Sabbatical Leave Report

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I. SABBATICAL LEAVE REPORT ABSTRACT

My major sabbatical goals were 1) to visit college English programs in order to learn more about how the rest of the country was teaching writing, integrating literature into their courses, and encouraging students to read and write with outside activities; 2) to visit writers’ homes and talk to writers, many times in historical regional areas; 3) to read literature and literary criticism of the places visited and that that was recommended; and 4) to take classes and tutorials to become more adept at making the materials accessible to students and faculty in the form of written research, photos, and PowerPoint presentations. I was able to visit twenty college campuses and these visits will continue whenever I travel. Each campus visit gave me ideas such as Dartmouth has a forum called Open Book for students and faculty to informally discuss any concerns English majors as well as potential English majors might have. Lane Community College in Eugene, Oregon has a project called Reading Together whereby two books are selected for the year and then taught throughout various departments; these books are chosen to reflect specific themes. In addition to these visitations, I traveled to various historical regional areas where writers lived and wrote, thirty-three in all, and I will be adding more in future travels. In my summer and fall courses, these experiences such as the material from John Steinbeck’s home and Henry David Thoreau’s pond have given added richness to my classes. Furthermore, the reading materials I collected on these travels have truly enriched my knowledge that I am already passing on to students and faculty. The annotated reading list is included in this report as is the bibliography in the appendix. And finally, I had the necessary time to become more comfortable with electronic
sources through the help of the Innovation Center, several friends, and a computer class so that I can use the media in my classes and know where to go for assistance. This second sabbatical built on the first, providing me with updated and enhanced material that will affect every aspect of my teaching and all that touches.

II. INTRODUCTION AND JUSTIFICATION

It is because I felt the first sabbatical to be such an enriching experience that I was convinced that following up by updating the existing material and exploring places heretofore unvisited would be the focus of a second sabbatical. After twelve years, I had been more involved in working with English majors, had integrated literature into all my classes, and had been using electronic sources but not comfortably. And I had not had the time to visit the campuses, talk to departments, visit writers’ homes and regions, talk with docents, visit regional bookstores, update my reading, learn all that I could about the availability of sources for our transfer students, in particular those seeking English majors, or become familiar with the computer and electronic resources. I now have the research from the sabbatical in files and a bookcase for easy accessibility for my use and for sharing with my colleagues in my office. I will present my findings at the first available department meeting and have already talked with several colleagues about some of my research and how Cerritos could benefit from implementing ideas gathered such as a bulletin board in the Liberal Arts Building that highlights what the faculty is currently reading with their comments. Seeing that faculty continues to read and not just the classics but current publications is important for students and will encourage students, staff, and faculty to read and form book clubs. I will facilitate students to form book groups and recommend
reading material based on what I have learned on my travels. Having this extraordinary opportunity to research what I deem to be essential to making me the best English professor I can be will not stop with this report’s culmination, just as it did not with the first. The process is on-going and energized by the students’ enthusiasm in and out of class as well as by my colleagues who share my research with their students.

III. NARRATIVE ON SABBATICAL LEAVE

A. COLLEGE ENGLISH PROGRAMS

Colleges listed are in alphabetical order. Places visited were often a matter of being at the right place at the right time. The need to be flexible when traveling from coast to coast often dictated these campus visits that were far from Southern California. I enjoyed the diversity, enjoyed mingling with the student population, exploring the book stores, talking with staff and instructors, and prowling the hallways for good ideas to “borrow” for Cerritos. Unlike my visits twelve years ago, most of the colleges have catalogues on-line and websites advertising their schools. Nevertheless, I was able to obtain important information not available on-line or by phone. It is essential that students visit colleges of their choice before making this all-important decision for the right fit. Minority literature courses are many and most of the bookstores highlighted works by the professors teaching at each college. I will share all my materials and experiences with students and colleagues.
1. UNIVERSITY OF ARIZONA. TUCSON, ARIZONA

On March 28, 2007, I visited this campus that is representative of Southwest architecture, was visitor-friendly, and where I was able to meet a friend, Susan Green, who was teaching Creative Writing to an emeritus class. A beautiful, warm day, students were casually dressed, many in shorts, and were quick to help me find my way around. The Poetry Center sponsors a Reading Series several times during the year; the series is free to the public. I recognized Jimmy Santiago Baca who appeared December 8. I was given hand-outs for English Majors, Major and Minor Checklists, Creative Writing Majors Checklists, and the Writing Center handout. Like ours, this Writing Center tutors with all aspects of the writing process except editing and proof-reading. Appointments are scheduled up to two hours a week but drop-ins are also offered. Literature being taught successfully included Capote’s In Cold Blood, Woolf’s To the Lighthouse, Faulkner’s The Sound and the Fury, Eliot’s Middlemarch, and Joyce’s Portrait of the Artist as a Young Man. This campus would work well for many of our English majors and transfer students who would like to experience an ideal Southwest college life.

2. BENNINGTON COLLEGE. BENNINGTON, VERMONT

On September 27, 2006, I visited this private, liberal college of only 600 students. This small quintessential New England campus of 600 wooded acres, an acre for each student, is unique in that both students and professors live on campus. Students choose their own course of study and must choose four weeks in the field between semesters at their own expense. At $42,000 a year for tuition, our students would
definitely need financial aid, but I was assured it could be possible by the Assistant Director of Admissions, Holly Bratkovich, who met with me and proudly showed me all around the campus. This was an extremely hospitable visit, and I was won over in spite of the cost. Though they only have ten English professors in their English Department because of the college’s small student body, nevertheless, English majors are strongly encouraged and supported. In the bookstore, I purchased a CD of Mary Oliver reading her poems, and a memoir by John Cheever’s daughter, Susan Cheever, Treetops. Both Oliver and Cheever have taught here. The college offers an MFA program in writing and literature. This is where I would have wanted to go because of the encouraging creative atmosphere, beautiful environment, and the proximity to writers. For students interested in a small hands-on creative New England experience, Bennington should be considered.

3. CALIFORNIA STATE UNIVERSITY FULLERTON. FULLERTON, CALIFORNIA

I visited CSUF January 24, 2007 and had not been back since I received my masters in 1979 so not surprisingly, I found many changes, one of which was the English Department’s having moved to another building. I saw so much building in progress; this campus has really grown and many of my students express interest in attending CSUF because of its good reputation and proximity. I was given an English Majors Preparation sheet, Advisement worksheets, and a Graduate Studies handout. More expensive than when I attended, nevertheless, at $3,290 a year, CSUF looks like a bargain compared to Bennington. Their English Department continues to be first
class and for transfer students who need to stay close to home a good university to consider attending. The structural changes I observed taking place in building were impressive in their ever-expanding campus.

4. CALIFORNIA STATE UNIVERSITY LONG BEACH. LONG BEACH, CALIFORNIA

I visited CSULB on February 8, 2007, a state college I almost attended instead of CSUF which I chose because of its smaller size. But on this visit, I had to admit that the campus is prettier than my alma mater, hilly with more trees and more students. English is one of the largest departments with over one hundred instructors, full and part time. Their degrees are divided into Creative Writing, English Education, Literacy and Composition, Literature, and Special Emphasis. No specific courses are required at community colleges, but students can get full or partial credit for some courses. On their website, CSULB states, “Although employers sometimes complain about college graduates’ lack of literature, English majors command respect by being able to read critically, write carefully about situation and character.” Literature being taught includes all of Woolf’s works, Uncle Tom’s Cabin, Winesburg, Ohio, most of Kate Chopin’s work, Moby Dick, all of Toni Morrison’s work, House on Mango Street, much of Barbara Kingsolver’s work, Heart of Darkness, much of Edith Wharton, Henry James, James Joyce, August Wilson’s works, Mary Shelley’s Frankenstein, John Steinbeck’s Of Mice and Men, and Frank Norris’ McTeague. Many of my students choose to transfer to CSULB, a good choice for its proximity and good reputation for academics and in particular for teaching. In fact, my forty-
something son-in-law, an economics major from the University of Pennsylvania and Wharton Business School, was just accepted into the MFA program, focusing on creative writing here, a mid-life change in his professional life.

