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CELEBRATING WORDS

Editor's Message

Amanda Thomson, Editor
English Language Arts Journal

It is my privilege to share with you another issue of the *English Language Arts Journal*. In this edition, we continue to explore the diverse and dynamic landscape of English language arts, showcasing a wealth of insightful research and thought-provoking contributions from scholars and practitioners alike.

I extend my heartfelt gratitude to all the authors who have generously shared their work with our community. It is your dedication to advancing the field that enriches our journal and fosters meaningful discourse among educators, researchers and enthusiasts. I am particularly pleased to note the inclusion of contributions from students, whose creativity and enthusiasm for writing infuse our discourse with vitality and promise.

It is your dedication to advancing the field that enriches our journal and fosters meaningful discourse among educators, researchers and enthusiasts.

This issue features an array of articles and creative writing that delve into various facets of English language arts, spanning research creation, digital platform ecologies, comics in the classroom, and beyond. From theoretical explorations to practical classroom praxes to personal narratives, each piece offers valuable perspectives that contribute to our collective understanding and practice.

I would also like to express my appreciation to the diligent reviewers whose expertise and discernment ensure the quality and rigor of the articles we publish. Their thoughtful critiques and constructive feedback play an indispensable role in maintaining the scholarly excellence of our journal.

As we navigate the ever-evolving landscape of English language arts education, I am confident that the contributions showcased in this issue will inspire, provoke and inform our readership. It is my hope that you will find these works both engaging and enlightening, and that they will spark further dialogue and inquiry within our community.

Once again, thank you to all our authors for their valuable contributions, and to our readers for your continued support and engagement.

President's Message

Chandra Hildebrand, President
English Language Arts Council

Like so many of us, one of the primary reasons I became an English teacher was because of my own experiences in English language arts (ELA) classes. Growing up in the tiny hamlet of Bezanson in northern Alberta, I had the unique experience of having my father as my language arts teacher from grade 5 all the way to grade 9. Although my teen angst was already developing well, and it would have only been natural to rail against *dad* being my *teacher*, it was instead my favourite class. Here, my love of literature grew, as Mr. Hildebrand (never "Dad" at school) read to us—from fantasy and sci-fi, to classic epic poems, to historical fiction—always with his trademark gusto and dramatic flair. His language arts classes were *fun*, and our creativity and even "weirdnesses" were valued.

High school continued the trend. Here, in Ms. Wanda Johnson's classes at Sexsmith Secondary School, my love of reading, writing and creative expression continued to flourish under her patient ("long-suffering" would probably be more accurate) nurturing. Not rolling her eyes at my tortured prose as I publicly read out my extended metaphor assignment (which was a *very* thinly veiled representation of a fraught friendship with a one-time crush, who was sitting in the room) was a feat only a master teacher could accomplish. And while there was definitely more than enough fun to be had through the creative projects and writing assignments I threw myself into, what was even more formative for me was the sense that we were respected as scholars who were on the cusp of adulthood. I may not remember the specifics of our class discussions, but I still recall the feeling that we were being trusted to think deeply and critically about the big ideas and issues in the perspective-broadening texts we studied. I certainly hadn't fully "figured out who I was" by the time I graduated, but the ELA classes throughout my youth were a fundamental part of putting me on that path.

I certainly hadn't fully "figured out who I was" by the time I graduated, but the ELA classes throughout my youth were a fundamental part of putting me on that path.

I reflect on these experiences because they help give me hope and renewed purpose as an English teacher today. The myriad global and local issues affecting our students are real and pervasive and potentially overwhelming. The attacks on teachers and public education and the devaluing of the humanities, particularly, can certainly be demoralizing for us as teachers. But our classrooms still have the powerful potential to be a place where students can find joy in story and laughter, edification from beautifully crafted words and ideas, empowerment from knowing their perspectives and voices matter, and hope from finding a firmer footing in a tumultuous world. And hey, I hope that we all—students *and* teachers—can have a little fun too while we're at it.

Thank you to Amanda Thomson for putting together another fantastic edition of the journal; I hope the articles here bring you a renewed sense of purpose, inspiration and/or connection to other English teachers in the province. And thank you for being a part of our ELAC community, and for all that you do in the service of students and communities in Alberta.

Below the Digital Surface:

Digital Platform Ecologies and English Language Arts Education

Dr. Robert LeBlanc

Introduction: Platforming English Language Arts (ELA) Education

Teaching is being increasingly facilitated by digital platforms. Platforms are digital spaces where users engage in social or economic exchanges (Gillespie 2010). They are a kind of electronic infrastructure which brings together different people and technologies, including students, parents and teachers (Srnicek 2017). These include social media giants like TikTok, Facebook and Google, which provide infrastructures for producing, storing and circulating texts, as well as more niche electronic resources for designing, remixing, monitoring, assessing, sharing and discussing them. Long before COVID-19 and its great digital migration (Williamson 2020), many teachers were already using digital platforms: SeeSaw for learning management, Flip for video-making and responses, Google Docs for note-taking, Padlet for collaboration, Classroom Dojo for classroom behavior, TurnItIn for academic integrity. Today, literacy teaching, learning and practice are heavily facilitated by platforms, which have become the very architecture of classroom life for many (Garcia and Nichols 2021). There hardly remains a facet of ELA education which is not potentially part of some digital platform or learning management system. These platforms offer both great opportunity and a good deal of frustration. Educators appreciate how the platforms make instruction engaging and connective, but they also express anxieties about being at the mercy of software companies whose products are designed without their input or control.

Today, literacy teaching, learning and practice are heavily facilitated by platforms, which have become the very architecture of classroom life for many.

All these technological changes to our classrooms—notably their rapidly-escalating adoption in recent years—can be bewildering. In this commentary, I want to offer a framework for thinking about digital platforms which captures some of their complexity as instructional infrastructure in today's ELA classrooms. While there is a robust scholarship of critical digital literacy scholarship for educators and their students (Ávila and Pandya 2013; Bacalja, Aguilera, and Castrillón-Ángel 2022; Morrell 2012; NCTE 2019; Parker and Smith 2022), much of it continues to focus on the circulation of texts and ideas—decoding memes, helping students adjudicate mis/disinformation, producing counter-messaging to negative representations—and largely overlooks the ecological nature of digital platforms (Nichols and Stornaiuolo 2019). Just as ecological approaches to the environment (Benson 2020) require the consideration of constantly changing relations between ever-evolving phenomena (temperature variations, the introduction of new species, parasite and host relations, interaction spaces, retreating riparian zones etc.), an approach to digital platforms also must move beyond simply analyzing and producing textual representations to account for a richer array of interactions, objects and dynamics. A broader, ecological approach would include both content (the familiar "texts"

for digital literacies) and the digital infrastructure that facilitates it: "from the code that allows them to run, to the business models that drive their features and updates, to the nature of the K-12 marketplace—that shape how we can teach and learn in those environments" (Garcia and Nichols 2021, 15). Because digital platforms are more than just representation (texts and symbols we can interpret), scholars have suggested that traditional "textual" approaches to "digital literacy" are inadequate in our current media terrain (Nichols and LeBlanc 2021); rather, we need a fulsome ecological orientation.

In fact, digital platforms are so ingrained in our contemporary lives that some scholars now describe the modern world as "the platform society"

In policy documents, district mandates and instructional conversation, digital platforms are often conceptualized simply as "tools": neutral "things" we can pick up, adopt for use and put down as we need them. Outside of educational contexts, however, digital media scholars have begun to focus on the ways in which hardware and software relate with each other, with individuals and with society (Eubanks 2018; Zuboff 2019). Indeed, digital platforms like Uber, Facebook, YouTube, WhatsApp, Amazon, Spotify and OkCupid have radically changed the way we buy, sell, travel, connect and even love (Bratton 2016; Srnicek 2017; van Dijck 2020). In fact, digital platforms are so ingrained in our contemporary lives that some scholars now describe the modern world as "the platform society" (van Dijck, Poell, and de Waak 2018). Consequently, pedagogies which specifically and directly address the unique dynamics of digital platforms (Nichols and LeBlanc 2020) are urgently needed for teachers and other educational stakeholders.

Why Platform Studies?

One way that critical literacy scholarship has begun to attend to this challenge has been to tentatively draw from research in adjacent disciplines like platform studies, critical algorithm studies and media studies. These literatures explore micro- and macro-level phenomena which are part of platform architectures: from physical hardware (Dourish 2017) and algorithms (Noble 2018) to shifts in human labor (Irani 2015) and political sovereignty (Amoore and Rally 2016). English education scholarship urgently requires research which closely attends to the platform dynamics that condition texts (literary or otherwise), their distribution through networks and the ways readers encounter both: material hardware, technical infrastructure, aesthetic interfaces, federal and provincial policy, algorithmic architectures and platform business models, as well as the human labor and natural resources required to create and sustain them (Gray and Suri 2019; Perotta et al 2020; Williamson 2017b).

Emerging platform dynamics and their role in our instruction, assessment and communication require specific attention from and for educators. Platform studies approaches can help educators identify important performative dynamics of the media environment. This is particularly urgent as our instruction is increasingly going digital following COVID-19 (Williamson and Hogan 2021). Despite the tectonic shift in digital relations in and through the platformization—algorithmically organized datafication, commodification and selection (van Dijck, Poell, and de Waak 2018)—of more and more of our lives, few provincial educational documents, even those explicitly addressing digital citizenship, have taken up these concerns in any substantive way (Alberta Education 2008, 2012; Government of Northwest Territories 2012; Ontario Ministry of Education 2016; Shepherd and Henderson 2019). Much of the work of platforms happens out of sight and below the digital surface; therefore, our attention is typically drawn to what is most immediately visible. One way to better grasp these new ecological relations is to try

Emerging platform dynamics and their role in our instruction, assessment and communication require specific attention from and for educators.

to draw a better map of the various dynamics, all of which bear down on our teaching, our grading and our interactions with students, parents and administrators.

