



Concord Review Society

Newsletter and Forum

To Promote Varsity Academics® in High Schools

"Be Serious"

A Letter from the Founder



As you know, I am very grateful for the work in history which you offered for publication in *The Concord Review*. It is also very nice to have your news as you venture through more education and into so many interesting lines of work. Your membership in the Concord Review Society and your support are much appreciated.

When I was teaching, I always liked the kids who dared to "be serious" about their academic work. Sometimes these were students headed for very selective colleges, but a lot of times they were not. I always felt that the siren cries of their peers and their culture to get them to goof off or do less or fail to make an effort just slid off them, because they held themselves to a higher internal standard of work. I was not only in their debt, because they

made teaching more worthwhile, but I also admired them for holding out against so many invitations to slow down and not try very hard.

As you may be aware, the new SAT and the new ACT tests now include a writing test, which asks students to write for 25 minutes on such challenging academic questions as "What is your opinion of school dress codes?" This reflects a general and widespread dumbing-down of writing in the schools, which only brings more lamentations from college professors, and may incline a large fraction of college freshmen eventually to give up and drop out of school. *The Concord Review* published a study in 2002 (it is on our redesigned website under TCR Institute) of the state of the history term paper in U.S. high schools. It found that the majority of teachers no longer assigned 12-page papers. I got a letter from the head of the history department at the Boston Latin School, an exam school and the oldest public school in the country, saying that they had not assigned "the traditional term paper" for more than a decade.

Which brings me to two thoughts. One, good for you that you were willing to be serious and to do good work reading for and writing your history research paper while you were in high school, and two, we need a lot of help in bucking the culture of

stupidification when it comes to reading nonfiction books and writing research papers in the schools. One organization, which teaches teachers how to write personal essays and fiction, gets \$17,000,000 a year from the Federal Government. When I talked to senior people at the National Endowment for the Humanities about help for *The Concord Review*, The National Writing Board, The National History Club, and the Ralph Waldo Emerson Prizes, I was told that while they thought everything we were doing was great, they couldn't fund any of it, because it dealt with "process not content." So we have no federal grants at all.

Of course donations would be wonderful, but we also need contacts with media people, recommendations for the kind of Board of Directors members who, for example, every private school needs to help raise an endowment, and any other contacts you may think of with people who care about nonfiction reading and serious academic writing in the school. Just send me their names and addresses. Best wishes,

Will Fitzhugh
Founder & President

A Letter from the Executive Director

Andrew J. Spadafora

As the Concord Review Society marks its first anniversary, I am pleased to report that the past year has been a very productive one for the Society and for *The Concord Review* itself. The *Review* has benefited from national press coverage in *The New York Times*, *The Washington Post*, and *Education Week*, among others. Meanwhile, the Concord Review Society's expanding membership and the generous donations made by many members and their families are a testament to your commitment to improving high school academics.

In June, former executive director Chris Nasson left the Concord Review Society for Charlottesville, Virginia, where he will attend the University of Virginia Law School. Thanks to Chris's efforts, the Society grew to include over one hundred and fifty members, and it is in a strong position to achieve both of its principal goals: promoting high school achievement in history and making communication between former *Concord Review* authors possible. As Chris's successor, I hope to be able to continue and expand his valuable work along both of these fronts.

I wrote to many of you in June to introduce myself. For those of you who have joined in the meantime, my name is Andrew Spadafora. I first learned of *The Concord Review* in 1998, when a high school history teacher in my home town of Lake Forest, Illinois suggested that I submit

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surprised and pleased I was when, arriving at home exhausted from a late-night flight into Chicago, I opened a letter from Will Fitzhugh and learned that my essay would be published. Since then, I have continued my interest in European history during a year abroad in Denmark and four years at Amherst College, from which I graduated this past May.

Before pursuing a Ph.D. in history in the fall of 2005, I hope to help The Concord Review, Inc. raise some of the money it needs to ensure that it can continue to promote Varsity Academics through *The Concord Review*, the National Writing Board and the National History Club. From my own experience in being published, and from what I had read in the national news media and in books on the history and sociology of education, it seemed to me that TCR

a research paper I had written for her course in modern European history. I did, and I can still recall how

offered a necessary and all-too-rare encouragement of hard work and serious standards.

We have become so accustomed to hearing reports on the declining test scores and the growing ignorance of students in the United States, if not in other parts of the English-speaking world, that they no longer shock us. But forget about the statistics for a moment and imagine what it would have been like to leave high school without the skills—research, close reading and analysis, synthesizing sources, developing an argument, and strong writing—that enabled you to write the paper which you sent to *The Concord Review*.

