This qualitative journey explores how literature informs and challenges my understanding of teaching and learning. Insights, questions, and conflicts are revealed through a series of essays in which my evolving teacher identity is illuminated through literature and imagination. Hopefully reading this portrayal of literature, which has been a source of educational insight and imagination for me, will be of use to other educators as they reflect on their own teaching.

The primary works of literature used to facilitate this journey are: *The Red Badge of Courage* (1895), *Les Miserables* (1862), and *American Idiot* (2004); *Light in August* (1932), *Seinfeld scripts* (1991-98), and *Frankenstein* (1818); and *The Odyssey, Night* (1960), and *The Souls of Black Folk* (1903). By delving beneath my exterior ‘teacher mask,’ a collage of images, anecdotes, reflections, aspirations, and fears is exposed.

As a resource for pre-service teachers or a reflective exercise for veteran teachers, this study aims to benefit educators by providing a new pathway through which to better understand their intrinsic identities as teachers. Each chapter concludes with “Recommendations for Reflection” that readers are encouraged to consider individually and/or collectively.

The spirit of daydreams allows me to integrate literature, autobiography, and imagination through inventive and inspired discourses with literary figures, using authentic quotations as content for original commentaries that further examine the intrinsic nature of teacher identity. My hope is that this journey will inspire other educators to further reflect on realities and possibilities of what it means to be a teacher.
Anecdotes and Afterthoughts: Literature as a Teacher’s Curriculum
Bold Visions in Educational Research
Volume 42

Series Editors:
Kenneth Tobin, The Graduate Center, City University of New York, USA
Carolyne Ali-Khan, College of Education & Human Services, University of North Florida, USA

Co-founding Editor:
Joe Kincheloe

Editorial Board:
Barry Down, School of Education, Murdoch University, Australia
Daniel L. Dinsmore, University of North Florida, USA
Gene Fellner, Lehman College, College of Staten Island, USA
L. Earle Reynbold, Qualitative Research Methods, George Mason University, USA
Stephen Ritchie, School of Education, Murdoch University, Australia

Scope:
Bold Visions in Educational Research is international in scope and includes books from two areas: teaching and learning to teach and research methods in education. Each area contains multi-authored handbooks of approximately 200,000 words and monographs (authored and edited collections) of approximately 130,000 words. All books are scholarly, written to engage specified readers and catalyze changes in policies and practices. Defining characteristics of books in the series are their explicit uses of theory and associated methodologies to address important problems. We invite books from across a theoretical and methodological spectrum from scholars employing quantitative, statistical, experimental, ethnographic, semiotic, hermeneutic, historical, ethnomethodological, phenomenological, case studies, action, cultural studies, content analysis, rhetorical, deconstructive, critical, literary, aesthetic and other research methods.

Books on teaching and learning to teach focus on any of the curriculum areas (e.g., literacy, science, mathematics, social science), in and out of school settings, and points along the age continuum (pre K to adult). The purpose of books on research methods in education is not to present generalized and abstract procedures but to show how research is undertaken, highlighting the particulars that pertain to a study. Each book brings to the foreground those details that must be considered at every step on the way to doing a good study. The goal is not to show how generalizable methods are but to present rich descriptions to show how research is enacted. The books focus on methodology, within a context of substantive results so that methods, theory, and the processes leading to empirical analyses and outcomes are juxtaposed. In this way method is not reified, but is explored within well-described contexts and the emergent research outcomes. Three illustrative examples of books are those that allow proponents of particular perspectives to interact and debate, comprehensive handbooks where leading scholars explore particular genres of inquiry in detail, and introductory texts to particular educational research methods/issues of interest to novice researchers.
Anecdotes and Afterthoughts: Literature as a Teacher’s Curriculum

Edward Podsiadlik III
University of Illinois at Chicago, USA
# TABLE OF CONTENTS

Preface                     vii  
Acknowledgments            xi  
Chapter 1: Prologue        1   
Chapter 2: Character As Doppelganger 7   
Chapter 3: Character As Conscience 27  
Chapter 4: Character As Nemesis 47   
Chapter 5: Discourse One   63   
Chapter 6: Dialogue As Meaning-Making 73    
Chapter 7: Dialogue As Irony 97   
Chapter 8: Dialogue As A Veil 113   
Chapter 9: Discourse Two   131   
Chapter 10: Journey As Metaphor 141   
Chapter 11: Night As Metaphor 163   
Chapter 12: Double-Consciousness As Metaphor 185   
Chapter 13: Discourse Three 205   
Chapter 14: Epilogue       215   
References                 219
This book’s journey is an exploration away from the *outer world* of teaching and into the *inner world* of spiritual, emotional, and oftentimes deeply personal realities, conflicts, and contradictions that lie beneath it. Integrating my life as an educator with excerpts from literature creates a variety of reflective entrypoints through which to explore the authentic intrinsic landscape that lies beneath the surface of teacher identity. It is a landscape embedded with a plethora of aspirations and fears, and vibrant with an assortment of values and contradictions.

This unique inquiry synthesizes literary analysis, autobiographical essay, and imagination as it transcends an educator’s exterior mask to explore the more authentic inner self beneath. Exploring the complexities and personal nature of educational practice in this way helps ascertain some of the intangible values, truths, and struggles that inspire, nourish, sustain, and sometimes even threaten the intangible heart of an educator. Hopefully reading this portrayal of literature, which has been a source of educational insight and imagination for me, will be of use to other educators as they reflect on their own teaching.

My intention is not to ascertain linear knowledge, but to explore the underlying values, truths, and struggles that characterize the inner consciousness of one’s teaching. This journey is not intended to categorize that which defines us as educators. Quite the opposite. It endeavors, instead, to unmask and meander through realities that are buried beneath externally-imposed constraints placed upon us. Each chapter transcends single dimensional perceptions of teaching and learning by constructing and reconstructing multiple realities that constitute the immeasurable possibilities of curriculum and instruction.

Integral to this exploration are works of literature that I have used as an urban public school teacher in the middle school classroom. As my students interact with the text, I too am simultaneously engaged at cognitive, emotional, and autobiographical levels. The primary literary works facilitating this journey are: *The Red Badge of Courage* (Stephen Crane, 1895), *Les Miserables* (Victor Hugo, 1862), and *American Idiot* (Billie Joe Armstrong, 2004); *Light in August* (William Faulkner, 1932), *Seinfeld* television scripts (1991-98), and *Frankenstein* (Mary Shelley, 1818); and *The Odyssey* (Homer), *Night* (Elie Wiesel, 1960), and *The Souls of Black Folk* (W.E.B. DuBois, 1903).

Excerpts from these texts facilitate this reflective and aesthetic journey into the interior landscapes of an educator. Relevant literary analyses are used to transcend external forms and functions taking readers into multi-dimensional landscapes that more clearly portray the personal and intrinsic nature of teaching and learning. When delving beneath the exterior ‘teacher mask,’ a collage of images, anecdotes, reflections, aspirations, and fears is exposed that sheds light on an inner consciousness that underlies curriculum and instruction. Many of the moral, pedagogical, and personal challenges and contradictions that inform and define who I am as an
educator become illuminated. It is my hope that a wide spectrum of educators, from novice teachers to veterans, will similarly benefit from this demonstration of literature as a means of meaningful reflection and illumination on the personal and professional aspects of teaching and learning.

My intention is that this book will inspire educators to further reflect upon the intrinsic realities of what it means to be a teacher. As a resource for pre-service teachers or as a reflective exercise for veteran teachers, this journey is designed to inspire educators by providing a new pathway from which to better understand their own innate and intrinsic identities as teachers. Each chapter concludes with a list of questions that readers are encouraged to reflect upon individually and/or collectively. These pages for reflection are modeled after the “Recommendations for Reflection” that William H. Schubert (1986) employs in *Curriculum: Perspective, Paradigm, and Possibility*. The purposes of these questions are to further connect chapter contents to the personal and professional lives of readers and to encourage further introspection along autobiographical, aesthetic, and imaginative pathways.

This book’s journey explores teacher identity unbound from deterministic restrictions of the physical world. Thus, I am freed to examine teaching and learning as a living embodiment of past lives, experiences and challenges as well as a harbinger of immeasurable future possibilities. It is in this spirit of creativity and imagination that each set of three chapters is followed by an imaginative discourse among three literary characters and/or authors from the preceding chapters and myself. Together, we further discuss issues and conflicts that arose within the chapters. The dialogue of the speakers is genuine in that it is taken directly from its original sources. The authentic words of the literature are re-imagined within the context of a conversation about realities, fears, aspirations, values, and conflicts that comprise an educator’s identity. It is this spirit of daydreams and imagination that extends the possibilities of this journey far beyond the limitations of space and time.

