

# ITBE Newsletter

## Real Talk in Real Time: Helping Learners Navigate Unplanned Discourse

**Kate M Donley,**

*University of Illinois at Chicago*

Unplanned spoken discourse is a messy phenomenon, full of hemming and hawing, false starts, stops, and repetition. It is difficult for even the most advanced learners to listen to, let alone participate in. However, effective interaction with unplanned spoken discourse is necessary for all facets of learners' lives, from their jobs to academic seminars. Now, learners have a new incentive to master the complexities of spoken discourse – the next generation of the Test of English as a Foreign Language (TOEFL). As presented at the ITBE conference (Highland, 2005), the Internet Based TOEFL or iBT requires learners to comprehend listening texts that display many of the characteristics of

unplanned speech. This article explores how learners can exploit the ways native speakers create unplanned discourse. Raised awareness of native speakers' strategies enables learners both to hear them and use them, resulting in more confident participation and increased listening comprehension.

### Native Speakers and Learners Responding to Unplanned Speech

The Longman Grammar of Spoken and Written English characterizes the priorities of spoken discourse as “keep talking, limited planning ahead, and qualification of what has been said” (Biber, Johansson, Leech, Conrad, & Finegan, 1999, p. 1067). As a result of these priorities, native English speakers often use utterance launchers to get themselves started speaking (i.e., “well OK then...”), depend on hesitators while they are determining what to say (“umm, uh”), and repeat themselves unintentionally.

Many adult English learners, however, have a very different goal in unplanned discourse; they want to demonstrate competence and speak “good English.” To meet this goal, students in my intermediate listening and speaking classes report that they usually plan everything they are going to say during a conversation, depend on translating, and often use diction-

aries. Naturally, these labor-intensive strategies remove their attention from the discussion itself, which compromises their ability to listen actively and speak spontaneously. While they are planning and translating, the conversation flows to other topics, leaving them unable to contribute the turn they had painstakingly composed.

Learners often want to speak perfectly and specifically, which is a desire native speakers may restrict only to planned speeches. Ironically, a learner's well-intentioned use of complex vocabulary or grammar may create an impression that is overly formal or bookish. In contrast, native speakers, who do not feel the need to demonstrate competency with English, are typically vague, imprecise, and depend on simple vocabulary. As an example, the 12 most common lexical verbs used in native speakers' conversation are *say, get, go, know, think, see, make, come, take, want, give, and mean*, and they account for a staggering 45% of verbs used in conversation (Biber et al, 1999). This is something I always share with students when they complain that their spoken vocabulary is too simple!

*(Continued on page 6)*

### In This Issue

- 1,6-7 Real Talk
- 2 Submission Guidelines  
Board Roster
- 3 Message from President
- 4-5 SIG News  
Poetry Winners
- 9 2006 Awards
- 10-11 Convention Photos
- 12 Member Snapshot
- 13-14 News Bites
- 16 The Ticker  
Cultural Humor
- 17-22 Writing Contest Essay Winners
- 23 Membership Application  
Professional Planner

The newsletter is a publication of Illinois Teachers of English to Speakers of Other Languages•Bilingual Education, a non-profit professional organization, founded in 1970, which disseminates information, provides a forum, and serves as an advocate for students, educators and administrators in the field. Illinois TESOL•BE is an affiliate of TESOL, an international organization.

Membership in Illinois TESOL•BE is open to all interested individuals. To join, please use the form in this issue of the *Newsletter*; for further information about membership, call (312) 409-4770 or visit our web site at [www.itbe.org](http://www.itbe.org).

### Submission Information

Illinois TESOL•BE welcomes letters and contributions to the *Newsletter*. The *Newsletter* is published four times per year with the following copy deadlines: **July 15 • October 15 • January 15 • April 15**

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Citations and references should conform to APA guidelines. The editors reserve the right to modify any material selected for publication to fit the available space, or to improve on clarity and style. Authors will be consulted prior to publication if changes are deemed by the editors to be substantial.

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# Message From The President / Board News

Yasmin A. Ranney, Northeastern Illinois University and Triton College



Yasmin Ranney  
2005-2006 President

The warmth and beauty of spring brings renewed commitment to our endeavors on behalf of ITBE as we wrap up another successful year. For me, serving as president of ITBE has been a rewarding experience. For teachers, this is a frenzied time; writing exams, preparing students for tests, grading, closing the school year, or just gearing up for summer vacations. In the midst of the hustle, I hope we all take a few moments to smell the roses along the way.

We just concluded a successful and well attended 32nd Annual State Convention at the Holiday Inn in Naperville. Our theme, *A Circle of Service*, garnered us an attendance of approximately 400 attendees on each of the two days, Friday and Saturday, March 3 and 4, 2006. Altogether there were 70 presentations and 18 publishers' demonstrations. Plenary keynote addresses and breakout sessions were delivered by Dr. Elise Klein, President and founder of TAP (Teachers Against Prejudice) and Dr. David Mendelsohn, Professor of Applied Linguistics and ESL at York University, Toronto, Canada. Closing presentations were made by Dominic Pacyga, author and Professor, Columbia College, and Nathan Bierma, Professor of English at Calvin College, Michigan, and author of "On Language" column, *Chicago Tribune*.

In the Exhibits and Advertising area, 30 exhibitors demonstrated their products, utilizing a total of 60 tables at the Convention. We sold 6 ads and received cash and hospitality contributions and several door prizes from Cambridge University Press, Pro Lingua, Delta Systems, McGraw-Hill/ESL, and Ellis. Oxford University Press held a cocktail reception for attendees at the close of the events on Friday, March 3rd, in the Garden Lobby of the restaurant lounge. It was a great opportunity for networking and free associating with colleagues and friends. Several other items and a Holiday Inn Weekend were given away as door prizes.

In addition to the new location, a revised format for single day registration (Friday or Saturday ONLY) was offered. Attendees could register for both days or choose the 1-day option. The registration fee included a full buffet lunch and coffee breaks on both days. Early review of evaluations reveals that members liked the new location and found the quality of presentations, parking, food and amenities appealing. This year we had a team approach to convention planning and execution. Thank you to our ITBE convention team, comprised of Claudia Becker, Madonna Carr, Ana King, Laurie Martin, Marsha Santelli, Alan Seaman, Kasia Stadnik, and Paul Angelis. Together, we assisted in the various aspects of convention planning and coordination and brought to fruition a successful, well-attended event. Your efforts are

appreciated, your work tireless, your commitment and energy boundless, your passion for what you do remarkable. You are indeed the strength and backbone of this organization. Thank you also to Jack Shindler and staff of North Central College, Alan Seaman and staff of Wheaton College and all the many volunteers who helped make our convention a resounding success.

Our Professional Development Co-chairs, Jennifer Eick Magan and Claudia Becker, are busy planning our forthcoming Fall Workshop, scheduled for Saturday, October 7, 2006, at St. Xavier University. Mark your calendars! For more information, check out our website periodically for updated information at [www.itbe.org](http://www.itbe.org).

