



LITERACY MATTERS

JULY/AUGUST 2021



Literacy Matters is a recurring publication of Literacy Nassau, Inc.

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MUSINGS ON MY MFA

(submitted by Karen Micciche)

On July 23, 2021, I will be graduating from Fairfield University with an MFA in Creative Writing. This achievement kills two birds with one stone: 1) It satisfies a requirement for my course of study with the Orton-Gillingham Academy, and 2) It has prepared me to become an author.

Those of you who know me well understand this dichotomy, but for those who don't, here's a brief explanation. At Recognition Night in 2016, John and Janet Kornreich announced that they would be giving Literacy Nassau a gift of one million dollars over the course of eight years (2017-2024). The purpose of the funding was to develop a donation-based tutoring center for children with dyslexia that would be entirely sustainable after the eight years ended. Loosely translated, I needed time to climb the ranks of the prestigious Orton-Gillingham Academy, with the goal of becoming a Fellow so that I could train teachers in OG to the point of certification.

There are many levels of certification through the Academy, but to be a Fellow, one must commit to a total of no less than 600 hours of practicum, three different application processes, dozens upon dozens of readings and observations, and at least

300 hours of classroom training. It's a mammoth commitment, one which also happens to involve the prerequisite of a Master's degree. The Master's could be in anything, so over the past two years, I seized the opportunity by pursuing an MFA in Creative Writing.

As a child, I read voraciously. The daughter of a dyslexic mother and a genius father (literally - my dad's IQ is 160), I was blessed to get the best of both worlds: my mother's creative brain led to my capacity in the arts, while my father's intelligence resulted in my own elevated cognitive abilities. Also, as an only child, I didn't have siblings to occupy my time, so I spent hours with my nose in a book on a very regular basis. I found novels fascinating and thought authors were the most impressive celebrities on the planet. I mean, really - to have the ability to transport a reader to a different place and time? To enable a person to embody the headspace of a completely fictional character? More importantly, to touch a reader's heart, and make him/her experience an intense emotional reaction to something not only fake but completely visualized? That, to me, was pure magic.

I wanted to be able to do that. So, in college, I majored in English. I figured it (continued on page 3)

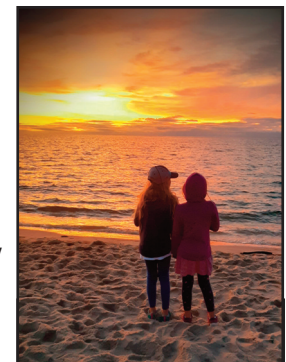
THOUGHTS FROM THE CORNER OFFICE

Hi Everyone,

Summer is a time for balance. At least, it is for me. All year long I've worked endlessly - weekends, holidays, you name it - and finally, I'm spending some well-deserved time in Cape Cod with my hubby and kids. It's funny; even when I'm technically on vacation, I'm still working. I'm tutoring a new child remotely, checking in on the office daily, finishing my final residency at school, and finally making time to teach my daughter, Julie, how to read. Someone once told me, "Life is like riding a bike. The only way to find balance is to keep moving." I think I embody that mantra.

My hope for you, dear reader, is that in this new (almost) post-COVID world, you are also able to find some balance. Whether that means making time to kick back with a new book, taking up a new hobby, heading back into the office (live), or going on a trip somewhere, I hope you can soak up the sunshine and let it re-energize you. Happy summer!

Karen 😊



My girls, pictured above, happily taking an out-breath as they watch the sky change colors on a warm July evening.





ORTON-GILLINGHAM STUDENTS COMPLETE 100 HOURS

(submitted by Kate Quijano)

We have just completed another year of OG tutoring. Our students were excited to receive their certificates of completion and our tutors can now take a well-deserved break after all their hard work over the course of the school year and the submission of their applications to the Orton Gillingham Academy. We would like to thank all of our families for their commitment to this year long practicum. We are so proud of all the progress our students have made and wish them all the best of luck in school next year. Here are some reflections on the year from some of our OG families.

