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The
Museletter
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What's Inside

- 2 Once upon a Time
- 2 New Representative
- 2 Wit & Wisdom
- 3 Why We Formed the Booker T. Washington Chapter
- 3 Chapter Activity
- 4 Words, Words, Words
- 5 NEHS Thespians Compete
- 5 The 82nd Annual Scholastic Convention
- 6 Jacket Patch Contest
- 6 2006 Scholarship Recipient
- 7 Creative Corner



From the Editor's Desk

And the Beat Goes On . . .

"What thoughts I have of you tonight, Walt Whitman . . ." is the opening line of a poem by Allen Ginsberg. I suppose I am thinking of Allen Ginsberg because an extraordinary thing happened that involved a "Beat" artist and a "Beat" poet. It was a reminder of the power and influence of the Beat Movement.

For nine weeks I had been after my students to write insightful, thought provoking, original essays, and got no place. I sometimes wonder who is more astounded; the students for not getting A's for regurgitating what they were told, or me for expecting higher level thinking.

Desperate times require desperate measures. For their mid-term exam I showed them *The Last Clean Shirt*, a movie produced by Alfred Leslie, a Beat artist, in cooperation with Frank O'Hara, a Beat poet. *The Last Clean Shirt* is a wonderfully artsy thirteen-minute, black and white movie. After viewing the movie, the directions to the class were simple: write about it.

At first the students sat bewildered. This was something for which they had no antecedent. Over the next two days they came to terms with the movie. Some watched it over and over again.

The reason I tell you this is that when the papers came in, they were the best those students had ever written; some were absolutely beautiful. The students were forced to think on their own, and they did it.

We, the members of the National English Honor Society, must find a way to tap into the creative intellect of our students. I charge all of you, before this school year is out, to have a literary night meeting for your chapter. Watch an artsy movie, read some Beat poetry aloud, have a guitar handy, leave an open microphone and hope for the best. Talk about Kerouac's *On the Road*, or Ferlinghetti's *A Coney Island of the Mind*. Try a little Gregory Corso, or Allen Ginsberg, and maybe, just maybe, think about Walt Whitman that night.

Robert Eliason
Editor

"Poetry is not an expression of the party line. It's that time of night, lying in bed, thinking what you really think, making the private world public, that's what the poet does." --Allen Ginsberg

Once upon a Time

May 12, 1738

Samuel Johnson's first significant work, "London," is published anonymously.

June 5, 1900

Stephen Crane (*The Red Badge of Courage*), 28, dies in a German sanitarium from tuberculosis complicated by malarial fever, which he contracted while covering the Spanish-American War in Cuba.

June 8, 1809

Thomas Paine (*Common Sense*), 72, dies in obscurity in New York City. Only six mourners follow his casket to the grave. His remains are eventually shipped to England where they are lost.

June 12, 1929

Anne Frank is born in Frankfurt-am-Main, Germany. She will receive her famous diary 13 years later as a birthday present.

July 4, 1855

Walt Whitman, 36, publishes *Leaves of Grass* at his own expense. The book does not sell.

July 8, 1822

Percy Bysshe Shelley ("Ozymandias"), 29, drowns in a boating accident and is cremated on the beach where his body washed ashore. Strangely, his heart will not burn, and his wife, Mary Shelley (*Frankenstein*) carries it with her for the rest of her life.

August 22, 1920

Sci-fi author Ray Bradbury (*Something Wicked This Way Comes*) is born in Waukegan, IL.

September 6, 1890

When the captain of the *Roi des Belges* succumbs to tropical fever on the Congo River, Joseph Conrad is made master of the ship. He will later draw upon the experience for *Heart of Darkness* and *An Outpost of Progress*.

New Representative

We extend a warm welcome to the newest member of the National Advisory Council, Dr. Janet Emmons. Dr. Emmons represents NEHS's Southwest Region.

Dr. Emmons has been an English educator in Conroe, Texas, for over thirty years. Currently she teaches English IV, English IV Honors, and Dual Enrollment English at The Woodlands High School. Dr. Emmons is also an adjunct instructor of English at Montgomery College, also in Conroe, Texas. She has always been active in high school and college English, constantly seeking new ways to benefit students.



