

**Title of Session:** Language Arts Forum

**Moderator:** Donna Hendry

**Title of File:** 20040818langarts

**Date:** August 18, 2004

Room: After School Online Room

**BJ:** Welcome to today's Language Arts Forum

**BJ:** Donna Hendry is our discussion leader

**BJ:** a reminder to use the Actions menu and detach your chat window

**BJ** . o O ( this will make it much easier to follow the dialogue )

**BJ:** we usually start all our discussions in Tapped In with brief introductions

**DonnaH:** (guess that means we're starting then \*chuckle\*)

**BJ:** I'm an art teacher in Pennsylvania

**JeffC:** I resize the chat and browser after detaching to look like this:

<http://snurl.com/tiledwindows>

**DavidWe** joined the room.

**DonnaH:** Donna Hendry, and I'm an educational consultant in CT.

**SandraS:** I teach literature in Alabama

**RachelMo:** Ed Tech student at San Diego State

**SusannahW:** I'm a graduate student, and soon to be substitute in TX.

**JohnFra:** Teach Lit in NY

**DavidWe:** I help teachers learn more about technology. I'm in New Jersey, near New York City

**JeffC:** Helpdesk here... 14 years in education from English and ESL to Ed Tech Specialist (also taught Computer Applications, Desktop Publishing).

**MarilynA** joined the room.

**BJ:** welcome, Marilyn. We're just doing introductions

**MarilynA:** Thank you, sorry I'm late, I got lost

**DonnaH:** I think that is everyone!

**DonnaH:** Tonight's topic...is summer reading \*grin\* what was everyone's favorite read this summer? (hopefully we read something we would share with our students...but we can share anything \*grin\*)

**DavidWe** smiles

**SusannahW:** "The Glorious Appearing"

**JohnFra:** "The Song of the Lark"

**DavidWe** . o O ( Dispatches from the Muckdog Gazette - by Bill Kauffman )

**DonnaH:** (gotta share authors as well, folks! and what are they about???)

**DonnaH:** Most of us have to have literature that either fits an era, or a genre to be able to use.

**JohnFra:** "...Lark" Willa Cather

**SandraS:** \_The First Part Last\_ Angela Johnson, \_33 Snowfish\_ Adam Rapp, \_Pool Boy\_ Michael Simms

**DonnaH:** unless of course, we're discussing adult books \*chuckle\*

**DavidWe** thanks Sandra for the underscores

**DonnaH:** \*chuckles\* gosh, I love being in a room of English teachers \*laugh\*

**SusannahW:** "...Appearing" Tim LeHaye and Jerry Jenkins - Christian novel about life during events of Revelation.

**SandraS:** I just finished 33 Snowfish and am kinda haunted by it

**DonnaH:** What's it about, Sandra?

**SandraS:** I read about it in English language Journal

**SandraS:** and the reviewer warned it was rough

**SandraS:** homeless kids

**DonnaH:** (Adam Rapp sounds familiar...what else has he written?)

**SandraS:** not sure, Donna

**SandraS:** this was my first book by him

**SusannahW:** Wow, sad I'm sure.

**SandraS:** very, but also uplifting

**SandraS:** the main character, who is a homeless boy abused sexually, and is racist, ends up with an older African American male as the only kind person

**DonnaH:** major learning curve there.

**SandraS:** it's a difficult story

**SandraS:** and I'm just wondering if I could ever teach it at any level

**SandraS:** beautifully written

**DonnaH:** Sometimes I think we should just teach a story because of that. I really hate having to get all into the whole politics of it.

**DonnaH:** (because it is beautifully written, etc)

**SandraS:** right, but if your student population has lots of social challenges, such literature can open wounds...lit. teachers occasionally end up like therapists...not such a bad thing, but difficult, and one has to be careful

**DonnaH:** exactly.

**DavidWe:** very interesting piece in the NY Times this summer (I think in July) about what people read for summer reading. The author remembered what she read, 30 years ago - and what kids read now - more social realism, more shocking to kids

**DonnaH:** we actually have a very high number of homeless children in our school system...

**DonnaH:** I've personally been living in a fantasy land this summer. I've had all the realism I could take this past year.