It goes without saying that many students never have the opportunity to learn and develop these skills, which are essential for college and for most careers in the new century's knowledge-based economy. TCR's goal is to reach more of these students by providing them with outstanding examples of their peers' academic work, and inspiring them to take their own work seriously. To achieve this goal we need first of all to "get the word out."

Fortunately, as I suggested, TCR has continued to make progress during the 2004 calendar year. In addition to media attention, we have received more funding from foundation grants this year than in the past, thanks in part to the Earhart Foundation and the Gilder Lehrman Institute. Submissions to *The Concord Review* have increased. Meanwhile, the National History Club now has eighty-six chapters in thirty states and one abroad, involving over 2700 students. And we have updated and expanded our website to make it easier and more enjoyable to use.

The Concord Review Society, too, continues to grow at a steady pace. Since July, thirty authors have joined, bringing the Society to a membership of one hundred and eighty-eight. We are also very proud to note a substantial increase in giving to The Concord Review, Inc. by CRS members, their families, and several other supporters. We last reported a donation total of \$2,370.00; thanks to a number of generous donors that figure is now \$26,285.00. With your ongoing support, we hope to continue to make progress toward our ultimate goal of an endowment. We recognize that many members have limited funds, and we have therefore been all the more grateful for their contributions. All gifts, of whatever sum, bring us closer to ensuring that The Concord Review, Inc. can continue to champion high standards and serious work at the high school level. Over the next year, I hope we can find ways to work in common toward this end.



Author Notes

Volume 2 ('89-'90)

Risa Diamond Arbolino received her B.A. from Columbia University and her Ph.D. in anthropology from Southern Methodist University. She is now an archaeologist at the Smithsonian's National Museum of Natural History in Washington, D.C., where she works for the Repatriation Office to return human remains and cultural objects to Native American tribes.

Ethan Korngold, who majored in biochemistry while at Harvard College, received his M.D. from Washington University in St. Louis. In 2003 he was a medical resident in internal medicine at Massachusetts General Hospital in Boston, where he has begun a cardiology fellowship this year.

Volume 3 ('90-'91)

Frances Hsieh recently completed her J.D. and M.B.A. degrees at Stanford University. She reports that she has traveled to thirty-five countries on five continents—and counting.

After graduating summa cum laude from Cornell University in 1995, **Bryan A. Williams** worked in a variety of different fields in New York and Boston. In the spring of 2003, he was married and finished an M.A. in Latin at Columbia University. Bryan and his wife moved a year ago from New York to a small town near Austin, Texas, and we hope they've been enjoying their new home.

Holly Hilsenbeck is now in her fourth year as a pathology resident at the University of Kentucky Medical Center, where she writes that she is "learning how to diagnose diseases, how to run a clinical laboratory, and how to work up difficult cases." Holly graduated Phi

Beta Kappa from Clemson University in 1996, and received her M.D. with honors from the University of Tennessee at Memphis, joining the medical honor society Alpha Omega Alpha along the way. After her residency, she plans to do a fellowship in a subspecialty of pathology and then move on to private practice in the southeastern U.S.

Volume 4 ('92-'93)

We would like to congratulate **Carlos de Vera**, who received his LL.B. and B.C.L. from McGill University Law School this past June. After graduating from Yale in 1997, he attended the University of Toronto for his master's degree in history and international relations. Before law school, Carlos worked two years for the Organization for Security and Peace in Europe's Mission to Bosnia as Coordinator for Special Projects, where he focused on election preparations and on monitoring the municipal and general elections of 2000. He is now based in Toronto, where he has begun his first year with the firm of Baker & McKenzie in their litigation practice group.

Alyson Hrynyk of Edmonton, Alberta, received her B.A. in history from the University of Alberta. She is currently working towards a Ph.D. in film studies at the University of Chicago.

Benjamin Hulse graduated magna cum laude from Harvard in 1999. He then attended the University of Chicago Law School, where he was a member of the Order of the Coif and managing editor of the University of Chicago Law Review. After receiving his J.D., he served as law clerk to the Hon. James B. Loken, chief judge of the U.S. Court of Appeals for the Eighth Circuit, and for the past year he has been an attorney at the Chicago firm of Kirkland & Ellis.

Volume 5 ('93-'94)

Natasha Vallini Broemling earned her B.Sc. in biological sciences from the University of Alberta, where she minored in history. She also attended medical school at Alberta, and is now employed as a medical resident at the University of British Columbia. She reports that her residency revolves around patient care.