Wit & Wisdom

Outside of a dog a book is man's best friend. Inside of a dog it's too dark to read. -- Groucho Marx

The book to read is not the one which thinks for you, but the one which makes you think. -- James McCosh

If we encounter a man of rare intellect, we should ask him what books he reads. -- Ralph Waldo Emerson

To read without reflecting is like eating without digesting.
-- Edmund Burke

The end of reading is not more books but more life. -- Holbrook Jackson

Why We Formed The Booker T. Washington Chapter

The 19th century activist, educator, and writer Booker T. Washington advocated a system of slow progress for freed slaves that involved education, assimilation, and patience. Washington was born a slave and died one of the most important leaders of post-Civil War America. Nearly one hundred years after his death in 1915, I teach the Creative Writing magnet at Booker T. Washington Magnet High School in Montgomery, Alabama. Our school is his namesake, and beyond that I advocate his view that patience, hard work, and realistic humility are keys to betterment, even in our current society where immediate personal gratification is offered so regularly.

When I applied to charter a National English Honor Society (NEHS) chapter at the insistence of one of my more diligent students, it made sense to name the chapter after Washington. Our school already offered National Art Honor Society for

artists, Quill and Scroll for journalism students, and other societies, but there was nothing available to our good writers.

Perhaps selfishly, I view writers and those interested in language as the pivotal figures in our culture. Modern digital technologies have allowed for more books and periodicals than ever to be published and distributed widely. Everything on the World Wide Web is written. Nearly every television show and movie has to have a written screenplay. Politicians and political groups have speech writers. However, so many people meet young writers and ask somewhat sarcastically, "How are you going to make a living with that?" Writers have books, the internet, the TV, the movies, and political speeches as the fruition of their work. As a writer myself, I know that payment comes less seldom than publication, but without writers our culture would crumble.

Creating a NEHS chapter at a magnet school that has an average of fifty students in the creative writing and journalism magnets, as well as adept students in other magnets, is another way to identify and encourage those students with strong abilities in the English language, including areas like law, another magnet at our school. Beyond the high school setting, our society needs people who can read effectively, comprehend what they read, and respond with clear and effective communication. Democracy depends on it. Booker T. Washington understood that with regard to freed slaves. I see the need for it still today in our media-heavy culture. Having this added dimension in our school is necessary and overdue.

Foster Dickson
Booker T. Washington Chapter
Booker T. Washington Magnet School
Montgomery, Alabama

Chapter Activity

Terri Cox, the Barbara Curry Chapter advisor, writes to us from Friona High School, in Friona, Texas:

Friona is a small town in the Texas Panhandle about 60 miles from any kind of movie theater that showed the new *Pride and Prejudice*. After our initial chapter meeting, we gathered our members in the school auditorium, used white fabric stretched across the drama department's set pieces for a big screen, hooked into the sound system, and had a morning at the movies watching the film.

Our project plans will extend into the summer because this year is our town's centennial, and--at various times all summer long--we will be helping with oral history, storytelling, and reading projects at the library.



Words, Words, Words

Words from Afar: Arabic

This column highlights loanwords originating from a specific foreign language.

Arabic belongs to the *Semitic* branch of the *Afro-Asiatic language family*. It is closely related to *Hebrew* and is spoken by more than 200 million people worldwide. Quite a few Arabic words have entered the English language after first being borrowed by Spanish, perhaps due to Spain's close proximity to North Africa (where Arabic is a prominent language). The following common "English" words are borrowed from Arabic:

☞ admiral

From *amir-al-bahr* ("commander of the sea"). First appeared in English circa 1205.

☞ algebra

From *al-jabr* ("the reduction"). The earliest known English version, *algeber*, appeared in 1551.

☞ cotton

From *qutun* ("cotton"). The earliest known English version, *coton*, appeared circa 1400.

☞ magazine

From *makhazin* ("storehouses"). The earliest known English version, *magosine*, appeared in 1583.

☞ mattress

From *al-matrah* ("the cushion"). The earliest known English version, *materasz*, appeared circa 1300.

☞ sherbet

From *sharbah* ("drink"). The earliest known English version, *zerbet*, appeared in 1603.

