

Chapter Six

The Liberal Arts at Lesley College: Three Perspectives

Robert Wauhkonen, EdD
Rosalie Fink, EdD
Anne Pluto, PhD

In this chapter, three professors highlight exciting Lesley liberal arts traditions and fascinating recent innovations that have received wide attention. First, Professor Robert Wauhkonen sets the historical context and discusses the liberal arts from both theoretical and practical perspectives. He goes on to explain how, for 100 years, liberal arts traditions at Lesley have been linked with timely innovations, especially experiential learning.

In the next section, Professor Rosalie Fink describes her unique approach to active, experiential learning. Rosalie merges dance, rhythm, and visual art with reading of texts to enrich students' understanding of literary and other text forms. In her classes (and in her books), students create and perform their own rap songs, reader's theatre scripts, poems, and movement sequences. For example, after reading and analyzing Barack Obama's (2009) memoir *Dreams from My Father: A Story of Race and Inheritance*, students recently reviewed for a test by creating their own rap songs, including "The Obama Rap," "He Leads the Nation Despite Discrimination," "Private School, It Ain't that Cool," and "He'll Take our Country Out of Economic Hell."

In the chapter's last section, Professor Anne Pluto shows how she adapts a wide variety of Shakespeare plays to create enthralling Shakespeare productions. The chapter presents lively vignettes and enlightening examples of Lesley's innovative, hands-on approaches to teaching the liberal arts.

Wedding Tradition and Innovation

Robert Wauhkonen, EdD

Ask someone at Lesley College about what defines the college's educational mission, and you're likely to get the same response faculty and students have been giving for nearly one hundred years: to make a difference in the world. From the earliest days of Edith Lesley's normal school, which educated women to be teachers, to today's co-educational college, with numerous programs and majors, Lesley's educational focus has been to send graduates out into the world to improve the lives of others.

This focus on "making a difference" is reflected in Lesley's programs in education, counseling, art and expressive arts therapy, human services, management, communication and technology, environmental studies, and the liberal arts. Lesley has a long and distinguished tradition of graduating students who have gone on to "make a difference" in each of these fields. A critical part of Lesley's success in educating students in these areas is its strong commitment to the liberal arts. Traditionally, study in the liberal arts has focused on broadening and enriching students' lives in ways that go

beyond students' professional education. Liberal arts study at Lesley has long shared this vision. Unlike at many other colleges, however, where study in the liberal arts is viewed as separate from study in the major, Lesley has long sought to integrate the two, creating an unusually rich and meaningful educational experience. In taking such an approach, Lesley has been in the vanguard. The Association of American Colleges and Universities has argued recently that the traditional distinction between liberal and professional education needs to be abandoned (Schneider & Shoenberg, n.d.), and recommends the integration of the two in the way that Lesley has long practiced. Lesley's innovative approach to the liberal arts is also reflected in the way that faculty teaching liberal arts courses seek to connect study in the liberal arts to real-world issues and concerns.

Nothing speaks more to Lesley's commitment to relating study in the liberal arts to students' professional education than its longstanding commitment to experiential learning. All Lesley students, regardless of major, undertake experiential learning from their first year of study. Common forms of experiential learning include student practica in education; internships in health clinics, hospitals, and businesses; work in clinics and community-based organizations; research in laboratories; assisting with writing and research. By the time Lesley students graduate, they will have undertaken the equivalent of three to four courses in some form of experiential learning.

In whatever form of experiential learning students undertake, they get to apply knowledge and skills learned in their liberal arts and professional classes in ways that reinforce one another and strengthen the overall learning experience. Applying theory and knowledge learned in the classroom in experiential learning settings develops understanding in ways beyond what classroom learning alone can provide. Addressing career-related challenges in "real-life" settings helps students develop critical thinking skills and the capacity for creative problem solving. A recent graduate, commenting on the connection between classroom and experiential learning, noted how her classes had laid the foundation for work she did in her internship, but "it was the internship itself that helped me put the skills into practice."

The capacity for experiential learning to reinforce classroom learning is documented in research done by T.K. Stanton. "Learning activities that require learners to apply knowledge and skills to the solution of problems," Stanton found, "more often develop the higher cognitive skills than do traditional classroom methods" (DiConti, 2004, p.172). Moreover, the opportunity that experiential learning provides students to apply theory and skills learned in their classes makes learning more meaningful in allowing students to apply knowledge and skills to their career interests.

Experiential learning not only contributes to students' cognitive development, but growth in social awareness and interpersonal skills as well. Development in each of these areas is central to the goals of liberal education. In interviews with recent Lesley graduates, students noted how their participation in internships, community service, teaching practica, and apprenticeships had been a key factor in enhancing their social awareness. Such opportunities, students noted, allowed them to work with people from varying racial, ethnic, and socioeconomic backgrounds, and thus to develop greater comfort with those from backgrounds different from their own. Similarly, students noted how experiential learning had strengthened interpersonal skills in the opportunities it afforded for working in "real-world" settings. While study in liberal arts classes deepened students' understanding of political and social issues and contributed to growth in

personal development, experiential learning, students reported, gave them an opportunity to engage “real-world” concerns in ways that they found especially meaningful. As with students’ cognitive development, the opportunity that experiential learning provided to work in real world settings added a dimension of learning that classroom learning alone could not.