**UverC** joined the room.

**SandraS:** 33 Snowfish is meant for middle-to high school audience

**DavidWe** waves to Uver

**SandraS:** so what have you read, Donna? I like the sound of fantasy land....

**DonnaH:** sounds like it should probably be high school.

**UverC** waves hello to all

**SusannahW:** So it is like students are reading to learn how to deal with things in their lives and others, rather than trying to escape.

**SandraS:** boa noite, Uver

**DonnaH:** Read the Dark Materials trilogy, reread Harry Potter (the whole series to my husband's disgust \*laugh\*)...and lots of trashy romance novels.

**UverC:** Boa noite, Sandra

**SandraS:** I love the Dark Materials trilogy!

**DonnaH:** (boa noite? Portuguese?)

**SandraS:** but that's not really light, I don't think

**DonnaH:** I was so ripped at the ending though. it fit...was beautiful...but I HATED it...was in a bad mood for a week.

**SandraS:** yup, Portuguese

**DonnaH:** My own children have been reading a lot of classics though.

**DonnaH:** (but one is kinder, the other going into 3rd...so I don't know if that is useful to anyone here.)

**SandraS:** are you talking about children's lit. classics, Donna?

**DonnaH:** \*nods\*

**DonnaH:** my elder daughter read some Roald Dahl, E.B. White...and L.M, Montgomery this summer.

**DonnaH:** (plus a bunch of the magic treehouse books, and the Unicorns of Balinor)

**DonnaH:** that's been her summer \*chuckle\*

**DonnaH:** she likes to raid my school books.

**DonnaH:** (wonders why everyone suddenly became so quiet?)

**JohnFra:** "Song of the Lark" Takes place in the US at the beginning of the 20th century (written in 1915). It is about the growth of an artist: good art and music references for integrating arts. The daughter of Swedish immigrants takes risks to break away from a small town and becomes a famous opera star.

**DonnaH:** oh.oh.oh....what's her name??? its based on historical fact, isn't it?

**DonnaH:** (this sounds SO familiar.)

**JohnFra:** Somewhat.

**JohnFra:** The protagonist is fictional.

**JohnFra:** ...her name is Thea Kronburg

**DonnaH:** this is going to bug me now \*laugh\* I know, there was a major Scandinavian immigrant who became a famous famous opera singer...and her nick name was birdish (song bird, lark, something like that)

**DonnaH:** Could it be integrated into an immigration unit perhaps?

**JohnFra:** Olive Fremstad is the real singer on whom Cather based the singing career of the character.

**DonnaH:** (\*chuckles\* don't everyone speak at once! )

**DavidWe . o O ( Swedish Nightingale )**

**DonnaH:** (I'd kiss you if I weren't married, David. THANK YOU!!)

**DavidWe . o O ( Jenny Lind )**

**DavidWe . o O ( just looked it up )**

**DonnaH:** it would've driven me insane.

**DonnaH:** (see how formal we are here? \*chuckle\*)

**DavidWe:** You have children for that, Donna

**DonnaH:** exactly.

**DonnaH:** and it's the end of the summer...hence my complete and utter lack of any sort of propriety.

**SandraS:** John, are you teaching the book?

**DonnaH:** Does anyone else have something they'd like to share?

**JohnFra:** Immigrant not prominent.

**JohnFra:** I have not yet, but I would like to.

**DonnaH:** \*nods in answer to the question of immigration\*

**DonnaH:** Well, since this discussion is petering out \*grin\* I'll toss out a new idea to you all.

**JohnFra:** ...more about commitment, sacrifice, and detachment from family needed to reach for dream.

**SandraS** listens

**DavidWe** listens to John

**DonnaH:** I'm a Harry Potter fanatic...(not big news really) and a friend of mine introduced me to a website that creates "bots" or AI's.

