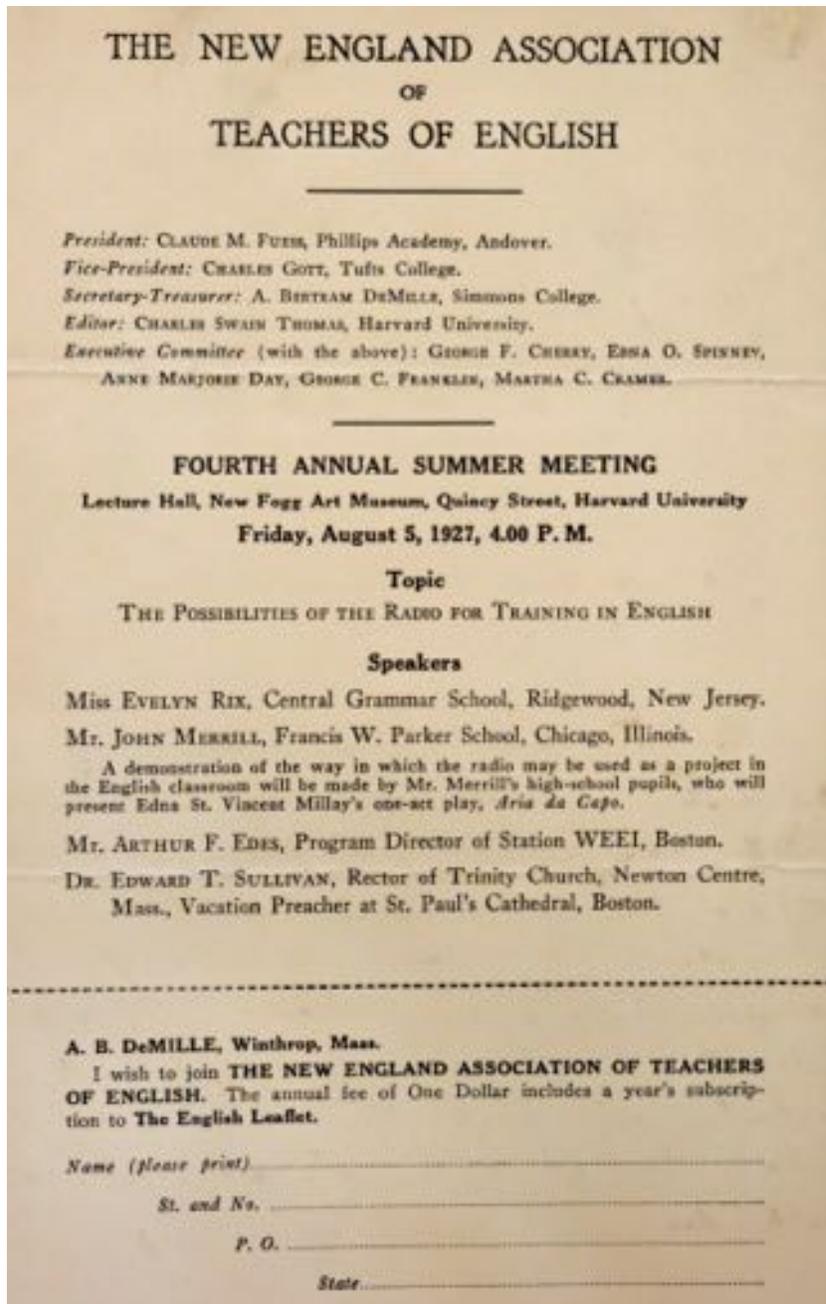


Hayley is a normal teenage girl who has many problems at school and at home that seem to be unfixable. She is failing many of her classes which would prevent her from graduating. On top of that she lives with just a dad, who isn't the most stable, because her mom died when she was very young. After her father returns home from the war in Iraq, Hayley moves permanently to her old hometown in New York. She loves living in one place consistently and seeing her father live a more grounded life. While she attends high school she connects with a few of her old friends. She also forms a bond with her math tutor, Finn, who sweeps her off her feet and shows her what a relationship should be. Although, no amount of time spent with them can distract her from her father. Her dad has gone through a war, therapy, and is currently dealing with the aftermath. He is scarred from many of the events he witnessed during the war. He has nightmares very frequently and occasional blow-ups when Hayley does something like check her phone while he's talking to her. This novel follows Hayley through her daily life and allows the reader to see through the eyes of a socially awkward teen struggling to march through life as a mature adult. On top of the stress of teenage life, like friends and school, Hayley struggles to keep her dad on track while he deals with facing old war friends, the abuse of drugs and alcohol, and supporting a child. Hayley and her father's past still lingers in their heads and seems to follow them wherever they go. They try to forget, or at least deal with their memories of what has happened, but every time something in Hayley's life goes right the issues with her home life, father, or boyfriend flare up causing her to deal with the impossible knife of memory always bleeding her dry when she does best.

I loved this book and would recommend to any young adult or adult audience who enjoys reading about some darkness relating to real life family issues and people's' pasts intertwined with a charming, yet complicated, love story. It also brings the reader into the life of a past war hero who survived which is complex, yet interesting. I would rate it 4/5 because it kept me intrigued with not many dull moments and presented a few unexpected twists picking through the brains of a war veteran and a teenage girl. It encompassed a relatable setting and characters with the usual problems found in any school or family life as well as even more difficulties. But, something to keep in mind is that certain sections of the books could be somewhat depressing.

From our Archives... 90 Years Later

A NEATE meeting brochure from 1927 indicating the topic or theme of the meeting, location and time, speakers, and an application section to become a member of NEATE.



To submit news and other items to the newsletter, please email: buffy8671@gmail.com

