The Sights and Sounds of Haiku

By Pam Sliger

I learned about the relationship between haiku and music while taking an Orff methods class. The Orff Schulwerk approach to music includes melody, rhythm, harmony, texture, and form. With the Orff approach, the child is an active participant in making music, not a spectator on the sideline. One lesson I was involved in during the two weeks of instruction involved haiku.

Small groups were given a poem and instructed to orchestrate the poem using Orff and rhythm instruments. We didn’t write haiku as a part of that lesson, but were encouraged to have our students try to write haiku of their own.

After reading the book to fourth graders, I displayed several of Issa’s poems from the book which I had written on poster board. Each class selected their favorite poem and we discussed the season Issa had intended for the poem. Then we discussed the sounds the things in the poem may have made. One class chose this poem: "A kitten / stamps on falling leaves, / holds them to the ground."

Dear turkey,
you are going to die.
I hope your meat is good.

Blake Snider

As a class, the students selected instruments that could be used to orchestrate the poem and they created an arrangement to be used while reading the haiku. The students chose to scratch the head of a hand drum to simulate the sound of the wind which was played during the entire reading of the poem. They chose to play maracas to represent the falling leaves, and again, a drum was played to indicate the leaves being held to the ground.

A student read the poem for the short performance while the instrumentalist played the background sounds. One class chose to have three or four
students move like the wind, along with playing the wind sound. Following the mini-performance, I asked the students to write their own haiku. The season at the time was fall, so I asked them to set their poem in the fall. I reminded them that each poem should involve nature in some way, and that their poem could result from something they had seen as they were coming to school that morning. I reminded them that their poems should only have three lines and that they should be simple.

Such a small dog but with a big attitude and has problems with love.

Meagan Cody

Some of them were apprehensive in the beginning, but I continued to tell them that they should write about something they had recently experienced. By the end of the class, every student had written a poem. They shared their poems with other students in their group and began choosing one poem to represent their group.

By the next class meeting, students had selected a haiku that a member of their group had written. They began the process of selecting instruments which they felt would represent their poem. I did not assist them in this selection process, but said they should select instruments which represented their poem, not just instruments that they liked. They began experimenting with the sounds of the various instruments. This part of the lesson took longer than I imagined, but the students worked hard to find the instruments that best fit their poem.

When each group had selected instruments, we discussed the form they would use in their performance. They could choose to read the poem first, and then play the instruments, or play the instruments as accompaniment for the haiku. Each group had to decide if their accompaniment would involve an introduction and how long to hold the final sound once the haiku had been read. After the group practiced and determined the form they would use, they performed their poem for the rest of the class. Each group featured a reader and the instrumentalist.

Deer running, turkeys flying - a cool breeze in a grassy bottom.

Sam Cosby

One thing that impressed me was that every child wrote a poem. Students who usually struggle in the regular classroom felt successful and helped contribute to their group because the poetry wasn’t complicated.

The thing that pleased me the most was to observe students using their creative brains to orchestrate the accompaniment for their poem. Creativity often takes more time than we expect, and may be noisier and messier than we anticipate, but the results are rewarding.

A dog barks at the rabbits and the rabbits run away.

Chandler Beasley

Works Cited:

Pam Sliger is a Teacher Consultant of WTWP and elementary music teacher at Sharon and Gleason Schools in Weakley County. A year ago she participated in the Rural Sites Network Retreat of the National Writing Project held at the University of Arizona.

About Teacher Consultants of WTWP

Sandi Walden, 5th grade, Hollow-Rock Bruceton, and Betty Hicks, 7th grade, Northview Middle School, Newbern, have been selected for the 2004 TCAP Scoring Committee meeting in Nashville this spring.
Professional Development Opportunities

March 6
Poetry Workshop
with
Bill Brown
from the
Tennessee Writers Alliance
in cooperation with the
West Tennessee Writing Project
Saturday, March 6, 2004
9 a.m. to 2 p.m.
Trinity Presbyterian Church,
145 Hannings Lane, Martin
Registration: $30;
TWA members, $25;
students, $15.
For registration information and full program see: www.utm.edu/wtwp