Understanding Platform Dynamics in Classroom Ecologies

In translating contemporary platform studies for educational contexts and audiences, my collaborator Phil Nichols (Baylor University) and I have begun to think about what this transition to digital platforms means specifically for literacy education (LeBlanc et al 2023; Nichols and LeBlanc 2020, 2021; Nichols, LeBlanc, and Garcia 2024; Nichols, LeBlanc, and Slomp 2021). In grappling with these processes, we have drawn on a conceptual map from platform studies scholar Jose van Dijck (Poell, Nieborg, and van Dijck 2019; van Dijck 2009; van Dijck, Poell, and de Waak 2018), whose work tries to capture many of the competing dimensions in this emerging ecology. We foreground van Dijck's conceptual map not only because it is the most comprehensive and accounts for every dynamic in this still-evolving system[1] but rather because we believe it contains dynamics which are most legible for working English educators. In doing so, we have also encouraged teachers to ask difficult questions about the digital platforms that are so seamlessly part of their instruction today (see Table 1) for facilitating small group interaction, assessing writing, giving timely and visible feedback, communicating with parents, testing for plagiarism, taking attendance, monitoring behavior and other potential uses.

In their foundational work *The Platform Society*, van Dijck, Poell, and de Waal (2018) describe an online platform as

> programmable digital architecture designed to organize interactions between users–not just end users but also corporate entities and public bodies. It is geared toward the systematic collection, algorithmic processing, circulation, and monetization of user data. (p 4)

A digital platform facilitates interaction, much like a train platform facilitates travel between two destinations. This might be interaction between two human users (for example, sending instant messages to each other on WhatsApp), or between a human user and a corporation's algorithm, or between two non-human users (for example, two bots competing for concert tickets on StubHub). And when we consider the immediacy of interactions between students and teachers (for example, using Google Docs to comment on rough drafts of each other's written responses to a text), van Dijck et al (2018) remind us that just out of view in these visible interactions are also corporate interests and potential unknown audiences (both human and non-human). Data generated on the platform for use between immediate interlocutors (two students chatting in a Google Classroom) is collected and aggregated for use as training data (either for the platform's corporate owner or sold elsewhere), as well as used for algorithmic attuning for the specific user. This builds value for the platform's ownership, rendering the platform a multi-sided market, where users buy platform access, and platforms sell user data or make users available to targeted advertising. As such, the design of the platform is specifically crafted with this in mind ("geared toward," in van Dijk's parlance, with other dynamics facilitating this outcome).

A digital platform facilitates interaction, much like a train platform facilitates travel between two destinations.

Such an understanding disrupts tidy definitions of digital platforms as mere tools (like a hammer), which can be used or subtracted from schools without further implications. Adding a digital platform to a classroom changes the nature of the instructional ecology, as teachers often bend their instruction toward platform features (for example, mandating peer commentary on Google Docs for legibility and easy tabulation). Additionally, a platform simultaneously plugs the classroom into a broader platform ecology, serving as a "kind of interface layer within a larger global computing stack" (Bratton 2014, 35), connecting the laptop or the smartphone "to an ocean of data and bring[ing] that data to bear on the user's immediate interests" (p 32). Every digital platform in our ELA classroom has implications both for our teaching and our data privacy, data harvesting,

surveillance and supervision, and a host of other broader concerns. Teachers must balance these dynamics and relations in their decision making (LeBlanc et al 2023), weighing productive functionality with other serious concerns.

Fundamental to platforms are two key processes: digitization and datafication (Williamson 2017a). Digitization is everyday processes being increasingly moved into online spaces. For example, it is now rare for a teacher to do something as simple as take attendance without using a learning management or software system (and many schools no longer accept analog records). Datafication is the reconstitution of swipes, clicks, information, engagement and other factors into "machine readable data, which can then be subjected to sophisticated forms of processing, calculation, analysis, interpretation, visualization, and circulation" (Williamson 2017a, xv). Thus, as our instruction migrates further online and into digital spaces, it is simultaneously subjected to more and more intense data extraction and analysis, which then feeds back into processes of personalization, targeted marketing and filter bubbling.

> Every time we bring a new platform into our classroom, it is vital to think about a broad range of implications.

In van Dijck's (2013) influential framing, she suggests that digital platforms are best understood as the intersection of three interlocking dynamics: the *technical, social* and *economic*. Some of these are opaquer to working teachers than others—few of us have the technical acumen to understand the specifics of a platform's algorithm—but we can still address each in our adoption, use and evaluation of digital platforms. Every time we bring a new platform into our classroom, it is vital to think about a broad range of implications. Teachers can and should ask themselves whether any platform, regardless of its digital bells and whistles, matches their vision of a quality education for all students. Teachers should also ask whether a digital platform asks them to constrain their instruction, to reconfigure it so that it better conforms with the platform's expectations.

We typically wrestle with a platform's *technical* dynamics first. The technical dimension of a platform refers to the varied components that structure applications and mediate how users experience them. To examine these details, we need to ask, How do platforms work? Most pressingly, we see the technical dynamics in our interaction with the user interface, which is the amalgam of visual features—buttons, graphic designs, layout etc—which mediates our subsequent interaction with the software's underlying code. The technical dynamics are a lure and also the site of our frustration when breakdowns occur or an interface feels

Table 1: Platform Dimensions and Considerations for Practice (Nichols and LeBlanc 2020)

Technical	How do platforms **work**?	• For whom is this hardware in/accessible? • What does the interface make in/visible to users? • How is content moderated by algorithms? • What default settings are coded into the software?
Social	What do platforms **allow their users to do**?	• How do a platform's intended and actual uses differ? • How does it reconfigure teaching and learning? • How does it alter teacher-student-parent relationships? • How does it transform existing practices or necessitate new ones?
Economic	**Who profits** from a platform's use and how?	• Is the platform publicly or privately owned? • What is the business model for the platform's owner? • What protections are in place for student/teacher privacy? • How is data generated through the platform used?

unwieldy. According to van Dijck's (2013) critical point, however, these technical features are designed for the systematic collection and processing of user data. So, where we may have some freedom in our swipes, uploads, likes and comments, "A platform's architecture – its interface design, code, algorithms – is always the temporary outcome of its owner's attempt to steer users' activities in a certain direction" (p 144). The technical side of any platform is consequently always guiding, prodding and directing users in certain ways—and these may directly undercut our own pedagogical intentions.

van Dijck's other two dimensions are also critical for our consideration. *Social* dynamics refer to the ways people create, consume or integrate hardware and software into their daily lives. This perspective considers the following question: What do platforms allow their users to do? For example, using a platform like Classroom Dojo or Seesaw is not just a matter of technical know-how. It may change the way we interact with parents or alter which learning objectives we choose to focus on for our lesson. This is how we typically talk about digital platforms in our classroom: how a new connective technology allows us to do something or to arrange groups in a particular way. Indeed, many digital technologies have become a de facto utility in facilitating social relations in our classrooms (consider the importance of Google Classrooms post-COVID). When a platform comes to be central to organizing our instruction, we might feel compelled to alter our teaching to match the platform's needs (rather than the other way around).

Equally, digital platforms have an *economic* dimension. Because they nearly all are privately owned, most are built on business models which require collecting student data and monetizing it by selling it to third party advertisers (Zuboff 2019). The economic model for freely available technology (such as many educational apps) requires datafication of platform interactions: transforming interaction into data (van Dijck 2018). When teachers' and students' clicks, likes and swipes are mined for saleable information, it is critical to consider how a platform's economic model might run counter to educators' aims and values. Focusing on the economic dimension encourages us to ask, Who profits from a platform's use and how? Most pressingly, it may urge us to consider the implications of mandating student app enrollment (think of the ubiquity of assignments which ask students to "create a social media profile for a literary character" or the required submission of written material to TurnItIn, and who subsequently enrolls those entries into training data). While economic dimensions are often hidden from users (perhaps only available by reading the interminably long and famously unscoured "terms and conditions" agreement), they are often the driving force behind the platform's design and thus have significant implications for our pedagogy.

Conclusion

In a connective world where apps and platforms have become our very educational infrastructure—as essential as the electrical grid or the water utility for the functioning of schools—it is crucial that we address the pressing questions that these technologies and ecosystems raise for instruction. This approach helps us to see how each keystroke, swipe and username in a classroom contains complicated social, technical and economic dynamics—each of them raising their own concerns. Being digitally literate in our contemporary education landscape means both having the technological skills to use platforms and thinking critically about their impact on instruction and education.

Teachers may not have complete control over which digital platforms they use in their classroom, but one prevailing goal can be to work toward aligning the platform with their pedagogy (and not the other way around). The following are some simple questions teachers might ask of any new platform as they consider its implementation:

Aligning Platforms and Pedagogy: Questions Teachers Can Ask (Nichols and LeBlanc 2020)

- What is the problem for which this platform is the solution?
- How does the platform address this problem differently than other platforms (or non-technological resources)?
- What new pedagogical or ethical problems might this platform create?
- How might it reshape relations among teachers, students, parents and administrators?
- How might its usage need to be amended or monitored to ensure alignment with educators' values and commitments?

Conceptualizing platforms as ecologies and as participating in broader educational ecologies draws us away from strictly focusing on the "textual" and the immediately observable—fake news, graphic interfaces and other semiotic material—and towards understanding platforms as "dynamic environments" (Fuller 2005). As with any ecology, the introduction of a new dynamic (whether in an environment or in a classroom, school, district or province) can have unforeseen implications, rippling out over time in new and potentially troublesome ways. A new learning app, a new classroom management system, a new attendance platform can all bend, buckle, alter and transform a host of other ecologically near and distant practices, assessments and policies. Our response is then not to reject digital platforms or purge them from our pedagogy but to think through their complexity at various scale levels to consider their current tensions as we use them in our everyday work, and to advocate for ecological orientations amongst our students, colleagues and administrators.

Notes

1. For alternative and equally compelling maps, see Bratton (2016), Ibert et al (2022), Stewart and Hartmann (2020), van Dijck (2021).