The ITBE Executive Board met on January 13, February 11, and April 8, 2006, and approved changes to ITBE's constitution and discussed changes to the by-laws. A vote of the ITBE membership is now needed to approve the changes. A slate of nominations has also been drawn up and members are being notified via mail and email to vote for the positions of Vice President and members-at-large. Please check our website at [www.itbe.org](http://www.itbe.org) for details, and watch your mail for your ballot, which will include both the election of those positions to the board as well as the vote on the constitution changes. Please vote on the changes and the nominations, and mail in your ballot as soon as you receive it.

This will be my last message and board report as president of ITBE. This year has gone by all too quickly. My work has barely begun; I will persevere and do my best to serve ITBE in my continuing capacity as past president next year, always remembering the needs of those hundreds of immigrants who come to this land to eke out a living—to fulfill simple dreams and hopes. Learning English is their passport to a better life. My colleague and current vice president, Kasia Stadnik, is the incoming president of ITBE for the 06-07 year. Good luck with all your endeavors and work on behalf of our organization, Kasia. Please join me as we welcome Kasia to another successful year of opportunities with ITBE.

As I conclude my year as president of ITBE, I extend my gratitude to all my colleagues at ITBE who have helped me with their thoughtfulness, suggestions, and hard work during a year that could best be described as a transition year for us, as we instituted many changes and were successful in achieving multiple goals such as moving our convention venue, updating our website, archiving materials for ease of access by board members and ITBE members, making changes to our constitution, and others too many to list. On behalf of our entire board, I pledge to continue to serve our membership with our best efforts in the years ahead.

Sincerely,  
Yasmin Ranney, President, 2005-2006

# SIG News

## Higher, Secondary & Adult

### Higher Ed SIG Chair

Arlene de la Paz-Kane, who teaches at Moraine Valley Community College, was elected at the ITBE Convention Higher Ed SIG (HESIG) meeting to serve as HESIG Chair for the 2006-2007 academic year. She is eager to develop plans for the HESIG and to represent the HESIG on the ITBE Executive Board. She welcomes input towards this end at [delapaz-kane@morainevalley.edu](mailto:delapaz-kane@morainevalley.edu).

### Higher Ed SIG Dinner

On April 2, a Higher Ed SIG dinner/discussion was held at Rique's Regional Mexican Restaurant in Chicago's Uptown. The discussion, led by Jane Curtis and Julie Howard, proved to be a fun and informative fiesta for eleven members from across the greater Chicago area. In addition to networking, members gained helpful insights into the "how to's" of presenting and publishing.

### Secondary Ed SIG

A Secondary SIG meeting was held on Friday, March 3, 2006, at the Annual Illinois TESOL/BE Convention. Pam Forbes and Vickie Green were elected as Co-chairs. Discussion followed as to how we could change the format of the ESL Student Writing Contest. This item was tabled until we meet again. The discussion also included a suggestion that a session be held at future workshops and/or the annual convention on opportunities for ELL students in regards to colleges and careers. The co-chairs will look into this and this will be discussed at the fall workshop. Let us know what you are doing. Send secondary information and news to Pam Forbes at [forbes@wowway.com](mailto:forbes@wowway.com) or to Vickie Green at [vickster\\_89@yahoo.com](mailto:vickster_89@yahoo.com).

### Adult SIG News

It was great to see so many familiar faces at the ITBE Convention in Naperville. I was very pleased that Lynn Kendall was elected SIG chair as she has been an active member and is very passionate about teaching ESL.

We had 8 members attend our SIG dinner discussion on Saturday, March 18, in Downers Grove. Those attending represented 6 different programs from all over Chicagoland. We were honored by the presence of Patricia de Hesus Lopez, ICCB Director for Adult Education & Family Literacy English as a Second Language/English Literacy Specialist. She patiently answered our many questions about funding and testing. This was my last official function as SIG chair. It has been my pleasure to get to know so many dedicated adult educators through the events I have organized in the past two years. I hope to continue to attend ITBE events as my schedule permits.

As you may have heard, I now work for the University of Illinois Extension in DuPage County. Every county in Illinois has an Extension office, which provides educational, research-based programs in Spanish and English on topics everyone needs, such as money management, nutrition, parenting, finding a job, gardening, and buying a home. I encourage you to contact your local Extension office and invite them to speak to your class. (Ask them to bring materials at a low reading level, if needed.) You can find the nearest office by checking our website, [www.urbanext.uiuc.edu](http://www.urbanext.uiuc.edu), which is extremely popular with educators, averaging about 5,000,000 hits a month. Our Spanish website, [www.urbanext.uiuc.edu/espanol](http://www.urbanext.uiuc.edu/espanol), is among the top ten in the nation. It also has many science activities for children. I hope you find it useful. I enjoy working for U of I Extension because we help thousands of people improve their lives by giving them the information they need to make good decisions.

### Meet the New Adult SIG Chair

A native Texan, Lynn Kendall has been a Midwesterner for over 30 years. She holds a Masters degree in Special Education from the University of Texas, Austin, and is currently close to completion of a second one in Linguistics with an ESL concentration from NEIU. She is also a professional choral singer and an ardent supporter of human rights at all levels.

# SIG News

## Elementary Meeting & Poetry Winners

The annual meeting of Elementary SIG at ITBE's Annual Convention was attended by 26 members. The following is a summary of the minutes of the meeting.

**Election of Chairpersons:** Margaret Gigous and Ruth Becker were unanimously elected as co-chairs.

**Annual "Check-up":** The poetry contest was discussed. More people expressed interest in participating in the contest next year, and there will be four categories of poetry in the contest: Diamante, Acrostic, Haiku, and Open/Freestyle Poems. The prizes will include a certificate and a possible reduction from this year's \$50 so as to accommodate more winners. The sponsors will continue to get the free membership and letter of referral sent to their princi-

pals. Margaret also informed the attendees that there is a monthly "shout-out" that is sent electronically to keep members updated on up-coming events.

**Brainstorming Session:** Discussion centered on ACCESS and reactions to the test. The group decided to send feedback to the WIDA Consortium to express their opinions and concerns.

**Raffle Winners:** Sarah Tibbot received a free one-year membership for ITBE. Traci Welcker and Nancy Rohn received raffle prizes.

Please send your questions or comments about Elementary SIG to [elemsig@itbe.org](mailto:elemsig@itbe.org).

### Poetry Winners

#### "Mexico Living"

by Dayana Gonzalez

Mexico is my land.  
Everyone there loves this country.  
X-ray my heart and there stands Mexico.  
I love Mexico even if it's poor.  
Come here and have some fun.  
Occupy yourself here by eating, dancing, or playing.

Living in Mexico makes you happy.  
In Mexico you have fun. Everyone should.  
Very happy to live there.  
If you went, a dream would come true.  
No one are mad, none are sad.  
Giving love is the best.

#### "Mexico and United States"

by Manuel Hernandez

Mexico  
peaceful, beautiful,  
working, relaxing, living  
towns, farms, cities, buildings  
working occupied, singing  
free, busy  
U.S.

#### "Two Countries for Me"

by Andrea Salazar

One boundary I see.  
Two countries for me.

Three angels beaming.  
Four saints awaiting.

Five stockings put out.  
Six shoes left about.

Seven chickens are bit.  
Eight candles are lit.

Nine rhythms are played.  
Ten children in bed fast asleep.