Lesley’s emphasis on relating study in the liberal arts to students’ lives is also evident in the way that faculty connect study in the liberal arts to students’ personal lives and the world in which they live. As at most colleges, Lesley students have historically taken a variety of courses in the liberal arts domains of the humanities, social sciences, and sciences. Through courses in literature and the arts, students learn to appreciate different forms of artistic expression and come to understand how works of art have both shaped and reflected the different cultures of the world. History courses enable students to see the present as a point of intersection between the past and the future, and provide the understanding and perspective critical for informed citizenship. Language courses teach students not only about speaking and writing a different language, but an appreciation for other cultures. Courses in psychology and sociology help students to better understand themselves and the dynamics of group and social behavior. Study in science not only teaches students the methodology by which scientists look at and understand the world, but also helps students to develop the knowledge and understanding critical for living in a democracy where more and more public policy issues have a scientific and technological component. As part of Lesley’s commitment to graduating students with a strong sense of global awareness, all students pursue study in non-western cultures to learn about values, beliefs, and practices different from their own.

Study in each of these areas develops the breadth of vision that defines a liberal arts education. While the subject areas that Lesley students engage is similar to those at most colleges, what distinguishes liberal arts study at Lesley is the emphasis that faculty put on making such study relevant and meaningful. In composition courses, students write about topics such as the environment, homelessness, public art, topics that matter to them and society. Students in literature and art courses learn not only *about* but *through* literature and the arts in their encounter with questions that lie at the heart of what it means to be human. Students learn math through investigating everything from statistics in sports to matters related to the economy and global warming. Courses in the social sciences develop perspectives on key issues of race, culture, and gender that enable students to become agents for social change. Study in world culture and religion teaches students about beliefs and values different from their own, essential for understanding the global dynamics that shape today’s world.

Lesley’s success in making study in the liberal arts meaningful is based not only on *what* faculty teach, but *how*. Recognizing the important role that pedagogy plays in learning, Lesley faculty have long sought to engage students as active learners, and to make classroom learning a dynamic, transformative process. Far more than “talking heads,” faculty at Lesley work to make the classroom experience interactive. Discussion is strongly emphasized, not only to engage students, but also to promote cross-fertilization of ideas. Peer assignments, group presentations, research projects, and other forms of collaborative learning are common. Whether it be a literature or a math class,

faculty work to make learning come alive by making students active participants in the learning process.

Beyond the formal academic curriculum, learning in liberal arts-related areas is supported through a wide variety of cultural activities and events outside of the classroom. Each year, liberal arts programs sponsor an array of lectures, forums, and seminars tied to current social and cultural issues. Speakers include Lesley faculty as well as scholars, artists, and public figures from outside the college. The recent development of Lesley's English and Creative Writing majors has brought about an increase in the number of readings at the college by students, faculty, and established writers. Adding to the richness of cultural events and offerings are the many art shows in galleries in Cambridge and at the Art Institute of Boston campus, as well as lectures and gallery talks by well-known and emerging artists. A new event designed to celebrate the scholarship of students and faculty alike is the Annual Scholarship Day, during which students and faculty present research and papers to the larger Lesley academic community.

Students also get to participate in numerous arts related activities. Each spring the Oxford Street Players, established in 1991, stages a Shakespeare play or a play from that era. Recently, dramatic productions have increased to include a contemporary play or a musical each fall. Students participate in all parts of the production, from acting, to set design, to musical accompaniment. Lesley's Choir and Gospel Choir present several concerts throughout the year, as does a recently formed *a capella* group. Each year, Lesley's English department publishes *Commonthought*, a student run literary and arts magazine in which students and faculty showcase their work. Students also run a number of film series throughout the year.

In recent years, a growing number of Lesley students have been taking advantage of another source of liberal arts study - study abroad. Students commonly take courses in a foreign language, literature, or in other liberal arts areas of study through the various study abroad programs that Lesley has developed. As many students have noted, studying a foreign language and culture in a native environment is an especially meaningful learning experience because of the cultural immersion that comes with the study abroad experience. Indeed, the cultural immersion that comes with studying and living abroad is deeply educational in itself, which is why the college is encouraging more and more students to take advantage of study abroad options.

An important development in liberal arts study at Lesley in the last decade has been the development of "stand-alone" liberal arts majors. For much of Lesley's history, the liberal arts existed primarily to provide service courses to the professional majors. Over the last ten years, liberal arts majors have been developed in art history, English, history, history and literature, and mathematics. Certification requirements in education provided the first impetus for the development of the majors, but the liberal arts faculty have spearheaded the transformation. Lesley now highlights its liberal arts majors in admissions materials, presenting the college as a place where students can do innovative and challenging work in the liberal arts with the added benefit of an experiential learning component. Currently, more than 20% of incoming students cite their intention to pursue a liberal arts rather than a professional major.¹ This change has entailed a transformation in the liberal arts faculty and its view of the liberal arts at Lesley. No longer solely

¹ This information was provided by Dr. Christine Evans, Program Director in the Humanities at Lesley College.

providers of service courses, liberal arts faculty are at the heart of a changing university, teaching a deeper curriculum of more junior- and senior-level courses.