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Reading Comics with a Numeracy Mindset

David Lewkowich

Given the uncommon nature of such an exercise, reading comics with a numeracy mindset involves not only rethinking the status of such texts in relation to literature and art but also considering how such a fusion of literature and art may serve purposes not normally associated with either discipline. As a small caveat, however, I should begin by pointing out that I am definitively *not* a mathematician, and that my interest in numeracy (which some refer to as "math literacy") relates to my history as a high school English teacher, as well as my current position at the university. Nonetheless, in this article I will explore the ways in which—given the demands and expectations of contemporary reading practices, and despite their different histories, disciplinary roots and methods of analysis—literacy and numeracy are often intertwined, and how comics and graphic novels offer a rich context in which to consider these complex interrelations. I will begin by describing some of the relevant preoccupations of contemporary literacy, after which I will briefly describe what comics are and how they work. I will then refer to the local jurisdiction in which I teach and examine how numeracy has been defined in several provincial curriculum documents. Last, I will discuss how these descriptions relate to what we encounter in the pages of comics and graphic novels.

Literacy as a restless search for meaning

In the dynamic and changing field of literacy studies, contemporary contexts of meaning-making increasingly position the individual reader as part of unstable, constantly shifting networks of communication (virtual, actual etc.), where the linguistic (or, the word as spoken and written) is only one of myriad forms of expression. In this enlarged communicatory context, possibilities for legitimate expression include movement, spatial design, digital text, posture, image, dress, gesture, sound, performance etc. Although language arts education is still largely concentrated on the disciplinary centres of reading, writing, speaking, listening, viewing and representing, it also deals with finding new ways to problematize and actualize questions of human subjectivity in the face of a changing life and a world in flux. Cohn (2016) describes the innately interactive nature of literacy as a restless search for meaning: "humans communicate through different modalities—whether through speech, bodily movements, or drawings—and can combine these expressive capacities together in rich and complex ways" (p 304).

Recognizing that we are *subject to* as well as *subjects of* language, key to this search for meaning in the contemporary era is a recognition that language, as we traditionally conceive it, may sometimes compromise the very thoughts we are otherwise endeavouring to express (Zoss 2009). As such, literacy is no longer only determined and legitimized by such traditional products (the essay, the story etc.) that we can see and touch; rather, it is also that which cannot be spoken, captured or traced with any absolute certainty. Though he writes from an admittedly different conceptual location, psychoanalytic theorist Bion (1989) powerfully describes the necessity of looking beyond traditional structures of comprehension: "To limit ourselves to the observation only of what we understand is denying ourselves the raw material

on which present and possibly future wisdom and knowledge might depend" (p 52). Thus, a study of future-oriented literacy practices, including the reading of comics, depends not only on what we know but also, more importantly, on what we do not.

To consider a brief example of reading as an indeterminate practice, let us look at a page from Michael DeForge's *Big Kids* (2016), as shown in Figure 1. Before I even begin considering the narrative, I read these panels as a series of spatial relations. In particular, I may be drawn to the shapes and semiotic gestures on this page that will likely indicate the story to come: the changing representational forms, spatial relations, the protagonist's unfamiliar sense of embodiment, the fact that the colour scheme shifts quite radically mid-page etc.

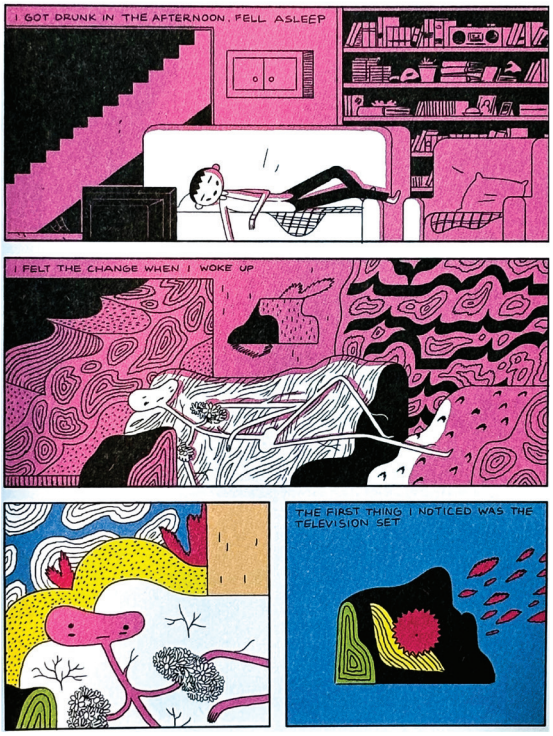

Figure 1: Unfamiliar embodiment in *Big Kids*

As a reader, even if I am trying to read the narrative in a logical, linear fashion, I cannot unsee what I have already seen, and my quick reading of the page as a whole will inevitably inform the more detailed reading to follow even though my conscious mind is not necessarily focused on the specific details of the comic. This is only a brief example, but we can already see how literacy and numeracy (in this case, spatial relations), and qualitative and quantitative understandings and impressions, are inevitably intertwined on the comics page. This subsequently affects the broader experience of reading. Therefore, ways of being and becoming subjects of literacy that may have been once considered peripheral, oppositional or unnecessary are now regarded as potential sites of individual and collective meaning-making. It is in this context that I will discuss considerations of numeracy in relation to comics art.

Comics and reading

But first, I will briefly consider the question: what *is* a comic? McCloud (1993) describes the form as "Juxtaposed pictorial and other images in deliberate sequence, intended to convey information and/or to produce an aesthetic response in the viewer" (p 9). Building on this definition, Eisner (2000), who initially employed the term "graphic novel," describes comics most clearly as "sequential art," which means that one image follows another to tell a narrative. Such a definition also usefully distinguishes comics from other artistic creations (like drawing and painting), which are typically more static in nature, involving isolated, standalone images. For Eisner (2000), then, comics are "an 'art of communication' more than simply an application" (p 6). Thus, at its most fundamental, sequential art deploys images in a recognizable order for the purposes of storytelling or sharing information.

Of course, there are many other ways we can define comics, and turning specifically to such concepts as time and space (which both appear to bridge the qualitative and the quantitative), Groensteen (2007), another influential comics theorist, describes comics as a language while also noting "the relational play of a plurality of interdependent images [as its] unique ontological foundation" (p 17). Just as language builds words and meaning from isolated letters, sounds and phonemes, the language of comics arranges isolated images in particular ways to communicate meaning. As a relational practice, comics are therefore not only an "art of fragments, of scattering, [and] of distribution," but also "of conjunction, of repetition, [and] linking together" (p 22). In essence, in this view, comics as an art form involves separate representations coming together with the intent and effect of telling a unified story.

However, in telling this story, several (often unspoken) rules are set, determining the reader's experience. Thinking back to the example from *Big Kids* (see Figure 1), the page is divided into a series of different boxes. These boxes are referred to as panels, which are generally understood to represent a frozen moment in time (though as we will see in what follows, such frozen moments are not the entire story). What we can say, however, is that time is represented spatially in comics, which also implies, as McCloud (1993) writes, that "in the world of comics, time and space are one and the same" (p 100). It is also usually taken for granted that the reader (at least in the western tradition) approaches the page much as they would a regular words-based text, moving from left to right and from top to bottom. However, comics narratives do not necessarily move in this way, and the author may play with the reader's expectations of spatial logic to tell a story that makes a different kind of sense. Importantly, we should also recognize that since comics always involve a confluence of modalities and ways of reading, they can "mean in multiple ways simultaneously" (Cates 2010, 102). Thus, the reader's approach to the comics page can never be predetermined. Even from moment to moment, a single reader will read differently and for different reasons.

In the text, most comics readers will also recognize different forms of thought bubbles and speech balloons. Their different shapes subsequently indicate different qualities of expression and different meaning-potentials. Words may be sung in chorus, yelled or whispered, spoken simultaneously by multiple characters, spoken from a distance or close up, while others may indicate internal dialogues. However, the number of things that appear on the comics page that characters themselves are not able to see are especially important as these are meant instead as indications and information for the reader. This is a significant difference between comics and film: from words on the page, to motion lines, to emanata (which are lines and squiggles that resemble motion lines but actually describe a character's emotional state), the reader is expected to think about all these elements together and simultaneously. Even the borders of panels communicate tone and temporality, where, for instance, squiggly, rounded edges may be used to describe a shift to memories and dreams.

Figure 2 shows an image from Chris Ware's *Building Stories* (2012). In this example, space is clearly used to represent time, and considering this artist's insistent use of repetition, droning, persistent noises and slow, heavy movements, the tone of this piece appears controlled, deliberate and collected. In emotional terms, with so many panels where nothing actually seems to happen, time appears to stand still; instead, the images elicit feelings such as boredom, sadness and fatigue. Indeed, as one commentator has remarked about Ware's style, "time moves sluggishly, and displays its sluggishness" (Samson, cited in Groensteen 2013, 155). The author's use of repetition—of colour, movement and image—lends the page a note of predictability, precisely measured. A reader's experience of reading will always be predetermined by their initial encounter with the text, which may rely on their knowledge of numeracy to condition their overall reading experience.

Figure 2: The tone of time in *Building Stories*

What is numeracy?

To clarify what numeracy means and why it matters at all in relation to comics art, especially in the context of teaching and learning, it is important

Put simply, the conceptual foundation of numeracy is mathematics, while the conceptual foundation for literacy is language.

to define it. As described in numerous policy documents in Alberta, where I teach, numeracy is defined as "the ability, confidence and willingness to engage with quantitative or spatial information to make informed decisions in all aspects of daily living" (Alberta Education n.d.b). If we look at the corresponding definition for literacy, the main difference between these concepts should be immediately clear. Literacy is defined as "the ability, confidence and willingness to engage with language to acquire, construct and communicate meaning in all aspects of daily living" (Alberta Education n.d.a). Taken together, numeracy involves quantitative and spatial information in the exact same way that literacy involves language. However, it needs to be emphasized that though they are both foundational and necessary concepts, "the underpinnings of literacy and numeracy are [fundamentally] different" (Alberta Education n.d.b).