5. DARTMOUTH COLLEGE. HANOVER, NEW HAMPSHIRE

I revisited one of my favorite colleges on September 26, 2006, having visited it in fall 1994 and years before that. The New England Ivy League ambiance and the traditional English Department, a bit shabby around the edges of its wood paneling and high ceilings and drafty fireplaces, is rich in books, literary announcements, and exudes a casual elegance. Fall semester had just started and students were already complaining about their reading assignments yet with quite sophisticated language, mostly Caucasian students who appeared to be privileged. In the Shakespeare Room the night before, a forum about literature for students and faculty had met called Open Book for informal conversations, discussions, presentations of interest to English majors, interested non-majors, and faculty. The idea is to foster intellectual and social community within the department to stimulate thinking on what they do and to have intelligent fun as well as cookies. I will most assuredly borrow this idea. They meet a few times each semester. A Midsummer Night’s Dream was being performed the following weekend. I was given hand-outs for the Creative Writing courses, English majors, and English courses being offered. Jane Eyre, Great Expectations, The Scarlet Letter, Narrative of the Life of Frederick Douglass, Huckleberry Finn, London’s Call of the Wild, Moby Dick, The Awakening are all literary offerings. I borrowed several student essays and blue books that were a few
years old and not likely to be picked up by students. The critical thinking and writing style was exceptional as might be expected by a top Ivy League college. Comparing and contrasting characters from different novels to understand a more universal topic such as the interracial relationships in *Huck Finn* and *Moby Dick* provide the readers with a peek into an utopian society without prejudice was one of the essay topics. I was impressed. This college is an English major’s dream, has financial aid, and for extraordinarily bright, hard-working Cerritos students, it would be an excellent choice.

6. GEORGIA COLLEGE AND STATE UNIVERSITY. MILLEDGEVILLE, GEORGIA

I visited this very southern college on April 9, 2007. Located in a small town of around 17,000, its most well-known graduate is probably Flannery O’Connor. Thus, the Creative Writing Program is one to be taken seriously. Since 1998, the department has hosted the likes of Billy Collins, Donald Hall, Maxine Kumin, Bobbie Ann Mason, and Ernest Gaines. Students serve as mentors to younger writers in an Early College Program, another good idea for Cerritos to borrow. The best students are invited to take graduate level workshops with the MFA program. This college also has a literary magazine called *The Peacock’s Feet* in tribute to O’Connor and an English Club that promotes poetry reading and social events. For over twenty-five years, the department has published *The Flannery O’Connor Bulletin*, a critical journal devoted to commentary on fiction. The Flannery O’Connor Collection is housed on campus. The tuition for residents is $12,272.00 for residents
per year and $22,994.00 for non-residents. This fee includes dorm, food, and books. For a student who wants to experience the South, especially literature reflecting southern overtones, this college would be an excellent choice.

7. HARVARD UNIVERSITY. CAMBRIDGE, MASSACHUSETTS

On October 5, 2006 I visited Harvard for the fourth time and was struck this time about the increased security. I was not able to get into the library without a pass or into the English Department, very different from Dartmouth, located in small town Hanover. And the traffic was noisy, the grounds were somewhat scruffy, and the students aloof. I walked all around the Harvard Yard, surrounded by Cambridge, and realized I would not want to attend this university, prestigious though it is.

8. LANE COMMUNITY COLLEGE. EUGENE, OREGON

On August 16, 2006 I visited Lane for the second time. The first time, I was taken on a tour by a teacher friend who had once taught at Orange Coast College in Costa Mesa, Ca. and had transferred because of the friendly nature of the campus as well as the forested beauty. Located in an idyllic setting of hills and trees, students peacefully stroll to their classes. Candace, the English Department secretary, ran off course outlines, gave me a class schedule and catalogue. It was interesting to read another community college syllabus. I’ve borrowed a few of the ideas for my teaching such as “Error Logs,” “Process Reports,” and formats. LCC has a project called Reading Together whereby two books are selected for the year and then taught throughout various departments, especially the writing and literature department.
Books are chosen for themes that reflect LCC values. For example, the books chosen this year are N. Scott Momaday’s *The Man Made of Words* and Dan O’Brien’s *Buffalo for the Broken Heart: Restoring Life to a Black Hills Ranch* that reflects the changing terrain. I would like to try this at Cerritos. The entire English department agrees on one reference book—*Keys for Writers* by Raines. I think this is a good idea so that students could use the same one in all their English classes. *The Bedford Reader* and *Norton Anthology of English Literature* are used. If a student wanted a Northwest experience that is a little more low key, this college has an appeal even though I would not want to lose them from Cerritos.

9. ORANGE COAST COLLEGE. COSTA MESA, CALIFORNIA

Once having attended classes and having taught classes at this campus that is only five minutes from home, I have visited many times. The campus is quite pleasant, and the buildings have been replaced as needed so that it is a very up-to-date community college that boasts of a high transfer rate to four year colleges. One of the really good ideas I would like to borrow is called the “Bull Sheet” wherein faculty submit writing once a month. At this time, a volunteer student and teacher put the monthly publication together. Sheila Koff, an English instructor, says it has really encouraged her and her colleagues to publish their writings in order to have an audience. The publication has helped colleagues become better acquainted as well. Like Cerritos College, scholarships are offered for English majors, and meetings are held to share lesson plans.
10. SALEM STATE COLLEGE. SALEM, MASSACHUSETTS

I visited this pretty campus of green sloping hills on September 22, 2006. I was given handouts for English majors and minors. The department has a Professional Writing Program that “will educate students in the context of the liberal arts and the study of English to the critical thinking, collaborative temperament, and writing skills required for leadership in profit and nonprofit business, government, and education.”

The college advertises this program for careers such as book publishing, business writers, copy editors, copywriters, Desktop publishers, editors, freelance writers, grant writers, magazine publishing and technical writers. They also offer internships—good ideas. I noted small classes, only ten—twelve students. Bulletins announced annual faculty and staff reading as well as a graduate student reading. This would appeal to students who want a small, low-key New England college experience.

11. SANTA BARBARA CITY COLLEGE. SANTA BARBARA, CALIFORNIA

I visited this most beautiful of campuses that overlooks the ocean, the harbor, and the mountains where it is perched on the Mesa on March 2, 2007. Having grown up in Santa Barbara, I had not appreciated its prime location. An unusual idea and one I would like to consider implementing at Cerritos is called a Great Books Course; these courses—English, Philosophy, Political Science, and Theatre Arts—include classical works from the Western canon and World Culture. At least half of each course’s readings is devoted to the Great Books. An example of these readings are by Austen, Cervantes, Confucius, Copernicus, Douglass, Freud, Newton, Galileo, Shakespeare,
and Whitman. Upon successful completion of four GBC courses (12 units), students receive an English Department award. Apparently the University of Chicago founded the Great Books in 1947 that is based on the Socratic method of group discussion. SBCC is one of five colleges selected to develop the program for community college students. For more information, I will contact Ms. Celeste Barber if enough interest can be generated at Cerritos. SBC also puts out a brochure called “You Don’t Have to be an English Major to GET LIT!” that announces literature offering and The Great Books Curriculum. I was given hand-outs about courses, “Great Jobs for English Majors” and “Transfer Major Requirements—both good ideas for Cerritos. This visit has given me excellent information for encouraging English majors and those interested in literature.

12. SOUTHERN OREGON UNIVERSITY. ASHLAND, OREGON

I visited this small campus on August 25, 2006 where it co-exists with the world-renowned Shakespeare Festival. I’ve been driving up here for over thirty years to watch many performances that are top-rate. The Festival presents plays and workshops throughout most of the year and work closely with SOU aspiring drama students. The campus is quite pretty with trees and lush greenery. The university offers several different BA programs in English and writing. I actually stayed in a dorm on this campus in spring 1979 when I’d completed my MA; I lived with students for a week while I studied Shakespeare and attended plays—a wonderful experience. One of the very good ideas I will implement is a bulletin board called “What the Faculty Are Reading.” Books such as The Kite Runner and Reading
Lolita in Tehran are commented on by faculty. Covers of the books or copies are displayed. I’d like to include students as well to be more inclusive in this reading community. Some books used in classes include The Kite Runner, Vonnegut’s works and Philip Roth’s The Plot Against America. Plays taught include O’Neill’s The Iceman Cometh, and Arthur Miller’s and Tennessee Williams’ major plays.