(L to R) Margaret Gigous, Dayana Gonzalez, Andrea Salazar, Consuelo Cabral (sponsoring teacher), and Manuel Hernandez

(continue from page 1)

## Some Features of Unplanned Speech

No doubt discourse analysts, conversational analysts, corpus linguists, sociolinguists, and psycholinguists could provide varying perspectives on natural discourse that would result in a list of hundreds of features of unplanned speech. This is, however, a quick and dirty list of some of the features I have found to be useful in working with my intermediate and advanced adult students.

**Overlap:** Through cultural beliefs or as a result of polite language classes, learners sometimes believe that only one person should speak at a time. In reality, speakers frequently overlap and piggyback on each other's remarks.

**Interruption:** Cultural beliefs also influence learners' use or perhaps overuse of interruption. Many learners can benefit from learning how to interrupt appropriately for a given situation or keep the floor when being interrupted.

**Repetition:** Native speakers often repeat themselves unconsciously. Unlike in writing, exact word repetition is not negative in speaking, and repetition can be used by learners as a way to jump in while they are still thinking about what to say.

**Active listening:** Many textbooks present this topic, which is using body language, sounds, and short responses to support another speaker.

**Gestures and body language:** Often learners sit still as stones during a conversation. Examining native speakers' body language can show learners other possibilities.

**Vague words:** As unplanned discourse generally takes place in a shared context, precision is less necessary. Speakers frequently use vague words such as *thing*, *something*, or even *whatchamacallit*.

**Words and phrases:** Learners are sometimes taught that complete sentences are polite, which tells them that incomplete sentences are impolite. It is useful to show learners how native speakers use phrases and even just sounds (e.g., "mhm") to respond in polite situations.

**Filler:** Native speakers frequently use words and sounds as meaningless filler to maintain the floor while they are figuring out what to say. Filler is classified by where it is used in the sentence.

**Utterance launchers:** These are stock phrases or

words that help native speakers get the floor while they are choosing their words. Some of the most prevalent are: *Well, you know, I mean, you see, you know, the thing is, now, I just, so anyway, in my opinion*, and *OK*. Several utterance launchers can be combined, resulting in "well, you know, I think . . ."

**Hesitators:** These sounds happen anytime within a sentence, but most often before or between clauses (Biber et al., 1999). Some of the most common are *ah, uh, er, and um*. *Like* can also be used as a hesitator.

## Raising Awareness of Features of Unplanned Discourse

Training intermediate and advanced learners about the features of unplanned discourse will help them cope with what they hear and develop a more realistic picture of speech.

Unfortunately, most current listening and speaking textbooks only present speech that has been scripted and edited, in the form of CNN clips or excerpts from National Public Radio. These samples provide learners with no practice in listening to unplanned speech within the sheltered atmosphere of a classroom. Thus, it is up to teachers to find samples of unplanned discourse and structure lessons.

Fortunately, there are numerous sources that teachers can tape themselves for use in class. Talk radio and TV talk shows are broadcast in a range of styles that would be suitable for a conversation class or English for academic purposes context. From *Check, Please!* to *Jerry Springer* to *The McLaughlin Group* or *Car Talk*, you will be able to find a program that will meet the needs of your students.

Teachers can present a short focused lesson on the features of unplanned discourse and then refer to the topics throughout the semester. First, the class can explore learners' ideas about the speech of native speakers. Perhaps learners could consider some questions: Do native speakers

- know what they are going to say when they begin speaking?
- plan before they speak?
- make mistakes?
- always use specific vocabulary?
- listen quietly?
- interrupt each other or speak at the same time?

- repeat themselves?
- use complete sentences?

Then, a video or cassette with a selection of unplanned discourse can be presented to the learners. After the learners have listened for meaning and processed what they heard, they can analyze what they saw. Groups of learners could follow different speakers to count the instances of “um” or “well” or “I think.” Learners could also focus on the role of overlap, interruptions, or gestures. Finally, learners should discuss whether the actual sample of unplanned speech matched their expectations.

Learners need to investigate their own habits in conversations. The teacher can write different habits on the board such as “I plan while other people are speaking,” “I am silent when other people are speaking,” or “I translate what I want to say from my native language.” Learners can discuss whether they use these habits and what they think of them. The teacher can then discuss the short-term and long-term results of using these habits. Learners may also identify a habit or habits that they feel they want to change.

After this introduction to unplanned speech, teachers can provide reinforcement during the remainder of the term. Teachers can use the regular class activities to practice utterance launchers, hesitators, or interruptions. For example, when there is a discussion topic in the textbook, the teacher can remind learners to use a word or phrase such as “um” or “I think.” Whenever learners speak in class, the teacher can remind learners of speaking habits or praise learners for good use of active listening or gestures. In addition, listening texts from the textbook or supplemental activities may contain some unplanned speech phenomena, which can be identified and discussed as a refresher.

### Caveats and Conclusion

Though I have seen learners become more confident in their conversation skills as a result of learning about natural discourse, there are some caveats. This is an approach that should be used as part of a wide repertoire of speaking activities. Learners need an incentive to improve their grammar and vocabulary, and they require encouragement to use new grammat-

ical structures and vocabulary in order to improve overall. Also, these strategies are not really new, as learners use them unconsciously in their native languages. Indeed, some learners may apply the strategies from their native language directly to English, such as using filler from their own language when speaking English. These strategies are so unconscious that students may deny that they ever use filler in their native language. One of my students was outraged when I asked her to use the English “uh” rather than a Spanish “e” for filler; while she denied that she said “e,” she used it more than five times and didn’t even notice! Learners may also overuse specific utterance launchers until they sound like parrots with every turn beginning with “In my opinion.” Finally, learners (and some teachers) may have prejudices against many of these features of unplanned speech because they result in “messy” language. Therefore, learners may not want to use them or learn about them.

Nevertheless, developing a more realistic picture of natural speech can help learners shed some beliefs and habits that restrain their participation in conversations. Whether unplanned discourse is discussed once or throughout the semester, learners will benefit. Raising learners’ awareness of discourse phenomena enhances their ability not just to produce it, but also to process it, which will increase their listening comprehension. Additionally, the features of unplanned discourse can easily become concrete strategies that build confidence for intermediate or advanced learners who need to navigate the world of unplanned discourse in the iBT, at school, at work, and in their neighborhood.

### References

- Biber, D., Johansson, S., Leech, G., Conrad, S., & Finegan, E. (1999). Longman grammar of spoken and written English. Essex, England: Pearson Education Limited.
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## 2006 ITBE Awards

Every year, Illinois TESOL/BE (ITBE) proudly awards a \$1000 graduate scholarship and a \$500 undergraduate scholarship to two deserving members. In addition, as many as ten Professional Development awards are given to members to attend ITBE's annual convention. This is an important member benefit and is also one of the important ways our organization promotes professionalism in the field of ESL and Bilingual Education.

The \$1000 graduate scholarship is given each year in honor of **Marsha Robbins Santelli**. Marsha is not only one of the founding members of Illinois TESOL, but is also one of the most active members. She has shared the responsibility for planning this convention, among others, and has been in charge of Publishers Exhibits and Advertisements for the convention, workshops, and the Newsletter for many years.