Put simply, the conceptual foundation of numeracy is mathematics, while the conceptual foundation for literacy is language. As these curriculum documents further emphasize, since we exist "in a data-driven society ... [it] is critical that our students be *both* literate and numerate" (Alberta Education n.d.b). With respect to the relationship between these concepts, we may also note that neither definition actually suggests a set of precise skills or knowledge, but rather an "ability, confidence and willingness." (Alberta Education n.d.a). This appears to stress the importance of using knowledge in various contexts, rather than just possessing such knowledge in abstract or academic terms. To further clarify our understanding of numeracy, we can characterize *quantitative information* as anything that can be measured or indicated in terms of an amount, a quantity or a number, and *spatial information* as that which relates to the material location of, and relationships between, objects, people and places.

Given this focus on measurement and spatial relations, numeracy fits into a discipline such as mathematics, although it is also important to recognize that numeracy and math are not the same thing even if they both draw from the same body of knowledge: "School mathematics begins with the study of numbers, patterns, shape, space, statistics and probability and becomes increasingly abstract as students move up in grades" (Alberta Education n.d.b). Since numeracy emphasizes the importance of context, it involves using mathematical knowledge and understanding with the intent of making informed and personally suitable decisions. The need to think in terms of numeracy—in terms of measurement, amounts and the physical relationships between objects and people—can arise at any moment, in any kind of situation. Therefore, the study of numeracy could potentially apply across the curriculum, from physical education, music, social studies, to English language arts.

Comics and architectural space

As an example of the interdisciplinary nature of numeracy, we may begin by considering how the language arts classroom often involves the study of literary elements and poetic devices (metaphor, imagery, alliteration, irony, repetition etc), not only as stylistic curiosities (though they are that as well) but rather as things that the author does to elicit particular emotional, affective and even cognitive responses in readers. For instance, consider this line from Edgar Allan Poe's "The Raven" (1845): "While I nodded, nearly napping, suddenly there came a tapping" (line 3). We may ask ourselves and our students, What kind of tone or mood is elicited by the author's use of alliteration? In reading comics with a numeracy mindset, we might similarly inquire about how mathematical concepts (or what we might call numerary devices or elements, like shapes, angles, spaces, measurements, distances, time, weight, size etc) may contribute to different meanings and meaning-potentials.

If we look at the example from *Building Stories* again (see Figure 2) and focus only on the spatial organization of the page, the organization of the panels in highly deliberate, grid-like fashion, we could qualify the mood elicited by the author's use of space as prison-like, carceral, inescapable and dysphoric. Thus, the grid itself, or the spatial structure of the page, "contributes significantly

to the meaning within" (Sousanis 2015a). While this connection is hardly surprising, it points to the potential overlap between comics and a field like architecture. Indeed, just as we consider the spatial arrangement of the comics page, we may also ask ourselves about the modes and models of living suggested by architectural structures. For instance, what kind of attitude towards learning does the University of Pittsburgh's "Cathedral of Learning" suggest?[1] Or, if we consider the examples of brutalist-styled libraries in San Diego and Toronto, what is being said about the relations of readers, reading and objects such as books?[2] Undoubtedly, it is also quite difficult to look at a building like Boston City Hall and not think of words like defense, fortress and grid.[3]

Considering the architectural structure of comics, we may think about the following questions: What kinds of values, feelings and experiences are suggested by an artist's organization of buildings and spaces? How do the larger organizational grids on the page prepare the reader for the experience of reading the contents of the panel? What kinds of numeracy devices do we see at work? How are shapes, angles, size and distance being used to communicate the uses that humans make of the cities they live in? Or perhaps, we can also ask about what these comics communicate, in terms of numeracy, regarding the uses that cities make of the humans who live in them? Most importantly, we may inquire, how can we use numeracy to better understand the values and experiences that are made conspicuous by comics?

Discussing the relationship between comics, measurement and architecture, Sousanis (2015a) writes, "In comics, not only are we concerned with what goes on in each frame or panel, but we also need to attend to the size and shape of individual panels, their orientation, and their placement within the overall composition and relationship to other elements of the page. Additionally," he continues, "we might also find intentional use of empty space as well as elements in the liminal space between panels and across panels" (para 3). In other words, just as architecture privileges certain modes of life and living and effectively reduces others to a state of non-existence, when reading comics, we concern ourselves not only with what we see but also with what we do not. As readers, it is thus important to question these spaces and use a critical lens to consider what is not being included and measured, what must surely lie outside the frame. Most importantly, it is necessary to ask why something has been excluded. To address these questions in comics, we need to reflect not only on the meanings that are often associated with literacy and literature but also on those that are more closely related to the fields of mathematical knowledge and numeracy.

Comics and the study of perspective and angles

A slight shift in perspective can emphasize certain relations and characters while diminishing others. For example, readers of all levels could be asked to study the use of mathematical angles in comics, and to subsequently question how their reactions change depending on the angles that authors employ. For instance, in the panel in Figure 3, from the opening page of Seth's *Clyde Fans* (2000), the relation of the city skyline to the reader (or from the point-of-view of an observing character) is somewhere between 45 and 90 degrees. As a low angle shot, this perspective makes the buildings and the night sky appear to loom over the reader, expressing a mood of power, dominance and fortitude. In general, the more the artist pushes such an angle to an extreme, the more exaggerated is this effect of intimidation and power. In this case, we might therefore consider how our reactions as readers would change if the angle was brought closer to zero degrees, making our view of these buildings more level and neutral.

Figure 3: The city's imposing skyline in *Clyde Fans*

In Figure 4, a page from Nick Drnaso's *Sabrina* (2018), a high angle shot reverses the point-of-view of the reader's gaze, so the character in this scene appears vastly diminished, as the reader literally has to look down on them. As the angle used travels below the horizontal or x-axis, the character appears smaller and more vulnerable, which also may prompt the reader to feel emotional discomfort and unease. In cases such as this, the strategic use of perspective and angles creates subtle insinuations about who is submissive or passive in a scene. Even with only a slight angle variation, the reader's reactions can shift, from a neutral reaction to—perhaps—one of fear, menace, pity and foreboding. Even a shift from zero to ten degrees either way may change how the reader interprets the relationships of power within a scene.

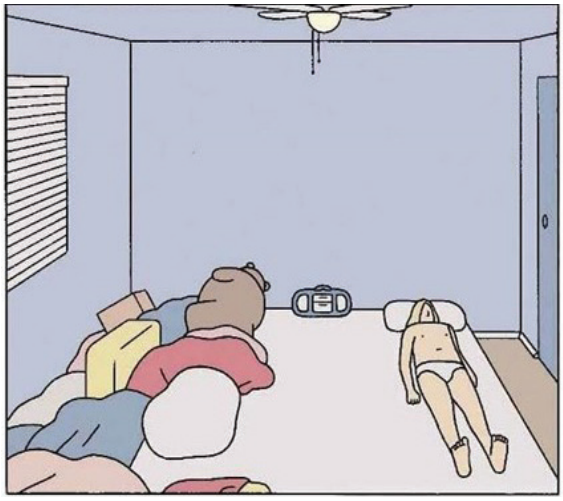

Figure 4: Emotional discomfort in *Sabrina*

Using such methods of numeracy, Connors (2012) describes the use of perspective in comics art as "the position from which an audience is made to view an image, [and] a resource [that] artists use to establish an imaginary relationship between a viewer and the subjects represented" (p 79). Using the graphic novel, *I Kill Giants* (2009), as his mentor text, Connors explores the author's use of angles to create various powerful moods and atmospheres. Apart from angles, Connors also notes how basic shapes (like circles, triangles and squares) play an important role in contributing to the reader's sense of emotional stability or instability. While circles, for instance, often suggest such feelings as comfort and protection, triangles are more likely to appear in scenes with dynamic action, tension and conflict. Squares, on the other hand, may be used to indicate notions of stability, integrity, orthodoxy and conformity. Such sensations, Serafini (2014) notes, are also typically strengthened by using comparative size, prompting readers to think in terms of composition and relation, and how the size, scale and weight of a particular object or character relates to the size, scale and weight of other characters or objects in the scene. In this regard, it seems that when we discuss such concepts as scale and weight, the point is not to clarify the actual weight of an object, but rather to conceptualize weight as a kind of comparative measure that inevitably directs the reader's attention. As with the effects of quantitative measures in general, numeracy as a reading practice never works alone. It always involves a qualitative understanding of the meanings that numerical contents and relations bring to the reading experience.

Comics and the study of time

Teachers are urged to incorporate practices of numeracy in several ways, including encouraging students to understand and manage relationships of temporality and time (Alberta Education n.d.b). In the context of this paper, I will therefore consider how comics can be used to measure and represent the passage of time. We should, once more, make note of the fact that as we read the comics page, we encounter multiple moments of temporal pause and recursivity, and we hardly ever read panels in a purely linear and rhythmically predictive way. "Comics," Sousanis (2015b) writes, "hold sequential and simultaneous modes in electric tension," as "meaning ... is braided together from all the assembled interconnected elements on the page" (Sousanis 2015a, 63). Indeed, given the physically static nature of the printed page, all moments of time may be said to occur simultaneously even though the passage of time may be represented across a series of different panels.

As we read comics, we occupy the unique position of being able to interpret time; even though authors can do certain things to affect our perception of time passing—changing the shape of the panel to indicate a long pause, adding consecutive panels, adding motion lines or letting their art extend to the very edge of the page in what is called

a "bleed," indicating a quality of timelessness—it is still the reader's privilege to determine how time is actually passing. As Groensteen (2013) notes, "In the final analysis, the author proposes but the reader disposes. It is the latter who animates, identifies, punctuates, and brings to life the story in his/her own way" (p 151). Given the primacy of a reader's interpretive acts, I can certainly imagine students being asked to theorize the passage of time across a chapter or even a single page, and then, to defend their theories with reference to the author's artistic choices.