Margaret Sloan is pursuing her Ph.D. in English at the University of California at Santa Barbara. After graduating from Yale, Margaret writes, she was a teacher in an elementary school in California, and worked in Madrid, Spain, for the Association of International Schools, where she organized professional development.

Jason Hopkins of Salt Lake City received his B.A. from Amherst College, graduating magna cum laude and with high distinction in fine arts. He then traveled to Sao Paulo, Brazil on a church service mission for two years. Upon his return to the U.S., Jason enrolled at the School of the Art Institute of Chicago, which awarded him a B.F.A. in studio art and an M.F.A. in art and technology. He now teaches art and animation at the Art Institute.

Volume 6 ('94-'95)

Congratulations to **Sarah Boon**, who will complete her Ph.D. in Arctic glaciology this October at the University of Alberta. Sarah, who graduated from the University of Victoria with an Honours degree in geography and environmental studies, will begin a postdoctoral fellowship in glaciology and ocean-atmosphere interactions at her alma mater, Victoria, in January. There she will also teach an upper level

Author Notes

undergraduate course. Sarah is a freelance science writer and recently published an article in *Above 'n' Beyond*, Canada's Arctic magazine.

Arjun Mehra, Williams College class of 1998, has begun studying for his M.B.A. at Berkeley this fall. After graduating with a degree in economics from Williams, he worked for six years in investment banking, focusing on mergers and acquisitions with the international firm RBC Capital Markets.

Volume 7 ('96-'97)

Andrea Arrington informed us that she is a graduate student at Emory University in Atlanta, where she is working toward a Ph.D. in African history. A graduate of Knox College, where she received her degree cum laude and with honors in history, Andrea participated in a study abroad program to Zimbabwe. She has returned to Africa several times: on a grant from the Ford Foundation to Zimbabwe, on a Watson Fellowship to West Africa, and on a research trip to Zambia this past summer. Andrea writes that her dissertation "will focus on the labor history of Livingstone, Zambia with a specific focus on the impact of gender on the development of the formal and informal sectors of employment during the twentieth century."

Randa Khouri graduated cum laude and with honors from the University of Maryland at College Park in 1999. There she majored in civil engineering, and took the Fundamentals of Engineering Exam the following year. Randa is currently working for VIKA, Inc., a land development firm based in Virginia where, she writes, "I perform site design and preparation for the developer, while coordinating with the architects, landscape architects,

[and] real estate lawyers." Several years ago she traveled to Lebanon, the subject of her essay in *The Concord Review*, and this fall she is looking forward to becoming an aunt.

Emerson Prize winner **Lisa Hopkins** is now an opera singer, and has performed in a number of operas across the country. After graduating from Yale, Lisa went on a church mission to Austria and then received her master's degree in music from the Manhattan School of Music. She received a Tony Award for her performance in *La Boheme* on Broadway, and will perform the title role in *Madame Butterfly* this fall at the University of Nebraska. Her future performances include the title role in the U.S. premiere of a Handel opera in early 2005, in New York City. Lisa has also won the Marilyn Horne Foundation Recital Series competition and will give solo recitals throughout the U.S. in the next few years.

Writing to us from Ireland, **Christoph Schmidt-Supprian** reports that he is currently working on his Ph.D. at Trinity College, Dublin, where he also received his B.A. in history and English literature. His dissertation will focus on the German occupation of Belgium during World War I, and he plans to publish a paper he contributed to an international conference in Brussels in 2003, entitled "German Economists and the 'Antwerp Question.'" Christoph will finish his Ph.D. in early 2005 and intends afterwards to find employment teaching and researching history.

Volume 8 ('97-'98)

Alison Friedman continues to reside in Beijing, China, following a year-long study of the development of modern dance in China on a Fulbright Fellowship. A Brown University alumna since 2002, Alison was Phi

Beta Kappa and received her B.A. magna cum laude in comparative literature and Chinese translation. She has climbed Mt. Kilimanjaro, and has been performing and doing choreography in Beijing in addition to continuing her research.

Toby Berkman is a Herbert Scoville, Jr. Peace Fellow at the Henry L. Stimson Center, a think tank in Washington, D.C., where he conducts research on international peace operations. He graduated summa cum laude from Harvard College, and then worked as a teacher in Morocco and at a peacebuilding organization in Jerusalem. Eventually Toby would like to get a graduate degree in international relations and conflict resolution.