13. STANFORD UNIVERSITY. PALO ALTO, CALIFORNIA

On Stanford’s website, I pulled up a valuable handout called “Why English? “ that had “Careers for English Majors” followed by “What Our Alumni Say” from different fields such as teaching, journalism, publishing, entertainment, public relations, etc. to testify how English has helped them with their careers, convincing evidence. And although I did not visit the campus this time, I have been there many times visiting friends who have attended and who still have ties on campus. Academically one of the strongest universities in the world, Stanford accepts exceptional students and expects excellence.

14. ALL UNIVERSITY OF CALIFORNIA INFORMATION

I was able to pick up a folder that tells about each of the ten campuses with invaluable information concerning enrollment (gender and ethnicity), academics, housing, faculty awards, famous alumni, distinguishing programs, and what is available in the surrounding areas. Illustrations give students an idea of what to expect. Tour information is also given for each campus. In addition, I picked up another important brochure on financial help.
15. UNIVERSITY OF CALIFORNIA IRVINE. IRVINE, CALIFORNIA

I visited UCI on March 7, 2007 where I was able to pick up a “Degrees Check” hand-out for English and one for becoming an English teacher in secondary schools. I have spent a lot of time on this campus over the past twenty-six years because of my involvement with the UCI Writing Project. The campus has changed as buildings have been added and the vegetation has matured to make the grounds beautiful. Even so, it tends to be a commuter college, strong academically especially in the sciences. However, their English Department is well known for its outstanding MFA program; famous writers such as Michael Chabon and Janet Fitch have attended. Some writings used are Don DeLillo’s The Names, Truman Capote’s In Cold Blood, Nathaniel Hawthorne, Henry David Thoreau, Arthur Miller’s The Crucible, and Eugene O’Neill’s Long Day’s Journey Into Night. I was able to hear E.L. Doctorow speak about his work on March 8 at a distinguished Fellows Lecture. UCI hosts many such events. The Asian Literature Department seems to be as large as the English Literature’s which should not be surprising, for they are the major ethnicity by far. The latest publication put out by the UC’s lists 48.8% Asian/Pacific Islander undergraduates; Whites are second with 25.8% of the undergraduates.

16. UNIVERSITY OF CALIFORNIA LOS ANGELES. WESTWOOD, CALIFORNIA

I visited UCLA on this particular day, April 29, 2007 because of a special event I have attended almost every year—the Festival of Books—held the last weekend of April. I always encourage my students to attend, even offering extra credit for
attendance and a critical write-up. It is free except for $8.00 parking fee. The venues that feature well-known writers are held all over the campus with promotional books, publishers’ representatives, children’s events, poetry readings, book sales, and food. It is full of energy and a clever way in which to encourage books and love for language and ideas. I know this campus well having taken a few courses years ago, having attended several conferences, and having had two daughters who graduated. Tree-shaded expansive grassy areas invite students out doors to read and talk in the middle of busy Los Angeles and its reputation makes it one of the most popular universities in the world. I was able to pull up requirements for English majors and minors and know from talking with people who have recently attended that the English department is well recognized. My daughter, a UCLA graduate, picked up a brochure, “University, as in ‘Universe’” for her daughter who will be applying in the fall. On August 17, 2007, I went back to the campus to visit the English Department. I was able to talk with them about our students who have dreams of attending their college and was given hand-outs that listed requirements for English majors and minors, a bachelor of arts in American Literature and culture, an English major with a creative writing concentration, and an English major with a world literature concentration. To belong to the English Honors Program, students must have at least a 3.5 grade point average in upper division courses for the major and a 3.25 overall grade point average at UCLA. Writers taught in the department include James Joyce, Henrik Ibsen, Toni Morrison, Raymond Chandler, Herman Melville, Ralph Waldo Emerson, Walt Whitman, Harriet Beecher Stowe, Nathaniel Hawthorne, Thomas Pynchon, Frederick Douglass, Alice Walker, Shakespeare, and so many others. This
campus is not only in a beautiful location but the campus and its buildings are simply wonderful.

17. UNIVERSITY OF CALIFORNIA SANTA BARBARA. SANTA BARBARA, CALIFORNIA

I attended UCSB on March 2, 2007 and was surprised to see how much the campus has changed since my son attended twenty years ago and certainly since I did more than twenty years before that. I was given information on majors, financial aid, housing, and an English Major Requirement sheet with an Ann Wainright to contact. The campus is in a stunning location—ocean and mountains from every vantage point. The slick brochure seductively lures readers into the paradise though the academics here are rigorous with many distinguished alumni and prestigious professors, one of whom is Sherwood Cummings, an involved participant in the Writing Project for years, giving his input to the one at UCI.

18. UNIVERSITY OF CALIFORNIA SAN DIEGO. SAN DIEGO, CALIFORNIA

I visited this beautiful wooded campus overlooking the ocean on January 11, 2007. One of my daughters graduated from Warren college in 1984. Writings offered include F. Scott Fitzgerald’s works, Lahiri’s Interpreter of Maladies, Eugenides’ Middlesex, Defoe’s Moll Flanders, all of Jane Austen and Shakespeare, Richard Rodriguez’ Hunger of Memory, William Faulkner’s Absalom, Absalom, and many works of Edith Wharton, Theodore Dreiser, Herman Melville, and Charles Dickens. The literature department is well represented by offerings in Greek, East Asian,
German, Chinese, Korean, Italian, Russian, and Spanish. A “New Writing Series” is part of the year’s offerings; Alena Hairston, a poet, was speaking January 17 for free. UCSD put together a handout for “Opportunities for Literature Majors.”

19. UNIVERSITY OF MISSISSIPPI. OXFORD, MISSISSIPPI

I was able to visit this campus on our last sabbatical and had been beguiled by its Southern literary charm and this second visit on April 4, 2007 was just as beguiling. I was given checklists for majors and minors in English, Department of English and Graduate course descriptions. The English Department secretary told me they were now the biggest department on campus even though the university is small and everyone I met exuded Southern charm. She said literature, music, and art majors are particularly important. Visitors get free day passes for parking, the only campus to do so that I visited. The Lyceum Hall where visitors go looks like a scene from Gone with the Wind. Oxford Square has three book stores, and the town seems quite prosperous as do the owners of the large homes that dot the green rolling countryside outside the town. I fell in love with William Faulkner all over again when touring Rowan Oaks, Ole Miss, and reading in Square Books facing the Oxford town square. The pace here is leisurely and works as an aphrodisiac. This place is a writer’s and reader’s paradise. For a student who would like a small town Southern experience where writers are appreciated, this would be the perfect choice and I would recommend it.
20. UNIVERSITY OF OREGON. EUGENE, OREGON

I had visited this campus in 1994 and talked with a friend who was teaching English there at the time and enjoyed the campus of big trees, massive green lawns, and hanging baskets of flowers, very northwest. The day of my visit, August 16, 2006, the secretary in the English Department was very helpful in giving me English Major course schedules and work sheets as well as an English Department Newsletter. The professors here publish writing reflective of the Oregon pioneering and ecologically-oriented spirit.

21. UNIVERSITY OF SOUTHERN CALIFORNIA. LOS ANGELES, CALIFORNIA

I visited this campus on a hot, humid August 17, 2007, and though I had been on campus before, it had been many years. Like most colleges, building is always taking place and USC is no exception. Because so many of my students want to transfer to USC, I wanted to visit again for updated information. While crossing the campus from the public parking lot, I asked a young man where the English Department was located and much to my surprise, he remembered me as his composition teacher at Cerritos College nearly eighteen years ago. He has been teaching at community colleges for twelve years and is now enrolled in the doctorate program at this campus. He told me how much he learned at our college and how well we had prepared him. That was good to hear. The English Department secretary gave me English major and minor hand-outs as well as course descriptions for the fall. I was also given a 2007/08 catalogue. Rebecca Woods would be the
person for students to call for an appointment. In the bookstore, I found Norton’s Anthologies being used and all the classics for the literature classes: Emily Dickinson, Walt Whitman, Herman Melville, Henry David Thoreau, Ernest Hemingway (including the complete short story collection I had bought at his museum in Oak Park), Ralph Waldo Emerson, a collection of American poets and then of course James Joyce’s Portrait of an Artist as a Young Man, Mary Shelley’s Frankenstein, Thomas Hardy’s Jude, the Obscure, and Shakespeare. The college campus is not as pretty as UCLA but students like the name and networking.