This year, **Jenny Larson**, a student in the Bilingual Education and ESL program at Rockford College's National Teachers and Educators College (NTEC), was the hardworking graduate student to receive the \$1000 scholarship. Jenny is studying for K-9 certification and bilingual and ESL endorsements, as well as a Masters in Teaching. Prior to this, Jenny taught English in an elementary school in Ecuador for several years. In college, as a Spanish major, she also spent a year living in Ecuador and volunteered in a school there. Now, teaching ESL students in Chicago Public Schools, her passion for teaching has earned her the recognition of the ESL/BE community with this scholarship. We wish Jenny continued success in her teaching career.

The \$500 Undergraduate Award is given each year in honor of **Jane Curtis**. Jane has contributed extraordinary efforts to Illinois TESOL/BE for more than a decade, serving in almost all capacities. She has served as President of

ITBE, co-editor of the ITBE Newsletter, and not long ago she was Chair of the Annual Convention.

This year the \$500 undergraduate scholarship was awarded to **Amanda Schacht** from Illinois State University (ISU). Amanda is working on her degree in Bilingual/Bicultural Elementary Education at ISU. In addition to her studies, Amanda is president of ISU's Students' Association for Bilingual Education. Through this organization, she has begun planning a Bilingual Advocacy Week for the ISU campus to share information about diversity and bilingual education. Amanda is committed to growing professionally and plans to pursue a graduate degree.

This year, ITBE also proudly awarded 5 Professional Development Awards. These awards made it possible for the recipients to attend this year's State Convention by covering convention registration fees and housing/transportation expenses. Two of these Professional Development awards were given to the scholarship recipients. The other three Award Recipients were **Carolyn Baughan**, Instructor at Illinois State University's English Language Institute and a former board member of ITBE, **Cassandra Powell**, ESL instructor at BIR Training Center in Chicago and graduate student at the University of Illinois-Chicago, and **Weirong Wang**, a doctoral candidate in Curriculum and Instruction and TESOL at Illinois State University and a presenter at this year's convention.

I would also like to thank the reviewers who gave so generously of their time to evaluate the applications: Karen Carrier, NIU; Lydia Omori, Harper College; Catherine Porter, Adult Learning Resource Center and Jacqueline Piersol, SIU.

Congratulations to all the Awards recipients!

Submitted by Betsy Kubota  
Chair, Scholarship Committee



(l) Amanda Schacht (r) Jenny Larson



(l to r) Carolyn Baughan, Weirong Wang and  
Cassandra Powell

# Photos from the 206 ITBE Convention



# Photos from the 2006 ITBE Convention



## Winner

Lisa Baran of Leyden High School, Schiller Park, was the winner of a free weekend get-away. The drawing was held at the conclusion of the 2006 ITBE Convention.



# Member Snapshot

**Name:** Margene L. Petersen

**Place of Birth and Residence:** Duluth, Minnesota. I currently reside in Chicago, Illinois. I have lived in Minnesota, Indiana, Ohio, Pennsylvania, Rhode Island, and Illinois and worked in Newark, Delaware, and Boston, Massachusetts. I also taught in Taiwan for 11 months.

**Currently Working As:** College Advisor at a community college and teaching ESL part-time.

**Years in Education:** Since 1980. I have an MA in Foreign Language Education/ TESOL and an MA from the Rhode Island School of Design.

**Years as an ITBE Member:** 7 years ever since I moved here.



**A Memorable Experience for Me:** My first teaching opportunity was in 1980 in Taipei, Taiwan, right out of college. Wow, was I a novice, but I loved teaching and learning about Chinese culture and customs. Another equally memorable time was my work as a VISTA volunteer in Columbus, Ohio, when I taught mainly Cambodian refugees in a church setting as well as organizing an ESL class for stay-at-home refugee women.

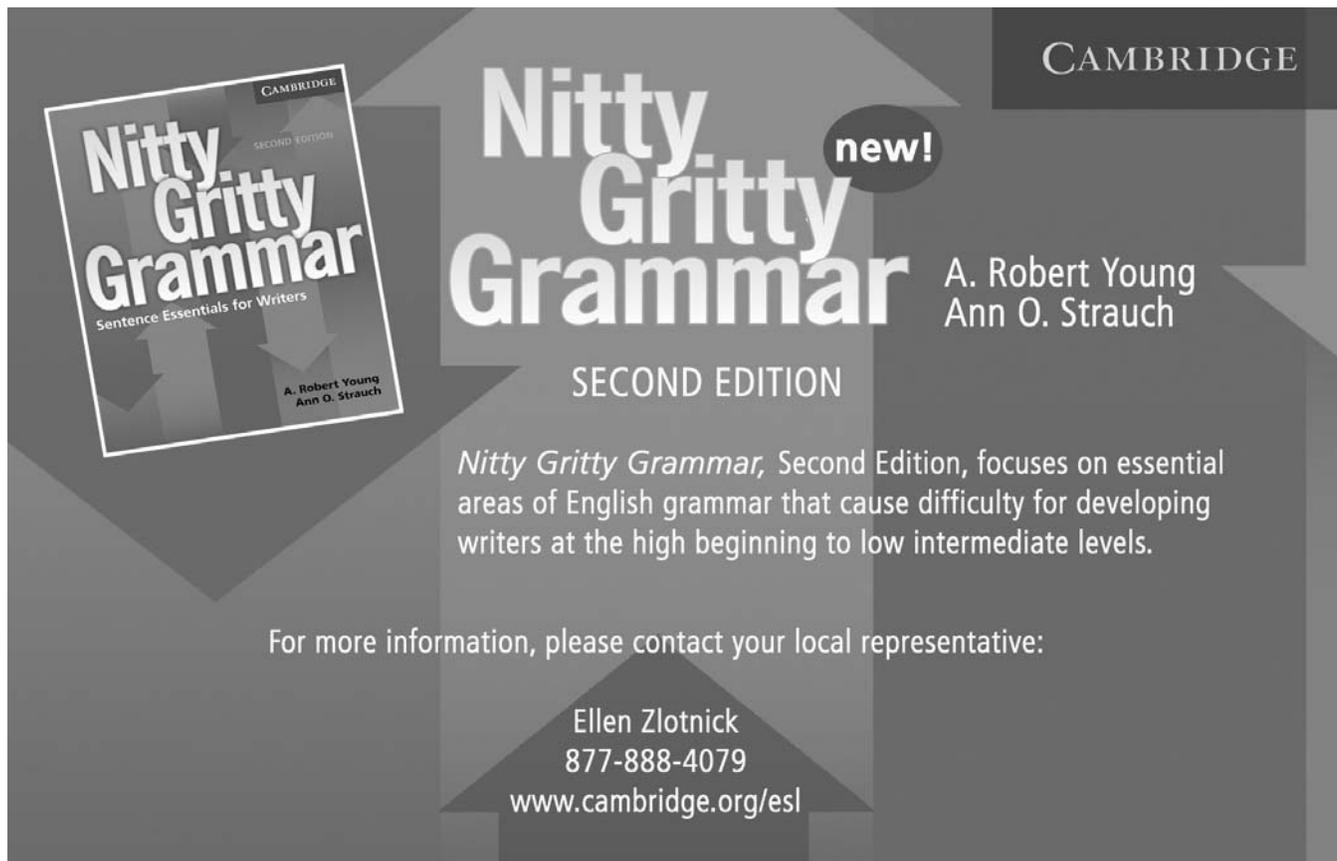
**A Regrettable Professional Experience:**

Being laid off from ELS Language Centers after 9/11. I had worked for ELS for nearly 11 years (6 years in Philadelphia, 1 year in Boston, and 3.5 years in Chicago). I miss working in an intensive ESL language situation and miss working with all my colleagues and international students.