Volume 9 ('98-'99)

Nicole Perlman majored in film production and dramatic writing while at New York University, from which she received her B.F.A. A screenwriter, she has won both the 2001 Sloan Grant for science-oriented screenwriting, and the 2003 Open Door screenwriting contest sponsored by Script Magazine and Splendid Pictures. She has spent time in London, where she interned with the BBC for the show "East-enders" and also taught school.

Earlier this year, **Patrick Stone** wrote to tell us that he is a project engineer supporting the development of satellite systems. While in the Washington, D.C. area, he has begun work on a master's degree from George Washington University's Elliot School of International Affairs in Science, Technology and Public Policy. Patrick has also earned both a bachelor's and a master's degree in electrical engineering from Boston University, where he was second in his class at the College of Engineering.

Author Notes

We'd like to wish **Sarah McKinley** the best of luck at her new position with the International Organization for Migration (IOM) in Mexico City. A graduate of the University of Chicago, where she majored in history and received both general and departmental honors, Sarah received a grant to study Spanish in Spain in the summer of 2000, and has traveled widely in Europe, Northern Africa, the U.S. and Canada. After finishing college, she stayed in Chicago to work for the Greater Southwest Development Corporation, which aims to strengthen the industrial base of the city's south side neighborhoods. Sarah hopes to remain with the IOM in Mexico City for up to a year, focusing on issues of human trafficking along the border with Guatemala.

Volume 10 ('99-'00)

Since this February, **Erica Bernstein** has been with BBC Worldwide Americas as a research coordinator in New York City. She reports that her position involves the acquisition of U.S. market research in all aspects of media, as well as an internal communications and PR function. After graduating from Tufts University in 2003, Erica also worked as a communications specialist at the firm of Pitney Bowes, Inc.

James Egelhofer, a winner of the Emerson Prize in 2001, graduated from Brown University this past spring. At Brown, he was a music and comparative literature major, and he was also active in the arts scene, especially in producing and managing theater. James now lives in New York, where he is enjoying his job at the classical music management company IMG Artists.

During the summer, **Sara Newland** began work as the Wellesley-Yenching Fellow at Chung

Chi College, Chinese University of Hong Kong, where she is a teaching and research assistant for the English Department. Sara graduated a year early (in 2003) from Wellesley College, receiving her B.A. magna cum laude and with honors in political science. At Wellesley, she was president of the political science honor society and won numerous creative writing awards. She spent last year teaching middle school in a high-need area of rural North Carolina, and intends to pursue a graduate degree in political theory after her time in China.

Hana Field writes us from Chicago, "I am happy to have just started working in the political office of the Illinois Attorney General. The job includes everything from writing and event planning to organizing and coordinating the campaign." After being published in *The Concord Review*, she won first place in the first annual Gilder Lehrman Institute for American History Contest, and majored in politics at the University of California at Santa Cruz. Hana plans to keep learning, writing, and being active in her community.

Volume 11 ('00-'01)

Barry Wenger is in his senior year at the University of California, Davis, where he is pursuing a B.S. in civil engineering. His concentration is in structural engineering, and he has participated in the campus-wide honors program called the Davis Honors Challenge. In the future, Barry plans to attend graduate school, either in engineering or perhaps architecture. He hopes to design large-scale urban buildings such as stadiums, shopping malls, office buildings and convention centers.

After working for the summer in a French restaurant in her home town of New Orleans, **Emily Dupuis** is studying abroad in Paris during her

last year of college. Emily attends Louisiana State University, from which she received a generous scholarship to pursue her double major in French and international studies in France during 2004-05. Emily plans to enter law school after graduation.

Tessa Levine-Sauerhoff is a senior at Oberlin College, majoring in art history and women's studies. She has served as program director for the Interlocken Center for Experiential Learning in New Hampshire, and has also spent time in Thailand. While abroad, she studied Thai and volunteered at an art therapy center for disabled adults.

Volume 12 ('01-'02)

Jessica Leight, a member of the class of 2006 at Yale University, is studying ethics, politics and economics. She writes, "Last spring I received two research grants from Yale to travel to Chile and do research on the political economy of free trade agreements there." Jessica intends to continue traveling and studying Latin American political economy, and eventually to obtain a Ph.D.

Martin Broyles is at the University of Iowa, from which he will graduate next spring with a degree in economics and anthropology. During his time in Iowa City, Martin reports that he has mostly been focusing on his studies, while working part-time at the university bookstore and becoming involved with progressive political organizations.