22. UNIVERSITY OF WASHINGTON. SEATTLE, WASHINGTON

I had visited this campus several times before with my step-daughter who is getting her PhD in Art History and also teaching. Its park-like atmosphere of big trees and brilliant green lawns make this university a good choice for those who like the Northwest. On this visit, August 18, 2006, an academic advisor said Washington has no remedial classes and that students must take those classes at community colleges and pay for them. Even so, the Writing Center is a busy place that offers fifty minutes of direct attention from a fellow UW student who is well-trained. Brainstorming and freewriting are encouraged. I also received handouts for English majors and a Creative Writing option.

B. HISTORICAL REGIONAL AREAS

As in the past sabbatical, several reference books helped me put together my author search across America: American Writers at Home by J.D. Clatchy, a beautifully photographed coffee table book published in 2004; Traveling Literary America: A
Complete Guide to Literary Landmarks by B.J. Welborn, published in 2005; The Ideal Guide to Literary Places in the U.S. by Michelle Prater Burke, published in 1998; The Literary Trail of Greater Boston by Susan Wilson, published in 2005; Mirror of America: Literary Encounters in the National Parks edited by David Harmon, published in 1989; Susan B. Anthony Slept Here: A Guide to American Women’s Landmarks by Lynn Sherr and Jurate Kazickas, published and revised in 1994; American Diversity, American Identity edited by John K. Roth, published in 1995; and The Atlas of Literature edited by Malcolm Bradbury. In addition, I used AAA tour books for directions and times confirmations. Unlike my first sabbatical and because of it, this venture was considerably shorter encompassing about ten weeks in all. Some of the homes were revisited with renewed eyes based on twelve more years of living and in many cases, the tours had been markedly changed as the homes had undergone renovations. The new visitations had either not been available in 1994-95 or not accessible during my travels. Again, the guides were highly knowledgeable, almost taking on the persona of said writer, and were eager to share stories with an audience, most of the time quite spare in numbers. Not only were the actual structures in which the authors lived fascinating, to see and feel where they dreamed and wrote, but wandering on the property, in the close-by communities, walking into frequented establishments, and hearing others’ voices recounting the writers’ lives made this visiting-in-person experience one I will replay for myself, for students, and for colleagues.

The fact that famous writers have lived in an area provides the townspeople with immense pride and encourages aspiring writers to keep working at their craft. Even
if, and in many cases this is so, at the time the author was writing, their work was considered scandalous and banned, such is not the case later on as I saw these same communities embracing these formerly ostracized writers. This is a good lesson to remember by all who have the courage to create before people’s willingness to accept new ideas. I have collected photos, pamphlets, books (I’ve enjoyed reading them during and after the travels), and any number of printed materials that have been filed in folders and easily assessable for any and all. I will keep all of my sabbatical findings in my office and willingly share, believing more than ever how important it is to understand the culture and know enough about the region a writer inhabits in order to truly appreciate his/her work. Visiting the places is even better; I will encourage everyone to do the same. The places visited are arranged in chronological order.

1. JOHN STEINBECK. SALINAS, CALIFORNIA

Though I’d visited the Steinbeck Center before, it has been expanded with more films and displays. The adjoining bookstore has all his work in multiple publications and enough critical analysis to satisfy the most diligent researcher. It is a short walk to his boyhood home, a small but very attractive wooden structure. It is also a short drive to the cemetery where he is buried. On this cool and foggy August 11, 2006 visit, visitors were at a minimum.

2. EUGENE O’NEILL-TAO HOUSE. DANVILLE, CALIFORNIA
On the last sabbatical, this was one of my favorite tours and this second tour on August 13, 2006 led by a state park guide on a beautiful sunny morning did not disappoint. I and a few of my family were the only ones picked up by the van who drove us up the hill. Such an impressive location and beautiful home in which O’Neill could be nursed by his protective wife, Carlotta, for his depressions and ill health, and thereby giving him the strength to continue writing his masterpieces. O’Neill is one of my favorites, and I bought several collections of his plays that I was able to read over the next several months.

3. ROBERT LOUIS STEVENSON-SILVERADO MUSEUM. ST. HELENA, CALIFORNIA

Although an English writer, Stevenson spent time in California. I had visited the Monterey Custom House where he had lived for three months and written but had never visited this museum that showcases his life. On this August 13, 2006, the docent was eager to share his writing desk, a copy of a hand-written page from a first draft of Dr. Jekyll and Mr. Hyde, one of the novels I use in my remedial classes. This will be fun to share. It was coincidental that when we arrived in Ashland a few days later, we were able to purchase tickets for the stage version of his novel that has become a widely-read classic.

4. JACK LONDON STATE HISTORIC PARK. GLEN ELLEN, CALIFORNIA

I had been here before but the revisit on this hot August 14, 2006 was worth the time in realizing how talented London was and perhaps undervalued in literary circles
though he is still read by the public and most non-literary majors know his work.
The cottage and grounds where he lived just before he died has been undergoing
renovations. I enjoyed seeing the film, walking around this forested property and
looking out at all the fields where he worked between his bouts of writing. It
reminded me of the tranquil surroundings O’Neill craved; however, London was very
active on his property. It was sad to again see the destruction of Tor House, just
completed, by fire before he had had a chance to move in. I have used London’s
short fiction that is in many anthologies and students really like his stories that reflect
the outdoors.

5. NATHANIEL HAWTHORNE’S HOUSE OF SEVEN GABLES AND BIRTH
   PLACE. SALEM, MASSACHUSETTS

I had not realized it until I looked at my 1994-95 sabbatical and discovered I had
visited his house exactly twelve years ago to the day, September 21. This particular
tour is far more filled than many of the others, I suspect because of its location.
Although Hawthorne had never lived in the sprawling gabled house near the sea, it
had certainly captured his imagination and continues to capture ours as we read his
novel. His birthplace house had been moved to the property but retained its
Hawthornian character and memorabilia. Salem inspired Arthur Miller to write The
Crucible about the 1600’s witch trials so has capitalized quite well with both witches
and Hawthorne.

6. SARAH ORNE JEWETT. SOUTH BERWICK, MAINE
On September 22, 2006, I revisited South Berwick with an exemplary guide who told our group of three about Sarah’s risk-taking nature as the middle daughter of a doctor. The photos of this area taken when Sarah lived here show this place largely unchanged. I had not realized her close friendship with Hawthorne and Stevenson, two homes I had so recently visited. She also mentioned Edith Wharton and Willa Cather, two writers I later visited. Apparently, the community of writers is essential for feeling connected to the outside world.

7. ROBERT FROST’S STONE HOUSE/MUSEUM. SHAFTSBURY, VERMONT

On a gorgeous warm September 27, 2006 day, I visited a Frost house I had never been to; it seems he chose beautiful locales as he struggled to establish himself as one of the most renowned poets. He lived here for a few years and wrote “Stopping by the Woods.” Looking out at what triggered his poem was a moving experience. The docent in the book store corner suggested the Frost biography that I bought, and it has helped me understand this complicated man. On the last sabbatical, I had visited his farm in Derry, New Hampshire, his favorite place in Franconia, New Hampshire, and his gravesite in Bennington, Vermont. Like many of the writers, he moved around a lot.

8. EDNA ST. VINCENT MILLAY’S POETRY TRAIL. AUSTRALITZ, NEW YORK

I had visited Camden, Maine’s White Hall Inn on the last sabbatical, the place where she gave her first poetry reading, had even stayed there as a guest. Austerlitz is
attempting to cash in on her continuing fame and this area a few miles from the colorful Berkshires on September 28 is beautiful. A windy road up a hill where she often hiked and wrote her poetry is worth the trip. Her Steepletop House is being restored, so I was not able to go through it but talked to the local postmistress who enthusiastically showed me the plans.