This synthesis of aesthetic, reflective, and imaginative components is worthy of inclusion in teacher and principal preparation programs. Pre-service and beginning teachers and administrators can deepen their understanding of teaching and learning by reflecting on the intrinsic realities that inform and define their identities as educators. Such reflection can help them better understand complexities and contradictions inherent in the field of education. School and district-wide professional development sessions would benefit from the cogitative and introspective nature of this kind of exploration. It could serve as a meaningful entryway for professionals to collectively and individually contemplate underlying tensions, dilemmas, and conflicts that quietly affect the quality and impact of their work.

My hope is that readers will be inspired by this personal journey. Perhaps some of the conflicts, tensions, and contradictions that I experienced will resonate with the lives (internal and external) of other educators. Perhaps some of the insights and epiphanies that I stumbled upon will speak to the experiences of others. I believe that the unique opportunities for introspection and reflection nurtured by this journey can serve to improve our understanding of curriculum and instruction.
I am hopeful that the liberating spirit of this book can help educators transcend the limitations and restrictions inherent in bureaucratic systems of teaching and learning. Each chapter is designed to increase the reader’s capacity to explore, describe, and grapple with inner tensions that shape teaching and learning and are shaped by the unique experiences, thoughts, values, and hopes of each educator. Integrating personal experiences with the universality of literature offers a host of possibilities for further exploration, contemplation, and meaning making. The potential for insights, epiphanies, and revelations - collective and personal - is vast. It is my hope that the ideas, thoughts, and suggestions inherent in this book will ultimately lead to a deeper understanding of ourselves and of each other as together we persevere on our lifelong journey of teaching and learning.
ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

I am grateful to my friend, mentor, and advisor, William H. Schubert, who inspired, encouraged and supported my journeys into literature as curriculum.

The quoted material used throughout this book has been kept to a minimum rather than offered to anthologize. I used portions of diverse literature and selected quotes to illustrate points and to enhance personal reflection. Use here will not infringe on or affect the market for the original or for subsequent permissions sought from the copyright holder.

I thank my students. Our journeys together have been – and continue to be – both challenging and inspiring.
CHAPTER 1

PROLOGUE

What informs our identities as teachers? What defines us as educators? What interior realities, fears, and aspirations lie beneath our extrinsic concerns of quantitative assessments and bureaucratic demands? How can the spirit of our intrinsic identity as teachers be accessed when it is so often buried beneath the immediate physical, mental, and emotional demands of our profession? Where is the elusive talisman that can help us educators transcend the finite and measureable external landscape of teaching and learning? How can we educators move past the deterministic landscape and return to the interior realities that inspire, nourish, sustain, and challenge the intangible heart of our lives as educators?

These questions capture the tensions I experience as a teacher somehow trapped between reality and possibility. This book journeys away from the outer world of teaching and penetrates the inner world of spiritual, emotional, and personal values. It is a journey into the landscape of a teacher’s heart and mind revealing the highly personal and oftentimes vulnerable nature of educational practice. Freed from the existential prison of impersonal measures and externally-imposed criteria, this journey meanders through the subjective realities of teacher identity. Using literature as its curriculum, each chapter constructs and reconstructs multiple realities that constitute and inspire the immeasurable possibilities intrinsically inherent to teaching and learning.

This book’s layout embodies both reflective and imaginative perspectives. Maxine Greene (1965) strongly advocates using these modes of exploration as a means to experience what she calls the “existential innerness which escapes all formulas and sermons and cannot be realized by any public Dream” (p. 162). I have also been influenced by George Willis’ and William H. Schubert’s (1991) work that relies upon the arts as a source of reflective inquiry into the understanding of curriculum and instruction. I have been further inspired by the scholarship of Eliot Eisner (2002) that further legitimizes the relationship between the intellectual and the aesthetic. These are some of the pertinent influences that have inspired my using literature as an aesthetic tool for reflective practice.

Each of the nine literary texts sustaining this reflective and aesthetic journey are ones that I have used as a middle school teacher. One of my primary classroom goals is for students to understand that they are invited (and encouraged) to meander through the worlds which the authors have created. Through discussions and projects, the students (and I) are challenged to consider layers of philosophical and moral meanings embedded in the texts and to ascertain the potential relevance to our
own lives. As their teacher, I am simultaneously engaged in introspection as I reflect on the same books that are currently provoking my students.

As I am teaching or reading literature, I continue learning from it as well. While my students interact with the text, so too am I engaged on multiple levels. This interaction between the literary and the personal serves to procure what Madeleine Grumet (1978) calls the means to “provide connective tissue between inner and outer experience” (p. 301). By consciously journeying into these intrinsic landscapes, I am endeavoring to bring to life the introspective capacity William Pinar (1978) describes as capable “to disclose more deeply one’s psychic and intellectual investment in educational institutions” (p. 323). Thus, this book aims to paint a ‘portraiture’ of the metacognitive methods, processes and conflicts that embed the intrinsic nature of an educator (Lawrence-Lightfoot & Hoffman Davis, 1997).

This curriculum, born out of my twenty years of classroom teaching, delves beneath one’s metaphorical ‘teacher mask’ by critically contemplating the images, anecdotes, reflections, aspirations, and fears that lie underneath. Each chapter centers on what for me have been transformational texts on personal and professional levels. By using reflection and imagination to integrate personal experiences with literary excerpts, each chapter evolves into a multi-dimensional landscape that more deeply represents and reflects the intrinsic thoughts, ideas, values, and fears that underlie one’s teaching and learning.

In their support for this kind of curriculum theorizing that relies on art, education, and autobiography, Willis and Schubert (1991) note that the outcome of such research is often “challenge, risk, and change” (p. 11). Similarly, this book illuminates many of the moral, pedagogical, and personal challenges and contradictions I intrinsically struggle with as an educator. Integrating literature as it is taught in the classroom with how the same text is simultaneously resonating within my mind and heart stirs up waves of personal and professional struggles, contradictions, and conflicts.

John Dewey (1943) wrote that the convergence of art with personal experience has the potential to evoke emotional ‘irritation’ and ‘transformation’ through which “the attitudes of the self are informed with meaning” allowing the self to “become aware of itself” (p. 487). What does this convergence look like? What could we learn from it? In what ways could a journey into these realms of intrinsic ‘irritation and transformation’ enlighten us as educators and contribute to the scholarship of curriculum and instruction? These are the kinds of questions this book unapologetically explores.

The first set of chapters channel Henry Fleming, Jean Valjean, and St. Jimmy, protagonists of The Red Badge of Courage (1895), Les Miserables (1862), and American Idiot (2004) respectively. My reflections of teaching these texts mingle with my personal musings of the words, images, and characters. When combined with autobiographical afterthoughts and aesthetic wonderings, an intrinsically personal, emotional, and psychological landscape emerges. The imaginative parallel between fictional protagonists and myself as educator brings to life what Jerome Bruner (2004) calls the ‘landscape of consciousness’ (p. 698). What Bruner refers
to as ‘autobiography as psychic geography’ (p. 703) emerges as a re-working of an inner reality which I propose defines and informs an educator’s. In this way, these chapters aim to fulfill Maxine Greene’s (1995) ambition of utilizing the meaning-making capacity of the arts as a means “for perspective, for perceiving alternative ways of transcending and of being in the world, for refusing the automatism that overwhelms choice” (p. 142).

The second triad of chapters focuses specifically on literary dialogue. The goal of these chapters is to further use autobiography and imaginative literature, as Janet Miller (1998) proposes, “to disrupt rather than to reinforce static versions of our ‘selves’ and our work as educators” (p. 151). Excerpts of dialogue from three William Faulkner novels I’ve used in the classroom become catalysts to explore the capacity of words to define, shape, or destroy our beliefs and values on real and surreal levels. To further transcend the literal use of language into an intangible realm of contradiction and incongruity, I use sequences of dialogue from diverse Seinfeld scripts. Finally, dialogue excerpts from Mary Shelley’s (1818) Frankenstein are used to penetrate the surface meaning of words to unveil often conflicting internal intentions or attitudes. Thus, literary dialogue is used to facilitate a journey from the real to the surreal, from the literal to the contradictory and incongruous, and from a surface view to an intrinsic vision. In this way, I frame a landscape reflective of the kinds of interior realities, fears, aspirations, and conflicts that lie within an educator’s heart, mind, and soul.