Nathan Piper has returned to the U.S. from Egypt, where he spent this past summer studying at the Arabic Language Institute of the American University in Cairo. A junior at the University of Pennsylvania, Nathan is a Ben Franklin Scholar, has been on the

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Dean's List each year, and is a board member of the Penn Arab Student Society and the Free Palestine Action Network. He plays the piano, tutors, and does weightlifting while at college, and is considering several possible careers for the future: in government, law, or the military.

A junior at Yale, **Erica Oppenheimer** is majoring in political science and international studies. She has been active in a number of groups at college, including the Model United Nations, Alpha Phi Omega, the Pi Phi sorority, and *The Politic* magazine, as well as the American Political Science Association and World Affairs Council. Erica has also served as Lead Intern at the D.C.-based U.S. Chamber of Commerce, Western Hemisphere Division, where she monitored the Chamber's free trade agreement initiatives in Latin America.

Damaris Yeh will graduate this next spring from Yale University with a B.S. in biology. She has spent several summers interning at the Yale School of Medicine, conducting research under Professor Ronald Duman. Damaris has also been a Freshman Bible Study leader, a cellist in the Yale Bach Society Orchestra, and coordinator of the Artful Tales program at the Yale Art Gallery. She plans to attend medical school.

Volume 13 ('02-'03)

Michael Korzinstone of Toronto is attending the Wharton School of Business at the University of Pennsylvania. He writes, "At Penn, I am busy with the sailing club, as well as the Pennsylvania Investment Alliance and the Wharton Investment Club," and last fall he helped put on an annual benefit dinner for soup kitchens in West Philadelphia. Michael interned at RBC Capital Markets this past summer, and plans a career in finance.

Hana Lee graduated from Hunter College High School in New York City in 2003, and is now in her second year at Harvard University. While in high school, she was first in her class and a National Merit Scholarship winner, and she participated in science fairs, math competitions, and Model United Nations conferences. Hana is interested in biochemistry, and hopes eventually to pursue a career in the sciences.

John Holman has begun his first year at Penn's Wharton School of Business this fall. While in high school, John was an AP Scholar with Distinction, a National Merit Finalist, a member of the Cum Laude Society, and was on the honor roll at Polytechnic School in California. He was also named the Prep League MVP in varsity soccer, and was a member of the state champion team for club soccer in 2003.

Sophomore **Nancy Cheng** is pre-med and majoring in biochemical sciences. After graduating from high school in Wichita, Kansas, where she was valedictorian, an All-USA Academic All-Star, and received a Toyota Scholarship, Nancy enrolled at Harvard. During the past year she has played the violin in the Bach Society Orchestra, become co-coordinator of the Harvard Hospital Volunteer Program, served on student-faculty committees, and become associate editor of the *Journal of the Harvard-MIT Hippocratic Society*, among other things.

Volume 14 ('03-'04)

Austin Woerner was valedictorian of his class at Wellesley High School in Massachusetts, and he was named a National Merit Scholar this past spring. He was intensely involved in music, especially classical composition, during high school, and

has composed a work for orchestra (performed by the Wellesley Symphony Orchestra) and several chamber music pieces. Austin attends Yale University, where he plans to major in international studies and to continue his study of music and foreign languages.

Ari Sofair-Fisch of West Orange, New Jersey is spending his first year of college studying in Israel with the Yeshiva University program there.

Dashini Ann Jeyathurai is a member of the Carleton College class of 2008, and the winner of Carleton's Starr International Scholarship. She wrote a paper on the German *Bildungsroman* which is to be published in an international journal of the theory and practice of creative writing. Dashini hails from Johor Bahru, Malaysia, and hopes to become a professor of Southeast Asian literature.

Kyle Lebell is in her sophomore year at Mount Holyoke College. There she was elected as a Speaking, Arguing, and Writing Mentor and as President of the Jewish Student Union, and she received the Hubbel Book Prize from the French Department. She plans to study and travel over the next few years, and to attend rabbinical school after graduation.

Paul DiRado graduated this past spring from Cactus Shadows High School in Arizona, where he was on the Dean's List and the National Dean's List, and now attends Whitman College. During the summer he worked with a high school economics teacher to write an introduction to a business textbook. Paul intends to major in mathematics and philosophy and ultimately would like to go to graduate school in philosophy.



Services of The Concord Review, Inc.

The Concord Review Varsity Academics®

Since 1987, *The Concord Review*, a quarterly journal, has published 60 issues with 660 high school history papers by students from 43 states and 33 other countries. Essays average 5,500 words, with Turabian (Chicago Manual of Style) endnotes and bibliography, and may be on any historical topic (ancient or modern, domestic or foreign). We publish approximately 8% of the essays we receive.