9. EDITH WHARTON’S MANSION-THE MOUNT. LENOX, MASSACHUSETTS

I had visited Wharton’s spectacular residence on the last sabbatical when it was quite fall-like. This time the lavish gardens were still exuding summer though the day was on the cool side this September 30, 2006. A guide took the four of us on a fast-paced tour, recounting story after story of this Pulitzer Prize-winning, independently financially astute woman who was also a humanitarian. It was important for her to decide every aspect of the place she would occupy for several years. Since my last visit, much renovation has taken place, costing millions, and the first of the year, the foundation was able to get most of her extensive library back. The library is my favorite room, one I would have a difficult time leaving although Wharton did all of her writing and reading in bed.

10. HERMAN MELVILLE-ARROWHEAD. PITTSFIELD, MASSACHUSETTS

This tour on September 30, 2006 was so much better than the one I was privy to twelve years ago. For one, it was a beautiful sunny though cool day. And I and several others were taken into every nook and cranny of his rather ordinary, small-
roomed but oddly charming house. How Melville was able to co-exist with four children, his mother, and his four sisters is hard to imagine except for the fact that he kept the largest room only for himself while the rest of the family lived in extremely close proximity. The house was already eighty years old when he moved in and only through the help of his rich father-in-law was he able to support his family as he made $1500 from his writing, not becoming recognized as a literary force until the 1920’s. The stories of his life here, his close relationship with Hawthorne, that the docent animatingly related to the group as we walked through the memory-filled rooms will long be remembered and used in my classes.

11. EMILY DICKINSON. AMHERST, MASSACHUSETTS

On October 1, 2006, a cold, rainy day, I again visited Dickinson’s home, a walk across the street from the Amherst Bed and Breakfast where I was staying. Unlike last time, I and the group were also taken into her brother’s, Austin and his wife, house that has not been renovated but still held Dickinson ghosts. The docent speculated about Austin’s life-long affair with another woman which apparently greatly upset Emily. Emily’s house is painstakingly restored, and I particularly enjoyed the bedroom where she spent most of her time secretly writing her poems that she stored in her trunk. I also was able to visit the Amherst Art Museum and wander around the campus where so many of Emily’s family were affiliated. She, like Melville, came into her own in the 1900’s.

12. MARK TWAIN. HARTFORD, CONNECTICUTT
Having visited this unique, very colorful large house before, I looked forward to a revisit on this cool day of October 2, 2006. Unlike most authors’ homes, Twain’s is visited by hundreds every day. At one time in the outskirts of Hartford, the house is now surrounded by ordinary housing. The house reflects Twain’s love of family and his boyish, playful nature. Watching the video and then listening to the guide’s stories about their happy times here when Twain was at the height of his popularity and then hearing of the deaths of his two daughters and wife who all preceded his own death made me think of the Kennedys. The happy times in this sumptuous house filled with children, pets, servants, and guests was truly Twain’s Camelot years where he was able to create and enjoy the rewards of a successful writing life. I loved the house and so do most who take this tour just as they love Twain, an American literary icon.

13. HARRIET BEECHER STOWE-HARTFORD, CONNECTICUT

Having visited her home before, I felt fortunate to again rethink her legacy to literature this October 2, 2007 after visiting Twain whose literature is far more critically acclaimed. In contrast to Twain’s, the Stowe home is far more modest yet quite comfortable in a traditional style reminiscent of her time and has been exquisitely refurbished with all her things. Far before her time, this energetic woman was able to raise seven children while writing novels, painting pictures and furniture, and working in her lush garden that has been restored. She was fortunate to have a nurturing father and an older husband, both ministers, who encouraged her to pursue writing. All seven of her brothers became ministers and her sisters were active in
education and women’s rights. Of course, everyone has heard of Uncle Tom’s Cabin, but she also wrote a book about decorating homes targeted at wives, the first of that kind, pre-Martha Stewart.

14. HENRY DAVID THOREAU’S WALDEN POND. CONCORD, MASSACHUSETTS

Still hanging onto summer this warm day, October 3, 2006, the pond’s surrounding foliage held a mixture of summer green and autumn gold. I enjoyed looking at his replicated house and marveling again at how very small it was and how cold it must have been in the midst of a snowy winter. I was almost the only one wandering the trails to where the original structure is earmarked by stones. Looking across the pond from where he closely observed the changing days in solitude, I felt as close to his writings as I have ever felt. Since I first read Walden, I have wanted to have time in the place he came to intimately know and record for future generations. This is a place to continually become renewed. I use passages from Walden in all my classes. I later had a delicious lunch at the Colonial Inn in the little town of Concord. Thoreau’s grandfather had owned the inn at one time, so his grandson was a frequent visitor.

15. NATHANIEL HAWTHORNE’S WAYFARER HOUSE. CONCORD, MASSACHUSETTS

I stayed in an old bed and breakfast, the Hawthorne Inn, right across the street from Hawthorne’s former home on October 4, 2006. Much renovation is currently taking
place in this rambling two story house where Hawthorne spent the last four years of his life. This neighborhood has been the home of so many literary figures; the Alcotts owned the house before Hawthorne who continued his reclusive writing life here until his death in 1864.

16. LOUISA MAY ALCOTT-ORCHARD HOUSE. CONCORD, MASSACHUSETTS

Although I had been impressed with the house twelve years ago, I was even more taken with the space and furnishings of the illustrious Alcott family on this October 4, 2006, an Indian summer day. The tour guide told us many stories of how Louisa’s profits from her writing saved the family from financial disaster. Her sister, May, was quite the artist and her paintings are also showcased. I enjoyed the room where the girls put on their creative play and could well imagine a time before the electronic age. The group was able to watch a video in the barn/meeting house before the tour. Her father, Bronson, was a pioneer in abolishing corporeal punishment and including physical education, music, and art in the public schools.

17. NATHANIEL HAWTHORNE AND RALPH WALDO EMERSON—THE OLD MANSE. CONCORD, MASSACHUSETTS

Ralph Waldo Emerson’s grandfather built this colonial house and then his grandson also lived here before Hawthorne moved in with his new wife, Sophia, for three years, the happiest in their life together. Thoreau even planted a vegetable and flower garden for them that has been restored. It was especially meaningful to be the only
visitors on this personal tour. Many of the artifacts and furniture have been preserved as well as the famous window pane where the young newly-weds etched messages to each other with Sophia’s wedding ring. It is fascinating to see how very much these Transcendentalists interacted and supported each other both financially and spiritually. Hawthorne was an avid proponent of America’s need to establish its own literary character and no longer revere England and Europe. I always feel that sense of individuality and energy here in Concord. I later visited the Concord Museum where Emerson’s study had been re-established and also saw many of Thoreau’s possessions.

18. RALPH WALDO EMERSON. CONCORD, MASSACHUSETTS

One of the most stately of the Concord houses was owned by Emerson and is situated nearer to the town of Concord. He held forth in his home where intellectuals gathered from far and near. His study where he wrote is situated downstairs where he would have been accessible to visitors and where he could look out at his garden to meditate. Such a beautiful property this was to visit on this warm October 4, 2006.

19. SLEEPY HOLLOW CEMETERY. CONCORD, MASSACHUSETTS

On the same warm fall day, I walked around the hilly cemetery to find Authors Ridge where Thoreau and family, Hawthorne and family, Emerson and family, and Alcott and family are all buried, united in death as they were in life. The fading sunlight cast a soft light onto the gravesites sprinkled with the first of autumn leaves.
On this crisp cool October 5, I was taken on a tour with several others through Longfellow’s stately home that he had coveted as a Harvard student and then after he married, his father-in-law bought the house for him and his growing family that eventually numbered eight children. The library is filled with books from all over the world and is where he met other prominent men of the day. I had forgotten how accomplished he was, speaking nine languages and he had been head of the Language and Literature department at Harvard. I walked to Harvard after the tour and visited the English Department as far as I was able. George Washington and his wife had lived here during the Revolutionary War. In this same neighborhood, I saw the house where T. S. Eliot had lived for a short time.