**Professional Passions:** Teaching students to love reading and cooperative learning, advising, curriculum development and cross-cultural communication.

**Future Plans:** Teach and advise; eventually teach overseas; raise money for AIDS/HIV awareness and prevention by running the ½ marathon.

**Beyond Work:** stained glass, ceramics, gardening, working with Teachers Against Prejudice (TAP) and especially getting to know our newly adopted daughter, Morgan. She has been with us 1 year and 3 months. She was born in Astrakhan, Russia, and is now 4 years old. Her English is improving every day. She is amazing!



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**Elizabeth Minicz**, Associate Professor  
*Harper College, Palatine, Illinois*

### **Immigration**

The week of March 27, the Senate Judiciary Committee will make a decision on which immigration bill will be forwarded to the Senate. As you are aware, the House passed the Sensenbrenner bill in December that would criminalize the approximately 12 million undocumented workers in this country and those who assist them. Curiously this bill appeared to be under the radar of all of us. This time we have more opportunities to make our voices heard. The two versions of the Senate bill under consideration take two different approaches. One, echoing the House bill, makes aiding undocumented workers a felony. The other, sponsored by Senators John McCain (R-Arizona) and Edward Kennedy (D-Massachusetts) includes provisions for legalization. In recent weeks there have been massive demonstrations in major cities across the United States: over 100,000 people protested in Chicago and 500,000 in Los Angeles. Obviously, the outcome will impact educational programs throughout the U.S.

Last year tens of thousands of adult educators and their students sent letters, emails, and faxes to Congress protesting proposed cuts in adult education funding. One can only hope that all educators of English Language Learners will respond to the immigration bills. After all, they could end up being classified as felons for helping students without legal documentation.

### **Scary Tuesday, Scary Year**

*The Washington Post* on March 22, 2006, reported on the panic in Philadelphia's Spanish-speaking community as a result of rumors on January 31 that federal agents were raiding businesses and deporting undocumented workers. "The fear and paranoia were so strong on that Tuesday, January 31, that the Italian

Market at Ninth Street and Washington Avenue virtually shut down because illegal immigrants refused to come to work at meatpacking plants, vegetable stands, fish markets, and restaurant," reported Daniel Fears in the *Washington Post* story.

Pro-immigrant activists are planning a protest in 10 cities on April 10. The coalition includes the AFL-CIO, The Leadership Conference on Civil Rights, The Catholic Bishops, The Day Without an Immigrant coalition in Philadelphia, and the U.S. Hispanic Chamber of Commerce. Interestingly, professional associations of educators appear to be missing from the planning group. According to Fears, activists, churches, and labor groups are planning a national "day Without an Immigrant" that will shut down all businesses where immigrants work. Will immigrants support these measures that will likely result in them being fired from their jobs?

Chris Simcox, President of the Minutemen Civil defense Corps is quoted by Fears, "I'm sorry that they're fearful that we're going to enforce the law. Maybe that's a sign that they should return home and reenter this country by our rules. Then they would have nothing to worry about. They could hold their heads high." Oh really?

### **U.S. Looking for Deportees**

A story in the March 1, 2005, *Washington Post*, also by Daniel Fears, reported that a U.S. judge ruled the federal government wrongly deported 15 Cuban refugees and must make a good-faith effort to return them to the U.S. Are you listening Fidel? Some of you may remember the news story about the refugees whose boat bumped into the old Seven Mile Bridge in the Florida Keys. The refugees thought they were covered under the "wet foot, dry foot" policy of the U.S. whereby those who make it to land are admitted to the U.S. Those who are apprehended at sea are returned to their home country. The Coast Guard decided that since the bridge was broken and didn't lead directly to land, the refugees were still "at sea." Or is that the Coast Guard? Cuban exiles exerted political pressure on the federal government including a hunger strike and threats to withdraw support of Republican office holders. Perhaps we should all take a cue from the Cuban exiles on how to impact judicial decisions. *(continued on page 14)*

(continued from page 13)

### **New Citizenship Test: 2007 or 2008?**

The *New York Times* on January 23, 2006 reported on citizenship tests in the U. S. and other countries. Discussion about a new citizenship test in the U.S. has been going on for a decade and about \$3.5 million has been spent since 2001, reports Times author Edward Rothstein. A decision was to have been made January 24 about whether the tests need to be changed. When I conducted a “Google” search I could find no reference to the decision. I did find a March 13, 2003 announcement by the U.S. Department of Homeland Security, Bureau of Immigration and Customs Enforcement that the goal was to have a new naturalization test in place by late 2004.

In Great Britain, a new citizenship test was introduced in November, 2005. The new test emphasizes living in the United Kingdom rather than understanding the government. There are almost no questions about history. Instead practical behavior and correct attitudes about women and minorities are stressed. Here are two examples from the test: If you spill someone else’s beer in a pub, what should you do? What is the voltage of British electrical outlets? Prospective applicants for citizenship with low level English skills can skip the citizenship tests and take a “skills for life” course instead.

The Netherlands is launching a pilot program that would test prospective immigrants on their knowledge of Dutch language and culture—before they immigrate. In the Baden-Wurttemberg region of Germany, Muslims are queried about women’s rights, religious freedom, and domestic life.

In 1997, the U.S. Commission on Immigration Reform reported there was no consistency in administration of the citizenship tests. According to Fears, “the commission also objected to the tests’ reliance on memorization of facts rather than on broader concepts. Immigration advocates fear that a redesign of the tests will simply make it more difficult, hence discouraging applicants. Alfonso Aguilar, chief of the Office of Citizenship says, “We see the test as an instrument to promote civic learning and patriotism. The purpose is not to limit immigration but to create

a system in which the process of naturalization works. Our history has been one of expanded citizenship.” Could it be that the test redesign is on hold until an immigration bill is passed by Congress?

Here in Illinois, the citizenship community continues to mourn the death of Margaret (Peggy) Dean last summer. Peggy worked tirelessly for years at the state and federal level to promote citizenship reform. We miss you Peggy!

### **And Finally, a Technology Update**

I wanted to end on a more optimistic note than the previous stories. On March 17, 2005, *The Dallas Morning News* printed an article by Katherine Leal about podcasts by Texas school children at W. T. Hanes Elementary School. Students download essays for free to iPods or computers through the Apple iTunes Music store. The store, according to Leal, has more than 900 listings under the K-12 category.

Although no one really knows how many people are listening to the podcasts, it is certain that they have an audience made up of friends, and families. “We have kiddos that say their grandparents are listening in other states and countries,” said Sylvia Ingram, a fourth-grade writing teacher. (Kiddos? Who says kiddos?) Darren Wilson, the school’s instructional technology specialist realizes teachers are skeptical of the technology’s value,” writes Leal. She says that Wilson thinks anything that gets kids excited about writing is a good thing. “It’s a motivation tool. The kids know they can’t record without being prepared,” said Wilson.