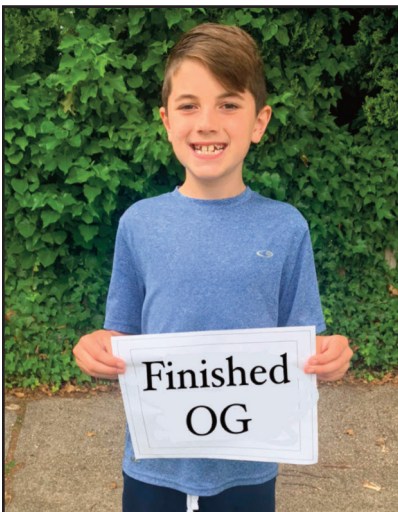
We are thrilled we participated in the donation based tutoring program. I saw huge growth with Connor this year. His confidence has increased and he read a chapter book with me this year for the 1st time!! He looked forward to his sessions with Donna and they developed a great relationship. She was kind, patient, and motivating. She made him believe he can read! Even when having to move to the zoom platform Connor thrived with Donna. He was thrilled to be back in person when the center re opened and no longer complained about the 25 min drive to the center. Thanks to LN and Donna for helping Connor realize he can learn to read!! We are forever grateful! - The Scheinman Family



I will be eternally grateful to Literacy Nassau for everything they have done for my son, Jonas. I was hopeless and with a lot of doubts, but Karen really walked me through it and patiently explain to me everything regarding dyslexia and what should I do next with my son. I want to thank all the people that work hard to give hope and help to those kids with dyslexia and families that are struggling. I want to thank Sam Aizer for all her dedication and patience with my son, without her Jonas couldn't reach 12 reading levels up! I'm so blessed to find you and we will continue our journey with LN. God bless you always for all you do. - Ana Carrillo



Bryce completed the 100 hour Orton-Gillingham program with his tutor Melissa. It was a challenging program for him but he kept at his sessions both live and virtual when necessary throughout the entire school year. He was so proud of himself for finishing the program and felt a sense of accomplishment. This accomplishment helped with his confidence and self-esteem. Thank you Literacy Nassau for all that you do! The Zwerling Family



It was incredible to have a personalized plan for Gavin. It helped him tremendously and he has made amazing strides this year. Thank you!! - The Wynne Family



Claire had an amazing experience at Literacy Nassau. She learned so much this year. We are so proud of how far she has come. I cannot say enough about her tutor Bonnie. This was truly a wonderful experience! -The Reynolds Family



We are so grateful for Literacy Nassau and Collin's teacher Christina! The OG program helped Collin make so much progress this year and has taught him many strategies that he will use forever! - The Friel Family





MUSINGS ON MY MFA (CONTINUED)

was a pragmatic choice, given that English majors could go on to do lots of different things in the workforce. My mother told me I would be a great lawyer. An early mentor of mine suggested I go into advertising. But there was one class I took my senior year that spoke to me. The class was called Contemporary Memoir, and its final project was a thirty page piece of creative non-fiction that helped me untangle my complicated feelings over my parents' divorce. It reminded me of the power of writing, solidifying in my heart that my dream job would be to become a novelist. But I packed that dream up in a box and shoved it in the back of my cranial closet, in the same way that so many kids dismiss their lofty aspirations of becoming a baseball player or a famous actress or pop star. I needed to do things like pay the rent, buy groceries, and save for a car. Grown-up stuff.

As a result, I ended up working as an English teacher right after graduating college. I was a leave replacement for two years in a row, until all the pregnant women came back to work and I found myself out of a job. Fast forward to 2019, when I started my journey at Fairfield University, and I had to laugh at the irony of the situation. I was going back to school to study something I dreamed of learning more about as a kid - and I got to do that as part of a work requirement?! Could a person get luckier than that?

Since the start of my Master's journey, I have written four full length novels. Four. In two years. I refused to squander even a second of the incredible opportunity I'd been given to learn about the business and craft of writing professionally. I have gone above and beyond in my study of the publishing landscape by fully immersing myself in the (terrifying) process of finding a literary agent. I've rewritten two of my four manuscripts under the direction of one particular agent who I'm hoping will sign me soon.