☞ soda

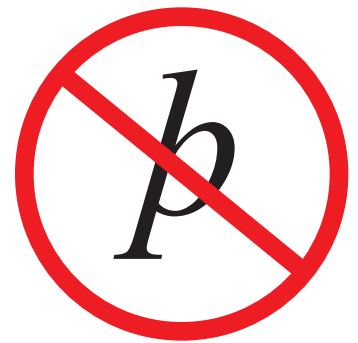
From *suwwad* ("saltwort"). First appeared in English in 1558.

The Bottom Line

This column discusses miscellaneous, interesting and little-known facts about the English language.

Ye Olde Mistake

The article *ye* is the same as *the* in meaning, use and pronunciation. *The* was once spelled *þe*. However, early printers did not have the character *þ*, so they substituted it with *y*. Readers continued to pronounce *ye* as *the* until the 1800s, when it fell out of use. When it was revived in modern times--to denote antiquity--how to pronounce it was no longer common knowledge.



Record Holder

The word *set* has 464 definitions, more than any other word in the English language. *Run* comes in second place with 396.

The Missing Vowel

The phrase "A, E, I, O, U, and sometimes Y" does not cover all the vowels in English. *W* serves as a vowel in the word *cwm* (pronounced "koom"), an English word borrowed from Welsh. It means "valley."



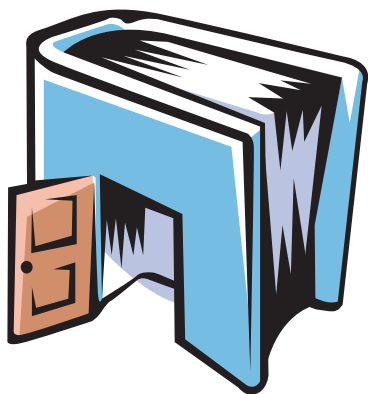
NEHS Thespians Compete

Each year, Florida drama students compete in district and state drama festivals. Schools compete in such categories as singing, acting, costume design and play writing. Each performance is judged based upon specific rubrics. Those who achieve high marks in district competition move on to the state festival.

This year, several members of the Athelbeorht Chapter participated in the District 4 Thespian Festival 2006. The festival had a military theme, with the

slogan "Support our Troupes, No Actor Left Behind." It was a great way for students to come together and practice their arts. Largo High's Troupe 911 did very well, with a number of overall superiors and one Critics Choice Award. Members of Troupe 911, Alisa Rehn and Dennis Eroh, will attend the Florida State Festival in April.

Alisa Rehn
Aethelbeorht Chapter
Largo High School
Largo, FL



"A publisher should always be on the receiving end. He should take an interest in almost any subject and remain anonymous, letting the author take center stage."

--Cass Canfield

The 82nd Annual Scholastic Convention

The Columbia Scholastic Press Association (CSPA) held its 82nd annual convention on March 15-17, 2006. Students and teachers involved in high school publications were invited to attend.

Over 300 sessions were categorized into classes for newspaper and yearbook staffers, advisors, magazine writers, photographers, and those wanting to learn about law, ethics and online media.

Attendees had the opportunity to have their publications critiqued by professionals. There was also a session called the Swap Shop, where students could swap ideas about their

publications. According to CSPA, "the value of the Swap Shop is in the discussion among student delegates at each table"

There were also hourly classes for advisors new to teaching journalism, experienced teachers with new responsibilities, and advisers who wanted new ideas. The courses were on layout and design basics, financing publications, grading, design, photography basics, staff motivation and press law.

Cassie Leap
Aethelbeorht Chapter
Largo High School
Largo, FL

NEHS Jacket Patch Contest

Inspired by an email from Jennifer Cantu, John Jay High School Chapter's faculty advisor, NEHS is conducting a jacket patch design contest. The contest is open to all student and faculty members.

The winning designer will receive a \$50.00 gift card for Amazon.com. The runner-up will receive \$15.00. Winners will be announced in the Fall, 2006 issue of *The Museletter*.

Submitted designs become the property of NEHS and will be judged on affordability, originality and how well they represent the Society. Decision of the judges is final. In the

event that no designs are accepted, the contest will run again in 2007.