The Carrollton-Farmers Branch schools are using podcasts for language development too. High school students learning French read essays on-line to practice speaking skills. ESL students listen to vocabulary recorded by their teacher and then record passages so she can check fluency.

Is anyone podcasting in ESL or Bilingual classes here in Illinois? Tell me about it if you are. I would be pleased to write about it in the next News Bites.



# ESL/ELL



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**Katerina Vallianatos,**  
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The **WebQuest Portal** ([www.webquest.org](http://www.webquest.org)) was created and maintained by Bernie Dodge, the San Diego State University professor of Educational Technology who originally coined the term “webquest.” This site is to-the-point, easy to navigate, and well-designed. You can learn what webquests are, start using them in the classroom, learn about new webquest projects, or discuss with other teachers who use this technology. Webquests are engaging activities which promote reading, computer skills, research skills, and critical thinking skills, and are wonderful for the ESL classroom. The WebQuest Portal has a *News* section, which highlights the latest developments surrounding this educational model. It has archives as far back as June 2003 and includes lots of links to relevant sites. A *Forum* section, where teachers can post questions or comments, doesn’t have many posts presently, and an *Articles* section, which lists publications about webquests, is also in its infancy. A *Find WebQuests* section, which allows precise searches for existing webquests, works very well. You can do keyword searches according to grade level. A *Submit a*

*WebQuest* section, which allows teachers to share their work, will add your webquest to the San Diego State University database. And, lastly, the *WebQuest Garden* section, which allows use of webquest authoring software, will help you make your own webquests without knowing anything about web editing or about uploading. What’s great about The WebQuest Portal is not only what it provides—lots of help in the world of webquests—, but what it does not—outdated links and non-innovative lessons. If you have access to computers and you’d like to add an activity that will captivate your students and add fun to your classroom, check out this site.

A good online source for idioms is **The Idiom Connection** ([www.idiomconnection.com](http://www.idiomconnection.com)). It’s a no-frills site, plain in appearance, but useful because it lists only very widely used, current idioms. It indexes idioms alphabetically and according to theme. Examples of themes include animal, food, and medical idioms, and each category has its own multiple-choice quiz. If your curriculum doesn’t include an idiom textbook, but you’d like to touch upon idioms in the classroom, this site is a good place to start.

## ***A Little Cultural Humor?***

***For those of you who watch what you eat, here’s the final word on nutrition and health. It’s a relief to know the truth after all the conflicting medical studies:***

- 1. The Japanese eat very little fat and suffer fewer heart attacks than Americans.*
- 2. The Mexicans eat a lot of fat and suffer fewer heart attacks than Americans.*
- 3. The Chinese drink very little red wine and suffer fewer heart attacks than Americans.*
- 4. The Italians drink excessive amounts of red wine and suffer fewer heart attacks than Americans.*
- 5. The Germans drink a lot of beer and eat lots of sausage and suffer fewer heart attacks than Americans.*

### **CONCLUSION:**

*Eat and drink what you like. Speaking English is apparently what kills you.*

*Submitted by Marsha Santelli*

# Writing Contest Winners

This year, the TESOL/BE writing contest for grades 6-12 had many essay submissions from twelve different schools around the state of Illinois. There were a total of 181 submissions: 141 from grades 9-12 and 40 from grades 6-8. As in years past, the first three places in each grade category are recognized and receive an award at the annual TESOL/BE conference which, this year, was on March 3rd at the Holiday Inn Select in Naperville, Illinois. They were also given the opportunity to read their essays at a reception held in their honor. All students who submitted an essay for the competition received a certificate of participation. The winners of each category, along with the name of their sponsoring teacher and school, are as follows:

## Grades 6 - 8

**1st Place:** Samuel Lee, Edison Middle School, Champaign, IL **Sponsoring teacher:** Sung-Ae Park  
**2nd Place:** Magdalena Ezlakowska, Algonquin Middle School, DesPlaines, IL  
**Sponsoring teacher:** Margaret Garlewicz  
**3rd Place:** Jennifer Kim, Edison Middle School, Champaign, IL **Sponsoring teacher:** Sung-Ae Park

## Grades 9 - 12

**1st Place:** Maryna Kruhlaya, Niles North High School, Skokie, IL  
**Sponsoring teacher:** Susan Dobinsky  
**2nd Place:** Ana Pimentel, Prosser Career Academy, Chicago, IL **Sponsoring teacher:** Krystyna Kalucki  
**3rd Place:** Irvin García, Roosevelt High School, Chicago, IL **Sponsoring teacher:** Maja Teref

All participants, winners, and sponsoring teachers should be commended on their hard work and courage to compete in the writing contest. We hope we will have even more participants next year!

Submitted by Vicki Green, Secondary SIG Co-chair





### **1st Place, Grades 6-8**

**Samuel Lee**

Edison Middle School  
Champaign, IL

#### **The Differences between Korean American Education Systems**

When I came to the United States last year, I realized that there are a lot of cultural differences between Korea and America. The biggest difference was the American education system. The two systems have advantages and disadvantages, and characteristics of those systems are very different, but the American education system is much better than the Korean education system. It is my belief that the Korean government should follow some of the merits of the American education system.

The first thing that was hard to adapt to was that most of the questions of the American textbooks which require explanations. For instance, the math textbook asks to show the process for the answers. It seems to me that the process of finding the answer is more important than just the result. Korean system is different. It requires just clear answers. When I was solving the problems in America, I was so confused. I knew that answer for the question and it was right, but I didn't know how to explain it.

Second, the American education system asks students to work as a group many times. Teachers give many homework and class assignments which require working with group members such as preparing for presentations, debates, and discussions. When I was in Korea, students didn't like group work, and teachers either. So I didn't need to work with my group members. When I had to work with my group, I was afraid because I didn't have any experience for group work. I could participate in that at first.

Third, American schools have about 20 students in one class. So teachers know every student's name and their character. The students also know most of the teachers. So the teachers and the students are very close like friends. However, Korean schools have about 40 students in one class. So teachers don't know all students' names. Instead of calling students' names, teachers call the student numbers. They are not friendly like American teachers.

Fourth, American schools teach something slowly, so most students understand that perfectly. They also use many ways to teach the students. They use computers, other textbooks, presentations, and small skits.

In Korea, however, teachers teach many things in a short time. For example, Korean students learn American 8th grade math when they are in 6th grade. So when I came to the United States, the problems were easy but the explanations were hard. I think slow learning and remembering for a long time is much better than fast learning and fast forgetting.

The American education policy emphasizes critical thinking and participation. In Korea, students have to study hard and learn a lot of things for their future. Learning everything they need seems to be much better than critical thinking. Entering a college is the goal for most students in Korea. So they just study, and they don't think getting good grades is best. But American students don't think like that. They think group work, participation, and perfect understanding are the three most important things in education. I think these are the reasons why the education systems in the two countries are different.