One of my favorite writers is Kate Chopin. Her house is in a rather remote run-down neighborhood, that had once been a small prosperous community when Chopin and her family lived here. The docent who told me to just look around on my own was straight out of a Tennessee Williams play with her mussed-up hair, dressed in a worn robe and scruffy slippers. On this warm April 2, 2007, I did not mind the freedom to poke and probe unattended. The second floor where the family of six children lived has been restored with her furnishings and shows a quite comfortable living space with the servants quarters and storage area on the first floor. Across the backyard is a
kitchen and stable and beyond that acres of trees. I have used her classic novel, The Awakening and her short fiction especially “Story of an Hour” many times so that seeing her home and Louisiana surroundings was particularly enlightening. The small town, Natchitoches, about twenty miles from here, is where she would shop and is situated on the river, a southern town of picturesque plantation homes graced by vivid green, willowy trees.

22. EUDORA WELTY. JACKSON, MISSISSIPPI

Welty’s house is surrounded by a garden filled with camellias, asters, larkspurs, and dogwoods; the garden has been carefully maintained as it was when she lived here. She loved working in her huge garden of ¾ acre that provided her with thinking time for her novel writing. In excellent condition, the house contains all her furnishings as if he had simply stepped out for a visit with her many friends. Of course, she has only been dead for six years, unlike many of the writers’ places I visited. The tudor designed large house was built by her father in 1925 when Welty was sixteen, and she was to live in it until her death. As would be expected, book cases of her favorite writers such as Joyce, Woolf, Eliot, and Auden dominate a living room wall and are stacked on tables, in other bookcases, and desks. A voracious reader as was her parents, Welty’s passion spills into every corner of her home. Drafts of her writing cover a table in her bedroom. The docent I talked with said Jackson is very proud of her legacy and works hard to keep the property perfect and it is quite evident. I drove from this house to the one she was born in a few blocks away, the school she attended, the cemetery where she is buried, and the library named in her honor. Her
birth home is across the street from Richard Ford’s birth home; he has said how very much Welty inspired him to write. I also drove by the school that Richard Wright attended, all these literary finds on a warm April 3, 2007 day in Jackson.

23. WILLIAM FAULKNER—ROWAN OAK. OXFORD, MISSISSIPPI

This wonderful house on four acres of trees and grass is on the outskirts of Oxford, my favorite southern town because of its beauty and love of literature. So I looked forward to a revisit on a sunny April 4, 2007; last time it was cold and rainy. A self-guided tour, I wandered happily until I was surrounded by at least twenty high school students with pads and pens in hand. I talked with their teacher who said her class focused on Southern writers—Faulkner, Welty, and O’Connor—and they were on an over-night field trip from a few hundred miles away. They were eagerly looking in every room, taking photos, asking questions, and jotting down information. She said many of them had not been this far away from home, so I found her pleasure in their pleasure contagious. I could see many azaleas and dogwood in bloom as I looked out the windows. The house has been meticulously restored with Faulkner’s possessions and a favorite part of the house is his study where he has written plot ideas for his novel, The Fable; once used, he would paint them out and write again. Faulkner’s next to favorite pastime was horses; therefore, his boots, riding crop, and stable are part of the visit. I use Faulkner’s short fiction often in my classes and will use As I Lay Dying and The Sound and the Fury in the future. I also hope to attend the Faulkner conference in March 2008 in New Orleans where he lived for a short time.
24. MONROEVILLE COURT HOUSE MUSEUM. MONROEVILLE, ALABAMA

On a hot April 7, 2007, I visited the courthouse made famous by the courthouse scene in Harper Lee’s novel and adapted to film—*To Kill a Mockingbird*. It is pristine perfect and with a little imagination, the courtroom scene comes alive with drama. Lee’s novel is a favorite of students as are many of Truman Capote’s short stories and as her close writer friend who also lived in Monroeville; the two have memorabilia in showcases throughout the building. I walked around the mostly deserted town that appears to be frozen in time—the first half of the 1900’s—and honestly made me uncomfortable.

25. ZELDA AND F. SCOTT FITZGERALD. MONTGOMERY, ALABAMA

The outside of the house and grounds are impressive and are located in an affluent-looking neighborhood of well-maintained older homes with large expanses of lawn and mature trees. However, inside the house, little has been done to keep the place true to the times in which the Fitzgwalds lived there, and Zelda wrote her first draft of *Save the Last Waltz* before she suffered another mental breakdown. The docent who took me through was an incompetent middle-aged grad student who clearly had other things he rather be doing. I did enjoy watching the video and imagining their lives on the sun porch and looking at the books and photos. The flavor of the South can be tasted in this neighborhood of outward gentility. I use many short stories of F. Scott Fitzgerald’s particularly “Winter Dreams” that shows this lifestyle of impressing the neighbors so well.
26. MARGARET MITCHELL’S APARTMENT AND MUSEUM. ATLANTA, GEORGIA

Since studying English Literature, I have tended to put down Mitchell’s talent and her accomplishment in writing one of the best known novels in the world—*Gone With the Wind*. However, I now have a far greater appreciation of her as a writer and person. On this Easter Sunday, the tour guide told our group many stories about her work on her only novel that took her ten years to write and passed through many, many rewrites. From a wealthy Atlanta family, she chose to live frugally with her second husband, and they remained childless. Her furnishings are intact in the apartment she lovingly called “the dump.” A private person, she gave to the poor, worked for civic and charitable activities, and refused to make much of her phenomenal success. Unfortunately, she had a tragic death when she was hit by a speeding driver a few blocks from her home when she was only forty-nine. Now I must read her classic I last read when I was only thirteen. Many of my students still read the novel.

27. FLANNERY O’CONNOR—ANDALUSIA. MILLEDGEVILLE, GEORGIA

O’Connor is one of my very favorite short story writers so visiting her farm on the outskirts of this small college town was a treat. I had already walked around Georgia College and State University where she had gotten her degree before going on for her MFA at the Iowa Writers’ Workshop. Her important papers are kept in the section of the library devoted to research and a quite sparse room of O’Connor photos and books is in the adjoining museum. Driving down the long driveway bordered by big
trees and green fields with grazing horses, I saw a group of black and white uniformed nuns gleefully feeding carrots to the happy horses. After parking the car near the big barn that reminded me of some of her short stories, I joined the covey of nuns to make our way into the house for our tour. The Mother Superior said O’Connor was her favorite writer, and she always brings her new charges here to introduce them to this author who happened to be a devout Catholic. I did not know she had such a strong following with this group of readers. The tour was a good one because of an accomplished, invested guide and because so much of O’Connor has been kept intact including her crutches from her long struggle with lupus while she lived here the last fifteen years of her life under the care of her mother. Most of her fiction was written here, and I was able to purchase the first collection of all her short fiction this drippy April 9, 2007.

28. FLANNERY O’CONNOR’S BIRTH HOME. SAVANNAH, GEORGIA

I had been here before, but this time, April 10, 2007, massive renovations were being undertaken to restore her birthplace to where it once was. Her farm is so very different from her birth house that is squashed between other houses and looks out at a green square.

29. THOMAS WOLFE. ASHVILLE, NORTH CAROLINA

On a cold April 13, 2007, I was taken on a tour, only two of us so very personal, by an engaging guide who enthusiastically shared Wolfe’s house and his life with us. I had taken the tour twelve years ago before the arsonist set fire to a part of the house.
Fortunately, the fire was put out before it did major damage. Also fortunate is the money that was raised and used to improve the entire house and include more of Wolfe’s work. Two of my favorite novels are *Look Homeward, Angel* and *You Can’t Go Home Again*, and I have used them and will continue to use them in my classes. His writing is more autobiographical, though fictionalized, that it is impossible to wander through this home/boarding house and not see scene after scene from his novels. I was also shown a very good film. When Wolfe was only thirty-eight years old, he died of ill health. Without this somewhat neglected upbringing in a crowded boarding house run by a mother intent on profit and occasionally visited by an alcoholic father, it is possible he never would have written his classic novels.