Over the past one hundred years, the scope of liberal arts study at Lesley has grown tremendously, from the range of courses offered, to the establishment of liberal arts majors. So, too, have the variety of cultural activities and events related to the liberal arts. What has remained constant, however, is Lesley's commitment to connecting study in the liberal arts to students' personal and professional development through experientially-based learning and engaged, dynamic teaching. Students from one hundred years ago would marvel at the growth of the liberal arts at Lesley, but be no less impressed by the college's continuing emphasis on making such study a truly transformative experience.

What's Hot, What's Not? Reading, Writing, and Rap in an Age of High-Stakes Testing

Rosalie Fink, EdD

The No Child Left Behind Act of 2001, which was intended to improve American education in the 21st century, created enormous controversy and had a profound effect on education across the United States. In Massachusetts it led to high-stakes tests called The Massachusetts Comprehensive Assessment System (or MCAS), a series of tests that every student must pass in order to graduate from high school. Since the advent of MCAS, a perception developed on the Lesley campus that more students arrive at Lesley better prepared in basic, traditional reading and writing skills, and apparently better prepared to deal with complex college texts.

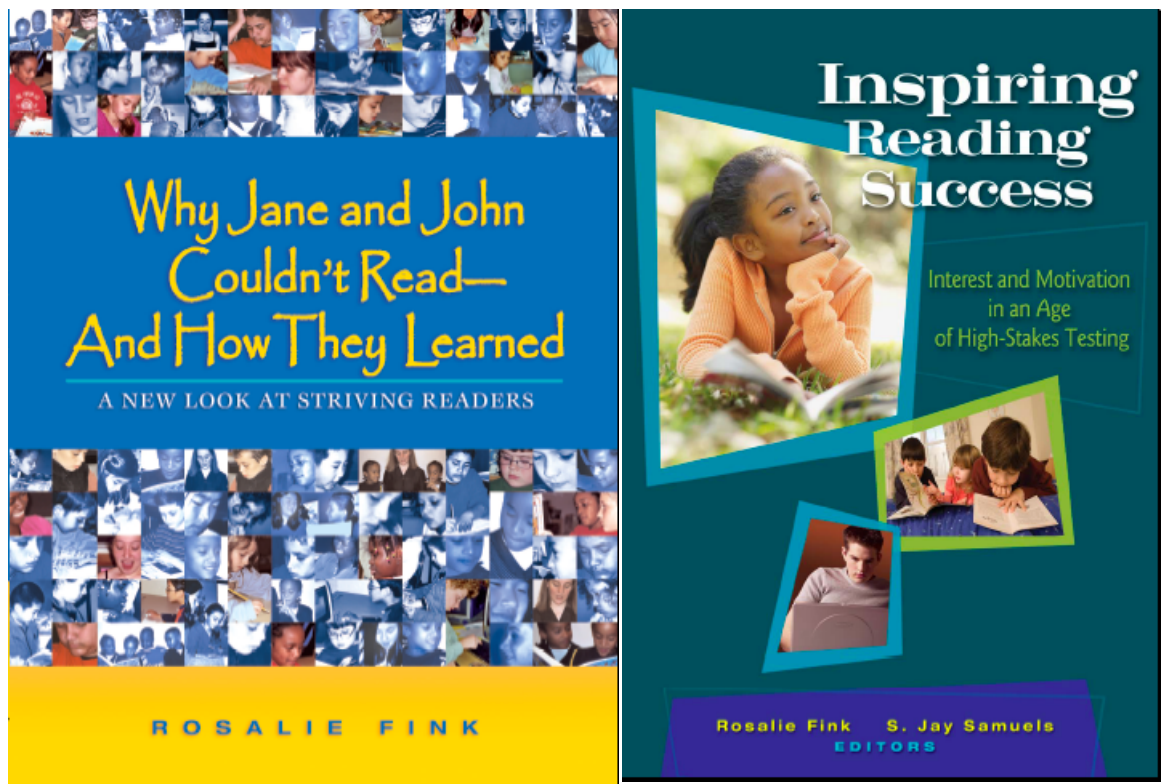
Yet, regardless of students' preparation for college, most books used at Lesley and other universities today face stiff competition from the alluring, dynamic texts found with the click of a mouse on the Internet, iPods, Facebook, and Twitter. These enticing new forms of dynamic communication are fabulous, because they provide access to worldwide information and engage students in almost instantaneous communication with voices that speak to them in 21st century tones. Yet, while we know that students relate easily to these tones, research shows that these new forms of literacy, while exciting and valuable, are not sufficient to enable students to develop deep understandings of issues and strong motivation and desire to read further, investigate deeply, and integrate what they have read. However, if these new, enticing forms of online literacy are not sufficient, what else is necessary? What's our new challenge at Lesley University going forward?