### **2nd Place, Grades 6-8**

**Magdalena Ezlakowska**

Algonquin Middle School  
Des Plaines, IL

#### **My Traditional Polish Christmas**

When I came here last year, I thought everything will be the same as in Poland. First I went to school—it was not that much different. Then came Halloween and Thanksgiving—holidays that we do not have in Poland. But the thing that was very different for me was Christmas, and this is what I want to write about.

First of all, everything here starts so early. I was shocked when I saw Christmas decorations at the beginning of November. At this time in Poland everyone thinks about people who died in their families. November is a "sad" month and nobly thinks about putting Christmas decorations. I saw Christmas things at the stores even earlier and I just kept saying, "Look, it is for Christmas". It was nice to see all houses with lights and decorations but I

think November is too early to put them out. In Poland everyone decorates their houses just before Christmas. My family buys Christmas tree on Christmas Eve, and then we decorate it. In Poland people do not put that much stuff outside, they have many decorations inside their houses and inside themselves, and this makes Christmas so special.

Our traditions of celebrating Christmas are a little bit different too. Christmas Eve is very important for Polish families. It is a day when whole family meets and eats a late dinner called Wigilia. For me on real Christmas table there should be twelve non-meat dishes. There have to be pierogi, red borsch, many kinds of fishes, compote and other traditional Polish dishes. We try to make everything by ourselves and this is very delicious. Also there should be one free space by the table for someone unexpected. The tablecloth should be white, and under it we put a little bit of hay to recall the event when Jesus was born.

Before we start eating, the head of family, which is usually father, reads the part of St. Luke's Gospel when the Jesus was born. After the prayers we start to share Christmas wafer and wish each other health, luck, and happiness. Then we start eating. Many people believe that if you try all twelve dishes, you will be lucky during all year. In my family after Wigilia, Santa Claus comes. Everyone gets beautiful presents. Usually it is something what that person wanted. Everybody is happy and the Christmas atmosphere is great. Then we go to the church. We have special Mass at twelve o'clock at night. It is called Pasterka. Some people believe that during this night, at 12 o'clock animals can talk, but I never heard one. Next day is the First Day of Christmas. For me it is not as much important as Wigilia but still I like it. We have Christmas breakfast and then usually we got to our aunt's or uncle's house to spend this day with them. In Poland we also celebrate the Second Day of Christmas, which is the 26th of December. We spend this day alike to the First Day of Christmas. The Christmas atmosphere with Christmas tree stays in my house until New Year or until the Holiday of Three Kings, which is the 6th of January, sometimes even longer.

During this Christmas I was no that shocked as last year, but still it is weird for me. As Christmas, there are many differences in our cultures. But I

think people invented cars and airplanes so we can travel and learn from each other. We can learn other languages, meet new people and their traditions. But if today someone will ask me to come here and live here, I would come, but only for vacations. At my age I prefer living in Poland with my friends, family, language, and traditions.



**3rd Place, Grades 6-8**

**Jennifer Kim**

Edison Middle School  
Champaign, IL

### **The Country of Holidays**

“Everything was shocking to me when I came to the United States for the first time.” This was what my parents said. This was true to me, too. But if someone asks me what the biggest cultural shock when I came to the United States, “Weird American holiday!” will probably pop out of my mouth.

First of all, whenever I think about the American holidays, the first thing that hits my brain is the story that my dad once told me. When my dad came to the United States for the first time in 1986, he didn't know much about the American culture. He settled in New York and one day in the fall of 1986, he was so mad and about to call the police because somebody threw eggs to his car. Later one Korean neighbor told him that it was common for some kids to throw eggs on October 31st. At that night he got shocked again because when he answered the door, there were kids with scary masks and costumes saying “trick or treat!”

Of course Korea does have holidays, but I was shocked by how many red marks American calendar has. Also, in Korea, there are only serious holidays like Independence Day, Creation of Korean Language Day, etc. There are no fun holidays like Halloween. I really enjoyed celebrating Halloween when I first came to the United States. The part I dress up scary or goofy and go out with my friends to get some candies was most awesome and unique thing to me. I hope Halloween could become an international holiday so that my friends in Korea and the children all over the world could experience this wonderful day.

Last of all, when holidays come most people in America seem to celebrate holidays with their fami-

ly in their house. For example, in Korea, most people get out to downtown and meet friends, so the cities are very crowded. But my first Christmas Eve in America my family went out, but it was really quiet and silent night, which reminded me of a song, "Silent Night." All the markets and stores were closed. There were very few cars in the street. It was kind of strange to me at first but on my second year of Christmas in America. I stayed home and celebrated Christmas quietly with my family. We had special Christmas dinner, and I really liked to stay with my family in Christmas rather than go out to the crowded and distracted city.

As you see, the American holidays were pretty shocking to me. But when I compared my cultural shock with what my parents told me, I think we, who came much later, have less cultural shock. I think it is because of the improvement of internet. Moreover, now we can watch American movies in Korea and learn a little bit about America's culture indirectly. I think it is a great thing because then in the future, the nations will get closer together and share other countries' honorable cultures. Therefore, we might live in a world with lots of great cultures.



**1st Place, Grades 9-12**

**Maryna Kruhlaya**

Niles North High School

Skokie, IL -

### **Collision of Modern and Old**

Have you ever been in the past? Do you think it is impossible? In Belarus there is one summer night when people find themselves in the ancient times when there were lots of superstitions.

At night on 21 of June in Belarus people celebrate one of the greatest and most poetic holidays called Kupalle. The sun rises at the highest possible level at that day. That's why this day was very important for the ancient people who were worshipping Sun. This part of summer is the time of most important blooming of the nature. The most important and hardworking part began at the time of the year for peasants in old times. The time of haymaking and harvest began after this day.

Kupalle is a very old holiday. The roots of it go in ancient times when people believed in spirits of

plants, water, and fire. The first notes about this holiday as it named right now had been dated 1262. As a calendar date, it is known from the 16th century. In the 19th-20th centuries, people started to celebrate Kupalle a lot. In the evening the day before the holiday young people walked around the streets. They all decorated themselves with plants. The girls usually twined wreaths and walked and sang songs inviting all people on the holiday.

Usually people celebrate Kupalle all together and they invite as many people as possible to the celebration. The people get together somewhere out of town in the place nearby where there is a river or a lake. It has to be a huge place with a forest nearby.

The main part of the celebration is a holiday fire. Men gather all old things that they have somewhere in their houses and bring them to this public fire. Then they light the fire and it becomes really huge. However, it is not a usual fire. In the middle of the fire people put a stick with a wheel and haystack on the top of it. That is a symbol of Sun. This tradition people repeat from ancient people who believed in the god of Sun Yaryla. They wanted to please him in this way because they thought that he could take their lives. The young people also jump through that fire to clean their souls.

Also people usually prepare unusual traditional foods for the holiday. They cook the food exactly on this public fire. The most common and popular food of Kupalle are fried eggs which represent sun and life, kulaha, that is made from wheat powder and is like a pudding, and vareniki, dumplings stuffed with berries and jam.

