Is the Sky Really Falling?

According to the National Education Association in early 2010, 300,000 teachers and other school personnel were expected to lose their jobs before the fall of 2010. It’s a budget issue. Academic programs, athletics, club activities, libraries, remedial programs are among the areas that will be affected.

In one New Jersey community of 37,000, the school board has identified 96 positions to be eliminated. Ten school librarians have been pink-slipped. Only the position of the high school librarian has been spared. Can volunteers fill the gap? The job is much more than checking in and out books. How will these people get students hooked on books? How can they answer teachers’ questions about titles related to what is being taught? Is there money for new titles? Who will evaluate what’s out there and order? Who has the answers?

What about the public library? In this same community, there is a main building and one branch. The staff and hours have been reduced, and very little money has been allocated by the town council. The State has cut funding drastically. Now the main building will be open shorter hours Tuesday through Sunday. The branch will be open only on Monday.

And this is a literate community! What are the implications for the rest of the country? How do publishers assess these developments?

Pique Their Interests

Freedom of choice is essential in developing a love of reading. As an adult, I enjoy visiting bookstores. I browse, looking at the covers and reading the blurbs. A title might grab my attention. Fly by Night by Frances Hardinge (HarperCollins, 2006) has this on its cover: “IMAGINE A WORLD IN WHICH ALL BOOKS HAVE BEEN BANNED!” How could I resist this book? The author has crafted a thrilling story, filled with deceptions and lots of action. Students have to browse—pick up books, sample them, and make their choices. Teachers and librarians can do book talks, guide students once they know these young peoples’ interests and abilities. But choosing one’s own reading matter is the ultimate goal.

I have always preferred teaching with a thematic approach. I broadly interpret a theme within a book, maybe a subplot, and let students choose a book, classic or modern, that develops that theme. Here are some examples for consideration.

Interesting People


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**Fantasy**


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**Families**


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**Sports**


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**Make Way for Laughter**


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**On School Time**


Draper, Sharon M. *Just Another Hero*. Atheneum, 2009.


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**Supernatural/Gothic**


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**Historical Fiction**


Search for a New Editor of *English Journal*

NCTE is seeking a new editor of *English Journal*. In July 2013, the term of the present editor, Ken Lindblom, will end. Interested persons should send a letter of application to be received **no later than August 15, 2011**. Letters should include the applicant’s vision for the journal and be accompanied by the applicant’s vita, one sample of published writing, and two letters specifying financial support from appropriate administrators at the applicant’s institution. Applicants are urged to explore with their administrators the feasibility of assuming the responsibilities of a journal editor. Do not send books, monographs, or other materials that cannot be easily copied for the search committee. Classroom teachers are both eligible and encouraged to apply. The applicant appointed by the NCTE Executive Committee in February 2012 will effect a transition, preparing for her or his first issue in September 2013. The appointment is for five years. Applications should be sent electronically to Kurt Austin, Publications Director, kaustin@ncte.org, or by mail to Kurt Austin, *English Journal* Editor Search Committee, NCTE, 1111 W. Kenyon Road, Urbana, IL 61801-1096.

Questions? Email kaustin@ncte.org or call 217-278-3619.