Lesley's 21st Century Challenge

Our challenge in the 21st century is to connect students to great literature through the students' own vernacular (such as rap songs) and through activities that resonate with relevant themes in students' lives (i.e., MCAS tests, college affordability, personal relationships, and career choices.) How can we accomplish this? How can we inspire our students and entice them to become captivated by texts and read them closely and reflectively? What can we do to attract students to the delights of literacy so that, once

they are out in the world and on their own, they choose to read avidly and become critical readers, writers, and thinkers engaged in the dynamic social questions of our time? These questions challenge me each semester as I begin teaching anew.

For me, answers come in part from my research at Harvard on students who had had severe difficulties with reading yet overcame their challenges. I interviewed men and women from across the United States to find out how those who had struggled with reading ultimately became highly successful readers and writers in fields that demand high literacy, (fields such as medicine, law, business, psychology, education, and the arts and sciences). My sample included a Nobel laureate and many who were movers and shakers in their fields. Conducting this research encouraged me to write two books about reading and writing in the 21st century: *Why Jane and John Couldn't Read---And How They Learned: A new look at striving readers* (Fink, 2006) and *Inspiring Reading Success: Interest and Motivation in an Age of High-Stakes Testing* (Fink & Samuels, 2008).



One of the most compelling findings from my books was that the fascinating people whom I studied had overcome their learning difficulties and, ultimately, learned to read extremely well. How? By reading avidly about a topic of passionate personal interest (Fink, 2006). Whether the topic was science, history, literature, biography, or auto-mechanics, the key to their success was that they had a passionate personal interest about a captivating topic that spurred them into the habit of sustained reading.

This observation led me to develop The Interest-Based Model of Reading, a model that helps me address an important 21st century Lesley goal: To help all kinds of students from diverse backgrounds achieve the highest levels of literacy, including gifted and

talented students, “average” students, students who struggle due to poverty, students with learning disabilities and emotional differences, and students for whom English is not the home language. The Interest-Based Model of Reading that I developed is central to my teaching and pivotal to both of my books. The Model has five key components, each of which I incorporate into my courses.

5 Components of The Interest-Based Model:

- Personal choice of texts based on the student’s passionate, personal interest
- Avid, sustained, topic-specific reading and writing
- Deep background information and knowledge
- Contextual reading strategies
- A supportive mentor (such as a Lesley professor!)

Both of my books use these five components and have been widely read by other educators. Consequently, I’ve been invited to give keynote lectures and workshops, which has led to new opportunities for me to collaborate with wonderful colleagues across the United States as well as other countries. My research and writing have also had a profound influence on my teaching at Lesley.

My Research Informs Teaching

My books about The Interest-Based Model of Reading have benefited my Lesley students by spurring me to create new approaches to teaching and learning---approaches that I use in my Lesley classes. Together with my students, we design compelling “hands-on” activities that promote excitement, engagement, and deep understanding of texts. These interactive, multi-sensory activities integrate reading and writing with the arts and the senses; the activities include seeing, hearing, touching, moving, chanting, drawing, painting, and dancing. These “hands-on” techniques engage students in active reading, writing, and performing of Reader’s Theatre, rap songs, group poems, debates, discussion, and so forth. I use these activities in conjunction with the marvelous new online forms of literacy; but they differ from the instantaneous communication of online literacies in one significant way: Each activity requires more time for reflection, and often more personal involvement and action, in order to promote deep understanding and reflective comprehension.

Popular “Hands-On” Activities

Recently, I presented some of the most popular activities described in *Why Jane and John Couldn’t Read* and *Inspiring Reading Success* at three special Lesley events: Lesley’s Annual Scholarship Days (March 31, 2009 and March 31, 2010) and The Lesley College Honors Symposium (December 3, 2009). Together with students from my English Composition and Struggling Readers and Writers classes, I demonstrated active learning techniques to develop vocabulary knowledge, reading comprehension, and expressive and persuasive writing. I utilized my extensive background as a professional dancer. (I studied choreography and dance with Martha Graham and performed and

taught dance in my earlier career.) My dance background helped me incorporate movement, music, and rap into these Lesley University presentations. During the presentations, audiences of Lesley students and faculty worked in small groups and used traditional folktales and modern literature as springboards for creating new scripts of their own with new 21st century endings. Together, faculty and students in each audience performed their original scripts, using scarves to enhance movement, create scenery, denote costumes, and indicate characters. These collaborative group activities included Reader's Theatre with Dance and Scarves, Original Script Writing, Short Story Writing, The Telephone Book Expressive Reading Technique, The Semantic Impressions Vocabulary Method, Poetry Writing and Poetry Festivals, "I" Poems, Bio-Poems, Rhythm Walks, Dramatic Story Readings, Photography, Video Shows, and Rap Songs. Some of the rap songs, plays, videos, and poems performed were "The Obama Rap," "He Leads the Nation despite Discrimination," "He'll Take Our Country Out of Economic Hell," "Private School, It Ain't That Cool," "Shrek and Fiona," "Cleaning Up," "Humpty Dumpty," "Gun Control," "The Ethical Nature of Photography," and "The MCAS RAP." (The words to "The MCAS Rap" appear at the end of this section of this chapter.)