The last set of chapters focuses on literary metaphors that both inform and define a teacher’s identity. While my students are interacting with the conflicts, challenges and monsters that Odysseus faces in Homer’s Odyssey, I am simultaneously facing my own professional and personal fears and obstacles. As my students and I read Elie Wiesel’s (1960) Night, metaphorical words, symbols, gestures, and thoughts resonate deeply – albeit differently for my students than for myself. How a teacher experiences the memoir on a personal level cannot be entirely separated from how it is presented to students in a classroom setting. Similarly, as students struggle with the political, economic, and moral injustices described by W.E.B. DuBois (1903) in The Souls of Black Folk, as an educator and as a person one is challenged to make some sense of personal incidents wherein integrity has been attacked and intrinsic values undermined based upon externals including race, gender, ethnicity, and religion.

The unique process of introspection utilized throughout this book is designed to craft an understanding of how and why lessons are designed, delivered, and received in particular ways. This course of reflection models the use of aesthetic and autobiographical means in a way that merges the professional act of teaching with the personal identity of the educator. Consequently, a better understanding of the complexity of curriculum and instruction emerges. My broader hope is that this journey will inspire other educators to further reflect upon the intrinsic realities of what it means to be a teacher. Each chapter provides alternate pathways through which educators can better understand their own innate and intrinsic teacher identities. To this end, a collection of thought-provoking questions included after
each chapter are intended to provoke further introspection and discourse – both individually and collectively.

To clarify, this book is based primarily on works of literature in the most traditional sense. In fact, each chapter in this study is in itself a ‘review of literature.’ It is ironic that most reviews of literature in journal articles and other academic works do not actually contain literature in the literary sense of classic novels, poetry, and drama. The importance of using words, characters, images, and dialogue from literature to reflect on and to better ascertain a sense of teacher identity, purpose, struggles, and accomplishments is critical to each chapter of this exploration. But literary analysis and personal reflection are not the only components used in this search to ascertain the intrinsic elements and values that both define and inform one’s teacher’s identity. The intersection of literature and imagination plays a crucial role. Wolfgang Iser (1976) describes this interplay in this way:

The literary text activates our own faculties, enabling us to recreate the world it presents. The product of this creative activity is what we might call the virtual dimension of the text, which endows it with its reality. This virtual dimension is not the text itself, nor is it the imagination of the reader: it is the coming together of text and imagination. (p. 1222)

It is this spirit that I have included three chapters of original discourse that specifically draw upon imagination and creativity. Authentic words of literary characters and their authors are re-imagined within surreal conversations that further explore an educator’s intrinsic realities, fears, and aspirations. Using imaginative discourse as an additional mode of inquiry is inspired by Virginia Woolf’s (1929) *A Room of One’s Own*: “Yet it is in our idleness, in our dreams, that the submerged truth sometimes comes to the top” (p. 31). The daydream-like nature of these chapters evokes William Schubert’s (2009a) use of what he calls a ‘dreamland portal’:

Daydreams are not mere excursions of fancy; they are the seeds of revolutionary ideas and the courage to live such ideas. Daydreams are the license to strive for social justice - profound stimuli to the human spirit...Thus I advocate for daydreaming to be recognized as a viable epistemological base, at least sometimes. (p. 6)

It is this landscape of daydreams and imagination that extends the possibilities of this book’s journey far beyond limitations of space and time. While exploring teacher identity unbound from deterministic restrictions of science, one is freed to examine oneself as a living embodiment of past lives, experiences and challenges as well as a harbinger of immeasurable future possibilities. In this way, this book uses literature, autobiography, and imagination to capture a glimpse of an intrinsic identity that is at once past, present, and future; personal and public; and private and universal.

Interpreting and reinterpreting one’s perspectives and life experiences in order to better understand the intrinsic nature of teaching and learning demand reflection and introspection that transcends linear and deterministic boundaries of thought and
possibility. Jerome Bruner (*Life as Narrative*, 2004) demonstrates how pieces of literature can become ‘experimental autobiography’ (p. 709) to the extent in which others can use the ‘structuring experience’ (p. 708) of the text as a tool to ‘interpret and reinterpret’ their own lives, values, and choices. Inspired by these ideas, these chapters reflect and build upon my dual passion for teaching and learning and for literature and language. It is through the aesthetics of literature that each chapter of this book explores a deeper understanding of an educator’s work and world.

Exploring the intrinsic landscape of an educator’s identity through an aesthetic lens opens up worlds of thoughts, ideas, dreams, hopes, values, and memories. Memories, you ask? How can something as fragile, esoteric, and deeply personal as a memory be critical to the immediate demands of daily teaching and learning? Again, I propose that we turn to literature as a portal to better understand the transcendental and transformational nature that underlies these external functions. Consider, if you will, Virginia Woolf’s (*Orlando*, 1928) provocative evocation:

> Memory is the seamstress, and a capricious one at that. Memory runs her needle in and out, up and down, hither and thither. We know not what comes next, or what follows after. Thus, the most ordinary movement in the world, such as sitting down at a table and pulling the inkstand towards one, may agitate a thousand odd, disconnected fragments, now bright, now dim, hanging and bobbing and dipping and flaunting, like the underlinen of a family of fourteen on a line in a gale of wind. Instead of being a single, downright, bluff piece of work of which no man need feel ashamed, our commonest deeds are set about with a fluttering and flickering of wings, a rising and falling of lights. (pp. 78-79)

By transcending physical limitations of time and space in this way, immediacy is restored to the values, memories, traditions, and histories that make us who we are. We become exposed again to the intrinsic realities that inspire, nourish, sustain, inform, and define the educators we perhaps were meant to be. As our teacher identities evolve, are we being true to our values, to our vision, and to our authentic selves? I do not believe that the answers to these inquiries lie in quantitative data, assessment scores, or standardized curricular manuals. Instead, I propose that it is qualitative and aesthetic inquiry which can transform external thinking into more intrinsic ways of knowing, being, and becoming. I am reminded here of the eloquent articulation Elizabeth Vallance (1991) offers on this matter:

> Aesthetic inquiry offers a perspective on curriculum research that traditional research methods assiduously avoid. In every case it offers a perspective that at best complements the perceptions of the situation gleaned from other sources…. [and] assists educators in seeing more clearly what they are dealing with - seeing what they may really be reacting to and why. (p. 169)

When I began my journey of pursuing literature as a teacher’s curriculum, I was inspired, supported, and intrigued by the perspective put forth by George Willis and
A. J. Allen (1978) in which they articulated a distinction between the inward and outer world of an educator:

We live within an external environment that we are experiencing immediately, but we also live within an inward world in which we constitute meaning by ultimately experiencing experience. The objects, processes, and structures of the external world may or may not be regarded as fixed, but all phenomenological methods attempt to take seriously the individual’s own particular perceptions of them and his own process of moving from the surface level of experiencing to the deep level of experiencing experience. (pp. 34-35)

This in turn lead me to a deeper understanding of the wise fox at the conclusion of Antoine Saint-Exupery’s (1943) *The Little Prince*:

And now here is my secret, a very simple secret. It is only with the heart that one can see rightly; what is essential is invisible to the eye.’ ‘What is essential is invisible to the eye,’ the little prince repeated, so that he would be sure to remember (p. 21).

It is in this spirit that I have embraced using literature as my curriculum. I do not mean curriculum in the traditional sense of content and subject matter. Instead, I am referring to an intrinsic curriculum of self, of identity, and of the values, aspirations, and conflicts that comprise the inner authenticity of a teacher’s being. My hope is that you the reader will be similarly inspired on personal and professional levels.

Just as Virginia Woolf (1929) proposed that “Fiction here is likely to contain more truth than fact” (p. 4), literature has served me as a provocative and challenging means by which to better understand, appreciate, and further inspire my growth and development towards becoming the teacher I am meant to be. It is my honor to now share these experiences with others as we journey together towards a deeper understanding of ourselves and of each other. May the opportunities for insights, epiphanies, and revelations along the way enhance and deepen our personal and professional odysseys of teaching and learning.
CHAPTER 2

CHARACTER AS DOPPELGANGER

*The Red Badge of Courage, Stephen Crane*

Henry Fleming is my doppelganger. He is a young man determined to live by his personal values and ideals as he confronts a variety of conflicts and challenges. Like Henry, as an educator I have always tried not only to uphold my personal values and ideals, but also to infuse them into my instructional work. Although to some the fact that Henry Fleming is from the 19th Century might disqualify him as my doppelganger, I adhere to a broader definition of the concept as characterized by James Hillman (1996):

Someone walks the earth who is your twin, your alter ego, your shadow, another you, another likeness, who sometimes seems to be close by your side and is your other self. When you talk to yourself, scold yourself, stop yourself up, perhaps you are addressing your doppelganger, not out there like a twin in another city but within your own room. (pp. 179-180)

Of this challenge to explore one’s ‘own room,’ my thoughts turn to Virginia Woolf (1929) who remarked that only within one’s own room can an individual “illuminate your own soul with its profundities and its shallows, and its vanities and its generosities” (p. 90) as it is “in our idleness, in our dreams, that the submerged truth sometimes comes to the top” (p. 31). Whether I’m exploring *The Red Badge of Courage* (1895) with a class of eighth graders or reading it alone, I sense author Stephen Crane holding up a mirror to my identity – as an educator, an individual, and as a member of a larger humanity. In this way, the novel focuses less on external features and functions, and more as a magical looking-glass capable of transporting me (and my students) into alternate realms of existence, self-awareness, and, if we’re lucky, illumination.