All night people sang specific Kupalle songs around the fire, made rounds around the fire holding hands of each other and playing different competition in strength games. It is a very unusual holiday because during Kupalle people believe in magic and practice different fortune-telling. The girls gather on the bank of the river and put their wreaths on the water and let the river carry them. It is night when they are doing it. So they put candles in their wreaths to see them in the river. The wreath that comes to the bank or meets another one means that the girl will be married this year. If the wreath sinks the girl will be in trouble or could even die. Also there is a superstition that the leaf of the plant called crossroads can bring luck. If a girl puts it under her pillow during sleep she will see the dream

of her future.

There is another very popular legend of the crossroads plant that once a year exactly on the night of Kupalle begins “the blooming”. At twelve o’clock at night the flower called “Paparac-kvetka” grows. The brave people sometimes go to find this flower. The lucky people who find it would live happily. Moreover, they will be able to foresee the future and understand the language of animals and plants. But it’s no easy to find this flower, because this flower grows in the wilderness, and tree can talk and move that night, the rivers glow with a special light, and animals speak, confusing people. And if the person reaches the flower he should take it and go straight without looking back. Otherwise, he will die. They say that many people found the flower; however, they didn’t survive because they looked back.

Kupalle is not a Christian holiday because it is based on beliefs on our ancestors. However, it is most the most loved holiday in Belarus because during it people can go away from their present life and experience the ancient life. They have a chance to find their luck and become successful in the future if they find the flower. Maybe the chance to find it is very close; you just have to try.



**2nd Place, Grades 9-12**

**Ana Pimentel**

Prosser Career Academy  
Chicago, IL

### **Our Poverty**

Poverty is one of the most critical things that happens in my country of Mexico and our government does nothing to try to change it. I was one of those people who unfortunately lived in that situation. My father died when I was only six years old; my mother had to work for me now that my father was gone. My life was more or less normal. I didn’t have much, but I didn’t lack anything either. But it was hard when my father passed away because my mother hadn’t worked and it was hard to find a job for her. I felt anxious and I wasn’t able to help her in any way.

I grew up in a small town in Michoacan, Mexico. I could see and even feel what it’s like to suffer in Mexico—not to have money and have to work,

from morning until night in order to have something to eat the following day. In Mexico you can see children dying of hunger; children who don’t have shoes, clothes, or a place to live. And our government doesn’t do anything to change this situation. You can see families that have to separate to immigrate to United States in order to look for a better life. But their families never know if they will see them again. You can see people working in the fields to provide some food for their families.

Girls of ages of thirteen and fourteen prostitute themselves to have some money to eat. It’s horrible to see these types of situations and who stands up to do something in regards to this issue? No one. Maybe Mexico is not the only country that suffers this situation. That’s why many of the people run away from it in order to survive.

To see little kids sleeping on the streets, asking for money to be able to survive and when I saw all this, I thought that maybe I could end up like this. But I thank God it was not like that. I have a mother who gives all for me; she does anything to give me the best. I remember how we had to come to this country, although in Mexico we were still living with my aunts, my mother decided that we had to come to this country. She decided that because she wanted to work and make some money and give me a better life. At first I thought she was joking, but I saw how serious she was and I knew it was for sure. So I had to accept this decision. This was really hard for me and my mom because we had to leave our family, but the principal reason why we were leaving our family was because we were trying to escape from that poverty that exists in my country.

When we arrived in Chicago, we had to live in my aunt’s house because we didn’t have a place to stay. I could see their uncomfortable faces and how we were unlike. It was horrible to live in that situation in which I thought I would never be in. My mother started looking for a job to survive, I used to cry every night to think how my mother and I were alone and lonely in a house where we had no rights to anything. After a few days my mom found a job; it was not good money but at least enough to survive. For a while we limited ourselves in everything. But the best of all was that we were together.

Now ten years have already passed from my father’s death and the wound in my heart is still

open and it hurts me just like in my mom too. Sometimes I ask myself why life is like that. Why do we have to suffer? But now we are living well, we don't have that much but we are okay. I still remember how the people from my country and other countries are living now the same situation that I had to pass.

And because poverty is an ongoing thing, people are leaving their country and their families, to come to this country looking for a better life and a better future for their family, like we did. But I hope one day this will change and no one will have to leave their families and country.



### **3rd Place, Grades 9-12**

**Irvin García**

Roosevelt High School  
Chicago, IL

### **My Favorite Mexican Custom**

There are a lot of customs in my culture that are the same and different from the ones here in the U.S. From all of the customs and celebrations we have in Mexico, there is one that I like the most. In my culture, we celebrate both the Day of the Dead and a special saint named San Francisco.

This tradition we celebrate begins in the month of October and ends in the beginning of November. All the people from my culture get together to participate in this celebration. A lot of events happen in this celebration. For example, people dance in costumes, the mariachi sing to our saint early in the morning and we put "ofrendas" for the dead.

In honor of our saint, San Francisco, we start the celebration on October 2nd. On this day men and women put different costumes on. Some dress up as what we call Chinelos, Tracoleros, and others as old men and as devils. Each of these groups has its own dance. On this day the people in costumes and masks, along with the rest of the people who follow just to see, go around our whole pueblo. On October 3rd early in the morning around 4 o'clock we go to our church to see how the mariachi sings to our saint.

Only on this day do the mariachis sing to our saint. For the rest of the month the people keep dancing. It is really interesting but is also kind of hard. During this celebration men and women from

different ages dance. I used to be in one of the groups of the dancing devils. It is kind of hard because we all have to dance and walk at the same time. Sometimes the dancers mess up but we all have fun. I think that the dancers have more fun because some carry things that scare children and even adults. Some dancers carry rats and other animals with them, and even though they are not real animals, people still get scared.

This dancing continues throughout the middle of October. The dancing eventually stops but there is a show of firecrackers near our church. A lot of people go there to see the firecrackers. The celebration continues until October 31<sup>st</sup>. On this day every family who has a loved one dead puts in their houses what we call Ofrendas. Ofrendas are table decorated with flowers and candles. On the wall next to the decorated tables we put a picture of our loved ones who died.

Early in the morning the next day on November 1st, we go to the cemetery. Near our loved ones' tombs we light up a candle and we go from the cemetery to our houses with candles lit. Our belief is that by doing that the spirits of our dead loved ones follow us and come to eat with us. In the ofrendas, we put the food that our dead loved ones used to like the most. We believe that for only that day we have at least the spirits of our dead loved ones close to us.

We have a lot more customs in my culture, but for me this is the tradition that we celebrate that I like the most. I like it because it is fun to see and to do all the dances that we do on these months. I also like the celebration we do in honor of the Day of the Dead because even though we don't see our loved ones in person, we can feel that they are with us.



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- May 24-25**                      **Illinois Family Literacy Conference**  
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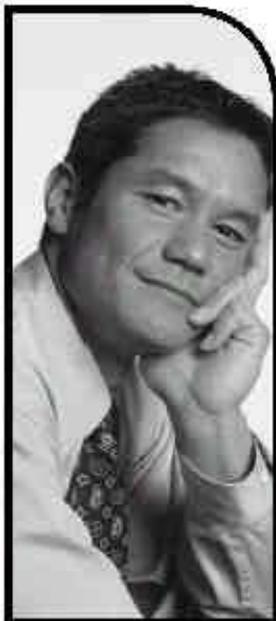
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