August 28
T is for Teacher:
Good Teaching
is STILL Good Teaching
a workshop for K-12 teachers
from the
West Tennessee Writing Project
Saturday, August 28, 2004
9 a.m.-3 p.m.
University Center
at the
University of Tennessee at Martin
Pre-registration $35;
after August 21, $45

Opening presentation by Michael Shoulders, author of V is for Volunteer and the Tennessee Counting Book, and followed by concurrent interactive teaching demonstrations led by Teacher Consultants of WTWP; coffee, lunch, certificates of participation. Book signing with Michael Shoulders before the opening session and during lunch.
For full program information and registration see:
www.utm.edu/utm
Or register on line:
http://www.utm.edu/~ecce/non_credit_registration.htm

May 1
No Teacher Left Behind:
Building a Community of Readers and Writers
a workshop for K-12 teachers
from the
West Tennessee Writing Project
in collaboration with
Northview Middle School, Newbern,
and the
Dyer County School System.
Saturday, May 1, 2004
8:30 a.m. to 3:00 p.m.
Northview Middle School
820 Williams Street
Newbern, TN 38059
Pre-registration by April 23, $45.
After April 23, $60.

Opening Presenter, Harvey Daniels, author of Literature Circles: Voice and Choice in Book Clubs and Reading Groups and A Community of Writers: Teaching Writing in the Junior and Senior High School. In addition: Three rounds of concurrent interactive demonstrations led by Teacher Consultants of the West Tennessee Writing Project; coffee, lunch from Colby Box Lunches, certificates of participation. Focal team chair: Betty Hicks, Northview Middle, Newbern, blhickswtwp@yahoo.com
For full program information and registration see:
www.utm.edu/utm
Or register on line:
http://www.utm.edu/~ecce/non_credit_registration.htm
Poems that Don’t Rhyme and Art Without Color: Judging what Really Matters for a High School Creative Anthology
By Lana Warren

It's Monday, so after my last period class drifts away from their desks (and mine), it is time to get ready for my writing club. The group of about ten students visits me every week to enjoy writing, working on a school-wide writing anthology, and eating candy. I have been very fortunate to have interesting and talented kids every year. This year, I have several young people who enjoy wit and often leave us rolling with laughter from their writing. I also have *Stu, who has recently won a local writing award, Renee, who writes sad poems as well as stories with a twist, and Jim, who is working on a novel.

I set out and open the plastic box of candy and then find the scoring rubric for anthology pieces in my filing cabinet. The overhead projector blinds me as I focus it so that the Warriors of the Ink, my writing club, can more easily judge the pieces for our school anthology. I've got it turned on as I pull the machine away from the dry erase board and simultaneously adjust the orange knob at the top to make it more clear. I laugh a little as I scan the words on the wall before I turn the machine off.

"Chris hasn’t judged yet, so he won’t know about that," Renee smiles, putting her heavy magenta backpack down and pulling some of her long curly red hair behind one ear. She points to the transparency and suggests, "You want me to open with that?"

Every time new members judge for the first time, I have an older member come up and read and explain the rubric. Most of the time, older members opt to read the rubric "with pizzazz," providing us all with new laughs.

"That would be terrific," I say as I begin to print out today's scoring sheets. The scoring sheets list each title and a place for scores. After that, I sort through the stack of poems, artwork, and short stories that will be judged for that day, making sure none of the cover pages with the students’ names accidentally made it into the stack. As I prepare, more members pour in.

"Oh, you have grape gum!" Fisher happily grunts, as he digs through the candy with one finger to find as many as possible. Bubba is carrying a soda in one hand and rubbing his forehead with the other as he scurries in: "I can’t stay long," he begins, "band meeting at 4:00 and I have to eat something between now and then."

Then there’s cautious Chris, who peeps in quietly before coming into the room. He’s new to this crazy bunch and isn’t sure if it’s O.K. to have something from the candy box. He stops in front of it and looks at me.

"It’s fine. Take as much as you want."

"Thanks," he mumbles, before taking a single piece of candy and finding an empty seat in the back.

After a few more members find their seats, Renee takes over. She’s obviously in her element as she rouses everyone’s attention and begins to explain judging for the anthology.