Send all entries to:

Robert G. Eliason
Largo High School
410 Missouri Avenue
Largo, FL 33770

This is your opportunity to leave a lasting mark on NEHS. Get involved, let the creative spirit loose, and design a jacket patch that will exemplify the Society.

Contest Rules

- ▶ Only one entry per person or team is allowed.
- ▶ Teams may not have more than three members.
- ▶ Entries must be received by June 9, 2006.
- ▶ In the case of duplicate designs, only the first submitted entry will be considered.
- ▶ All entries must be submitted through a faculty advisor.
- ▶ All entries must be in color.
- ▶ Each entry must include an explanation of its design features (i.e. colors, shapes, symbols, etc.).

2006 Scholarship Recipient

NEHS extends a hearty congratulations to Emily Chambers for being the 2006 recipient of the \$1,000 Sigma Tau Delta Scholarship. She is the first NEHS member to receive that distinction.

Emily's dedication to academic excellence is readily apparent in her outstanding grades and consistent placement on her school's honor rolls. It was also a key factor in the creation of the William Faulkner Chapter at James W. Robinson Secondary School (Fairfax, Virginia).

Eager to form a club for literature

enthusiasts, Emily and some friends took it upon themselves to perform much of the research, coordination, and planning necessary to establish a NEHS chapter. Emily is the William Faulkner Chapter's first president. She will attend Grove City College, in Grove City, Pennsylvania, this fall.

Emily's accomplishments exemplify the true spirit of NEHS and are a great reflection upon her self, chapter, school, and our Society.

All college-bound members are encouraged to apply for an NEHS scholarship. The process is easy to complete. For more information about the scholarships visit www.nehs.us/scholarships.shtml. To see an example of a winning essay, go to www.nehs.us/pdf/scholarships/chambers_essay.pdf.



Creative Corner

Changing Season

It is a beautiful, sunny morning. A gentle breeze blows from the north; flowers bud with the onset of spring. Mary, who is two months with child, walks towards the Necareⁱ Clinic. She has an appointment with Dr. Mors.ⁱⁱ

Every parent wants what's best for their child. They want their child to grow up, live a happy life, and become successful, but what Mary doesn't know is that her child, once an adult, will develop a cure for cancer.

Thousands of lives will be saved from this cure. The cure will be available all around the globe to whoever needs it, regardless of finances. Cancer will no longer end life prematurely.

At the age of eight months, the child will take its first step, one of many.

Six months later, the child will say its first word, "Mama." To the child, Mary is no longer Mary; she's "Mama."

When reaching five, the child will start its first day of school. It will experience separation anxiety, as do all

children when they are first separated from their mothers. The child will wait anxiously, arm propping up its head as it looks out the classroom window, sitting, waiting.

The child will have its first sleep-over birthday party at the age of eight. For the first time in its life, the child is a "normal" kid with "normal" friends, eating freshly-baked chocolate chip cookies that Mama made.

At thirteen, the adolescent will experience changes in its life like the child has never felt before. It will develop an interest in the opposite sex, but unlike many children, the child will not rebel against its mother during this time.

At the age of fifteen, the child will receive its learner's permit, and Mary will teach her child to drive. "Place your foot on the brake; shift the car into reverse. Slowly ease the car into drive, and gently apply your foot to the accelerator," Mary will tell her child.

At the age of sixteen, the child will pass its driver's

test and receive its license. That night, instead of taking the car out for a drive, the child will spend time with its mom to whom it owes its knowledge of driving.

Seventeen years come and go; the child will receive its acceptance letter from a prestigious college. Mama has never been so proud of her baby.

Eighteen will roll around, and the child will go off to college but not without many tears. It will start a new chapter of its own for the first time in its life.

At the age of twenty, the child's life will, in an instant, change forever; the child's mother will be diagnosed with cancer and given only ten years to live.

The child will turn twenty-three, and Mary is at her child's wedding. She watches as her child commits its life to another and walks down the aisle with that innocent smile it always had.

At the age of twenty-six, the child, all grown-up, will deliver a speech after winning the Noble Peace

Prize for finding a cure for cancer. The adult thanks its mom for the inspiration saying that, in a way, she has saved many lives.

