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WordPlay

The newsletter of the UCI Writing Project



Dear Writing Project Friends,

Welcome to the February edition of WordPlay, the newsletter of the UCI Writing Project. I trust that you all had a welcome Winter Break, and that you are finding the energy and inspiration you need for the remainder of the school year. Spring is around the corner, and soon the hillsides, green from the recent rains, will be bursting into a riot of color with the arrival of poppy season.

I hope that you may also find inspiration in this edition of WordPlay. Our Director, Michael Hebert, presents us with a list of ways in which we can all contribute to making our community even stronger and more vibrant. Please consider getting involved in one or more of the opportunities he describes. Opportunities for inspiration may also be found in the extensive list of Upcoming Events, compiled by Lynne Pantano. There are zoom events, in-person meetings, and opportunities to connect with other writers as well as with published authors. I particularly want to draw your attention to the webinar *Argument in Service of Civic Reasoning and Discourse* by Dr Carol D. Lee on Wednesday, March 14 from 3:30 - 5:00 P.M. This is a free webinar presented by the Write Center on a very timely topic.

Inspirations for reading come from our book review team, including a review of *iGen*, an adult non-fiction book seeking to explain how and why the current generation of students is different from any before it. The Classroom Spotlight this month, features Cale Kavanaugh who writes about how UCIWP continues to inform his classroom practice. Cale is certainly an inspiration for us all.

Once again, I would encourage you, too, to be an inspiration to our community by contributing to WordPlay. Articles, poems, stories, photographs ... We are open to any and all ideas. Please contact me when inspiration strikes!

With best wishes
Liz Harrington

Editor
eharring@uci.edu



Dear UCI Writing Project Community,

In a seemingly quiet part of the year for the WP, things are bustling behind the scenes. We're planning amazing programming, and we'd love to get you involved. Here are some ways you can help:

Nominate Teachers for our Summer Institute

Do you have colleagues who would make great WP fellows? Nominate them! This year's theme is "Adventures in Teaching." We'd especially like to recruit some elementary and special education teachers. Teachers will be paid a \$2,000 stipend.

- Nominate teachers here: <https://forms.gle/rShse7H3niXjQMKr9>
- Check out the website: <https://writingproject.uci.edu/summer-institute>

Teach in our Summer Youth Program

We're planning great Virtual and In-person Programs, with sites in Irvine, Tustin, and Aliso Viejo. We pay \$1,425 for 3 weeks (30 teaching hours) and you can teach in more than one. We already have 34 applications. Secure your spot now!

- Apply here: <https://forms.gle/Q4MzgU463ScNmWhw9>

Increase Writing Opportunities in Underserved Communities

We're broadening our impacts. Instead of teaching half-filled youth classes, we've started offering scholarships to fill them. We're soliciting recommendations for students, and we'd love our fellows to play a role. Contact us to get involved.

Plan or Implement Professional Development

Can traditional PD workshops be improved? Yep! We're currently working with some school partners to adapt the concept of "practice-based professional development" for writing, with in-situ modeling and coaching for teachers. It's super cool! Let me know if you're interested in planning or implementing PD.

Get Involved with the December Conference

We're already planning our next conference. We're inviting great speakers like Antero Garcia, Earnest Morrel, and Tricia Ebarvia (fingers crossed!). Contact me if you'd be interested in planning or presenting.

Our Writing Project is healthiest when our community is engaged. Try to get involved as early as you can. I'm looking forward to doing great things with you!

Best,
Michael

Mark your Calendar

Upcoming events

Thursday, Feb. 16 and 23 Lake Forest Writers' Roundtable

10:45 a.m.-12:00 p.m.

Lake Forest Writers' Roundtable discussion group, featuring writing and publishing business topics, takes place from 10:45 a.m. to noon on Zoom. Meetings are free and open to the public. To receive Zoom access information, email Roundtable leader Barb DeLong at delongbarb15@gmail.com.

Saturday, Feb. 18 Southern California Writers Association monthly meeting with featured speaker Jonathan Brown

10:00 a.m. PST

In-person: Regency Theatre (adjacent to the San Juan Capistrano Train Station), 26762 Verdugo Street, San Juan Capistrano, CA 92675

Check the website for cost and more details. www.southernwriters.org.

Monday, Feb. 20 OC Writers' Monday Morning Write-In

8:00 a.m.

In-person: High Ground Coffee House (25522 Marguerite Parkway, #102, Mission Viejo).

Bring your work in progress to work alongside other (socially distant) writers at the O.C. Writers' Monday Morning write-in at High Ground Coffee House (25522 Marguerite Parkway, #102, Mission Viejo). For more information, send an email to Barb De Long at info@oc-writers.com.

Wednesday, Feb. 22 Connect and Inspire with Student-Created Audio Essays

4:00 p.m.-6:00 p.m. PST

If you've ever thought of doing podcasting or audio storytelling with students and weren't sure how to get started, this workshop is for you!