"As you all know, the Warriors produce a school-wide literary magazine, Watershed 16." Bubba rolls his eyes. "Not all of you have been here when we judge, so I am going to explain for you how to judge using our scoring scale." She walks to the overhead projector and stares as if she can’t turn it on. Just as I offer to help, she finds the "on" button and begins:

"TPOT’s Scale of Judging. Ten: Wow! I love this."

"Nine, this is good…I like cheese." The class laughs as Renee rubs her belly and nods. "Eight…cool." Between the cheese joke and the sugary candy, the class is beginning to get silly. They laugh harder than they should when Renee says this.

"Seven is average." She holds out one hand and wobbles it to indicate "so-so" or "kind of." She continues, "Six means ‘okay.’"

"Are you Buckwheat?"

"Five means ‘uhm…ok.’ Four is ‘Dude…this is crazier than I am.’" She crosses her eyes and bends her knees together as she says this.

"That’s pretty crazy," remarks Bubba.

"Shut up," Renee laughs.
"Three, ew…I don’t like this kind of cheese." She leans up against my desk and sticks out her tongue. Some laugh. Some say, "Gross."

"Two means it’s material suitable for Mystery Science Theater," Renee smirks. "That show rocks" Bubba and Fisher give each other high fives. Everyone’s smiling, even those I’m sure have never seen the show.

"And finally, a one is a piece that falls into the category of ‘Cheerleader.’ That was a poem we got the first year. Basically, it stunk up the place. It’s kind of an inside joke, but you get the idea." Renee clicks off the projector.

Bubba turns to look at Chris, "It didn’t even rhyme!"

"Poems don’t have to rhyme," interjects Cliff, one of my more sensitive students, "What matters is rhythm and content. Some of the best poems I’ve read didn’t rhyme."

“Well, it’s just a pet-peeve of mine is all,” explains Bubba.

"And that’s fine," I say. "That’s why we use this method, why we have three judges for every piece. Each of you will bring your own background to your judging."

"Speaking of judging, we need to start if Bubba’s going to have time to eat," says Beth, giggling. She’s right. I hand out a scoring sheet and a small stack of pieces to be judged to each member. As I sit down, I think back to the origins of our little judging rubric, and I have to smile.

"TPOT” stands for "that person over there" or "those people over there" (and sounds like "teapot" when said aloud). It was the nickname for one of my most interesting members, John, who graduated in 2002. John tried to name our club "Those People Over There" when we were getting things started, but the name only stuck to him, as the kids started calling him "TPOT" (or "teapot") from then on. John and his fellow club members set the tone for our club that first year. They inspired the title for the group; the fact that officers are given names like "King," "Princess," "Duke," and "Jester;" and this fascinating little judging rubric for choosing works that go into our anthology, Watershed 16.

Watershed 16 was inspired by UT-Martin's Beanswitch. I showed the collegiate literary and artistic magazine to my writing club members the first year, and they immediately jumped on the chance to produce one for our school. We knew we wanted to accept as many pieces as possible, that we wanted a variety of works, and that we wanted it to be something different. The title, Watershed 16, comes from the fact that our county (Obion) is scattered with watersheds, and watersheds are sort of man-made collections, like our anthology. We decided on 16 after one student researched to learn that we had fifteen watersheds in the county at the time, making ours an imaginary sixteenth one.

This will be the third time around for our school-wide magazine, and the third time the group members have used the funny little scale to help them score the many poems, stories, and pieces of artwork that are submitted. What I like most about having the students judge the pieces themselves and about having them discuss the rubric is that they are thinking about writing on a higher level. Without realizing it, they are using their analytical and evaluative skills, as well as problem-solving and cooperation. The result is a writing anthology that I would have to give a ten: "Wow, I love this!"

*Names are pseudonyms.

Lana Taylor Warren, a teacher consultant of WTWP, is an eleventh and twelfth grade English teacher and yearbook sponsor at Obion County Central High School. A WTWP mini-grant helped support planning and facilitating the writing club.
"Steven Was Here:" Writing Club Writing Marathon

By Beth Halbert

"What are we doing today, Ms. Halbert?" Emily asked as she tossed her book bag into the corner of my classroom.

"Ms. Johnston gave us so much homework!" Sasha huffed into the room.