**DonnaH:** It is a fairly simple thing to create your own bot...and its free.

**DonnaH:** They can get quite detailed.

**DonnaH:** the one my friend created was based on Severus Snape (granted, this one is for adults only...but the concept is there)

**BJ:** how would you use these bots in a language arts classroom, Donna?

**DonnaH:** (I'm getting there, BJ ...REALLY!!!)

**BJ . o O** ( I always wanted to use the bots in the old TI for that purpose )

**DonnaH:** In a character analysis...I think it could be used as an assignment to create a bot based on a character...

**SandraS:** ooh, that's a cool idea

**DonnaH:** and they would have to try to incorporate whatever made that character that character.

**DonnaH:** so like this Severus Snape is snarky, sarcastic, witty, intelligent...etc.

**BJ . o O** ( you could also create historic characters )

**DonnaH:** (also dirty minded, hence the adult rating...) but it's what brought the idea to mind.

**SandraS:** didn't you have an historic character, BJ? Molly Pitchers?

**DonnaH:** (if anyone wants to play with it...let me know, I'll share the url...)

**BJ** smiles and nods to Sandy...good memory!

**DavidWe . o O** ( also a rest stop on the NJ Turnpike )

**DonnaH:** (it's more based on the fan fiction version of Snape...)

**SandraS:** and one would need to know content to adequately program the bot

**DonnaH:** Exactly, Sandra.

**SandraS:** I'd love to see the URL, Donna

**DonnaH:** and, I've found certain key words trigger different responses...so you'd have to know enough to figure out the trigger words.

**DonnaH:** <http://www.personalityforge.com/botland/userviewer.php?UserID=17916>

**DonnaH:** (click on the "chat" in order to check it out)

**BJ:** do you know if this works with a variety of interfaces, Donna?

**DonnaH:** I love love love the idea...but that being said, since there are adult bots on here, I'm not sure how much I like the idea of using it in school...but really, the idea only came to me this afternoon...so I haven't researched if there are other sites

**DonnaH:** when my friend brought it up, we were in a large chat...and no one else had problems...but we'd all have to have java for the chat...so that might not mean much.

**SandraS:** there's a 20questions bot website...might work for vocabulary study

**DonnaH:** (you might want to check under artificial intelligence too...this site says it's an AI site)

**BJ . o O** ( homepage is <http://www.personalityforge.com/> )

**SandraS:** <http://www.botknowledge.com/20Qreview.html>

**DonnaH:** (any other ideas?) do we like this? is it workable? or too indepth/time consuming for realistic use?

**BJ:** you could connect with science and use the turing test

**BJ:** <http://encyclopedia.thefreedictionary.com/Turing%20test>

**SandraS:** bot seems somehow decontextualized on the personalityforge.com site

**SandraS:** if there were a way to incorporate it into a study of the text

**SandraS:** link to bot from website?

**DonnaH:** how do you mean decontextualized?

**DonnaH:** since students would create their own...that shouldn't be a problem.

**SandraS:** I mean, when I went to personality forge.com and saw the snape bot, just seemed like it was hanging out in cyberspace

**DonnaH:** as I said, at least in this instance, Snape is based on the fan fiction version.

**SandraS:** not attached to any context with the text

**DonnaH:** you spoke with it?

**SandraS:** not yet....

**DonnaH:** that's why. you need to type into it...

**DonnaH:** I think the basic algorithms are based on key words.

**DonnaH:** an example, use the word "potion" in a sentence, and see what he does.

**DonnaH:** (says)

**DonnaH:** if the word potion is present, you'll always get the same response.

**SandraS:** right, paterresponses

**DonnaH:** (there are 3 variables if you speak to him using "sir"...)

**SandraS:** I'm still programming bots on a couple of moos

**SandraS:** there are randomresponses, randomquestions, patternresponses...

**DonnaH:** With snape it was easy, I could tell...if something didn't make sense...she set him to say he didn't want to talk (which fits the personality, of course \*laugh\*)

**DonnaH:** So I guess my question is, how time consuming would it be to give students as an assignment?

**DonnaH:** (and I would assume this would require lab time.)

**DonnaH:** (wonders if everyone is playing with Snape.)

**DonnaH:** However, our time is just about up for this evening.

**BJ:** would the students write the scripting for the dialogue first?

**DonnaH:** I think that would be the smartest thing.

**BJ:** the learning curve for students probably isn't very steep...it's the teachers I would worry about

**SusannahW:** I am going to sign off now, but thank ya'll for sharing. Thank you Donna.

**BJ** waves goodnight to Susannah

**BJ:** Thanks, Donna. What is your topic for September?

**DonnaH:** Ah. that's what it was Student centered USEFUL Classroom decorating.

**DonnaH:** I'm off for the night, thanks everyone for coming!

**DavidWe:** Thanks, Donna