FINDING THE PATH TO THE THRESHOLD OF TRANSFORMATION

When Henry skedaddles after a frightened squirrel into the depths of a forest, he enters into the deepest realms of nature that metaphorically represent the innermost terrain of his human nature, the very essence of his being. If my students and I are on a quest to ascertain a better understanding of our world, and ourselves there are more meaningful answers to be found on this intrinsic path than can be gleamed from external resources such as curriculum guides or test prep books. To this end, I am indebted to educator Leo Buscaglia (1982) who inspires me with his reflections on teaching:
If you want to find life you’ve got to look inside you…. Trips outside of you are worthless. They are what lead off into the forest where you are going to be lost. If you want answers for you, the answers are inside, not outside. (p. 70)

As an educator, I have come to articulate a personal vision of teaching and learning that values the growth and development of one’s inner consciousness, values, and spirit. By taking this journey with Henry - as Henry - my students and I reconstruct a sense of who we are as individuals, as teacher and students, and as members of the larger community of humanity. As the mind, identity, and spirit of Henry change and evolve throughout the text, Crane’s words, images, and metaphors linguistically weave together pieces of imagination and reality with the potential to transform the consciousness of the reader. These are the intrinsic transformations of mind and spirit that are of a nature to evoke and inspire illuminations and epiphanies.

Consider Crane’s images of nature. Collectively, they serve as a metaphorical Greek chorus and establish a dynamic pattern of consciousness that progresses as such: from metaphysical support (“he [the youth] lay down in the grass. The blades pressed tenderly against his cheeks” p. 16); to anger (“the branches, pushing against him, threatened to throw him over upon it [a corpse]” p. 46); to fear (“the youth stared at the land in front of him. Its foliage now seemed to veil powers and horrors” p. 99); to consternation (“Yellow flames leaped toward it [the troops] from many directions. The forest made a tremendous objection” p. 100); to grief (“There was much blood upon the grass blades” p. 122); to condemnation (“As he marched along the little branch-hung roadway among his prattling companions a vision of cruelty brooded over him. It clung near him always and darkened his views of his deeds” p. 126).

By metaphorically portraying nature as an emotional compass, Crane extends the narrative experience beyond static story telling as he blends realism (the military events Henry encounters) with naturalism (the organic presence and responsiveness of nature). As impediments that separate humanity from nature are eliminated, an uncommonly unified vision of a singular human nature is presented. The value of this holistic portrait is universal and timeless. Crane pulls us away the mechanical to the natural, from the immediate to the infinite. On this critical point, I am reminded of educator Barry Sanders (2009) who warns that too great a focus on human matters of the here and now, without consideration of the simultaneous nature of our inner humanity, will result in a metaphorical disappearance of the human being!

If classroom teaching and learning rely too heavily on scripted lesson plans, quantitative assessment data, and other mechanically derived resources and means, I fear that we might be facing a similar danger of creating a metaphorical disappearance of teachers and students! Thus, the urgency and immediacy of reclaiming our human nature and our potential for being and becoming is heightened. Using literature as our curriculum (as Crane demonstrates with his use of nature as a major character) reminds us of the transcendental difference between a human specimen and a human being; and between human physiology and human nature. Sanders specifically cites
several authors whose works preserve the finite consciousness of our humanness as it is enveloped within the infinite consciousness of our larger humanity:

Henry James and Henry David Thoreau both use human being with great frequency. Twain uses human being in almost every one of his books and short stories. I count some sixty occurrences in Ralph Waldo Emerson’s essays of the word human being, which makes absolute sense, for that’s precisely his main subject – the sentient, spiritual, and vibrant human being. (p. 242)

The images and values embedded in The Red Badge of Courage (1895) defy the absolute nature of tangible facts and the limitations of mechanical initiatives such as scripted lesson plans and skills-based instruction and assessment. Instead, the text serves as a meaningful meditation on the intrinsic nature of one’s values, beliefs, and authentic identity. For educators (and all human beings), the text has the potential to forge a unique pedagogical path toward self-enlightenment. Henry’s intrinsic experience (and ours) begins when Henry deserts the regimented path prescribed by the army commandos, and we, I suggest, turn away from a similarly prescribed path dictated by curriculum commanders:

The youth went again into the deep thickets. The brushed branches made a noise that drowned the sounds of cannon. He walked on, going from obscurity into promises of a greater obscurity. At length he reached a place where the high, arching boughs made a chapel. He softly pushed the green doors aside and entered. Pine needles were a gentle brown carpet. There was a religious half light. (p. 46)

At this moment, Henry has turned away from an imposed military protocol. He has retreated from what promised to be his first opportunity to demonstrate patriotism and valor in battle; his first chance to earn a red badge of honor and heroism. Or has he? He has not entered into the external forest wherein, Leo Buscaglia (1982) warned, a person could get lost. Instead, as Crane portrays this moment, Henry has turned away from cannon fire into a religious half light; away from deep thicket onto a gentle carpet of pine needles; and away from the battle field into the arching boughs of a chapel.

No longer a member of an army of soldiers carrying bundles as it heads toward the lips of a riverbank, he now is an individual spectator noticing an “army of ants” (p. 46) carrying bundles along the “lips of a corpse” (p. 46). His finite consciousness of binaries (right or wrong, good or bad, north [union] or south [confederate], dead or alive) is transformed to a new level of consciousness:

He was being looked at by a dead man who was seated with his back against a column like tree. The corpse was dressed in a uniform that once had been blue, but now was faded to a melancholy shade of green. The eyes, staring at the youth, had changed to the dull hue to be seen on the side of a dead fish. (p. 46)
As a corpse surreally stares at Henry, Henry’s former mechanical reality (defined by only two possibilities - dead or alive) has suddenly been extended into a reality wherein dead and alive exist simultaneously.

Roland Barthes (1967) asserts that when literature is used as a reflective tool, it triggers an embodied self-feeling which in turn allows for more introspective and empathic reading and understanding. In Barthesian terms, the reader initially identifies with the role of the protagonist, then unconsciously adopts the lens of the creator (the author), and finally reconstructs an experience based on his or her own human relationships and cultural contexts. Barthes qualified this phenomenon as movement from identity to adoption.

Henry’s identity as soldier, indoctrinated with military protocol and patriotic dogma, now must adopt to a heightened sense that transcends one-dimensional dogma and rules. Initially, Henry is turned to stone: either he returns to a one-dimensional consciousness (dead or alive) or he adapts to this reality of two dimensions (dead and alive), and enters the final stage of embodiment Barthes’ reconstruction. A reconstructed reality would indicate that an episode of transformation and epiphany has occurred.

But as Henry and the corpse exchange this long look, it is Henry who shrieks and turns away; Crane emphatically tells us that Henry retreats. In Barthesian terms Henry has now retreated twice: first from his military (binary) identity and now from the two-dimensional reality that he refuses to adopt. Thus, Henry’s chance at what Barthes called reconstruction or epiphany is delayed.

As I read and teach this initial stage of Henry’s journey, I also reflect on the extent to which I am operating out of a Barthesian level of identity, wherein my instruction serves mostly to perpetuate surface identities of my students and myself. If my instruction is geared toward noticing the answers and behaviors I have been ‘trained’ or taught to look for (i.e. correct answers and appropriate behaviors), then, like Henry, I am blinding myself from seeing a much larger, more meaningful reality both in myself and in my students.