30. ERNEST HEMINGWAY. OAK PARK, CHICAGO

I visited Hemingway’s birth home, a lovely Victorian home, on a rainy April 18, 2007, where he comfortably lived for six years with three siblings. I had no idea that Hemingway was born into such an affluent lifestyle. Much of the furnishings are still in the house, and it has been painstakingly restored. The ladies who guide the tours have fireplaces roaring and make guests feel as if they have stepped in for tea. I had visited Hemingway’s Key West, Florida home on the last sabbatical, and could not be more different from this prim and proper home. Afterwards I went across the street from the hotel I was staying at to visit the Hemingway Museum that has extensive collections of his work, the critics’ works, running films of different times in his life, and all sorts of memorabilia. I was saturated with Hemingway today; I bought a
collection of all his short fiction. Many stories I already use in my classes and many more I plan to use.

31. ABRAHAM LINCOLN’S MUSEUM AND LIBRARY. SPRINGFIELD, ILLINOIS

Although Lincoln’s claim to fame is in politics, his writing continues to influence Americans, and I have used “The Gettysburg Address” in my classes. I had never been to the town he called home and the place where he is buried. The museum has been magnificently created for visitors with interactive groupings that highlight his life as visitors make their way through the spaces that also have life-size figures of Lincoln and his family, videos, and even a replica of the log cabin where he was born. On this April 19, 2007, visitors were everywhere. According to the museum, there have been more books written about Lincoln than anyone other than Jesus. Again, I was struck at the complexity of the revered president and his brilliance. The library is a mecca for researchers.

32. MARK TWAIN. HANIBAL, MISSOURI

I have wanted to go to Hanibal ever since I first read Huckleberry Finn and had imagined it as being much like this sleepy town on the Mississippi though I was surprised at the rather run-down appearance of the Main Street because so many visitors come to see Twain’s boyhood home. Nevertheless, I was here April 20, 2007, before tourist season so very few of us were going on the tours. Many sidewalks were in sad disrepair and shops were closed up. However, his boyhood
home, a two-story clapboard, is meticulously maintained, the place he lived in from the age of four to his young adulthood. Several of his books reflect the home and town, so that it is easy to visualize scenes as visitors walk around; Twain himself said all that he later became started here. The Twain Museum is next door to his home; first editions of Twain’s works and his white suits are part of the museum’s collection. Behind the museum is the law office where his father was Justice of the Peace in 1841. I really felt a connection to the younger Twain having already spent time with the older Twain in Hartford, Connecticut. This is the one students could more easily relate to, the one that especially says Huck Finn and Tom Sawyer.

33. WILLA CATHER. RED CLOUD, NEBRASKA

Only two of us were able to freely tour the Willa Cather Museum this cool April 23, 2007 morning. This building was once the Opera House where Cather gave her high school speech and has since been given over to Cather memorabilia, the small prairie town’s claim to fame. The sweet lady, who answered our questions, set us up with the video, sold me her recommended edition of My Antonia and then took us through her small but cozy home only a few blocks away, clearly put Cather on a level with major influential American writers, clearly thought she to be a feminist before her time. Later, when I read the novel that captured a Pulitzer Prize for her and more about her life, I had to agree with her. The home has been left almost entirely intact with her furnishings. All her writings center in this flat desolate windy prairie land even though she moved to New York and worked for a magazine. She returned often
and called Red Cloud home. It was hard for me to understand the attraction of this land filled with scrub brush, wind, and either extreme cold or hot weather.

C. LITERATURE AND LITERARY CRITICISM. ANNOTATED READING LIST
Most of these books were picked up on our travels to the various authors’ homes, college book stores, and independent book stores in regions across and around the United States. They were recommended by personnel, by teachers, or simply caught my eye as helpful in teaching my classes. During the school year, it is impossible to take on supplemental reading in this manner, yet it is important to enhance my knowledge base to keep the teaching experience fresh for not only the students but for collaborating with my colleagues. These books, as well as those from my 1994-95 sabbatical and those I continue to collect will be kept in my office with the annotations for fellow teachers and for interested students to borrow, a lending library. Many of them will be integrated into future syllabi and will naturally lead to other sources. The writings are listed in alphabetical order.

1. BROWN, AMY BELDING. MR. EMERSON’S WIFE.
This book was recommended by the Concord Book Store in Concord, Massachusetts by the store owner, a long-time resident of Concord. The author is on the staff at Orchard House in Concord and teaches writing at Worcester State College and other schools in central Massachusetts. When I began reading this blend of fiction and fact, I was not sure I would be able to finish it because of the stilted dialogue and somewhat flowery/sentimental descriptions. But what kept me going was the
references to history—events, people, and places—that are so well integrated into the imagined interior life of Lidian Emerson and life as she saw it. She was a woman who had to live through and for her family and friends though she was often an intelligent and creative force who is suppressed. How does she deal with it? What’s sacrificed? I especially liked the many details of life in Concord living with the Transcendentalists we had recently visited in the fall. They were a tight-knit group, given to long intellectual talks, lectures, imposed exiles as well as expectations that someone else would provide, so they could live their ideals. Emerson seems to have taken care of many people because of his writing and lecturing—his mother, Lidian, Lidian’s sister and children, his brother, Thoreau, and the Alcotts. It seemed to be the accepted thing to do. If this marriage is a true account, it certainly would be considered tragic by today’s standards and would have most likely ended in divorce.

2. CATHER, WILLA. MY ANTONIA.

Before visiting Red Cloud, Nebraska, a small prairie town seemingly dedicated to keeping Cather’s legacy alive, I had only read excerpts from her novels and never studied her in a literature class. Another writer who moves away from the place that defines her, Cather wrote of those formative years, realistically detailing the landscape, the cultural environment composed of largely Scandinavian and Bohemian immigrants, and those who had migrated from other places in America. She uses Jim Burden, a boy we watch grow up, to tell his story of the changes in a farming community during the late 1800’s. Part memoir and part history, the novel is nevertheless beautifully written fiction. The migratory clashes, the cultural
differences, and engrossing story of families attempting to make their way in an inhospitable land; all these aspects of the writing would make *My Antonia* a good choice for English 100, perhaps an English department novel-in-common. I would want to use the edition I bought in Red Cloud, edited by Joseph Urgo, a professor of English at the University of Mississippi, complete with critical analysis published soon after the novel was written, a current introduction critiquing Cather’s place in literature, sketches, photographs, and comments by Cather herself. This rich edition was put out by Broadview in 2003, ISBN 1-55111-491-7.

3. CHEEVER, SUSAN. *TREETOPS*

I bought this book at Bennington College in Vermont, one of our favorite stops. John Cheever, her father, has been one of the most read short story writers of suburban America after WWII. His daughter teaches at Bennington, and she wrote this book about her eccentric family going back several generations and their life that centered around the summer home called Treetops in New Hampshire. She discusses her father’s using actual family experiences as gist for his stories. She portrays him unkindly: a drinker, moody, sarcastic, promiscuous, distant, bisexual, intelligent, cruel, and divisive. All of them are often sick like Frost and Thoreau. Even so, Cheever is a much admired short story Pulitzer Prize winner. I would like to use excerpts from this memoir with Cheever’s short fiction to add to the reading experience.
4. CHOPIN, KATE. **AT FAULT**

This first novel of Chopin’s was one I purchased after visiting her Cloutierville home at a bookstore in nearby Natchitoches. Having taught *The Awakening* and “Story of an Hour” in my classes for years and having read her fiction since grad school, I wanted to know more about her early writing. So much of this not fully realized story foretells one of her most important themes in later fiction, that of the conflict between society’s conventional expectations and individual desires and happiness. Divorce was still to be avoided at all cost, often to the detriment of everyone around these unhappy couples. What happens when one sacrifices happiness for society’s mores? The rich details that so aptly showcase plantation life and various dialects of the different strata within this world are the novel’s strengths. The protagonist, Therese, is a bit too saintly as is her lover, David. Thank goodness for the more complex Edna in her masterpiece, *The Awakening*. Like most writers, their early writing almost always works as rough drafts or exploratory novels to be polished over the years to perhaps result in pure magnificence. Such is the case with Chopin. I plan to share this information with future students and use *At Fault* and *The Awakening* to show them how a writer progresses in her craft.