Another way that time is apparent in comics is through the rhythms of reading. Again, such rhythms are never simply a matter of objective measurement but refer instead to the reader's felt impressions of tempo, time and beat. "When the layout is regular," as Groensteen (2013) emphasizes, "so is the beat" (p 138), which refers to the structure of comics that operate according to what is known as the "waffle-iron" grid, such as the example in Figure 5 from Drnaso's *Sabrina* (2018). As this grid affects the meaning of its content, "progression from one panel to the next is smoothed out in compliance with an immutable cadence" (p 138). Such predictable and uniformly organized panels allow readers to enter the process of reading without any fear of confusion. In other cases, however, confusion seems to be intentional, as time and space may be presented and perceived as discontinuous and complex, wherein the rhythms of reading are not immediately predictable. This then adds to the reader's feeling of uncertainty regarding the narrative's temporal qualities. As before, we can pose the question: In terms of narrative and time, how does the author's organizational use of space affect our reading experience?

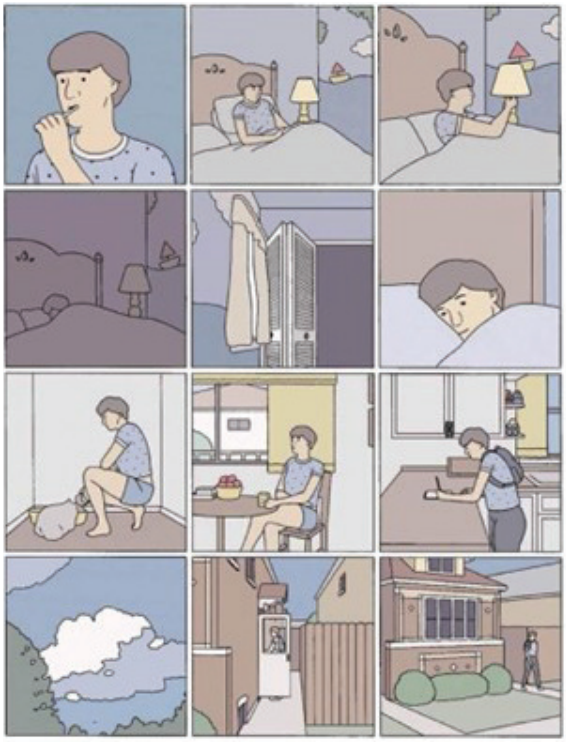

Figure 5: The "waffle-iron" grid in *Sabrina*

Comics and the logic of mapping

Several writers in the field of contemporary geography have suggested that comics and graphic novels "can be used to develop students' geographical competencies" (Peterle 2015, 69) by examining the author's use of a grid. Given their structure as visual texts, comics remain ideal sites through which to consider the relation between cartographical reality (or reality as represented on a map) and lived reality, to which the map (at least in theory) refers. Michel de Certeau (1984), suggesting that narratives can supersede the often artificial divisions in maps, remarked that "What the map cuts up, the story cuts across" (p 129). Given this distinction between the map and story, it may be helpful to consider that comics contain and relate to both. How, we might therefore ask, is the story conditioned by a logic of mapping. Furthermore, how does the map relate to the story? While comics are quite "literally a map of time" (Raeburn, cited in Dittmer 2010, 222), what is most intriguing about these maps is that their narratives are constructed both by what is on and off the page. As Dittmer (p 201) writes, comics involve "the interplay of what is on the page," which he calls *the visual*, with "what is not" (p 228), which he titles the *anti-optical*. For students, this anti-optical element is an especially crucial feature since it suggests that reality is constructed not only by what we can map, measure and catalogue but also by so much more, including stories, desires and everything that readers bring to the comics page. "Simply put," Dittmer tells us, "comic book visualities open [readers] up to uncertainty, tangentiality and contingency by picking apart the linear montage of film ... and replacing this linearity with the more open comic page and the multiple paths through its frames—and consequently opening up to its multiple possible narratives" (p 235).

Reading comics as maps allows us to recognize that *all* visual phenomena can only ever offer a partial view of the reality that is depicted. Such a recognition of partiality and incompleteness is even more important for maps that strive to refer to actual lived reality, and the neighbourhoods, cities and countries we live in. In effect, comics tell us that numeracy is a necessary part of studying visual phenomena, cartographical or otherwise, and that the story that numeracy tells is always inevitably incomplete. This incompleteness needs to be addressed by something else; namely, by another kind of reading that pays attention to the situated contexts of readers' lives.

Conclusion: Reading for the possibility of revision

To reiterate the implications of the understanding of numeracy that have been used to guide this paper—concerned with an "ability, confidence, and willingness to engage with quantitative or spatial information to make informed decisions in all aspects of daily living" (Alberta Education n.d.b)—any meaningful and integrative study of numeracy needs to relate to life in the classroom, as well as to life outside. In regards to the reading experience, we may think of this relationship as follows: How we teach our students to read is also a reflection of how we teach our students to live. By emphasizing the fact that texts contain multiple meanings and meaning-potentials, we allow readers to likewise consider that interpretations of social life are always subject to revisions because they are concerned with perception and context. As Dittmer and Latham (2015) express this possibility in relation to the study of space and time, "the production of new spacings (and therefore meanings) is dependent on our ability to shake free from entrenched patterns of thought and to engage in new routines of thinking about these spaces" (p 442). Thus, by learning to read differently, and from a different perspective, we may also be learning to include new forms of thinking in our living, including the likelihood that our understanding of any space, textual or otherwise, will be limited, flawed and inevitably incomplete. As an interpretive principle for literacy education, this suggestion of an impossibility of expertise may allow readers to think and read beyond the limits of what may appear to be comfortable and secure. In brief, untethering readers from the fetters of disciplinary security may eventually lead them to learn to notice that there is always another way to read.

Notes

1. https://www.tour.pitt.edu/tour/cathedral-learning

2. https://archeyes.com/geisel-library-william-pereira-associates/; https://www.acotoronto.ca/building.php?ID=1604

3. https://architectuul.com/architecture/boston-city-hall

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ABOUT THE AUTHOR

David Lewkowich *is an associate professor in the Faculty of Education at the University of Alberta, teaching in the area of literacy education. His research interests include psychoanalytic theories of teaching and learning, representations of teachers in comics and graphic novels and autobiographical inquiry.*

"What Knowledge is of Most Worth?":

A sociopolitical analysis of creative literacies and research-creation in education

Brent Saccucci

Touching,

Slowly,

A finger across the page. A tap on the keyboard.
A kiss on the forehead.

New tab.

A handshake, a board meeting, an office cry, a sweet goodbye.

Esc key.

New tab.

google.ca

"How to assess art"

Enter.

Is this a good poem?
Write your answer here (Yes or No): _____.

If you answered Yes, how good was it? Scale 1-10. Or more typically, out of 20. Out of 30 marks. If you answered No, how bad was it? Still a pass, maybe a B+? Or a fail?

I wrote that poem in about two minutes. I say that not in an effort to brag about how quickly I can write a poem, but to elicit the question of whether the time I spent on it relates to whether you think it was "bad" or "good" art. Amidst the rise of creative multiliteracies and research-creation (artistic) work, we (I use *we* intentionally) as scholars and artists are faced with the valuing of art as *our collective* problem in education: What is good art? Is making good art the same as making good scholarship, or does it require a different set of practices and an epistemic shift in our thinking around academic value? My central question to explore in this paper is therefore the following: How does research-creation (the university term for creative work) and creative multiliteracies (the K–12 term for creative work) beckon us as educators to re-think academic value?

Coming of age: Situating the self

As a politically engaged educator/activist/artist-scholar, I intend for this paper to be dialogically reflective (asking more questions than giving answers, providing a personal and academic voice to this reflective work). As curriculum theorists Leggo and Herdt theorize a "metissage" (2018) of knowing, I imagine this piece as a curricular blending of multiple ways of knowing, where the theoretical voice meets the personal, critical and artistic. I hope to write in ways that showcase my impetus for research-creation, my activism for writing research and assessments differently, and my tone of urgency and yet playfulness in this pursuit. Although these characteristics may exile this paper from [traditional] academic scholarship, this may be necessary to situate creative work in relation to more traditional scholarship. A blending, a "metissage," may be ideal but it may not be possible.

Curriculum studies as a field is concerned with educational and epistemic equity, as well as the sociology of knowledge, and is thus uniquely positioned to take up the argument for research-creation. Since many in the curriculum studies scholarly community self-identify as arts-based researchers, artist-scholars and activist-scholars (including myself), I believe we are at a critical standpoint where, through the pre- and post-reconceptualization eras of curriculum studies, the rise of research-creation forces us to return to the most central question of the field: What knowledge is of most worth? (Pinar 2006, 80). Furthermore, a questioning of how we have come

to value certain knowledge(s) helps reinforce hierarchies of knowing and, in turn, hierarchies of knowers (people).

> As a graduate student in education asking for creative work to be seen as "valid," and as a literacy teacher asking students to deliver on more creative assessment tasks, how might we sit with "the trouble" creative educational work begs of us?

The educational context of arts-based research for the emergence of research-creation

As some qualitative arts-based methodologists begin a new chapter in research-creation, we are faced again with either reproducing academic tradition and norms or becoming academically untethered from the colonial and power-driven mindset of literacy. This also leads to rethinking, or more importantly, recreating, what we mean by knowledge, who gets to create it and which knowledge (especially when soaked in art) is good and which is bad. What a task! To map our journey, this paper will first outline how Canadian funding bodies and leading scholars in the field (such as Loveless 2019) qualify research-creation, which will help me distinguish and wrestle with/stay with the definitions of "arts-based research" and "research-creation" for the purposes of clarifying the differences between meaning-making and doing, respectively. This exploration will prove useful as we dive into the final section, where I will explore the sociopolitical contexts within which research-creation takes place (the neoliberal academy) and how, methodologically and pedagogically, research-creation acts as a feminist intervention.