In this way, The Red Badge of Courage (1895) teaches me to ask questions that challenge dogmas, biases, and ideologies that threaten to block or restrain paths to higher levels of consciousness and humanity. As a teacher (and a person), how often, like Henry, do I respond to immediate external stimuli rather than using my journey as teacher to develop a deeper sense of possibility and understanding for my students and myself? Like Henry, my complacency is disrupted as more questions emerge: How often do I lead students on paths that (although not intentionally) perpetuate identities defined by curriculum guides, political agendas, and stereotypes (economic, racial, or ethnic in nature)? To what extent am I using rich texts to empower students to travel beyond surfaces and facades into deeper, more meaningful arenas of awareness, reflection, and thought? How willing am I to lead students, like Henry, into “deep thickets” and into a “religious half light” of individual and communal self-awareness? These questions prod and vex me much like the branches and brambles of deep thickets prickled Henry.
Crane (1895) metaphorically illustrates the dangers of remaining satisfied in the realm of blindly accepting pre-established, extrinsic identities and of being apathetic toward adopting new thoughts or reconstructing one’s way of thinking. Consider this passage wherein a confused and frightened Henry returns to his prescribed soldier identity so as to hide safely behind rules and procedures that do not require critical thinking or reflection:

As he ran with his comrades he strenuously tried to think, but all he knew was that if he fell down those coming behind would tread upon him. All his faculties seemed to be needed to guide him over and past obstructions. He felt carried along by a mob…. he instantly saw that it would be impossible for him to escape from the regiment. It inclosed him. And there were iron laws of tradition and law on four sides. He was in a moving box. (p. 20)

As soon as Henry is confronted with the threat of external conflict (“a sudden spattering of fire”), he loses his abilities to think independently (“he strenuously tried to think”) and to exercise free will (“he felt carried along by a mob”). Military protocol with its unwavering rules and restrictions on movement and thought made it “impossible for him to escape” to the point that he became enclosed behind iron bars of patriotic dogma and was trapped “in a moving box” of men to an unforgiving and merciless slaughter. While he is functioning here at Barthes’ base level of identity, he is furthest away from the higher levels of human existence, namely exercising free will and independent critical thought.

Regardless of the outcome of this military skirmish, Henry’s deeper humanity is spiritually and morally “dragged by the merciless government” further “out to be slaughtered.” It is not with tremendous pride that I acknowledge Henry during this episode as my doppelganger. This passage forces me to consider episodes (personal and professional) when my judgment, perception, or actions have been similarly taken over by dogma of one kind or another, be it patriotic, religious, ethnic, or economic in nature.

In this sense, I can now adopt the idea that Henry and I are metaphorically in the same “moving box.” As such, Henry as an entity is no longer real or imaginary; he is now real and imaginary. He is no longer past or present; he is now past and present. For me, the restrictions of space and time have been lifted and I can now consider questions of more intrinsic worth: When have my independent thinking and free will been so assailed that I succumbed to the bias of a larger external “authority”? When have I been enclosed by the rigidity of some tradition, law, or bureaucratic mandate and become (like Henry) thoughtlessly carried away? These are the branches and brambles of intrinsic questions that bombard my thoughts and lead me to reflect upon teaching and learning in new ways.

As teachers, to what extent are we perpetuating “iron laws of tradition”? To what extent is it impossible not to? I remember trying to guide my eighth grade social studies students to an understanding of the differences between fighting the American Civil War (1861-1865) for political reasons versus ideological ones that focused on
racial equality. I was surprised when the wave of student sentiment turned strongly against President Lincoln. By raising issues of political motivation and economic gain, I seemed to have opened a floodgate of what my students would call ‘trash talk.’ Was I tarnishing my student’s perception of a great American icon? Wasn’t this terribly unpatriotic of me to ignite a conversation in which a group of fourteen year olds were maligning the ‘Great Emancipator’? Although I understood my lesson rationale as well intentioned, these questions and fears I experienced forced me to quickly conclude this class session. Was I retreating from this discussion with a fear and confusion similar to what triggered Henry’s retreated? Oh dear.

With this in mind, to what degree is our instruction promoting free will and independent thinking? I remember teaching John Hersey’s (1946) Hiroshima in the months following the 9-11 attacks against the United States. With recent violent and heart-breaking images still fresh in our minds, the details of despair and destruction that Hersey described became even more poignant:

Of a hundred and fifty doctors in the city, sixty-five were already dead and most of the rest were wounded. Of 1, 654 nurses, 1,280 were dead or too badly hurt to work. In the biggest hospital, that of the Red Cross, only six doctors out of thirty were able to function, and only ten nurses out of more than two hundred. (pp. 33-34)

Was the American use of atomic weapons against the civilians of Hiroshima and Nagasaki an act of war? An act of retaliation? A crime against humanity? Although I have read Hiroshima with students for a number of years, this was the first time these specific questions surfaced. As my students and I read the atrocities that destroyed unsuspecting Japanese citizens and civilians, questions continued to burn in my mind and my conscience. I wondered if any of my students had a similar reaction. But I was afraid to ask. One passage at the end of Chapter Two, however, prompted my students to vocalize the kinds of questions I was asking myself:

She [Mrs. Kamai] was crouching on the ground with the body of her infant daughter in her arms. The baby had evidently been dead all day. Mrs. Kamai jumped up when she saw Mr. Tanimoto and said, “Would you try to my husband?” Mr. Tanimoto knew that her husband had been inducted into the Army just the day before…. He surmised that the barracks had been badly damaged by whatever it was that hit Hiroshima. He knew he hadn’t had a chance of finding Mrs. Kamai’s husband, even if he searched, but he wanted to humor her. “I’ll try,” he said.

“You’ve got to find him,” she said. “He loved our baby so much. I want him to see her once more.” (Hiroshima, 1946, pp. 54-55)

A serious boy, who always kept our class informed of what he learned from watching a variety of history documentaries on television, began to raise questions: Didn’t Hersey’s descriptions of chaos and mass human suffering sound like what
happened at Twin Towers in New York City? Aren’t both these situations examples of military attacks on non-military territories and against civilians? My initial reaction was a rush of excitement and pride! I was nurturing independent thinking! My students and I were analyzing the impact that political and military decisions have on innocent men, women, children, senior citizens, babies, and medical personnel while they were in their homes, schools, hospitals, and places of worship. Connections were being drawn to the atrocities of 9-11, to the real world!

As we moved into Chapter Three, wherein Hersey provides further explicit details of the aftermath of the atomic explosion, students were now reading the text with a different lens. The parallel between Hiroshima and the events of 9-11 (which had occurred only months earlier), gave Hersey’s text a poignant immediacy and relevance:

Thousands of people had no one to help them. Miss Sasaki was one of them. Abandoned and helpless, under the crude lean-to on the courtyard of the tin factory, beside the woman who had lost a breast and the man whose face was scarcely a face anymore, she suffered awfully that night from the pain in her broken leg. (Hiroshima, 1946, p. 64)

My teacher heart felt excitement and pride as I listened to students critically examining a text in light of current events. But my rising exhilaration was soon deflated. A student asked that if the 9-11 attack was regarded as a terrorist event, wouldn’t it follow that the American use of atomic weapons in 1945 against Japan also qualifies as a ‘terrorist attack’? I should have been proud when my students began making these sorts of meaningful connections between events past and present. I should have been proud when they began critically reflecting on the ethical implications of military policies and practices. I should have been proud when they were challenging contemporary political rhetoric. But I wasn’t. I was frightened.

And it got worse. The student with the passion for history documentaries then asked whether it was true that while the citizens of Hiroshima were suffering from nuclear fallout, Americans were celebrating back at home with victory parades. Another student then shared that he saw rallies on television showing people from foreign countries celebrating 9-11. At this point I feared that the tone of the discussion was replacing one set of “mob-like mentality” with another. I feared that I was unwittingly nurturing a perspective insensitive (and irresponsible) to the national grieving that was prevalent post 9-11. I feared I was facilitating a discussion that was disrespectful to victims of 9-11 and their families. I feared that when students would repeat some of the classroom comments out of context, the students (and my lesson) would be perceived as disloyal, unpatriotic, and even blasphemous. Like Henry during his first battle skirmish, these surges of fear within me quickly mingled with sharp pangs of regret:

He [Henry] ran like a blind man. Two or three times he fell down. Once he knocked his shoulder so heavily against a tree that he went headlong.
Since he had turned his back upon the fight his fears had been wondrously magnified…. He believed himself liable to be crushed. (p. 40)

Before this class session ended, I quickly decided to re-direct students to Abraham Lincoln’s (1863) *Gettysburg Address*. There would be no more discussion of *Hiroshima* or 9-11 during this class. Instead, I explained that in order to understand the complexity of these events and issues we needed to turn to *other* primary resources with historical validity. We spent the next ten minutes focusing *only* on Lincoln’s inspirational and patriotic words:

> Four score and seven years ago, our fathers brought forth on this continent a new nation conceived in Liberty…. this nation, under God, shall have a new birth of freedom – and that government of the people, by the people, for the people shall not perish from the earth. (*Gettysburg Address*, 1863)

I directed students to record their personal reflections to the prompt ‘How does the spirit of Lincoln’s words and sentiments remain alive in our nation today?’ No mention of Hiroshima or 9-11. Like Henry, I had retreated. When I read their journal responses, I saw that students indeed were re-focused away from criticism and debate toward more generic platitudes of idealized patriotism and liberty. One student ended his writing with the sentiment ‘I thank God for the United States.’ These responses reassured me (at the time) that my decision to retreat from the earlier discussion was fully justified. This was a reassurance, however, derived from fear, not principles. It paralleled the relief Henry felt after his retreat:

> This landscape gave him assurance…. He threw a pine cone at a jovial squirrel, and he ran with chattering fear. High in a treetop he stopped, and, poking his head cautiously from behind a branch, looked down with an air of trepidation. The youth felt triumphant at this exhibition. There was the law, he said. Nature had given him a sign. (pp. 44-45)

Crane portrayed Henry as a prisoner of a metaphorical mechanical contraption, a moving box that imprisoned him. As Henry’s doppelganger, what man-made contraptions were entrapping me? Did I lead a retreat away from critical analysis because my thinking was similarly imprisoned within a ‘moving box’ of patriotism that rebelled at thoughts or ideas that might undermine that idealized perception of patriotism? On the other hand, wasn’t my retreat, like the squirrel’s, perfectly natural and in synch with an innate understanding of all that is right, just, and natural?

