



# MCTE News

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*Newsletter of the Minnesota Council of Teachers of English*

## PRESIDENT'S COLUMN

Georges Samyn died in Redwood Falls on November 28th. I never met Georges Samyn, in fact never heard of him until the other day, but his life has captivated me and made me think about the meaning of words and books and literature in our lives.

Georges Samyn was born in Belgium in 1920 and attended school there for nine years, the only formal schooling in his life. He survived being held a prisoner of war for seven months in East Germany during World War II. Over his 83 years, he raised five children, visited Belgium seven times, farmed in Redwood County for years, and learned to love woodworking, dancing, and sports.

I was intrigued when I learned Georges wrote his own obituary and a poem to be read at his funeral. This man with very little formal schooling, a man who made his living working with his hands and not with what we call the tools of language, decided in his seventy-fifth year to set his life's stories to words in an autobiography he called, *Three-Fourths of a Century - History*. Georges wrote his book (with one finger) on a typewriter in the basement of his house. Years before, he had suffered a stroke that took away his ability to read so writing was difficult, yet he felt driven to tell his story.

In his introduction, he says we should not look for literature value in his book. He says, "This is only a life story told by an old Grandpa to his children and grandchildren, so they can trace back where we came from and how the family became citizens of this great country, the USA."

In his book, Georges tells stories about buying machinery to farm his 240 acres in 1953, taking a trip to Belgium on the *Queen Elizabeth*, marching through the streets of Maastricht, Holland after being taken prisoner. His book is a wonderful mix of historical events like the assassination of John F. Kennedy and personal reflections about things like the quality of the food and beer on a trip to France. It's full of tales of birth, death, marriage, and anniversary. It's full of life.

I've been thinking about Georges' book all afternoon. Is this literature or is it only a life story told by an old grandpa? Garrison Keillor says we should live rich, full lives and then tell stories about them. No doubt, that's just what Georges Samyn did. How much more literature value could a piece of writing possibly have?

I wonder, after all, if the true value of writing isn't for us to set our lives to words. And if that isn't literature, what is?

*Teresa Saum*

### MCTE

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### MCTE

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#### POSITIONS OPEN:

Regional Representatives  
- SEE PAGE 2



# MCTE REGIONAL REPRESENTATIVES NEEDED

The MCTE Board recently created regional liaison positions that would represent each of these regions: Northwest, Northeast, Central, Southwest, and Southeast. (See [www.mcte.org/regionalrep](http://www.mcte.org/regionalrep) for a map.) The function of these regional representatives is to increase two-way communication in Greater Minnesota.

## Duties of the Regional Representatives:

- Must be a current member of MCTE. Membership in NCTE is also encouraged.
- Serves for one two-year term, appointed by the MCTE Executive Board.
- Attend the Spring Conference, along with all Board meetings held in conjunction with the conference.
- Promote MCTE membership and involvement.
- Contribute at least once a year to MCTE News, Minnesota English Journal, or to the MCTE website.
- Review agendas and minutes from each Advisory Board meeting, sending along any feedback or input.
- May volunteer to serve on committees, perform other duties, and attend additional Advisory Board meetings.

If you are interested, contact Teresa Saum [tsaum@hickorytech.net](mailto:tsaum@hickorytech.net) or 507.934.4781  
Or complete the on-line application form at [www.mcte.org/regionalrep/application.html](http://www.mcte.org/regionalrep/application.html)  
Please submit by January 28



*Congratulations  
New National Board  
Certified Teachers*

*Amy Dahlin, Roseville  
Adolescence and Young Adulthood/  
English Language Arts*

*Jennifer Hansen, Minneapolis  
Early Adolescence/  
English Language Arts*

*Krista Hitchcock, Edina  
Adolescence and Young Adulthood/  
English Language Arts*

MCTE News is published four times a year as a benefit to members.  
Next newsletter deadline: **MAY, 2004**  
Contact Sandy Hayes [sjhayes@aol.com](mailto:sjhayes@aol.com) 19019 180th Avenue,  
Big Lake, MN 55309 website: [www.mcte.org](http://www.mcte.org)  
Member of NCTE Information Exchange Agreement

## PROFESSIONAL READING



Check out this article by  
**EDGAR SCHUSTER**

Keynote speaker for 2004 Spring Conference

“National and State Writing Tests:  
The Writing Process Betrayed”

*Phi Delta Kappan*, January 2004

[www.pdkintl.org/kappan/k0401sch.htm](http://www.pdkintl.org/kappan/k0401sch.htm)

## Making the Match: The Right Book for the Right Reader at the Right Time, Grades 4 - 12

Teri Lesesne (Stenhouse, 2003)

This highly readable handbook centers on three principles: knowing the readers, knowing the books, and knowing strategies for motivating students to read, with this most important advice in motivating students: “In order to motivate kids to read, you must be a reader yourself.”

A unique feature of the book is a series of personal essays by popular young adult authors such as Chris Crutcher, Mel Glenn, Jack Gantos, Sonya Sones, and Sharon Creech about their own experiences as readers.

A most useful section are the 70 pages of appendixes. Topics include annotated lists of books to booktalk, websites of popular young adult authors, extensive book lists by genre, annotated lists of easy reading books, and lists of print and nonprint resources.



## WEB CITES

### WWW.NCTE.ORG NATIONAL COUNCIL OF TEACHERS OF ENGLISH

The NCTE website was entirely redesigned this fall. After adjusting to the new look and the new navigation paths, you will find a wealth of resources. Some of the site is available to all, but the most extensive resources, including access to all articles from all NCTE journals, is available to NCTE members only. Join NCTE and take advantage of the trial membership in COLEARN, an interactive research and study tool.