Let's explore SSHRC's definition of research-creation, specifically the part, "The research-creation process and the resulting artistic work are judged according to SSHRC's established merit review criteria" (Social Sciences and Humanities Research Council of Canada 2019). Subsequently, an examination of this "merit review criteria" has revealed, in my opinion, an ill-suited rubric to evaluate research-creation. Tenants of this criteria are focused more on the qualities of adjudicators (that is, transparency, confidentiality, due diligence and appropriateness, a characteristic I will explore later), and less on the rubric used to assess "the creation process and artistic expression" (2019). These loose definitions allow for gaps in the pedagogical and methodological processes of art, gaps that can allow for colonial perspectives on what makes art have "merit."

I remember assessing a student's poem last year and wondering how best to do so. I was stuck at my desk thinking: Is the poem good? By whose evaluation? Am I even qualified to comment on what a good and bad poem is? As someone assessing art, how was my palette for it influenced by social and cultural factors?

After further contextualizing arts-based research (and arts-based theses submitted for assessment) in Canada, we will now look more closely at how "the creation process and artistic expression" that SSHRC defines as research-creation work can be assessed, and the educational politics and cultural activism such an assessment raises.

Before we discuss the sociopolitical ramifications of research-creation in higher education, we should first come to a pan-Canadian understanding of research-creation in its artistic and scholarly roots. Research-creation differs from arts-based research in that the latter is not concerned with the research process itself but rather is a creative aid or supplement in the methods or dissemination of more traditional qualitative research (Barone and Eisner 2012, 180). Tara Goldstein's work on her Out at School project (Goldstein 2019) is an example of arts-based research. The project is an audio play based on interviews of LGBTQ2S+ families. Another example is Monica Prendergast's poetic inquiry work that takes narrative data and creates poems from it (Galvin and Prendergast 2015). It is important to note that this arts-based research paradigm takes the premise that art supplements "hard" or "real" qualitative data, such as interviews, ethnographic field notes or survey results. Thus, in arts-based research, art is used in addition to data as a form of creative analysis, or art is the data (such as a participant's drawings)

and is then engaged with through traditional academic analysis. Here, bookending is a common practice, where art is seen as additive and "after the fact" of the real research that precedes it. On the other hand, in research-creation, art is the data, methodology and analysis; art is the central vein of the research process and traditional academic form (if any) is supplemental.

In K–12 settings and within a typical literacy/ELA classroom, arts-based assessment might look as follows (taken directly from an assignment I gave): Write a poem or develop a collage or write a song; but accompany the art with an "artist's statement" explaining your choices. It will be the statement/explanation of the art I will mark, rather than the art itself!

In such an assignment, the art is almost described as a "nice to have" aspect or a "creative add on" to the more legitimate academic work of explaining students' choices. Arts-based research, and by extension, creative assessments thus usually understand art as not "real" research/scholarship but rather as an additive to it.

From meaning-making to doing-making

In curriculum studies, particularly within the past two decades, a subfield of arts-based research termed "a/r/tography" has developed. This was the methodological nucleus of many graduate dissertations in arts education in Canada, especially for UBC's arts-based researchers who leveraged the practices and positionality of **a**rtist/**r**esearcher/**t**eacher. The a/r/tography movement has been critiqued (Wallin and jagodzinski 2013) for its lack of critical analysis of social systems and its academic rigour. In a comprehensive scan of arguably the largest increase in arts-based research within education, Sinner et al (2006) analyzed over thirty a/r/tography graduate theses and dissertations from UBC's Faculty of Education from 1994 to 2004. They found four attributes that underpin these dissertations: a commitment to aesthetic and educational practices, an inquiry-laden process, a process of searching for meaning, and interpreting for understanding. The first two attributes continue to be central veins for artistic practice(s) as we look toward research-creation, but the final two, "searching for meaning" and "interpreting for understanding" are rooted in the curriculum studies field (as well as in my own department), which is largely informed by European continental philosophy, Aokian theory and North American reconceptualism (Strong-Wilson et al 2020). Instead of the search for meaning through interpretation, research-creation urges us to move toward a DeleuzoGuattarian model of *responding* to what something *does* rather than *interpreting* what something *means*. In producing art as academic work, this shift from interpretation art (the essay that augments the art) to doing (the art itself as the scholarly product) is colossal. Building on a/r/tographical and other arts-based methods, research-creation is not research *on* the arts or research *through* the arts (meaning and interpretation) but research *as* the arts (doing). Moving from the overused discourse of meaning-making as the only valid definition of literacy (Butler-Kisber 2010), a concept that may have lost its meaning in curriculum and literacy research, research-creation instead "does"—it acts in performative and aesthetic ways to create a response, and in many instances, is a response to not only doing things differently but othering various "doings" as well.

There is no "this is what the play was about" or "what does this art suggest about X?"; instead, the more important questions are what does this art *do* to me? To institutions and spaces? To relationships? What is the relational sympoesis (Haraway 2016) of the doing-making act to the witnesses and coperformers in this social art act? Although I've conceptualized meaning-making as the less central concern for research-creation, for many scholars (and artists) bookends (or artist statements) prove to be useful guides when viewing a work. As much as I want to let art reveal its own meaning, I appreciate an explanation about how and why they made the choices they did and what they hope the art does, especially if the artist is working in a medium I am unfamiliar with. However, I continually revert back to Barone and Eisner's (2012) foundational work in arts-based research to ground me in the principle that such research always has multiple perspectives. The role of art is not to give a statement to get all viewers on the same page; rather, "[arts-based research] is based on the notion that any perspective on the world is always partial and therefore *incomplete*" (p 166, emphasis

added). This incomplete picture includes the one we have painted about what constitutes scholarly research and valid academic form.

Politicizing research-creation I: The unarchivable, the unassessable

As I've described, arts-based research often is an appendix at the end of the dissertation or is a separate section of the more traditional qualitative dissertation. For the assessment of my MA thesis, more than half of which comprised creative writing and the rest traditional curriculum theory, almost none of my creative writing portions had any feedback other than "great!" from my examining committee. This is not to fault my exceptionally supportive supervisors, who were willing to mentor (what I considered) a quite rogue early-scholar work, but rather is a commentary to suggest that I did not have the institutional support set up to have my research-creation work assessed in a way that felt generative to my emerging artistic-scholarly practice. If we are to seriously consider the integration of art as scholarship, as Loveless' (2019) manifesto suggests, then we must consider the assessment of this scholarship. This needs to be especially done in light of sociocultural factors that constitute "good" and "bad" art in the Euro-Western artistic canon. Considering the poem I was trying to assess from my ELA class, this was a big undertaking.

> Research-creation instead hopes to reorient, make accessible and invite larger audiences outside the gatekeep of academic literacy to engage in scholarly conversation. In short, a pedagogical research-creation project seeks to reorient what and who can constitute as "academic."

Returning to the example of *doing* (research-creation) versus *meaning* (arts-based research, traditional literacy), how can we purposefully assess research-creation? Would we say, "your art made me *do* [talk to my child] ... [send a message to a power-hungry boss] ... [protest at the legislature]"? Would that constitute a *good doing* that would have to be translated into a grade... A? And if the research-creation creates a *bad doing*, such as "[your art made me fearful, where is the hope?] ... [your art made me feel less adequate about *my* art] ... or the popular [your art did nothing to me]"? Would this constitute a lower grade translation? What if my art did nothing for you, but something for someone else in the room, someone who was not assessing the work? Does art's impact rely on one sole viewer [or a small committee of reviewers that are not trained in art]? When asked what we might "do" about assessing creative work, what kind of rubric are we using? Although the answers to these questions are vital, for now the questions act as provocations only as the limits of this paper prohibit me from doing justice to a full analysis of the politics of assessment.

In *Propositions for a Radical Pedagogy, or How to Rethink Value*, research-creation scholar Erin Manning (2019) argues that "the soundscape of learning is full of inklings which reside below the threshold of actual perception" (p 44). She goes on to advocate for a pedagogy of the "undercommons," a learning that creates its own value, value misperceived and, sometimes, not perceived at all. As educational researchers attempt to archive the pedagogical experience through publishing papers, we must ask what and who we are missing in the educational research archive we are attempting to publish in so rigorously, when very little of pedagogy's intensive and charged moments make their way into the archive at all. Moreover, when we combine Manning's (2019) argument here with Barone and Eisner's (2012) proposition that arts-based research is meant to be perceived differently across audiences, then we see that perception (and perception of value) is integral to the conversation around research-creation, and more largely, creativity in education. If we can only assess that which we can perceive to exist, then research-creation is tasked with a daunting question about assessment; and for many in the academy, research-creation ignites a moral panic around what is valued, and when considering summative assessment and faculty hiring/promotion, *which knowledge is of most worth?*

Politicizing research-creation II: A critical intervention

> "The production of 'legitimate' knowledge has been closely related to the context, class affiliation, and their social identity of the producers ... European colonizers have defined legitimate knowledge as Western knowledge, essentially European colonizers' ways of knowing, often taken as objective and universal knowledge."
>
> -Francis Adyanga Akenda, *Critical Analysis of the Production of Western Knowledge and Its Implications for Indigenous Knowledge and Decolonization* (2012).