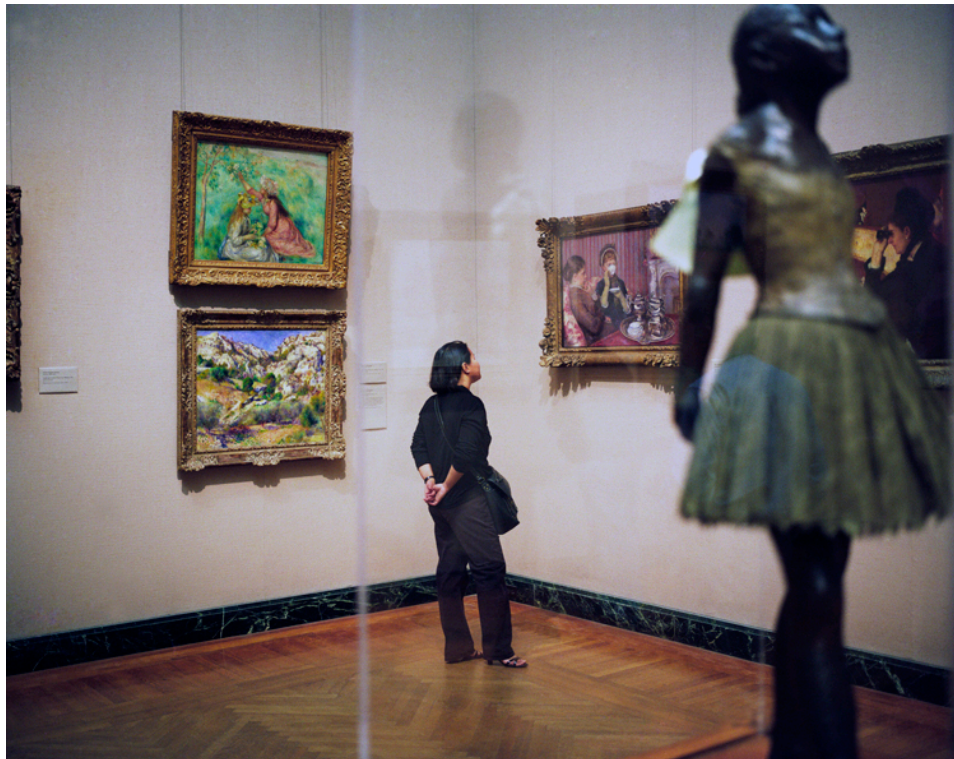
"The MCAS Rap", created by urban students to enhance testtaking, is a lively rap performed with compelling rhythmic movement. This rap song and dance was created as a follow-up activity based on the books we read and the activities we did in my Struggling Readers and Writers class at Lesley. After creating original raps in class, Melanie Gavin, one of my students, then applied what she had learned and used the activity in her experiential learning classroom at The Neighborhood House Charter School in Dorchester, Massachusetts. Creating their own rap songs about how to become good testtakers, helped Melanie's inner city students prepare for the high-stakes MCAS tests. Writing and performing their own lyrics with their own choreographed movements enabled Melanie's students to comprehend, remember, and internalize the meaning of the text that they themselves had created. This type of interactive, "hands-on" experiential learning is the hallmark of a Lesley liberal arts education.

Paolo's Project

Another hallmark of "hands-on" learning at Lesley was demonstrated in a project by another student of mine, Paolo Morales, through his PowerPoint and video entitled "The Ethical Nature of Photography." Paolo's project was based on his research paper for my English Composition class. The project explored several intriguing questions: (1) Who is the "owner" of a photographic portrait, the photographer or the subject? (2) What, if any, moral responsibility does a portrait photographer have to the individual whose image appears in the photograph? And, (3) What are the lines between "truth" and "fiction" in the art of photography?

