

# Editorial

When I was twelve, I lived in a semi-rural community at the southern tip of New York City--too far from the center of things to join in organized summer recreation programs, too close to the center of things to enjoy unpolluted waters and open fields. I gave my summer days to the bounty of books I had borrowed in June, when the traveling bookmobile made its last visit of the school year. I gave my summer evenings to writing plays--murderous mysteries, most of them, set in aristocratic English households teeming with matrons and butlers and inscrutable sleuths. Scholarly analysis of my literary corpus would disclose heavy indebtedness, at this stage of my career, to Agatha Christie, A. Conan Doyle, and W. W. Jacobs.

The reading and writing of that twelfth summer were not new hobbies for me. My earliest memories are crowded with fragmentary but poignant images of preschool literacy--the colorful illustrations of Grimm and Andersen, the chalked alphabetical characters on the small slate board that folded down into one's very own desk, the thick pencils and wide-lined paper on the "tea-table" that now belongs to my daughter. More vividly memorable than any of these images is my mother, the first and most influential teacher of them all. Untrained as a teacher, she had mastered the pedagogical basics: She loved her pupil and delighted in the subject matter.

In the time and place of my growing up, formal instruction took place in a one-room schoolhouse, that one room divided at times by partitions. The four teachers responsible for the one-hundred students, K through 8, shared their duties with their students. As an eighth-grade student, I read and wrote for younger ones when I wasn't doing assigned work on a research team with my peers. The assignments were handwritten, as I remember, and adjusted always to our "individual needs." As peer tutors, my schoolmates and I read to one another, wrote for one another, and solved assigned problems, all together. One day, as my teacher dia-

grammed a complicated sentence for our group, I was reading a book not well concealed on my lap under the desk. The teacher, who witnessed my asocial behavior, made no embarrassing comment then and there. The next day, he dropped a new, black-and-white speckled composition book on my desk and said: "Those books you read in your lap--write about them in here." I did.

That was at another time; it might as well have been in another country. One-room nostalgia may have no obvious place in such an issue of **forum** as this one--devoted to **Writing Across the Curriculum** a fashionable contemporary slogan that points to the future. Yet I yielded to the temptation to reminisce about my personal past, from the distance that lends enchantment, by questions that came to mind as I edited and aligned the articles of this issue of **forum**. Most of these articles are pervaded by a common sense that is not new. That temporarily lost but recently recovered common sense boils down to this: Reading and writing are best taught by those who read and write in any subject--by those for whom literacy is at the center of students' learning, is the teacher's whole vocation.

We do not propose to re-invent the wheel as we urge our colleagues in all disciplines to share in this vocation; we merely remind ourselves and our colleagues of its uses, including some that may have been forgotten. To determine when or where we got side-tracked from our common calling--literacy--is of less interest, in 1981, than how to get back to **Everybody's Business** that should never have been the business of English teachers alone.

Daniel Fader's **English in Every Classroom** anticipated James Britton's **Writing Across the Curriculum**. Their idea is one whose time has come and gone and come again. Our challenge is to apply the common sense that the idea elicits from us all. In doing so we are free to mouth mere slogans or make real differences.

Patti Stock