Akenda's quote allows us to read the proposal of research-creation and creative literacies as a social argument in order to answer not only *what knowledge is of most worth* but also how did that worth get assigned to knowledge. In the era of truth and reconciliation, how can we reassign the worth of knowledge to be a more expansive one? When thinking in binary terms of "good/bad" art, as we did previously, I argue that we are subconsciously and simultaneously reinscribing dichotomies of "Eurocentric/Indigenous," "heterosexual/queer," "white/racialized" and "male/female." For example, male-dominated fields such as STEM (science, technology, engineering and math) are often romanticized as objective fields that utilize logic and the scientific method, while female-centric fields such as visual arts, drama and education are seen as practitioner-focused, "caring professions." Although, the need for artistic thinking in education has gained popularity only insofar as benefitting "hard" disciplines to develop "soft skills" such as interpersonal communication. For example, the rise of STEAM (adding *A*rt to the acronym of STEM) has become a popular educational speech act that has added **A**rt to the STEM curriculum discourse only to showcase that interpersonal and creative skill outcomes are being met (Concordia University 2022). Loveless (2019) reminds us that research-creation, and by extension, art, "is a feminist intervention, not a feminist addition" (p 6). Furthermore, "[research-creation], read in this way, demands a reconfiguring of standard academic pedagogical training and assessment practices" (p 7). By rethinking our pedagogical and assessment practices, we must also think of the ways in which our academic values are also sociocultural values that have been shaped by hegemonic structures and institutions to dictate which knowledge is of most worth and to whom. Thus, it can be argued that any creative undertaking is inherently an equity-seeking project, leading to new knowledges that have been silenced by colonial, sexist and classist understandings of academic value. Although I have reached this conclusion quickly (and perhaps missed carefully drawing out the steps that led me to make the connection between marginalized communities and marginalized knowledges), I am careful here to not conflate the experiences of sexism, racism, classism and ableism with my understandings of "knowledge on the margins." Rather, I aim to draw connections between the marginalization of knowledge and the marginalization of communities to create solidarity and build understanding across positionalities. To be clear, I am not stating that undervaluing art-as-knowing is not the same as undervaluing humans in relation to other humans; instead, I am drawing parallels between how values in knowledge and axiology are residual from values seen in an oppressor/oppressed social hierarchy. In clarifying this distinction, I hope I have illuminated the ways in which such undervaluing is related diagonally rather than synonymously.

I am intentionally returning to remind us of our central task in this paper, to ask "which knowledge is of most worth?" This is curriculum studies' central vein of inquiry. I have now laid the groundwork to view this question within the sociopolitical context of education (thought of here (and in Loveless' text) as the neoliberal academy/school). To extend this claim, if we take the suggestion that logic, productivity and the scientific method are perceived as more masculine attributes, and creativity, affect and art perceived as more feminine attributes, we can see how research-creation's value as an affective art form is socially and culturally implicated. I agree with Loveless' claim that research-creation is a feminist intervention but also extend her argument to suggest that research-creation, as an artistic and affective literacy, is also an anti-capitalist intervention. Research-creation's "ineffable moments of literacy" (Ehret and Leander 2019, 21), which are always-already "beyond our grasp" (p 2), refuse to be archived and refuse traditional citational practice, and instead elicit action in the moment. Furthermore, in schools,

creative literacy is not "job ready skill development" or fostering some sense of "entrepreneurial thinking" (Alberta Education 2013). Instead, in both research-creation and creative literacy pursuits, we see that art is difficult to assess, teach and bring into curriculum studies' scholarly conversation as we currently know it. But when assessed and included, to return to this section's question of assessment, how does research-creation escape the sociopolitical wrapping of the western canon's rubric of "good" and "bad" art? Without answering, I instead find solace in knowing that creativity and research-creation are not simply an art of social practice but an art of educational disruption in the increasingly corporatized and capitalist education systems we operate within. Research-creation not only expands what counts as knowledge (objects and methods of study), "but *who* might produce such knowledges, and *how*" (Loveless 2019, 14, emphasis in original). With this ever-expanding gate of allowance in what counts as knowledge and who its producers can be, [higher] education loses prestige and "rigorous" academic study may lose its status in a constantly corporatizing educational arena.

Reconfiguring academic value through failure and fear

We can, however difficult it may be on our own reflections of academic value, consider institutions that are beginning to formulate research-creation doctoral programs and learn from them. In Canada, the University of Regina's PhD in Media and Artistic Research attempts a first stab at such a task. Dr. Kathleen Irwin, Associate Dean of Graduate Studies and Research at the university's Faculty of Media, Arts and Performance suggests that the research-creation PhD "recognizes and embraces non-traditional approaches to look at research through the lens of other cultures and their methodologies. Here in Canada, for example, there is a growing awareness that new knowledge can be found within a non-European model" (Stecyk 2019). We see, therefore, that a partial answer is being attempted to the above question regarding the refusal of western notions of good and bad art. In understanding what Dr. Irwin states are "non-traditional approaches," we are not asking for an appendix but rather arguing for a requalifying of the value of scholarly work. Shifting our cultural standards of rigour and reconfiguring the paradigms of merit in education will certainly evoke fear and discomfort. This "pedagogy of discomfort" (Boler 1998), however messy to sit in and work through, is integral to any cultural or educational paradigm shift.

The academic panic around research-creation and creative literacies, I believe, comes in part from scholars and teachers who have had to learn "the hard way" and insist on continuing the supervision style that they themselves received. I too am guilty of perpetuating this "tough love" to my students. Whether in elementary or graduate school, this cyclical rite of passage often acts as scholarly gatekeeping: if you can't handle the heat, get out of the kitchen. In the university context, instead of shying away from the fact that over 65% of social science PhD students in Canada drop out before graduation (Charbonneau 2013), why do we not ask instead, Are these knowledge practices working for you? How can you know *and do* this work in other ways? If you were permitted to use the mediums of X and Y, would you perhaps stay? In addition, only 18.6% of the 35% that do graduate from social science PhDs in Canada are employed as (tenure or tenure-track) full-time professors (Kappeler 2015; Charbonneau 2013). Many graduate students who leave the academy thinking they have failed are not up for the academic-industrial complex of publishing, or simply cannot handle the required form of literacy because of the way they know the world culturally or through their own neurodiversity (Kelsky 2015). I know for me, as a neurodiverse PhD dropout with only two years of full funding, I couldn't always handle the demands of the full-time writing and reading required of me. Furthermore, in preparing PhD students, who are artists, activists and scholars, to continue their work outside the academy, our doctoral programs should be refocusing their failed curriculum to ensure that it does not simply tailor to a bleak market for its graduates. With these failures in mind, research-creation seeks to intervene pedagogically to support a research training program suited to new knowledge practices. Additionally, students who are not only in graduate programs in arts education and those that don't necessarily come from minority backgrounds would also benefit from research-creation. Regardless of whether I cite all the ways that creativity is beneficial to the brain, mental health and academic achievement, I am interested in the

risk of doing creative as learners and teachers. With that risk comes failure, something our education system has no tolerance for. But what if we reorient (again) to see failure as pivotal to any academic task? What better way to explore failure than through creating/doing art?

If we use the word "academic" synonymously with the words efficient, logical and rigorous, is research-creation not academic enough to survive in education? Don't its goals reflect the curricular outcomes of rigour and academic excellence that the social science PhD prides itself on? Is research-creation set up to fail in an academy only-already prepared to swallow up diverse knowledge practices into its bottomless belly of assimilation? Or can we reconceptualize the failure of research-creation as a set of "complicated [curricular] conversations" (Pinar 2004)?

Conceptualizing research-creation as an "academic failure" (Loveless 2019, 46) in a way that resists neoliberal frameworks for understanding success helps us see research-creation's potential. If we understand art through the lens of multiliteracy, we can see research-creation as an access point into knowledge production and circulation. Podcasts, films, comic books and paintings, due to their accessible and public form, produce a low, instead of high, theory scholarship (Halberstam and Halberstam 2011). Why are certain literacies higher or lower than others in their academic (and by extension cultural) currency? In my classroom, when utilizing podcasts and comic books in ELA, I have received criticism from colleagues for not being rigourous enough and focusing my class on the "easy, fun stuff." In an interview with queer theory scholar Jack/Judith Halberstam, she suggests that in her forthcoming book, *Dude, Where's My Theory?*, low-theory spaces are fruitful sites for knowledge production where "negative epistemologies... such as forgetfulness, stupidity, and failure" (Danbolt n.d.) will help us produce contrary knowledges (like research-creation) necessary for our revolutionary times.

Refusing quick solutions and conclusions: An invitation into complicated conversations

In many ways, our schools and universities are failing with respect to the student mental health crisis, precarious "publish or perish" employment standards and declining student interest in and engagement with research and academic form. I have argued in this paper that curriculum studies, as a field supposedly concerned with educational and epistemic equity as well as the sociology of knowledge, is uniquely positioned to take up the argument for research-creation as a complicated conversation. To think seriously about counter-hegemonic academic practice, we must theorize in new ways with new learners whose knowledges have been excluded from education. We must refuse the status complex that comes with failing "our beloved," as Loveless (2019) states, "academy." As curriculum scholars and artists within the academy, we are in a privileged position to re-(re) conceptualize curriculum studies and educational thought to not only convince the school and university of research-creation's value from the perspective of what is accepted as academic success but also to decide that value for ourselves.

Discussion questions for class conversations on the value of different knowledges/subjects (Used with Grade 11 students in November 2022)

This activity can take place over one or two class periods. Invite students to respond to each of the four initial questions first, and if they would like to discuss in more detail, invite them to respond to the prompt following each initial question.

I like to start by having students respond independently to each question for 2–3 minutes each in any medium they want.

To start a discussion from the responses, use your favourite "discussion starter" activity to build on the initial student responses (such as a Snowball activity, musical pairs, gallery walks or Padlet responses).

Questions for individual and class discussion (tailor to your specific grade group and student demographic as needed):

1. Which rubric has been used to determine what is a "core" and an "elective" subject? To what extent do these value systems of

disciplines suggest a hierarchy in answering the question *what knowledge is of most worth?*

Further prompt to deepen discussion: Does this hierarchy have economic causes and/or repercussions (such as artists making less money than coders)?

2. In what ways do our school practices (reading, writing, sitting all day) reinforce colonial values of education?

   Further prompt to deepen discussion: Which school practices do we have that work against colonialism?

3. In what ways do we associate cultural assumptions with disciplines? That is, why is math more powerful than creative writing in our western economy?

   Further prompt to deepen discussion: In what ways do gender and class intersect with the hierarchy of subjects?

4. Considering that value = rarity in late capitalism, does knowing something most people don't know mean that you are smarter?

   Further prompt to deepen discussion: For example, if everyone could read Shakespeare fluently, would that make it less prestigious? If everyone can draw, does that make art less valuable? If everyone could do advanced calculus, would that make it less impressive?