To investigate these thought-provoking questions, Paolo used captivating photographs by world-class photographers such as Sally Mann and Jacob Riis. In addition, he included Lesley students in his photographic presentation. For example, the photograph on the next page shows a Lesley student doing an assignment at Boston's Museum of Fine Arts. Here, the student is viewing a painting in an exhibit of Impressionist masterpieces that includes a sculpture by Edward Degas, "The Dancer" which is one of my personal favorites. The Lesley student in Paolo's photograph appears

to be deeply engaged in an assignment that requires her to do several things: (1) go to The Museum of Fine Arts in Boston, (2) view and reflect upon great works of art, (3) integrate paintings and sculptures by artistic masters into her own experience, and (4) develop her own unique creative and analytical work based on this “hands-on” experience. As a result of being physically present and viewing original paintings and sculptures close up, rather than using paltry reproductions, the student experiences a work of art in all its splendor and integrity. She sees for herself the richness and intensity of the colors, the thickness of the paint. She feels the immediacy and awe of being in the presence of an artistic masterpiece. This kind of firsthand experience becomes deeply meaningful to the student because the experience is enhanced by important preparation for the museum visit: extensive background reading; a professor’s expert lectures; and thought-provoking activities in class. This type of well-designed, experiential education promotes deep, memorable learning. Experiential learning is the hallmark of a Lesley liberal arts education - past, present, and future. I am happy to be part of this great Lesley tradition and look forward to contributing new ideas to Lesley University in the 21st century.



Photograph by Paolo Morales

The MCAS Rap

Created by Melanie Gavan and The Neighborhood House Charter School students in Dorchester, Massachusetts in conjunction with lectures and “hands-on” activities in Rosalie Fink’s Struggling Readers and Writers Class

Chorus

We are here today
To rap about a test
Called the MCAS
So you can do your best

Verse

My name is Keishawn and the first thing that you do
 Is to read the directions all the way through
My name is BJ and the next step that you take
 Is to read the title; don't take a break
My name is Tavari and the next thing that you do
 Is to read the italics; that is what you do
My name is Caitlin and the fourth thing that you do
 Is to read the questions; then go back and review

Chorus

We are here today
To rap about a test
Called the MCAS
So you can do your best

Verse

My name is Star and after we review
 You start the story; that is what you do
My name is Christian, and when we find the answer
 We make sure to highlight, to get the right answer
My name is Dominique and I have a suggestion
 After you highlight, read the next question
My name is Marlayeeka and we've shown you the way
 To conquer the MCAS, so have a nice day!

**The Oxford Street Players of Lesley University:
The Place Where God Lives**

Anne Pluto, PhD

The theatre, according to Tina Packer, the Artistic Director of Shakespeare & Company and the woman whose Text class forever changed my life, “is the place where god lives” (Lecture, Packer, June 1993). If we read God to be the human spirit, the human voice, then theatre is the classroom of huge emotions and complex rhythms, especially as found in Shakespeare. On stage, in both rehearsal and performance, the actors express feelings in poetry or prose and in action. The literature classroom is different; it is the place where God is visited and revered, and in the writing/creative writing classroom, the place where God is created. We speak differently, in a different

voice, not in the stage voice. We are silent as we write our own text; the page we create speaks for us.

In the spring of 1993 I was promoted to Associate Professor, accepted into Shakespeare & Company's June Intensive Workshop and Summer Training Institute, and granted a year long sabbatical. When I returned to Lesley in the fall of 1994, I was no longer only an English professor and the faculty advisor of *Commonthought Magazine*, but a fledging director and an actor who had returned to the stage after a 19 year absence, who soon assumed the role of Artistic Director of the Oxford Street Players of what was then Lesley College. The Oxford Street Players of Lesley College had been conceived in 1993 through the effort of Dr. Stephen Trainor (then the program director of Liberal Arts in the Women's College) and Lisa Risley, and me (Pluto). Shakespeare's *The Merchant of Venice*, directed by Lisa Risley and produced by me, was our first season.

The three months spent at Shakespeare & Company in Lenox Massachusetts transformed my life and gave Lesley a theatre company. June 1993 was spent immersed in Shakespeare. My training included: text work, bodywork (Alexander, medieval and renaissance dance, and stage combat), and Linklater Voice work. Back home in Boston, I audited text and movement courses at Emerson College, continued studying voice at the Linklater Studio (with Kristen Linklater herself), and was cast as Fabian in a production of Shakespeare's *Twelfth Night*. The connection I found between voice, breath, and text has impacted all my teaching and scholarship.

In January 1994 I returned to Lesley to direct my first play, Shakespeare's middle class comedy, *The Merry Wives of Windsor*. Since 1994, as the Artistic Director of the Oxford Street Players, I have directed and/or produced the following plays:

- 1993 *Merchant of Venice* (producer) [pre Shakespeare & Company]
- 1994 *Merry Wives of Windsor* (producer and director)
- 1995 *Twelfth Night Fever* (producer and director)
- 1996 *Romeo and Juliet* (producer and director)
- 1996 *The Comedy of Eros* (co-written, produced and directed with Lisa Risley)
- 1997 *The Two Gentlemen of Verona* (producer and director)
- 1998 *Comedy of Errors* (producer and director)
- 1999 *All's Well that Ends Well* (producer and director)
- 2000 *Thomas of Woodstock* (producer and director)
- 2001 *The Tempest* (producer and director)
- 2002 *Dr. Faustus* (producer and director)
- 2003 *Henry VI Part I* (producer and director)
- 2003 *The Laramie Project* (producer, directed by Kevin Carr)
- 2004 *The Rover* (producer and director)
- 2004 *The Glass Menagerie* (producer, directed by Kevin Carr)
- 2005 *The Winter's Tale* (producer and director)
- 2006 *Blithe Spirit* (producer, directed by Kevin Carr)
- 2006 *Much Ado About Nothing* (producer and director)\
- 2007 *The Merry Wives of Windsor, Texas* "shore know how to git a man down..." (producer and director)
- 2008 *Measure for Measure* (producer and director)
- 2009 *The Merchant of Venice* (producer and director)