Henry’s pride in his decision to retreat was soon shattered – as mine would be. In Henry’s case, it was announced that those who surrendered to the imprisonment of the “moving box” and kept fighting were the heroes of the battle. They were *heroes*. Henry was not:

> The youth cringed as if discovered in a crime. By heavens, they had won after all! The imbecile line had remained and become victors.... He, the enlightened
man who looks afar in the dark, had fled because of his superior perceptions and knowledge. He felt a great anger against his comrades. He knew it could be proved that they had been fools. (pp. 43-44)

Those in the “moving box” were the ones who refrained from independent and critical thinking and were blindly following orders. They were now to be awarded medals for valor, heroism, and bravery (for not surrendering the battlefield). But in order to achieve this, they needed to surrender the components of their humanity responsible for thinking, feeling, and reflecting. Consider the regimented march of the ‘moving box.’ When Henry is marching, is he moving forward or going nowhere? Yes. He is moving forward and he is going nowhere. Like Henry, I often choose to retreat in the sense that I do not want to move my students quantitatively forward, if that means leaving them stranded in a state of being qualitatively stagnant. Sometimes the only expression of free will left lies in the act of retreating from bureaucratic mechanisms or systemic regulations that restrain our humanity and deny our consciousness as “sentient, spiritual, and vibrant human beings.”

To help sort out these strands of thoughts, reflections, musings, I turn to an observation made by William Barrett (The Death of the Soul, 1987). He proposes that if free will succumbs to the will of political, economic, mechanical, or other externally imposed systems, human consciousness itself is at stake. He framed his argument around the notion that if we are not aware of these “mechanical moving boxes” which trap our spirit and attempt to control our personal liberties and values, we are in danger of losing the very freedoms that define our humanity:

The science of mechanics was no sooner founded than a widespread ideology of mechanism followed in its wake. Man is a machine, so the lament goes. The molecules in nature blindly run according to the inalterable mechanical laws of nature…. The human mind is a passive and helpless pawn pushed around. (p. xv)

Without this self-consciousness, human beings don’t even know if their actions are constrained or not. Without this authentic self-awareness, their freedom and free will become an illusion.

It is at this point that Henry and I (or Henry and we) stand at a threshold of epiphany (Barthes’ point of reconstruction). When Crane tells us that a dead man is staring at Henry or when Henry claims to be a prisoner inside a mechanical box, we can either choose whether these events are real or imaginary events (identity level), or we can embrace a reality that acknowledges these events as both real and imaginary (adoption level). Henry’s consciousness (and by extension ours) is on the edge of a transformation of understanding (Barthes’ reconstruction level). What has previously been understood as a singular reality (based on physical senses) is now beginning to be understood as a veil of reality – a veil masking a greater truth.
Initially, Henry longs to participate in battles, sieges, and conflicts that are “distinctly Homeric”; he desires to witness a noble “Greeklike struggle”; and he is determined to prove himself a man within episodes of glory steeped in “large pictures extravagant in color, lurid with breathless deeds.” Such are the values society has “taught” in terms of what it means to be a man, and to be a hero decorated with secular honor and prestige. Henry has been schooled in the stories and images of “heroic and praiseworthy men” (including Achilles, Odysseus, King Arthur, and General Washington) who have proven largely through military valor to be ‘great heroic men’ on a mythic scale.

While witnessing graphic episodes of warfare, however, Henry notices a “singular absence of heroic poses” and is shocked to witness soldiers standing “as men tied to stakes” as they faced oncoming enemies. My students and I have often commented at this point that the more men are engaged in battle, the more they lose their humanity while becoming “strange and ugly fiends jiggling heavy in the smoke;” that the soldiers actually “resembled animals tossed for a death struggle into a dark pit.” It is at this point that Crane sardonically remarks “they were become men.” Likewise, when battles resume, the soldiers are described as having “wolf-like temper”; running like “madmen”; and fighting like “tortured savages.” Again, Crane slyly remarks “And they were men.”

The military training, patriotic fervor, and blind allegiance to commands that Henry has been taught will help him achieve his ambitions of becoming a great hero and to earn the highest medal of esteem and respect that men can bestow (the red badge of courage) are simultaneously the same components that would usurp his humanity and obliterate his free will. Crane describes a battlefield whereupon military heroes become successful only when they are transformed into beasts. In order to accomplish the ‘heroic’ deeds of mythic proportion in the image of Achilles and Agamemnon, soldiers ironically sacrifice their humanity. Crane paradoxically proclaims that they are ‘men’ at the very moment that human compassion and free will are lost. Thus, those honored as the ‘greatest of men’ (i.e. war heroes) are those who have successfully denied their own humanity to become non-thinking animals, war machines, and madmen.

In this way, red badges and other medals of courage bestowed in the name of honor and glory are veils masking nightmarish behaviors and an absence of humane values. When Crane portrays Henry ‘heroically’ absorbed in battle, he lifts the veil of heroism and shows us images of inhumanity that lie beneath: profound clamor, splitting crashes, armies positioned upon each other madly, houndlike leaps, screaming and yelling like maniacs, men bandied like toys, dirtied faces with glowing eyes and grotesque exclamations. With these bleak images, Crane reveals a contamination of our humanity simmering just beneath a façade of patriotism and valor.
Henry’s emerging awareness of this marks an intuitive epiphany. Henry transcends the cultural veil of ‘hero’ and glimpses a stifled humanity suffering beneath externally imposed military badges of honor. Again, I see in Henry my spiritual doppelganger. As I read and re-read these turns of events in The Red Badge of Courage with my students or on my own, I can identify with this sort of intuitive awareness. After all, I ask myself, what lies beneath the veil of a “Teacher of the Year” recipient who has been selected based on the quantitative gains in assessment scores? What is gained and how much is sacrificed in order to achieve a Golden Apple award of public recognition (perhaps an instructor’s equivalent of a soldier’s red badge of courage)?

More carefully considering Henry’s observations and realizations as well as the development of his deepening consciousness provides my students and me a pathway through which we are enabled to further reflect upon what actually informs the meaning of our lives. To what extent are our values and identities (as teachers and as human beings) rooted in bias, dogma, or myth? To what degree are we (as well as our students) labeled and judged based upon externally imposed quantitative data? These questions are neither skills-driven nor standards-based. They do not neatly fit into a regimented sequence of segregated skills. Nevertheless, when crossing a threshold of illumination alongside Henry my doppelganger, these questions (along with the reflection and discussions they ignite) serve to nurture the kind of introspection and soul-searching capable of awakening the spirit of our innate humanity. For my students and me, this line of reflection and inquiry is more than test-preparation – it is life-preparation.

In this way, I have become increasingly aware of classroom teaching practices and experiences that are more in harmony with the ideals of the Lama Surya Das (2007). I am inspired by his articulation of the soul-searching potential inherent in authentic classroom discourse:

… questioning is a wisdom practice that leads directly to discovering for ourselves the wisdom, conviction, and inner certainty that lead to greater knowledge and understanding of the deepest issues and mysteries of life. (p. 5)

As my students and I examine the metaphoric nature of Henry’s character, we begin to explore the intrinsic depths of Henry’s identity and values as they appear often in shades of irony, oxymoron, and contradiction. ‘Henry as metaphor’ provides an image to explore as if Henry were an object about which to think, ponder, and discuss. These reflections and discussions transport my students and I into realms of ideas, questions, and conflicts concerning life’s larger purpose and meaning. Analysis of Henry as metaphor is not as an end in itself but acts instead as a catalyst of new meanings and alternate perspectives. Although metaphorical Henry does not reveal a truth, he does trigger more profound levels of reflection and thinking.

