

Jessica R. Gallo

From the Editor

*Montana English Journal's
Editor introduces this
volume's content and the
incoming Editor of MEJ.*

Welcome to the first digital volume of the *Montana English Journal*. It is thanks to the incredible forward-looking vision of the *MEJ* Editorial Board and the Executive Board of the Montana Association of Teachers of English Language Arts that we can share the insights, ideas, and reflections of Montana's ELA teachers via this new site. The process of moving from a traditional print journal to an online journal has been underway for more than a year, and with the new format comes a more streamlined process of article submission, review, revision, and publication. The *MEJ* Editorial Board is excited that this change will increase the reach of *Montana English Journal* so that English teachers nationwide can be inspired by the innovative work happening in Montana's ELA classrooms.

In this volume, we are pleased to offer a variety of pieces that highlight new and familiar teaching practices to ignite your teaching. While many ELA teachers may be familiar with the writing workshop model, Sheryl Lain's piece "Hold Steady in the Wind: Reclaiming the Writing Workshop" offers a fresh take on the deep and lasting impacts of this teaching practice.

Two articles in this volume focus on the value of using mentor texts in teaching writing. In "Teaching Punctuation: Seventh Graders, Mentor Texts, and Commas" Tara Berg and Ann M. Ellsworth detail Tara's use of Tomie dePaola's *The Legend of the Indian Paintbrush* to help her 7th

grade students use commas more effectively and beautifully. "Happiness Is...Poetry!" features several examples of student poetry written in response to Charles Shultz' *Happiness Is a Warm Puppy* in Julie Papp's 5th grade class. Both articles are sure to inspire your own inclusion of mentor texts in your teaching.

In "Refueling through Scholarship, Student Authors, and Curricular Connections," five English teachers reflect on their writing and learning as a result of participating in Fire on the Page!, a yearly conference hosted by the Yellowstone Writing Project. For these teachers, the professional networking and personal writing opportunities reinvigorate their work and reaffirm the power of collaboration.

Katie Kotynski shares two moving pieces of fiction in the form of 100-word essays. I think you'll savor each of those words, as I did.

In her piece "From the Boston Stone Jail, 1775," Jean O'Connor marvels over the discovery of a primary source document that will contribute to her writing of a novel about American patriot James Lovell. She also offers tips and resources for teachers who want to include primary sources in their teaching.

Beverly Ann Chin and Catherine Filardi count the many positive benefits for writers and teachers who work with the Writing Coaches of Montana in their article, "Writing Coaches of Montana: Providing In-class Support to Middle and

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High School Writers.” WCM is a strong and growing organization, and readers will surely see its potential for expansion in your classrooms and communities too.

Joyce Herbeck’s lively interview with Tim Tingle highlights the wonderful work of MATELA’s 2017 keynote speaker at the MEA-MFT Educator’s Conference.

Finally, in September 2017, I accepted a new position at the University of Nevada, Reno, and I will step down as Editor of *Montana English Journal* after the publication of the 2017 volume. I have enjoyed my work in ushering *MEJ* into the digital era, but *MEJ* is, and will remain, a Montana-based journal. Thus, I have the pleasure of introducing Heather Parrish as the new Editor of *Montana English Journal*. Heather, who is an English teacher at Capital High School in Helena, MT, has assisted in the publication of previous volumes of the journal, and *MEJ* will continue to flourish under her steadfast and generous leadership. I owe Heather many thanks for her support in the production of this volume as well.

I hope that you enjoy the articles in this volume, and I hope that you will consider *Montana English Journal* as a venue for your work in the future.

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