In addition to producing and directing the plays, I developed the Play Production Shakespeare course that accompanies the Shakespeare productions; and the non Shakespeare productions course. Both are challenging courses to teach. While focusing on the world and text of the play, we design and build the set, design and sew the costumes and construct the props. It is theatre done from start to finish in ten weeks. The course has a lab, which consists of set and costume construction for the technical crew and Linklater Voice class, movement class, stage combat workshops, dance and music class and scene rehearsals for the actors.

The Spring 2006 production of Shakespeare's *Much Ado About Nothing* had another component, math and science. Sets cannot be built without knowledge of the Pythagorean theorem and cannot stand without following the simple rules of physics. Dr. Jim O'Keefe joined us to teach geometry and Dr. Linda Grisham, physics. Dr. David Morimoto gave a lecture on the flora and fauna of Sicily. Theatre is the most interdisciplinary of the arts. Both courses and their linked productions are open to students across the university; they may take the course twice for credit and participate in OSP productions their entire Lesley career and beyond. My stage manager of 13 years, Andi Wakefield, was a student in my English Composition course in the fall of 1994, and began working with the Oxford Street Players in 1995, pulling the curtain for *Twelfth Night Fever*. *Measure for Measure* was her final production with the Oxford Street Players. In 2009, Ariana Balayan, a first year graduate student in the Community Arts Program, joined us as stage manager. This became her internship and was supervised by Dr. Terry Chance, our Paul A. Kaplan Visiting Artist Fellow.

In addition to Terry Chance, we have had several guest artists over the years. Gianni di Marco of the Boston Ballet has been our choreographer for two shows: *Dr. Faustus* and *The Rover*. Armando Maciel of the National Ballet of Portugal joined us for three Shakespeare productions as our choreographer in residence: *The Tempest*, *The Winter's Tale*, and *Much Ado About Nothing*. Terry Chance first came to us in 2007; the music he composed for *The Merry Wives of Windsor*, *Texas, shore know how to git a man down...* was a part of his PhD thesis in Fine Arts at Texas Tech University. Terry is a professional musician and songwriter/composer in his own right, and we were lucky to get Terry back in 2008 and 2009 on a grant from the Kaplan Foundation. He was the recipient of the Paul A. Kaplan Visiting Artist Fellowship.

In addition to being the Artistic Director of the OSP, I designed a drama minor and a drama track in the English Major. I have developed courses with other theatre professionals, i.e. designated Linklater voice teacher Chris Von Baeyer: Introduction to Voice and Acting; Jill Mackavey: Improvisation and Movement. In my position as Artistic Director of the OSP, I choose the play and hire the Linklater Voice teachers, the choreographers, the stage combat and movement teachers, musical directors, and assistant directors for each production. As producer I am responsible for the budget and work with the Development Office, fund raising for the Friends of the Oxford Street Players of Lesley University and oversee business interns who sell the program ads and "man" the box office. That is the producer role; my director's role involves 15 hours of rehearsal time a week with the actors. In addition to preparing for the rehearsals, I also attend the Linklater Voice class assisting the voice teacher, and the movement/stage combat, and dance rehearsals.

Courses are broken down into examining the world of the play, the background of the author and their historical time, and prevalent theatre history. This examination always includes a look at religion, politics, gender, and class in addition to the literary/dramatic devices of prose/poetry/Act/Scene/Dialogue. As a class, we do an in-depth analysis of the actual play script, the text; all the students in the class (and the production) come to the read-through of the entire play, which serves as the first day of the rehearsal process. The actors read their parts and we stop at the end of each scene to talk about the plot and clear up any surface mysteries (and there is a great deal that is mysterious in Shakespeare, Christopher Marlowe, and Aphra Behn). That is only the beginning; the textual analysis continues throughout the entire ten-week process and, up to the final dress rehearsal, we are uncovering new meanings and how to “play” them. I teach the structure and rhythm of the verse to both the class and the actors (as not all the actors are in the class) and lead them through a visualization exercise called The Elizabethan Worldview to establish the hierarchy of the Elizabethan world, and go over the difference between Verse and Prose and what that would mean for an actor/character. It is vital for actors to understand the difference between the iambic pentameter and prose and to understand why some characters speak only in verse, or prose, or a combination of the two.