David McCullough wrote: "I very much like and support what you're doing with *The Concord Review*. It's original, important, and greatly needed." **Arthur Schlesinger Jr.** said: "*The Concord Review* offers young people a unique incentive to think and write carefully and well...*The Concord Review* inspires and honors historical literacy. It should be in every high school in the land." **William R. Fitzsimmons**, Dean of Admissions at Harvard College, has said: "We have been very happy to have reprints of essays published in *The Concord Review*, submitted by a number of our applicants over the years, to add to the information we consider in making admission decisions...All of us here in the Admissions Office are big fans of *The Concord Review*." We seek to recognize those students who are working hard in their study of history and to motivate their peers with examples of good historical writing.

National History Club

The National History Club, founded in 2002, now has more than 2,700 members in 86 secondary school history club chapters in thirty states and one foreign country. There is no fee for a high school to be granted a charter by the National History Club. Our goal is the promotion of the reading, writing, discussion, and pleasures of history among secondary school students and teachers of history. High school history clubs which join the NHC may be of several different kinds. Some may already be established. Others may be newly formed. Some will emphasize local history and site visits, others may focus on reading history books together and writing serious history papers. History Clubs may choose to invest their time into History Day or History Fair projects of various kinds. History Clubs from the same region may even coordinate activities with each other.

We provide members with a biannual newsletter (available at www.tcr.org), sharing information about Club activities in member chapters throughout the country. We also award a book prize to a History Student of the Year in each club. Our goal is to have a Club that is able to connect students of diverse backgrounds and varying abilities from high schools across the country.

National Writing Board

The National Writing Board, founded in 1998, has now given an independent, unbiased assessment of high school history papers from 29 states. Each author receives a three-page report, with scores and comments, which she/he has asked us to send to college admissions officers (at 72 colleges so far), or simply could use as feedback on one of her/his best history research papers. History research papers of two lengths—around 2,000 words, or around 5,000 words—with Turabian (Chicago Manual of Style) endnotes and bibliography, may be submitted, with a notarized Submission Form and a check for \$100, to the National Writing Board. We spend almost three hours on each paper. Deadlines for submission are November 1 and June 1 each year.

The following colleges and universities now endorse this independent assessment service for academic writing: Amherst, Boston University, Bowdoin, Carnegie Mellon, Claremont McKenna, Colgate, Connecticut College, Dartmouth, Duke, Eckerd, Emory, George Mason, Georgetown, Hamilton, Harvard, Haverford, Illinois Wesleyan, Lafayette, Lehigh, Michigan, Middlebury, Northwestern, Notre Dame, Pitzer, Princeton, Richmond, Sarah Lawrence, Spelman, Trinity (CT), Tufts, Virginia, Washington and Lee, Williams, and Yale.

Concord Review Society Member Column

READING, WRITING—AND TEACHING— HISTORY

By Sarah Weiss

Writing history requires more than primary sources, an original thesis and a good editing pen. At times in my history education, I have thought that a successful history paper would require original copies of the *Jewish Daily Forward* in Yiddish or correspondences between social workers and Italian families in the 1930s in New Haven. Most frequently during my college years, I have longed for my father's red editing pen, uncapped during elementary and high school on the Sunday morning before a due date.

Yet, I have discovered that the standard elements of good history research and writing are naught without high quality history teaching. History teachers have provided direction to me in years of historical research on the universal struggle for justice—in Chicago, premodern Asia and in the history of race and education in the United States.

In the fourth grade at Abraham Lincoln Elementary School, a Chicago public school, two teachers taught me one of the most important lessons necessary to becoming an historian. They taught me that I was more than a student of the discipline, or a recorder of time. Rather, I had a stake in the past and a responsibility to the present. By learning history, I was increasingly a part of what I learned and a full participant in the way history is examined and remembered.

These two teachers taught this lesson to their students by recounting their own participation in history. One teacher, a middle-aged black woman, grew up in the South on her family's farm. She vividly remembered the days she spent pulling cotton out of thorny bolls. She subsequently required us to explore other life stories that were a part of history, and to think of history as a living body of people and stories.

Another teacher was a white former nun. She marched with Martin Luther King, Jr. from Selma to Montgomery, Alabama in 1965. Two summers ago, my mother and I retraced this route from the Edmund Pettus Bridge in nearly deserted Selma down U.S. route 80 to Montgomery. My teacher's story gave me a sense of what the civil rights movement meant to its organizers; once I visited Selma myself, I began to understand what the civil rights movement and its history could mean to me.