[Register here](#) to receive the Zoom link to join the workshop.

Thursday, Feb. 23 Author Sadeqa Johnson

6:00 p.m. PST

In-person: Costa Mesa Donald Dungan Library, 1845 Park Ave., Costa Mesa.

The Orange County Public Libraries will feature author Sadeqa Johnson (*And Then There Was Me*) at 6 p.m. at Costa Mesa Donald Dungan Library, 1845 Park Ave., Costa Mesa. <https://ocpl.org/events/ocpl-special-event-sadeqa-johnson..>

Sunday, Feb. 26 O.C. Sisters in Crime monthly meeting

3:00 p.m.

Zoom ([Register here](#).)

O.C. Sisters in Crime will gather at 3 p.m. via Zoom for its monthly meeting. Novelist Jordan Harper (*Everybody Knows*) will be the guest speaker, in conversation with Barbara DeMarco-Barrett. Learn more at www.sistersincrimeoc.com.



Tuesday, March 14 Argument in Service of Civic Reasoning and Discourse

A discussion with Carol D. Lee, Ph.D., Edwina S. Tarry Professor Emerita, Northwestern University

3:30 p.m.-5:00 p.m. PST

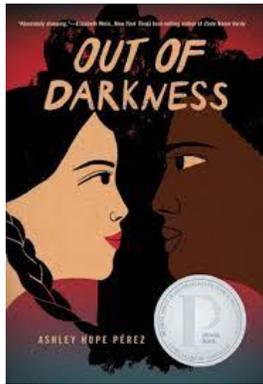
Offered at no charge as a community service.

More information: writecenter.org

Webinar: [Register here](#)

Reading Corner

Book Reviews



Mature High School-Adult
Out of Darkness
Ashley Hope Perez

1937. New London, Texas.
 1 gas explosion. Nearly 300 dead.

The story starts out with the punch of a historical event and then begins to weave a purely fictional, though historically representative, tragedy.

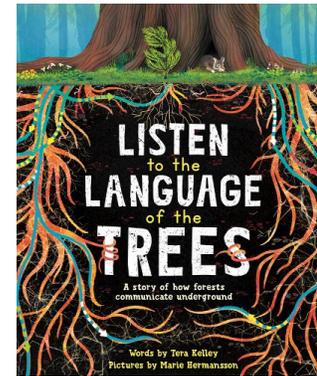
Henry is a man who follows a preacher to New London, Texas, to work in the oil fields. He brings along his step-daughter (Naomi) from his dead wife as well as his biological twin daughter and son (Cari and Beto). Naomi is a girl who stands out, beautiful and distinctly Mexican. Her mixed half-brother and sister, however, pass more for white in New London. The schools are good and Henry finds a job,



Attack of the Black Rectangles
Amy Sarig King

Mac Delaney is experiencing a heck of a beginning to his sixth grade year. He's dealing with an abusive father and a teacher who is a well-known repressive force in town and who doesn't appreciate Mac's honest questions about U.S. history. He's dealing with a bullying classmate. The icing on the cake is Mac and his friends discovering that the book their lit circle is reading has been censored. Passages in the book have been Sharpied over, creating the black rectangles of the book's title.

Attack of the Black Rectangles is a story that shows how vitally important it is for adults to be honest with kids. Fortunately for Mac, he has a loving mother and devoted grandfather. He can trust them



Listen to the Language of the Trees,
by Tera Kelley
pictures by Marie Hermansson,

This is a book that tells a story about a Douglas fir and how the roots of these trees throughout the forest help the trees support one another. While the book is written in story format with enough excitement to hold even young readers' interest, the concepts are science-based. These science concepts are woven throughout the story and highlighted by the author in the book's last few

but there are deep wounds in this family and this town.

Riddled with tragic details, Perez weaves a story from which it is hard to turn away. While sad, it is not all consumingly tragic after being filled with so many bright hopes. Forced love mixed with true love. Inhumane actions mixed with compassionate actions.

There are trigger warnings to be had here: sexual, abusive, and violent (man to man and when the school blows up). However, this Latina author writes a piece as reflective of its times as *To Kill a Mockingbird* with a tone similar to that of *The Outsiders*, though clearly written for a more mature audience. It is not wholly adult in nature but definitely best saved for Juniors and Seniors.

A gripping mature, YA book, this is one that you will remember.

Liz Taireh

because they do believe in being honest with him and have taught him about the less pleasant aspects of U.S. history. With their support, Mac and his best friends take on the teacher, principal, and school board over the desecration of Jane Yolen's award-winning Holocaust-related *The Devil's Arithmetic*.

Attack of the Black Rectangles could not be more relevant, given current events coming out of Smithtown, Florida, Texas, and too many other places. Young people need to know the truth about history, science, sexuality, and other topics. They will soon own the future and they need to be as educated and wise as possible to live their lives well and to make decisions that will save the planet.