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- Please communicate with the Editor about any questions you may have.
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- The contributor is responsible for obtaining releases for the use of photographs and written parental permission for works by students under 18 years of age.
- The Copyright Transfer Agreement should be completed and attached to the manuscript.

CELEBRATING WORDS

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INTRODUCTION

Celebrating Words is a judgement-free space within the *English Language Arts Journal* that showcases our students' brilliance, eloquence, intelligence and creativity. The submitted pieces need never be "perfect"—if such a thing even exists—as the most important aspect, and the heart of this publication, is the students' thoughts and efforts and their teachers' willingness to share the students' ideas and practices.

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A Leap of Faith

Hope Mauricio

One of life's biggest challenges is learning how to truly trust ourselves. When I reflect on my development in self-assurance and trust, I realize that my journey started at a very young age. At this point in my life, I look back at this innocent little story and smile. But at that time, when I was four years old, it wasn't just a simple story. Through my young eyes, it was the biggest event of the whole year.

So let me take you back in time ...

When I was four years old, my brother was in Grade 2. Every day after my brother finished school, we would play in the glorious park together. I adored the jungle gym section. When I was in the jungle gym, I felt like a superhero. I could swing on the monkey bars just as well as the big kids. I could climb the ladder faster than anyone and I could even swing the highest on the swings. But the one thing in the park that still seemed quite scary and off limits was the fireman's pole. And scariest of all was watching the big kids make the huge leap from the tall platform directly beside that yellow fireman's pole to the hard sand far below. Through my eyes at that time, I found it hard to believe that I would ever be big and brave enough to complete that daunting task.

Day after day I would go back to the park. I was an adventurer. I loved jumping and leaping across the playground! I tried every sort of stunt possible, and I did a lot of big, fun jumps off of many tall platforms, but never the fireman's pole platform. When I performed these daring leaps, every time just before I jumped, I would ask my mom, "Mommy, can I jump?"

And she would reply "yes" or "no" because Mommy knew if I would be safe.

Every day, I would climb up to the lower platform right under the fireman's pole. I would play and jump from there, but I would never dare to go up any higher. The tall platform was only for big kids, and even then it was too high for many. I would stare longingly at the big jump, wondering if a little 4-year-old like me would ever be able to perform such a daring leap. I watched my brave, tall, older brother climb all the way up to the high platform.

He yelled "Woo hoo," and then he jumped and sailed through the sky, landing softly and gracefully on the sand. I wanted to be like Aidan, I wanted to do that jump.

One day, I felt extra courageous. So, very carefully and very slowly I decided to climb up to that tall platform. I was terrified. I wasn't even able to stand up. From my kneeling position, I looked down and the sand looked like it was miles away. I gripped tightly onto the cold railing, afraid that I would fall.

"I can't do this," I whispered to myself, disappointed. I was ashamed and upset. Why couldn't I trust myself to make that jump? I was so close to victory, and yet my head got in the way. At that moment, I started to doubt myself. I started to question whether I really was a superhero on the playground, or if I was just a normal 4-year-old, too scared to take that high jump. I carefully climbed down from the platform of shame. Then I went to my mom and asked for a hug and to go home. I couldn't stand being at the place where I had failed any longer.

I stayed away from the park for two whole days because I couldn't face that high leap. I watched the other kids play from the bench where I sat still beside my mother. My mom might have been puzzled about my behavior, but she cleverly disguised it. She did not pressure me to get up and play. She trusted me to get back out there when I was ready.

But eventually I felt I had waited long enough. Even though I was terrified, I was no quitter. So, by the third day, I held my head high and decided to attempt the unfathomable.

I carefully climbed up that tall ladder, making sure I wouldn't fall. Getting onto the platform, I gripped the yellow railing. My hands were

shaking, but I knew that I had to do it. So, very slowly, I lifted myself up off of my knees and found myself standing on the tall red platform beside the yellow fireman's pole. Now all I had to do was ask mommy if it was safe to jump.

"Mommy, can I jump?" I asked, sounding terrified.

But, this time, Mommy said something quite different than her usual "yes" or "no." She said something that really made me stop and think. She came over close to the fireman's pole and in a calm voice she said, "What does your tummy tell you?" I was very surprised, but I looked at her supportive eyes as she continued, "If your tummy feels kind of sick when you look down and you feel like you are going to throw up, then don't do it. Your tummy is telling you that you are not quite ready."

I looked way down at the sand. I wasn't quite sure what my tummy was telling me. Then my mom smiled and counseled, "But, if your tummy feels excited and tingly, then it is saying that you should jump! It is saying that you are ready."

Mommy was trusting me to decide whether I should jump or not. And in my little 4-year-old thoughts, I decided I should trust myself too. I took a deep breath, and I focused on my stomach. It felt warm and tingly. It wasn't just telling me to jump, it was practically screaming at me to jump. I felt the adrenaline rush through my body. And at that moment I knew, this would be the day where I conquered my fear.

Instead of a tiny 4-year-old girl, I envisioned a heroic superhero, coming to save the day. This brave superhero felt her cape blowing in the wind, and she surveyed the citizens all looking up at her ready to watch her fly. And most importantly of all, she herself felt ready and proud, knowing she could take the jump. For the first time, she felt a strong sense of trusting herself. She stood on the side of that platform and gathered all of her courage. Bending her knees, she lifted off.

That leap was every bit as magical as I dreamed it would be. That superhero, me, soared through the sky with a victorious smile. I gazed down at the citizens and saw their shocked faces when they realized how high I just jumped. It felt like time had stopped. It seemed as though everyone in the entire world was holding their breath, watching me, hoping that I would land safely. And guess what? I landed perfectly, without a scratch. Mommy clapped enthusiastically and was beaming, with tears of joy in her eyes. I was so proud of myself that I had conquered my fear. I trusted myself. I believed I could do it, so I did.

Maybe I was just a 4-year-old girl, but when I took that jump, when I was that superhero, I felt like I could do anything. And nobody will ever be able to take that feeling away from me. Maybe that's just it, maybe we all want to be superheroes. And why can't we be? Sometimes, we get in the way of our own success because we don't trust ourselves. We don't believe that we are good enough, brave enough or strong enough. We don't allow ourselves to be the superheroes in our own stories. Back then, in my own simple 4-year-old way, I started to ask myself these questions about trusting my own abilities. And even today, if I am wondering how I feel about any new adventure, I often ask myself, "What does my tummy say?" And I am happy to report that more often than not, my tummy says I am ready to take my next leap of faith.

At the time of writing, Hope Mauricio was a Grade 8 student at Vimy Ridge Academy. She created this short story as part of a trilogy based on stories from her own life. This story is about a moment from her past that taught her an important lesson in life.

“Go Make Me a Sandwich”

Gracie Wilson

A simple phrase
Takes us back to the old days
The days in which I couldn’t vote
The days in which I was a housewife who couldn’t work
Go Make Me a Sandwich
A simple phrase that takes away my meaning
A phrase that kills my personality like a lion killing its prey
Kills my interests, passion, and values
A simple phrase that reminds me

I am a woman.

Power

Michael Grey

•~•~•

In shadows deep, where tyrants scheme,
A struggle rises, like a dream.

Against the grip of power's might,

Some people sit, while others fight.

With voices raised, in unity,

They challenge chains, seek to be free.
Injustice trembles, as hearts ignite,
The struggle against power, a relentless flight.

Through whispers sown in winds of change,
Resilience grows, it will not estrange.
In every heart, a flame ablaze,

Defying power, seeking brighter days.

The struggle weaves through history's thread,
Where dreams of justice have often bled.
Yet hope endures, an unwavering tower,
In the timeless fight against oppressive power.

Through the pain, where shadows fall,
Blood may stain, yet hear the call.

Together, a chorus, voices spun,

In unity, we are many, in the end, we are one.

•~•~•

There is not nearly enough time

Matthew Johnson

Not nearly enough time for me to experience all that I dream about
There are far too many places to visit
Concerts to see
Cities to live in
People to meet
Movies to watch
There are far too many adventures I wish to go on
At least within this lifetime

Some may say it is futile then
To continue exploring and expanding my world
Knowing that I will never be truly satisfied
It would be better to stay where I am
But I cannot stand the thought
Of not endlessly learning and growing
Through new experiences and revelations
I believe the desire to grow and explore is one of humanity's defining traits
We would be nothing without it

To give life meaning is to accept that it does not make sense
And build your own understanding of the universe around your experiences
Even though I cannot do all that I wish
I still try
Because it is in that desire that I find meaning and motivation

The age I used to wish I was

Sydney Wiggins

I sat next to my older cousin on the couch,

I gazed at her as her long dark hair flowed nearly to her waist,

I compared it to my frizzy mop that grew barely past my shoulders,

I began wishing away my youth,

From then on I would make comments such as, “I can’t wait until I turn sixteen,”

I’d admire the older girls at my dance studio and idolize my teenage relatives,

For they had beauty and maturity that I could not wait to possess,

“Life will be so much more fun when I am a teenager,”

My relatives would roll their eyes at these remarks and advise me to enjoy every second of my girlhood before it became just a bittersweet memory,

Before I could under
stand what they meant the barbie dolls in my hands transformed into makeup brushes and curling irons,

The sport I used to love was now a scale measuring my worth,

I gripped my thighs and lined my outer eyes for I grew to despise every piece of me,

But, my hair flowed neatly as my cousin’s once did,

So why did I feel incomplete?

In desperate efforts to fill the void I starve the little girl who only wished to be sixteen,

Why do I punish her?

For she would have watched me in awe simply because I am now the age I used to wish I was.

These students are from All Saints High School in Calgary, Alberta, and were in an ELA: Creative Writing and Publishing 15 class. As part of the curriculum, they were required to research publishing markets and submit their pieces to three of them. They were asked to choose a piece from their writer’s notebooks, workshop it with their peers, make revisions/edits and submit their best draft to the chosen publishing market. Throughout the semester, I also provided them with prompts for different genres and they free wrote. What they wished to submit was entirely their decision.

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