The child will live ninety-three years. It will see its mom live until she is eighty-six, deceased from old age. At Mama's funeral, rain will fall upon the child's, reddened cheeks. It will raise a family with four children who will influence the world in their own ways.

...if the child had only had a chance to live.

The sky turns dark and gray as Mary walks out of the Necare Clinic. The rain begins to fall and streak down her cold, pale cheeks. With each step, the flowers begin to wilt.

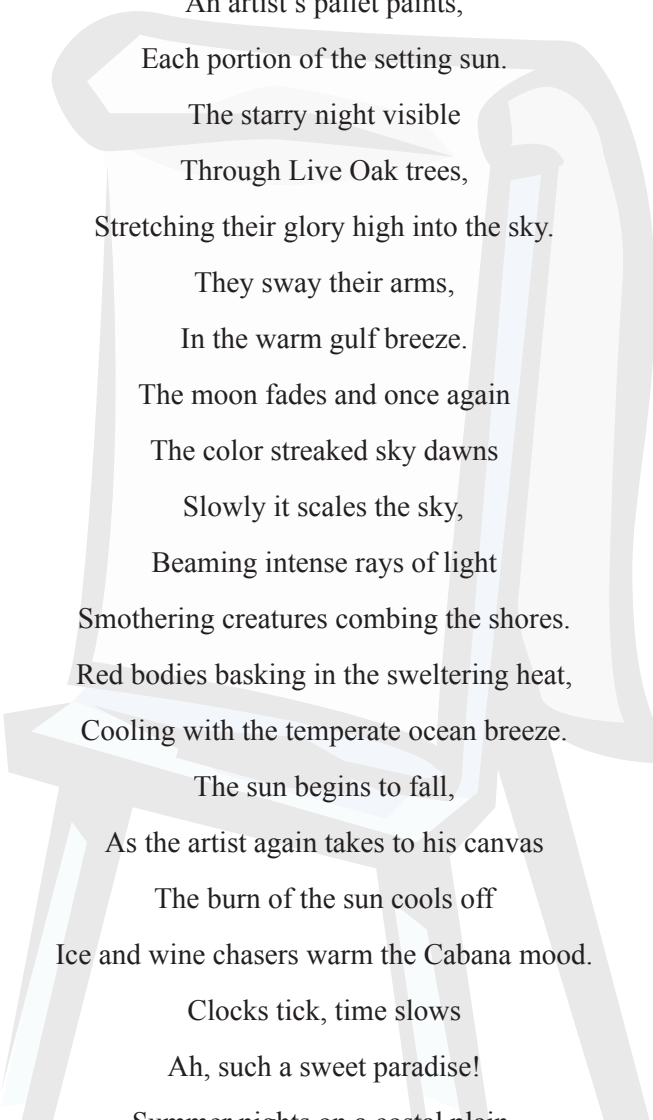
Paul Boley
Woodlands High School
English Honor Society Chapter
The Woodlands High School
The Woodlands, TX

i Necare – infinitive form of the verb *neco*, meaning *to kill* (in Latin)

ii Mors – nominative form of the noun *mors*, *mortis* meaning *death* (in Latin)

Creative Corner

Tropical Perfection



An artist's pallet paints,
Each portion of the setting sun.
The starry night visible
Through Live Oak trees,
Stretching their glory high into the sky.
They sway their arms,
In the warm gulf breeze.
The moon fades and once again
The color streaked sky dawns
Slowly it scales the sky,
Beaming intense rays of light
Smothering creatures combing the shores.
Red bodies basking in the sweltering heat,
Cooling with the temperate ocean breeze.
The sun begins to fall,
As the artist again takes to his canvas
The burn of the sun cools off
Ice and wine chasers warm the Cabana mood.
Clocks tick, time slows
Ah, such a sweet paradise!
Summer nights on a costal plain.

Danielle Wilson
Aethelbeorht Chapter
Largo High School
Largo, Florida

NEHS members are encouraged to submit their literary creations for publication. All submissions must be made through faculty advisors, then submitted via electronic format. By making submissions, you are giving consent to publish your work in The Museletter. Send submissions to nationaloffice@nehs.us.