I've also served as a Teaching Assistant to my faculty mentor this semester. I am hosting two seminars this week: 1) Literary vs. Commercial Fiction, and 2) Mastering Rejection: The Art of Finding a Literary Agent. I'm introducing my mentor at his reading (which may not sound like a big deal, but believe me, it is an honor), and he and I have been discussing potential opportunities for me to teach some craft classes in the future.

All the while, I've been fully immersed in the Orton-Gillingham process by taking on more and more students at varying levels. I plan to apply to the Academy as a Fellow in March 2023. If my application is successful, I'll be celebrating that in the summer of 2023.

And who knows? If all goes well, you might be able to pick up a copy of my debut novel at Barnes & Noble that summer too.

CITIZENSHIP CLASS AND MARIA MALYSHEVA

(submitted by Fran Fox, Tutor)

One of the programs that Literacy Nassau offers is "Citizenship Class." I have been fortunate enough to provide instruction on American civics that helps non-citizens pass the U.S. Citizenship class. As a citizen of the United States, you can vote in national elections and contribute to your community.

Since the fall of 2020, I have been teaching small groups using Zoom technology to conduct our classes. The goal of this class is to offer people the opportunity to practice their speaking and reading skills and acquire knowledge about the United States. This entails learning about America's geography, an overview on our history starting in 1492 with Columbus' arrival and most importantly information about the Constitution and our rights and responsibilities.

The entire class curriculum focuses on the 100 possible questions on the test. At your citizenship test, the USCIS officer will ask you up to 10 questions from the list of 100 civics test questions. You only have to answer 6 out of 10 questions correctly to pass!

Our most recent success story is Maria Malysheva! Maria and her husband arrived in Hewlett, NY from Russia in 2014. She was a doctor while living in Russia and is now studying to pass certification to practice in the United States.

Maria said that her test took place in Holtsville, in Suffolk County. It consisted of 3 parts. During the first part of her interview, she was asked 6 questions about America which she answered correctly. Then in the second part, Maria was required to read a question and provide a written answer. The third part consisted of a conversation about Maria herself with the USCIS officer.

I hope this article provides an understanding about Citizenship Class and I look forward to continuing in the fall.

CONGRATULATIONS to **MARIA MALYSHEVA** on becoming a United States citizen!



Warm July Birthday Wishes!

Barbara Alster – Janet Baram – George Bleckman
Eric Bonge – Shelly Brennan – Joanne Brun
Sid Burgreen - David Caines – Janis Caravello
Deborah Cavalieri-Arden – Carol Ann Ceraldi
Andrew Corsi – Erin Daly – Aisha Deljanin
Helene Doleyres – Susan Fitzgerald – Ed Friedman
Gloria Glick – Audrey Green – Anna Maria Iannetta
Elise Knauer – Carmen Lloyd – Helene Marcus
Christine Martin – Roseann Michelson
Phyllis Modiano – Camille Mowatt – Lynn Newman
Nancy Reedy – Mary Jane Regan – Patricia Regan
Susan Risberg – Kevin Ryan – Dianne Saccone
Karen Santoro – Jane Schwartz – Susan Shaw
Cynthia Spiletic – Trish Szendrey – Susan Woodward
Anne Zajac – Nathalie Zephirin

Warm August Birthday Wishes!

Amina Ahmed – Alison Auerbach – Eleanor Blackman
Elinor Brown – Evelyn Chevalier-Richards
Miriam Cobian – Stephanie Coons – Maryann Deveau
Eileen Eder – Judy Elfenbein – Barbara Entes
Jerry Fitzgerald – Marcie Granick – Anita Greenman
Maureen Gunderson – Patricia Hanlon – Barbara Kiprik – Fran Kistler – Harriet Klein – Debbie Levine
Robin Lillyreed – Angela Milora – Jazmin Mooney
Mike Moran – Linda Napoli – Mary Ellen Nardiello-
Janet O'Keefe – Victoria Perrone – Anthony Pustorino
Nancy Reibling – Patricia Rossi – Ann Scavetta
Elizabeth Tilton – Reed Toscano – Eleanor Turino
Suzanne Valls – Glenda Vieites – Bridget Ward





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