Does growing up mean adhering blindly to values and beliefs that we have been taught since childhood? How can we be respectful to family, religious, or national traditions while still explore our own independent thinking? To what extent can we achieve success in a capitalistic society while remaining true to deeper, spiritual
values? *The Red Badge of Courage* (1895) has inspired my students and me to reflect on these sorts of questions and to use them as topics for classroom projects and discourse. Whether it’s through informal student script-writing and performance; planned, formal debates; or candid discussions of related current events, critical reflections on Henry’s evolving character have impacted the scope and depth of ordinary skills-based assignments with a sense of the extraordinary.

Throughout the novel, Henry’s dreams of glory vacillate from “Greek-like struggles” to crimson blotches; from killing machines to “puppets under a magician’s hand”; and from “dragons coming with invincible strides” to “men tied at stakes.” This aesthetic blending of real and imaginative images constitutes a collection of symbols that transcend the restrictions of space and time and create a textual tapestry rich in extrinsic and intrinsic conflict and transformation. The dynamic nature of Henry’s character reveals a human being just as much in conflict with his external enemies as with his internal ones. Like us the readers, Henry is struggling and interacting within two landscapes: physical and psychological.

As Henry is battling an internal civil war between a veiled reality of what he has been taught versus the perceived reality of what he is actually experiencing, Crane describes him in various stages of being and becoming “a mental outcast”; a “bloodthirsty man”; a “fine fellow”; a “proverbial chicken”; a wise man; a criminal; a “slang phrase”; a “war devil”; a “knight”; “mule driver”; a “madman”; and “a man.” Out of this internal commotion rise a variety of critical existential questions that again echo what the Lama Surya Das (2007) call the soul-searching potential of educational questioning:

Who among us can say they really know themselves, without illusions, beyond the face in the mirror, their name-rank-and-serial-number role in the world, their personas, defense mechanisms, and self-deceptions? Do we distinguish between when we are being authentic and inauthentic? (p. 55)

Henry’s journey into nature is really a trek into Henry’s “human nature” which actually is an expedition into our human nature. As a human being and teacher, who am I? When (if ever) have I, like my doppelganger, crossed a metaphorical line from proverbial chicken to wise man? From slang phrase to fine fellow? From knight to devil? To what extent is my instruction authentic and meaningful? How can I, like Henry, illuminate the truths that lie beneath self-deceptions and public persona?

His [Henry’s] mind was undergoing a subtle change. It took moments for it to cast off its battleful ways and resume its accustomed course of thought. Gradually his brain emerged from the clogged clouds, and at last he was enabled to more closely comprehend himself and circumstance. (p. 125)

Just as it took large-scale physical violence to obliter Henry’s Cartesian thinking (is he *either* a hero or a coward, and is war *or* is religion the honorable choice), it took atrocities of ethical violence to disrupt my Cartesian thinking (instruction as *either* successful *or* unsuccessful, and student achievement as *either* substantial *or* stagnant). The ethical violence I am referring to consisted of a series of events,
policies, and procedures that relied upon racial profiling, financial impropriety, ethnic/racial elitism, and political patronage that were expected to continue to flourish under my brief tenure as an educational administrator. The ethical boundaries of right or wrong and legal or illegal were destroyed leaving me, like Henry, comprehending myself through “clogged clouds.”

An internal civil war raged between the veiled reality of what I had been taught were acceptable moral and ethical guidelines of educational leadership and practice versus the political, economic and racist realities of what I actually faced. The clouds of conflict thinned when I stepped away from asking what results I was expected to ‘produce’ and concentrated instead on asking what were the values and ideas were most worth implementing and defending. Instead of focusing on quantitative questions regarding how my effectiveness as an educator would be measured (similar to young Henry’s initial thinking), I began asking where my daily pursuits as an educator were taking me …and the students I was responsible for.

TRANSITIONING FROM PERSONAL EPIPHANY TO CLASSROOM PRACTICE

Reaching this critical moment affected me personally and professionally. At the moment of Henry’s illumination, Crane tells us “whatever he [Henry] had learned of himself was of no avail. He was an unknown quantity.” Like Henry, despite my college diplomas and state education certifications I, too, became an unknown quantity to myself – an explorer sifting through conflicts and contradictions in search of deeper meanings and intrinsic truths. I, like my doppelganger, “suddenly became a modest person.”

This modesty became for me a conductor of insight and illumination. My understanding of teaching and learning no longer meant delivering lectures, rote vocabulary lists, and test-tips. Instead, my students and I would now be embarking on journeys of discovering ideas, ideals, and values. This leap from delivery to discovery had a deep impact on my role as educator. Students and I would now use texts as a means to shape, transform, and challenge each other to see things in new ways. William Ayers (2004) called this a transformation into the “humanistic concept of teaching: the voyage is under way, and we are pilgrims, not tourists” (p. 2).

As tourists, students line up and are herded wherever an ‘expert-guide’ leads them. The herd becomes a quiet receptacle of the shepherd’s ‘expert wisdom.’ As a part of a herd, Henry came to understand that he and his fellow soldiers were being treated no better than “longheads, mule drivers, and jackasses.” When expected to follow orders without any independent critical thinking, Henry comments that “it makes a man feel like a damn’ kitten in a bag.” But what happens when the tourist questions the motives and expertise of his guide? It is only when Henry begins leading rather being lead and thinking instead of being told what to think that he discovers that the lieutenant himself was the lunkhead mule driver who was blindly following the orders of his superior (and equally ‘lunkheaded’) officer.
The more Henry would blindly follow orders, the more likely he would be to achieve a red badge of courage, high military honors, medals, and stripes. However, to achieve these “honors”, he must forgo his humanity and enter the battlefield as a criminal; a “slang phrase”; a “war devil”; and a “madman.” Is Crane saying that those labeled “hero” (i.e. those with the greatest number of medals and ribbons) are likely to actually be the greatest lunkheads, mule drivers, and jackasses? Is the person who chooses to retreat, who elects to hold on to his humanity, free will, and critical thinking (and is thereby is labeled by the outside world a coward and a disgrace) in actuality the more heroic one because he had the bravery and courage to think for himself and to resist becoming a war devil and a madman? If so, how much of our externally generated labels and categories are mismatched to their true intrinsic nature?

With these questions challenging our preconceptions, values, priorities, Henry and I (and my students) “had now climbed a peak of wisdom from which he could perceive himself as a very wee thing.” By lifting the external veils of military medals and stripes, Henry realizes that true wisdom, courage, bravery, and heroism itself come from within. Regardless of rank, power, or prestige, we are all pilgrims searching for wisdom and courage. Similarly, if we lift the host of external honors and designations, state certificates, university degrees, and summative assessments, we see that teachers, like students, are part of a much larger group of pilgrims searching for wisdom and courage. I can now see myself now as a very wee thing. Whether I am standing in front of the classroom or not, my students and I are all pilgrims; we are all ‘wee little things’.

Clifford Mayes (2005) regards this revelation of modesty as crucial to authentic spiritual teaching. If, like Henry and his fellows, our students and we are as pilgrims on a journey, where are we headed? Why are we headed there? How will we know when we’ve arrived? Here Mayes’ proposal for what he calls a spiritual pedagogy becomes relevant to consider:

Thus it is imperative that the spiritual teacher enter into a relationship with the student in an ever deeper moral encounter…a process that illuminates subject matter but ultimately transcends it as the teacher and student, through dialogical encounter, approach the light of the divine. In this sense, education is a form of prayer. (p. 50)

The more Henry’s veiled understanding of the world becomes illuminated, the more his surroundings become filled with “a religious half light” and “the trees began softly to sing a hymn of twilight.” Similarly, I discovered that the more teaching and learning can transcend external forces that are politically, economically, and socially imposed, the more a classroom is endowed with a similarly intrinsic “religious half light” and “a hymn of twilight.”

For example, I would begin by asking students (and myself) questions regarding Henry’s pursuit of military glory; then I would ask about Henry’s struggle to maintain his morality/code of ethics; and finally I would synthesize these issues
and begin to question how a military code of ethics and a religious code of ethics might co-exist without hypocrisy or compromise. This third level of questioning, inspired by Henry’s struggles, is the level that most stripped away external layers of rote thinking and brought the flow of ideas to a more intrinsic and personal place. As students and I searched for the right words to express ourselves, it was as if our dialogue became a hymn and the light of knowledge became a twilight of wisdom. Through our discourse we were no longer asserting our identities. We were finding them.

Scholar L. Thomas Hopkins (1954) described this phenomenon as a step toward self-realization. The intrinsic half-light I experience through classroom dialogue and reflection based on *The Red Badge of Courage* illuminates a path toward deeper meanings and insights. Instead of discussion that anticipates specific answers and responses, these discussions take dialogue into new directions. Like Henry, the students and I embark on a journey of self-questioning and self-discovery. In doing so, we become free to explore the personal and community values that underlie our words and actions.