Between the fourth grade and college, I worked on several research projects, most of which followed the theme of struggling for justice. Hannah Shapiro began the

1910 garment workers strike in Chicago. Oscar Micheaux wrote and produced films in the 1920s that asked questions about race and gender in the context of the race riots at the beginning of the twentieth century.

The history of justice continued as an interest when I arrived at Yale University in the fall of 2001. History evolved into a discipline for me, with influences of philosophy, literature, drama and sociology. In Yale's Manuscripts and Archives Library, I pored over boxes of field notes written by a social worker in

New Haven studying the condition of Italian immigrant families in the 1930s. In Yale's basement Microform room, I scrolled through pages of Memphis newspapers looking for editorials related to the 1968 sanitation workers' strike that set the stage for King's assassination. I searched in the Sterling Memorial Library stacks for John Milton's *Areopagitica* – his address to the London Parliament on censorship. I hoped to find a philosophical explanation of access to knowledge to aid in my exploration of censorship and publishing in seventeenth-century China.

The right of access to knowledge and who partakes in the struggle for these liberties has been a recurring theme in my history education. I have learned to participate in this study of justice from my fourth grade teachers who recounted their participation in history and from my mother's initiative to get into a car and drive across the country to places of historical importance. I have also learned from John Delury, a Ph.D. candidate in History, and Dean Stephen Lasonde, an education historian at Yale, to address history with an interdisciplinary mind and the ambition to search for information that

lends to a fuller illustration of particular moments in history.

Last semester, I conducted an independent study on race and ethnicity in American education, with a focus on the history of desegregation. This year, I will research a desegregation case, *Green v. County School Board of New Kent County, Virginia* (1968) for my History senior essay. Though the population of New Kent County was equal parts white and black in the 1960s, and not residentially segregated, its schools existed under a *de jure* segregated system. The U.S. Supreme Court declared the school system illegally segregated and rejected its "freedom of choice," or voluntary, desegregation plan. The Court went on to

History teachers have driven my interest in historical research and writing.



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Article: “Romantic Fiction”

WHAT PASSES TODAY FOR STUDENT ACADEMIC WRITING

By Will Fitzhugh

Education Week, Commentary Section

15 September 2004

A Senior at Harvard College recently told the story of her first expository writing class in college. As a high school student in California she had never written anything longer than a five-paragraph essay. When her instructor at Harvard announced the first paper and said it would be five to eight, she said, “Paragraphs?” and everyone in the class, including the instructor, laughed at her.

But her experience is not that unusual. A study done in 2002 for *The Concord Review* found that the majority of U.S. high school students no longer write history research papers. In fact, the head of the history department at Boston Latin School, an exam high school which is the oldest public school in the country, told us that teachers there had not assigned the “traditional history term paper” for more than a decade.

What sort of writing are our students doing instead? In the case of many, if not most, it amounts to diary entries, creative writing, and personal essays, including the sort of expressions of opinion that require no reading and not much thought. The SAT, starting in 2005, will include an essay which accounts for 800 points

Often student writing amounts to the sort of expressions of opinion that require no reading and not much thought.

of the 2400 points on the revised exam. This essay test is much the same as the old SATII writing test, which thousands of students in Boston have managed to “beat” by spending six or eight hours with a tutoring service. There they are taught to write an essay, memorize it, and then reproduce it to the College Board’s “novel” prompt. According to a report last year in *The Boston Globe*, students at one such service averaged a score of 747.

In addition to these short opinion pieces, many college admissions offices ask applicants for 500-word accounts of their personal lives, struggles, encounters, reflections, and so on—again, the sort of writing that requires no knowledge of anything beyond the applicant,

and no reading. The damage that these sorts of writing expectations do to the amount of nonfiction reading done in the high schools is the subject for another article, but let me note here what Willard M. Dix, a college counselor at the University of Chicago’s Laboratory School, discovered recently, when he asked a panel of Illinois admissions counselors what they thought the new SAT’s impact would be on the teaching of writing in the high schools. Mr. Dix, who had been advising the counselors on the test, wanted to see if they’d talked among themselves or with other educators about its possible influence on their students or on their teaching of writing. “I might as well have been speaking in tongues,” he reported, “After a long silence, someone said, ‘Why would we do that?’”