I think it would be cool to read this book and have students create blackout poems that mimic censorship but actually reveal a hidden message... There is a lot that can be done to integrate this book into the curriculum or it can be enjoyed as a free choice reading book!

Megan Grint

pages. The author also shares some SEL connections readers can make to interconnectedness.

With Earth Day coming up on April 22nd, this would be a great addition to a classroom library!

Allison Serceki



Professional Development Book Review

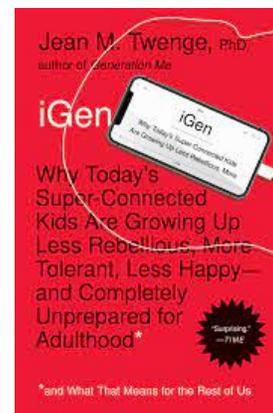
iGen

Dr. Jean Twenge

iGen, an early name for the generation following millennials.

We teach them, you know them, but Dr. Twenge tries to explain the why of them.

You will read a lot of harsh criticism about this book and much praise as well. Dr. Twenge is a well known author and a professor of psychology at San Diego State University.



As a social psychologist, Dr. Twenge studies years of patterns and data and has solidified many of the arguments about how this generation is different. First, this generation is getting their licenses significantly later than previous generations. While there are many causes, the main marker for her and iGen is the invention of the iPhone. Those who grew up with iPhones prevalent during their childhoods have a very different experience than those of us who did not.

There are those who will say that this is a stretch and how is this different than when the car was invented...but that's just it, her argument is that this is changing social patterns. Good, bad, or indifferent, there is no denying that our experiences as a society have changed and we can only expect our children to change as well.

Twenge's writing comes 3 years before any COVID lock down and before remote learning was a thing. Her predictions are amazingly accurate about how technology is impacting students.

To take this thought a step further, it begets the question of how we are failing this generation. If kids are the leaders in growing up with this technology, who is there to teach them how to use it responsibly? Like the first generations of drivers with those first cars, parents are terrible examples and models for how to behave with technology and are struggling with how to cope with its side effects as well.

Some accuse this book of blaming iGens or coming to a conclusion and then finding data to support it, but no matter how you take it, this book will give you data to support behaviors you see and perhaps give some insight on how to handle it.

Liz Taireh



Classroom Spotlight

Teaching Thinking

I admit it, upon occasion I indulge in the mind-dulling brain sugar that is short form digital content. It usually starts with my wife showing me a funny dog video and then somehow after twenty minutes pass, we've mindlessly laughed at dozens of short video clips that illusively blur together. For many of my students, this is how they pass the time when they have a few minutes—or hours—to kill. Among raising societal concerns greater than the scope of this piece, mindless digital consumption has dialed up the need for educators to equip students in the process of thinking rather than simply being dopamine-dragged through algorithmically curated content.

I use the Cognitive Reading Strategies daily with my students from ninth grade college prep English students reading self-selected texts with their book clubs to my AP Literature and Composition seniors as they step into *Beloved's* 124 Bluestone Road for the first time. Sometimes I'll have my students practice these strategies with a free-write activity at the beginning of class or right after a few minutes of independent reading. Other times, I'll use them as discussion prompts in their writing groups, when I want them to reflect on aspects of their peers' writing. Occasionally, I'll model for them a Cognitive Reading Strategy as we meet a new poem for the first time or wrestle with a difficult full-class text. Simply making predictions about the contents of a poem based off of the title or empathizing with a character from a novel can go a long way to increase the academic rigor and quality with which they are thinking about a text. Cognitive Reading Strategies help put students back in the driver's seat of their own thinking, which may be one of the most valuable gifts education offers.

Cale Kavanaugh
Portola High School



Help Wanted

Help Wanted

The Young Writers Program is growing and thriving in our digital format! We are always on the lookout for new classes and instructors. As we look to grow our



network of instructors, we would love for you to consider applying to teach a class! Classes happen three times a year fall (October - Dec.) spring (mid Feb. - April), and summer. If you would like to teach a class, please let us know. Classes are one day a week for 8 weeks and 1.5 hours each day for a total of 12 hours. Classes are capped at 12 students.

Classes that have been popular in the past are:

- Argument Writing grades 6-8
- Science Fiction or Fantasy 3/4 or 4/5 or 5/6
- Creating your own Graphic Novel 3/4 or 4/5 or 5/6
- Young Writers Network (This course would facilitate a writers group where students would get feedback from peers and the teacher on a short story or novel they are working on.) 3/4 or 4/5 or 5/6 or 7/8
- Journalism and Podcasting 6 - 8
- Poetry
- Fan/Fiction

We are always open to new class ideas and would love to hear what you would love to teach! Apply by emailing the Writing Project at:
uciwritingproject@uci.edu

Angie Balius



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