Alex poked his head into the door. "Does anyone else want a coke? I'm going to get one. Did you bring cookies today, Ms. Halbert?"

"Of course," I replied as I grabbed the Kroger bags from underneath my desk and began unpacking cookies, napkins, and candy. I spread everything out on the front table, shoving aside textbooks, handouts, and other paraphernalia from the day's activities. Sometimes I think these high school students come to the writing club every Wednesday afternoon just for the cookies!

It was the end of September, a breezy fall day. The Mt. Juliet High School Writing Club had been meeting in my room every Wednesday afternoon for about six weeks. About eight students attend the meetings regularly. They all enjoy writing, and most of them have been in my class before and know how I approach the teaching of writing. I had decided that we were ready, comfortable enough around each other, to try a writing marathon.

"We're going on a writing marathon today," I announced with no further explanation. I like doing this. I like giving my kids just a tiny bit of information and then listening in as they attempt to make sense of it.

"A writing marathon? What's that? It sounds...long. What do you mean going somewhere?"

"We'd all settled into the circle of desks. I handed out a paper that had some general writing marathon guidelines from Natalie Goldberg's book Writing Down the Bones and some guidelines from Richard Louth's article on the writing marathon that he does every year in New Orleans. "Here's the deal," I said.

"We're going to go on a writing marathon somewhere outside this classroom. We're going to write for ten to fifteen minutes. Then we're all going to read out loud from what we've written. One of the important writing marathon rules is that after we read out loud, no one is going to respond. The only response I will allow is 'thank you.' You can only say thank you to the person who read."

"Ugh!" Emily grumbled. "You mean we can't say anything to each other?"

"No responses to the writing except thank you. The idea," I explained, "is that you will be freed to write because you won't feel worried about a response." They were all getting excited. Their eyes were big, feet tapping, giggling. "Here's one more rule," I said. "If anyone asks what you are doing during the marathon, you have to say, 'I'm a writer.' Let's practice. Hey, Alex? What are you doing?"

"I'm a writer," he replied dutifully.

"Uh, Jennifer, what are you doing?"

"I'm a writer!" I pumped my arms into the air and cheered and then jumped up out of my desk, grabbed paper and a cookie for the road.

"Let's go," I said loudly as if we were off on a great adventure or something.

"Alex, where are we going?"

"You mean we can go anywhere?"

"Yeah, within walking distance."

"OK, let's go outside."

"Who would like to read next?" I asked quietly, trying not to break the spell. We had found our spot, written for fifteen minutes, and several of us had read our pieces out loud. I glanced around at the students' faces, trying not to linger on one face as if to say, "OK, it's your turn now."

This was after all supposed to be low stakes, low pressure writing. After a few seconds, Amanda began to read her poem. She said:

Steven was here.
Steven was always here.
In big bold lines
he made his presence
known in unusual places
with unusual phrases.
He forced himself to the top,
but he never got there.

As she continued I glanced up at the brick wall of the school and there it was, somewhat faded but clearly visible written in black paint about twelve feet up, "Steven was here." I didn't know who Steven was or why he had left his mark on the wall, or, most perplexing of all, how he had written it up so high. I hadn't even noticed the graffiti, but Amanda had. Amanda had written this amazing first draft poem about this Steven,
who none of us knew anything about, this Steven who, as Amanda put it, "left his mark, and then he left from a place you’re never supposed to stay."

As we finished our round of thank yous, stood up, and brushed off, Kellsi said, "I want to pick the next place." She was practically jumping up and down(0,22),(999,999). "OK, sure. You lead. We’ll follow."

"We’re going to the office," she announced.

"Uh, ok. Let’s go." I briefly wondered what the weary school secretary, principal, and vice principals might think about eight writing marathoners invading the office at 3:45 in the afternoon. But I had said anywhere. As we sprawled ourselves around the office, Coach Bell came through and looked. I imagine he wanted to ask but then thought, "it’s 3:45, I’m not even going to ask."

Before I set my watch time, our principal, Ms. Monroe, came through and greeted us. She made some small talk, acting like it was the most natural thing in the world for seven students and one teacher to sit and write in the middle of the office at 3:45 in the afternoon. Finally, Kellsi exploded, "Ask us what we’re doing!" she demanded. She was leaning forward toward Ms. Monroe, hardly able to contain herself.