Many high schools have literary magazines, or similar kinds of publications, in which short poems, photographs, drawings, and the like, can be displayed to demonstrate creativity. Yet, I have found only three or four high schools with magazines that publish the academic nonfiction of students.

While we may, of course, need more Hemingways, Updikes, and Stephen Kings, where will we find the next James Madison, Abraham Lincoln and David McCullough if we do not encourage, teach, and recognize serious academic writing by students while they are still in school? As *The Economist* recently commented, “One thing worse than having an elite is not having one.”

The College Board’s National Commission on Writing in the Schools last year called for more attention to writing, and in its report, provided an example of the sort of writing that Commission members thought admirable. They said, for example, that the following passage from Michael, a high school student, showed “how powerfully children can express their emotions”:

“The time has come to fight back and we are. By supporting our leaders and each other, we are stronger than ever. We will never forget those who died, nor will we forgive those who took them from us.”

I suppose this is the kind of writing, which, expanded for 25 minutes, would earn an 800 on the new SAT writing section? From my job as Editor of *The Concord Review*, I have accumulated more examples of the kind of creative/personal writing students are led to believe is worth publishing in a journal. The following entry by a


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define several aspects in which students must be desegregated, including faculty, facilities, and extra-curricular activities. *Green* explicitly extended the force and reach of *Brown v. Board of Education* to the rural South, and also into school environments where desegregated student bodies did not necessarily mean social integration. Research on this case will take me to New Kent County to conduct oral histories of former students, NAACP lawyers involved in the case, and school administrators, as well as to conduct research in the New Kent County and Virginia historical societies.

The struggle for educational equity in New Kent County, Virginia, and the continuing unrealized dream of integration in American schools today, will provide a foundation for my study of access to knowledge and justice in history. I will certainly use the passion I witnessed in my fourth grade history teachers as guidance to find my own interpretation of history's moments. The power of visiting a place and talking to participants will guide my research in New Kent County. The excitement of finding primary sources that bring my topic to life will always drive the pace of my research.

History teachers have driven my interest in historical research and writing. It is in the elementary classroom that a teacher can impact a student's attitude toward history's importance and applicability. It is in the upper grades and high school classrooms that the history teacher can give a student the tools to learn how to write and do research. It is in the college seminar room that history becomes a discipline, and in the university library in which resources seem endless. It is also in the hands of engaged parents to bring a child to places of history and to make concrete the continuity between story and place. History education will not end when I hand in the final draft of my senior essay. I will pass these lessons of history on to whomever my students are, whether my peers, students or children, and I will continue to seek the possibilities and intrigue of history. 

Sarah Weiss (Vol. 9, No. 4, "A Bintel Brief," and Vol. 11, No. 1, "Oscar Micheaux") will graduate with a Bachelor of Arts in History from Yale University in May 2005. She intends to attend law school in a year or two after graduation. Sarah's future plans include teaching social studies or history, working with low-income children in extra-curricular programs, or travel.

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9th grader, entitled "My Reflection," was received in July:

*I stare at my reflection,
Yet I don't see me.
First glance,
I thought it was you.
Second glance...
Wait...that's...me?
That's me and,
My sky blue eyes,
My nose,
My blond hair.
I stare at my reflection,
Yet I don't see me.
At first it was you.
Then it appeared
To be me.*

Some people I sent this submission to thought it was a joke, but they don't realize how much writing in the schools has become a dumbed-down, self-centered and not even very creative enterprise. Creative writing in general is held to no standard. How, after all, can one grade, or even criticize, someone else's feelings about himself?

Ironically, those same colleges that ask applicants for brief autobiographical statements as essays, are also home to the professors who routinely observe that not only do their new students seem to have difficulty reading the nonfiction books they assign, but also appear to have had little or no experience writing term papers. And meanwhile, the number of corporations and law firms with remedial writing classes for new employees continues to grow, as does the amount of money spent nationally to make up for the lack of academic expository writing in schools, colleges, and even graduate education.

Our Romantic commitment to poetry, personal journals and so on perhaps does credit to our love of student fiction and our pleasure in having something to put up on the refrigerator door. But if we don't ask our students to read nonfiction [books] and write academic research papers before they leave school, we not only dumb down their opportunities, but also deprive our society of the kind of clear, thoughtful writing it needs to maintain a democracy, power an economy, and enhance the daily lives of its citizens. And we could also find that the decline in the reading of fiction recorded in a recent National Endowment for the Arts study, would be echoed in future findings [in a study of the reading of nonfiction books] from the National Endowment for the Humanities.

Will Fitzhugh is founder of *The Concord Review, Inc.*

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