Although the rehearsal process begins with my concept of how the play will “look” and what the play will do, this concept changes as my relationship with the actors/technical director/stage manager evolve. Directing/teaching the play production course is constructivist learning at its best. Empowering my students and engaging in dialogue with them is imperative to my teaching and my scholarship. The play evolves from day one until the final matinee performance; nothing is static. In 2003, as the US was mustering to attack Iraq, I chose a cameo role in Shakespeare’s history play, *Henry VI, Part I*. Having worked on a version of that play in 1993 at Shakespeare & Company, the impending war in Iraq and the bombing campaign in Afghanistan compelled me to revisit *Henry VI, Part I*. The play begins with the funeral of Henry V, but his widow Catherine of France and their baby son, Henry VI, are absent. I created a text for Catherine – borrowing the sonnet from the end of *Henry V* and began the play with Henry V’s funeral, with Catherine and veiled ladies speaking the first 12 lines of this sonnet.

Thus far, with rough and all-unable pen
 Our bending author hath pursu’d the story
 In little room confining mighty men,
 Mangling by starts the full course of their glory.
 Small time, but in the small most greatly lived
 This star of England: Fortune made his sword,
 By which the world’s best garden he achieved,
 And of it left his son imperial lord.
 Henry the Sixth, in infant bands crown’d King
 Of France and England, did this king succeed?
 Whose state so many had the managing,
 That they lost France and made his England bleed.

The ladies then listen in horror to the dead king's brothers and uncles who vow to continue war in France. I took liberties with the text and also rewrote the character of Joan of Arc, from Shakespeare's crazy whore, Joan la Pucelle, to the young girl who truly believed in the voices of saints prophesying her destiny as the savior of France.

Rewriting Shakespeare is daunting, but this is what directors do and are allowed to do with the bard. Shakespeare is the universal playwright; his plays are translated and produced all over the world; his truths on family/politics/love have withstood the test of time; his extraordinary poetry and complex prose are the passions of interested/feeling characters who live in a world prior to industrialization and psychoanalysis. They *can* speak their feelings and attempt to live their desires. As an actor or director theatre is a place to examine the world in the shadow of one's private life. I have witnessed the positive change in my students through the text and the Linklater Voice work.

President McKenna joined us as the goddess Juno in the 2001 production of *The Tempest*, our 10th anniversary production and her 15th year at the university. Writing a larger part for Juno (in iambic pentameter) was another opportunity to rework Shakespeare.

In my Shakespeare productions, I incorporate the authorship question into my vision of the play. I am an Oxfordian and I am in good company with Sir Derek Jacobi, Mark Rylance, and Kenneth Branagh. I don't accept William Shakesper of Stratford upon Avon as William Shakespeare the author of the plays, but believe, due to circumstantial evidence surrounding his life and work, Edward de Vere, the 17th Earl of Oxford, to be the author of the play and poems. One of the required texts I use is Richard Whalen's (1994) book, *Shakespeare – Who Was He?* which serves as an introduction to the Authorship Question. Whalen presents the case for both William Shakespeare otherwise known as the Stratford Man and Edward de Vere. Students have a myriad of responses to this; for some it is painful to go past the idea of the middle class genius. Shakespeare looks something like us, whereas an eccentric aristocrat is problematic, perhaps even impossible, to identify with. Beginning the course with the Elizabethan world picture and examining the hierarchy of this specific world allows the students to enter the authorship question. It's eye opening to my students that wherever they fall on the authorship question is not important to me, but that they know this scholarly "problem" exists and that research and writing are both powerful and dangerous. The search for the truth is not easy, and, perhaps, in some cases may never be found.

In theatre the search for the truth remains a goal. My students grow by living in the moment and working together to create a world alive with rich language, memorable characters, and well-known plots. The years I have spent producing, directing, and teaching Shakespeare have been rewarding. I carry each script around like an old friend and am proud of my students' accomplishments. Several have gone on to theatre careers in Boston and New York; others have continued the Shakespeare tradition in middle and high school classrooms and stages, while others have gone to graduate school for theatre and theatre in education.

Conclusion

Many Lesley students are deeply inspired by their liberal arts professors. Consequently, many pursue careers in related fields. Responding to Lesley's unique

teaching approaches, students become fired up and motivated to seize opportunities offered in their liberal arts classes. As a result, Lesley students develop deep knowledge, passionate involvement, and intellectual and emotional transformation---transformation that can last a lifetime and make a difference in the world.

This chapter showcases how the liberal arts make a difference and come alive in the classrooms of two Lesley professors, Rosalie Fink and Anne Pluto. Rosalie Fink's unique approach to teaching reading and writing through rap songs, dance, Reader's Theatre, and museum visits illustrates how Rosalie's Interest-Based Model of Reading (described further in her books), results in exciting, innovative learning outcomes demonstrated through students' creative work (i.e., "The MCAS Rap," "The Obama Rap," and Paolo's Photographic Portraits). Anne Pluto's detailed descriptions of integrating the study of Shakespeare in her courses and drama productions, illustrate in rich descriptive detail the depth of learning through "hands-on" activities that is central to Lesley's signature approach to experiential learning. The three professors who contributed to this chapter (Robert Wauhkonen, Rosalie Fink, and Anne Pluto) are proud to be part of Lesley's great tradition of experiential learning.

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