### WWW.TTMS.ORG TEACHING THAT MAKES SENSE

This site contains extensive practical materials including a strategy guide for writing teachers, tips for writer's workshops, materials for writing across the curriculum, a guide to spelling instruction, ideas for reader response. Most material is available in easy to download and print pdf files.



## ANNOUNCEMENTS

### FEBRUARY: I LOVE TO READ MONTH.

This program is sponsored in Minnesota by the Minnesota Reading Association. This year's theme is "Pair Up With a Good Book." Each year, MRA offers buttons to teachers to help promote I Love to Read Month in their schools and communities. A packet of teaching ideas is also available. For more information or to order buttons (40¢ per button), contact Betty Klemensich at [bettyreads3@yahoo.com](mailto:bettyreads3@yahoo.com).

### GRANT OPPORTUNITY

The Minnesota Reading Association has grants up to \$1000 available for schools, libraries, non-profit organizations, and individuals seeking funds for reading/writing projects. Projects can include curriculum, author visits, workshops, storytelling events, book study groups, and other literacy-related events. Deadline is May 1. Applications and more information at [www.mnreading.org](http://www.mnreading.org)

## WORKSHOPS



### GRAMMAR MATTERS A WORKSHOP FOR MIDDLE AND HIGH SCHOOL TEACHERS

Wednesday, February 18 - 8:30 - 3:00  
Registration \$90 - Registration deadline: February 6  
Minnesota Humanities Commission, St. Paul

This workshop sponsored by the Minnesota Writing Project will help participants gain a rationale for teaching grammar in the context of the new state standards, practice teaching strategies in the context of literature and writing, learn methods of developing peer editing skills while avoiding drill-and-kill exercises. For more information and registration form: <http://mwp.cla.umn.edu/grammarwkshp.pdf>



### COEXISTENCE

From May 1 to July 6 a major outdoor exhibition will be on view in Minneapolis and St. Paul. This large scale display of artworks is accompanied by quotes on the theme of coexistence. The images explore human relationships and the meaning, use and misuse of words such as tolerance and respect. Teachers of art and social studies will find this to be a valuable resource to exploring contemporary themes of urgent importance. A wide variety of events are being planned to lead up to and coincide with the exhibit.

#### Teacher Workshops

Participants will receive a set of 13 large size posters of selected artworks from the exhibit and a CD slide show, as well as suggested curriculum activities. Teachers will examine the exhibit, analyze the ways that art conveys essential cultural meanings, and investigate the connections between art, social sciences and contemporary issues.

#### Training Dates and Locations

January 10 - Norwood-Young America - 10:00-1:30

January 12 - Faribault - 4:00-7:30

February 11 - Saint Cloud - 4:30-8:00

February 28 - Minneapolis YWCA - 4:30-8:00

Cost: Free for registered participants

Register Online: Teachers can register online at: <http://igs.cla.umn.edu/outreach/Seminars.htm>.

Contact: Sarah Herzog, Phone: 612-624-7346

[sherzog@umn.edu](mailto:sherzog@umn.edu)

### 2004 WORLD AFFAIRS CHALLENGE

This academic competition in international affairs for middle and high school students is sponsored by the Human Rights Center at the University of Minnesota. The four events (a formal presentation, a global awareness quiz, a collaborative question, and a discovery poster) center around the theme "The Rights of the Child." Funding of curricula is available.

A teacher training workshop will be held on January 26. For more information contact Contact: Sarah Herzog, Phone: 612-624-7346 [sherzog@umn.edu](mailto:sherzog@umn.edu)



# Fast Forward >> Humor from the internet

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## Ten Words That Don't Exist But Should

1. AQUADEXTROUS (ak wa deks'trus) adj. Possessing the ability to turn the bathtub tap on and off with your toes.
2. CARPERPETUATION (kar'pur pet u a shun) n. The act, when vacuuming, of running over a string or a piece of lint at least a dozen times, reaching over and picking it up, examining it, then putting it back down to give the vacuum one more chance.
3. DISCONFECT (dis kon fekt') v. To sterilize the piece of confection (lolly) you dropped on the floor by blowing on it, assuming this will somehow 'remove' all the germs.
4. ELBONICS (el bon'iks) n. The actions of two people maneuvering for one armrest in a movie theater.
5. FRUST (frust) n. The small line of debris that refuses to be swept onto the dust pan and keeps backing a person across the room until he finally decides to give up and sweep it under the rug.
6. LACTOMANGULATION (lak' to man gyu lay' shun) n. Manhandling the "open here" spout on a milk container so badly that one has to resort to the 'illegal' side.
7. PEPIER (peph ee ay') n. The waiter at a fancy restaurant whose sole purpose seems to be walking around asking diners if they want fresh ground pepper.
8. PHONESIA (fo nee' zhuh) n. The affliction of dialing a phone number and forgetting whom you were calling just as they answer.
9. PUPKUS (pup'kus) n. The moist residue left on a window after a dog presses its nose to it.
10. TELECRASTINATION (tel e kras tin ay' shun) n. The act of always letting the phone ring at least twice before you pick it up, even when you're only six inches away.

## MCTE

Minnesota Council of Teachers of English

## News

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Sandy Hayes, Editor  
19019 180th Avenue  
Big Lake, MN 55309

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