These classroom experiences demonstrate how *imagination* illuminates our essence, consciousness, and deepest levels of being. When stripped of political, economic, and social limitations, ideas and concepts serve as linguistic and metaphoric signs with infinite qualitative possibilities and meanings. By using literature as our curriculum for living, my students and I experience what George Willis and Anthony J. Allen (1978) identify as a phenomenological attempt to move from a surface level of experiencing to a deeper level of experiencing experience. For Henry, the hymn of twilight is the sound of tranquility and truth emanating from within without interference of external noise. For my students and me, hymn of twilight is the sound of our inner voices as we attempt to ascertain values and beliefs that resonate with who we are. Reading *ourselves* in this way means putting aside extrinsic lenses through which we regularly are judged. Peter Smagorinsky (2001) succinctly describes the quality of reading I am trying to characterize:

> During a reading transaction, reader and text conjoin in an experimental space... in which cultural mediation takes place, including the act known as reading. I view this space not as a sealed area connecting two discrete entities but as a dynamic, permeable zone. (p. 141)

Examining Crane’s text in this way allows for more introspective and empathic reading and understanding. In Barthesian terms, the reader initially identifies with the role of the protagonist (identity); then unconsciously adopts the lens of the author (adoption); and finally reconstructs an experience based on his or her own human relationships and cultural contexts. Thus, Barthes’ *reconstruction* stage is achieved. A data-driven, competitive veil of reality is thereby transformed into a more prayerful authenticity. This level and calibre of teaching and learning, is embodied in what Clifford Mayes calls “soulful teaching”:
CHAPTER 2

Through the mirror of the subject matter, the teacher helps students see into their own hearts and thus find freedom from the psychological, social, and spiritual forces that have heretofore enslaved them… from the starting-point of subject matter into the depths of our own hearts, where the eternal lives. (p. 59)

Henry Fleming becomes the metaphor through which my students and I explore what James Hillman (1996) calls our invisible selves. Alongside Henry, we search beneath our various personae to ferret out deeper truths. Beneath our various masks (i.e. citizen, student, teacher, child, athlete, etc.) lie the values and morals that intrinsically define and inform our authentic selves:

And so it came to pass that as he trudged from the place of blood and wrath his soul changed. He came from hot plough-shares to prospects of clover prosperity, and it was as if hot plowshares were not. Scars faded as flowers. (Crane, p. 127)

When considering the sentence “Scars faded as flowers” my students and I embark on another transcendent voyage of thought and discovery. We explore scars and flowers not as qualities but as possibilities; not as general laws but as reasonable arguments; and not as symbols but as pieces of our consciousness (individual and collective). Embedded in these four words is a spiritual motif of death and resurrection. It reflects an intricate weaving of values, attitudes, and beliefs that aligns with timeless sacred mythologies and storytelling artifacts. The words also embody the challenges inherent to all heroic journeys – including our journeys as teachers.

The hurts and abuses we all suffer along life’s paths become our scars. Our scars define us on an external level. But our wounds, the source of the scars, need to be explored in order to free our spirit and mind from the prison of the scar. Henry has shown me a new meaning of William Shakespeare’s (1597) line: “He jests at scars that never felt the wound” (Romeo and Juliet). The challenges Henry faces in battle are the challenges we encounter as we engage in life. The Red Badge of Courage inspires me to reflect on the realities of my life that lie beneath external scars or masks. My students and I aren’t examining Henry Fleming - we are exploring ourselves. It is in this way that the teaching experience becomes transformative.

When Henry is bombarded with hype and hysteria generated during the Civil War era and is in pursuit of an externally imposed emblem of glory and honor (military rank and medals), he is transformed into a metaphorical beast on the battlefield. He surrenders to an externally imposed tale of heroism that ultimately de-humanizes him. Because he sacrifices his intrinsic sense of self, his humanity is metaphorically crucified.

Although transformative images of crucifixion and rebirth are seldom included in teaching manuals, my study of literature has shown me its relevance. Consider John Gray (2003) who advocates a Dionysian spirit to better enable humans to experience life’s cycles of cruelty and survival. Then consider Joseph Campbell (1991) who expounds on the motifs of life as life and life as death as being the two aspects
most critical to one’s quest to become the authentic person he or she are meant to be. These modes of thinking align with Henry’s transformative experience as he struggles with ascertaining his authentic identity and values.

In order to achieve externally bestowed honors, Henry must set aside his natural reflection, contemplation, and free will in order to act according to a base, thoughtless, and bestial spirit. He must metaphorically crucify his old self (a self that relied on dogma, state-sanctioned patriotism, and an externally imposed rank), in order to be resurrected as an individual thinking human being:

He had been an animal blistered and sweating in the heat and pain of war. He turned now with a lover’s thirst to images of tranquil skies, fresh meadows, cool brooks – an existence of soft and eternal peace. (pp. 127-8)

What happens when the intrinsic reality of a teacher and learner is crucified to externally generated ‘standards’ imposed from outside our humanity instead of being generated from within it? Consider education’s capacity to crucify prejudice and resurrect understanding; to crucify dogma and resurrect free will; and to crucify allegiances and resurrect free thought and logic. These are the educational standards that Henry’s journey inspires me to contemplate.

If our work as educators becomes exclusively skills-based and state-mandated, then what qualities of our humanity are crucified? If scientific data trumps value-driven instruction, what hope is there that a person’s authentic identity can be resurrected from what William Barrett (1987) calls the “death of the soul”? Barrett warns that the human mind and self are disappearing; that there is a gaping hole at the center of our being; and that technology and bureaucracy are usurping personal ethics and free will. Henry Fleming and we educators are engaged in a parallel civil war. Submissive Henry battles freethinking Henry. We educators tangle with a public curriculum that prizes skill-based passivity versus a humanistic curriculum devoted to a quest for more authentic truths that do not exist within external core learning objectives, but within us.

TOPICS FOR REFLECTION

1. As an educator, where do you stand in terms of infusing personal values and ideals into your instruction? Reflect on times when the school’s curriculum was at odds with your own values. As a professional, how can these dilemmas be addressed?

2. Rate these statements first as a human being, then as an educator.

   • External knowledge is valuable and effective in assessing student progress and teacher performance.
   • External knowledge is valuable in categorizing students into ability groups and projected job and/college tracks.
   • External knowledge is valuable in the development of personal and community values.
CHAPTER 2

How might educational systems and educators develop a greater harmony in terms of these pedagogical perspectives?

3. Characterize the social, political, and economic situations and attitudes surrounding your educational environment. To what extent is the educational system operating primarily out of the Barthesian level of identity, wherein reading and reflecting serve mainly to perpetuate surface identities that we have been taught to accept? Which areas of the curriculum allow educators to challenge such prevailing ideologies and prejudices? What risks and what benefits can be incurred from instruction that challenges externally imposed identities, expectations, and values?

4. Relate an experience that you’ve had in which a teaching episode (either inside or outside of a formal school setting) led participants on a path that imposed identities and beliefs as defined by curriculum guides, political agendas, or stereotypes (economic, racial, or ethnic in nature). Imagine ways in which that experience could be re-written in order to empower the participants to travel beyond externally imposed identities and into deeper, more meaningful arenas of awareness, reflection, and thought.

5. Try to recall experiences (as a teacher and as a student) in which you, like Henry Fleming, were in the “deep thickets” of deeper personal reflection and awareness. To what extent do you feel these events characterize meaningful educational experiences?

6. As a human being and an educator, what moments of personal and professional transformation or epiphany have you experienced? What were the circumstances and the outcomes? How have these kinds of experiences impacted you as a person and as a teacher?

7. As an instructor, to what extent are you perpetuating what Henry Fleming called the “iron laws of tradition and law”? What are some of the significant teaching moments you’ve experienced that promoted free will or a mob-like mentality? In what ways have these experiences influenced your role as educator?

8. Do you think it would be possible to re-focus curricula away from extrinsically quantitative, fact-based information and toward a more intrinsically personal, and qualitative perspective? What would be gained? What would be lost?

9. How much of our lives as teachers revolves around imposed societal values and how much revolves around our personal values and character? From which ‘reality’ (the externally imposed one or the internally derived one) does our reality find its sustenance?

10. Brainstorm additional ways texts such as The Red Badge of Courage can be used to analyze and construct a sense of who we are as individuals and as a community of teachers and learners.

11. Metaphorically speaking, what lies beneath the veil of a ‘Teacher of the Year’ whose students have scored the highest test scores in the district? What is gained and what is sacrificed in order to achieve a Golden Apple of public recognition (perhaps an instructor’s equivalent of the soldier’s red badge of courage)?
12. As a teacher (and a person), how much time is spent responding to immediate external stimuli and expectations rather than using one’s journey as teacher to develop a deeper sense of possibility and understanding of one’s self and one’s students?