"Uh, ok," Ms. Monroe said, "What are you doing?"

In unison, a chorus of seven high school voices boldly proclaimed, "WE ARE WRITERS!" and then laughed like this was the greatest game ever invented.

It was so wonderful to see and hear these kids get so excited about writing and to be so proud. Even though they followed the no response but thank you rule, they gave each other non-verbal responses – vigorous head nodding, huge grins, laughter, sighs, slapping their knees. It was 4:15 by this time, and we had only been to two places and written twice on our marathon. I knew, though, that the kids had homework, jobs, church, etc. "Should we call it a day or go one more place?"

"Oh, no, one more place," Sasha said. "I get to choose this time." Everyone agreed, and we set out following Sasha who led us all the way out of the building, around the school, to the football stadium, and up to the very tip top row of bleachers. I groaned as they bounded up the stairs. The Mt. Juliet High School Writing Club – Dustin, Alex, Emily, Kasper, Kellsi, Jennifer, and Sasha – looked down on the football team practicing plays, the girls basketball team running sprints in one end zone, and the track team running sprints in the other. They wrote about the social status of football players and cheerleaders. They wrote the typical high school, "are dreams worth dreaming," and "that lingering feeling he left in her heart."

And Amanda wrote a poem about a boy named Steven.

Steven tried and tried to make everyone see, but they never did. They continued on their way forever and a day.

Beth Halbert is a co-director of WTWP and teaches students in English classes at Mt. Juliet High School. A WTWP mini-grant helped support planning and facilitating the writing club.
About WTWP

The West Tennessee Writing Project is a program of professional development for teachers, K-12, from all subject-matter areas. It seeks to improve writing and writing instruction in our schools.

Headquartered in the Department of English at the University of Tennessee at Martin, WTWP is one of 160 sites of the National Writing Project and the only affiliate site in Tennessee of the National Writing Project.

The heart of WTWP is its annual invitational summer writing-reading institute for selected West Tennessee teachers, all subject-matter areas, all grades K-12 and held on the UT Martin campus.

Why a writing project? To increase the frequency of writing in the classroom, expand the variety of modes of writing, develop a love of reading and writing among students; publish student writing; combine writing with reading to increase reading fluency and comprehension.

WTWP is supported by grants from the National Writing Project of the University of California, Berkeley, with matching funds from the University of Tennessee at Martin. Additional contributions support particular workshops and programs.

The director of WTWP is Margrethe Ahlschwede, professor in English. Associate director is Paula Cox, 5th grade teacher at Camden's Briarwood School. Co-directors are Molly Coffman, chair of the English Department at Madison Academic Magnet High School, Jackson; and Beth Halbert, Mt. Juliet High School, English. Technology liaison for WTWP is Shannon Tolene, Waverly High School English teacher. Inservice Liaison is Betty Hicks, Northview Middle, Newbern. The WTWP Advocacy Council also includes Renee Cooper, 2nd grade, Camden Elementary; Doug Cook, chair, Visual and Theater Arts, UT-Martin; Sandi Walden, 5th grade, Hollow-Rock Bruceton; Helen New, 7th reading, Tigrett Middle, Jackson; Deanna Chappell, Hillcrest Elementary, Troy; Kelli Ligon, Franklin Schools, art consultant to WTWP.

Administrators who make WTWP possible: Chancellor Nick Dunagan; Vice Chancellor for Academic Affairs, Tom Rakes; College of Humanities and Fine Arts Dean Jerald Ogg; Department of English Chair Lynn Alexander.

For further information about inservice programs, the annual summer institute, and additional programs of professional development write or call: West Tennessee Writing project, Department of English, UT Martin, 38238; 731.587.7290, 731.587.7300; FAX 731.587.7276; or e-mail: wtwp@utm.edu

WTWP website: www.utm.edu/wtwp
National Writing Project site: www.writingproject.org

Field Notes is mailed twice yearly to Teacher Consultants of WTWP and West Tennessee supervisors, principals, and additional educators. It is available online at www.utm.edu/wtwp

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