5. DIRDA, MICHAEL. **BOOK BY BOOK**

I purchased this book at Amherst Book Shop that promised to show connections between life and books and although I did find some pithy quotes from writers he values such as “Every day one should at least hear one little song, read one good poem, see one fine painting and—if at all possible—speak a few sensible words.”
These words are Goethe’s and are certainly ones worth remembering, but I feel almost any well-read author could have collected quoted passages from his or her favorite writers. His advice for encouraging reading seems rather obvious. I will extract the good which is to write; one has to allow time for inspiration, to enjoy nature, and take in all that life has to offer but then to be disciplined in scheduling writing which is hard work, this from a Pulitzer Prize winner for criticism. Perhaps it’s good to be reminded.

6. FERLINGHETTI, LAWRENCE. ED. CITY LIGHTS POCKET POETS ANTHOLOGY

Ferlinghetti, the owner of City Lights Bookstore in San Francisco where I visited edited this anthology based on his assessment of forty years of avant garde poetry. He has included poets widely separated by language, geography, and culture so that he includes Kerouac, Ginsberg, Yevtushenko, Pasolini, Parra, Murillo, Bly, Corso, etc. So as Ferlinghetti says in his introduction, “So may our little cultural exchange program continue into the 21st century in a world without walls in which poetry is still the best news.” The bookstore is a rare find where differences are encouraged and showcased, where so many of the Beat Poets were first heard. Opened in 1953 by co-founders Lawrence Ferlinghetti and Peter D. Martin, the mantra has been to support “anti-authoritarian politics and insurgent thinking.” An independent bookstore and an independent publisher, the store highlights less conventional literature and perhaps is all the more thought-provoking. The Pocket Poet Series was born at the store and is what this anthology is taken from. Hard-to-find selections are
only found here; a Literary Meeting Place since 1953. The poems are perfect to share with students in literature courses and in Creative Writing. My personal favorites were written by Ferlinghetti.

7. FORD, RICHARD. INDEPENDENCE DAY

I had read this novel when it first was published but enjoyed re-reading it after having read The Sportswriter and Lay of the Land to see how it fit between the two. Another holiday, July 4th, Bascomb faces more angst but always with humor and optimism. Selling real estate instead of sports writing, he is living in his ex-wife’s home, trying to give advice to his rebellious son, and he has difficult relationships with women. One thing Ford is not in this rambling novel is terse. We are in Bascomb’s consciousness from beginning to end, almost Proust-like. Although I was totally immersed in Bascomb’s striving for independence, his desire to shed ghosts from the past, and get on with his life, I am not sure how students would be willing to sign on till the end. Still, his character is so compelling that I would like to try.

8. FORD, RICHARD. THE LAY OF THE LAND

Ford’s last Bascomb novel in his trilogy at least so he claims, the novel was published in fall 2006. I was staying in a bed and breakfast in Boothbay Harbor, Maine, across from his home when he was in Europe promoting his latest novel. I talked with our B & B owner who often walked with him and a retired professor who lived on the same point. Both agreed he was extremely likeable but reclusive by nature, one whom likes his peace and quiet. I was told this novel may be his last
large work. Another holiday, this time Thanksgiving, he has apparently moved us through the seasons as Bascomb ages and so does his prostate. His cancer, however, is in remission but his second wife has left him for her first husband. His grown son and daughter will visit him for the holiday. Even more than the other two novels, this one takes us minutely through Frank’s wandering mind while he at times quite humorously and at times quite sadly meditates on where he is now and where he wants to be. In many ways, Frank is an “everyman”, a James Joyce Leopold Bloom character, who is still searching for the comfortable life. What makes these novels so absorbing and worth the time—they are not fast reads—is our being taken out of our worlds and squarely planted in Bascomb’s. This novel is the longest, so I am not sure if students would stay with it unless they became huge Ford fans such as I have become. My favorite is still Independence Day.

9. FORD, RICHARD. A MULTITUDE OF SINS

Published in 2001, this collection of ten stories shows couples who love each other but often fail at intimacy and even betray those they love most. The settings are distinctly different among Montreal, New Orleans, Maine, and the Grand Canyon. His characters are average, somewhat normal people who somehow make a bad decision that leads them into ever more complications in their lives. The adultery committed over and over again in each story is nevertheless played out differently depending on the setting, characters, and circumstances, almost like the many variations on a theme in music, causing us to see how very different each of us is in responding to the same act. Again, Ford’s short fiction is so good that I want to
explore using different stories in all my classes and in proposing his work to the English Department. As one of the major living writers, he must be addressed by all of us who teach writing. Born in Jackson, Mississippi, he shares that southern sensibility of compelling characters facing every-day situations that show their strengths and their weaknesses but with optimistic resolve to do better.

10. FORD, RICHARD. **ROCK SPRINGS**

I was fortunate to discover Ford’s novel, *Independence Day*, for which he won the Pulitzer Prize several years ago and knew I had stumbled onto a writer worth knowing. It was not until this sabbatical, though that I had the opportunity to immerse myself in more of his writing. His last of the trilogy centering on Frank Bascomb, *The Lay of the Land*, was published fall, 2006, and was the book I chose for one of my book groups to read. Like John Updike’s critically acclaimed Rabbit series, Ford has his readers grow older along with his male character who is shown to be full of human frailties as he moves toward his mortality. Humorous overtones, likeable characters, vividly realistic settings and attention to a historical backdrop make his wordiness worth the read. *Rock Springs* is a collection of his short fiction gathered from other publications such as *The New Yorker*, *Esquire*, and *Granta*. Strong, somewhat disturbing subjects that focus on characters who are down-trodden, alienated: they drink, smoke, cheat on each other and with the law, yet these stories pull on the reader because of Ford’s empathy with their hard-luck stories that are set in the wide-open spaces of the west, mostly Montana. These stories show the reader the crisis moments that occur with people of non-heroic stature; his writing style is
far more spare, less digressive than his Bascomb novels. I would like to include his short fiction in my classes to show students a contemporary writer who has changed stylistically but is still captivated by relationships, by how human beings long to feel connected to someone and something. People compare Ford to Carver, and it is not difficult to see why with this collection. Pairing these two writers would also be a good idea in English classes. One of the reviews I read mentioned reading Mary Clearman Blue’s *All But the Waltz*, a book I picked up in Montana on my last sabbatical that gave me insight into the people of this rugged state, as a good pairing with Rock Springs. These characters are all tough survivors who struggle in a harsh environment and Ford refuses to sentimentalize them.

11. FORD, RICHARD. **THE SPORTSWRITER**

Published in 1986, the first novel of his trilogy was given critical acclaim. “Richard Ford is a daring and intelligent novelist (with an) extraordinary ear for dialogue and the ability to create everyday life with stunning accuracy,” says *The New York Times*. Although I had read the second and third novels, I had not read his first. The novels stand alone but like Updike’s Rabbit series, the main character is more thoroughly understood when all three are read. Bascomb becomes a friend, someone we know; his friends and acquaintances become ours. The New Jersey suburban upper middle class that Ford argues to be unimportant to his story is delineated so carefully as to become a part of these characters’ very being. The landscape and the society who lives there are given to us over the course of a holiday week—Easter, the holiday that pulls and tears people apart. As Bascomb ruminates about his life—past,
present, and future—we are in and out of these musings as well, possibly making connections to our own lives. This would be a good novel to use in a contemporary fiction class.

12. FORD, RICHARD. WOMEN WITH MEN

A collection of three stories, this is his first short fiction book to be published, 1996, since Rock Springs. His male protagonists in each story are at crossroads in their lives as they explore their options. Unlike his trilogy, the short stories have an economy of words yet show us how difficult relationships are in balancing our individual needs and desires with someone else’s. How can we understand ourselves? The protagonists could be us, and we take on their vulnerability when pondering their lives. The stories end on an optimistic note though the journey to that end has been rocky and uncertain. I believe these stories would work quite well in any one of the English courses and would lead to stimulating discussions and writing.

13. HEMINGWAY, ERNEST. THE COMPLETE SHORT STORIES OF ERNEST HEMINGWAY. THE FINCA VIGIA EDITION

I purchased this collection at Hemingway’s Museum in Oak Park, Illinois because I had used so many of his short stories in classes over many years of teaching. And after touring his childhood home nearby, I wanted a more in-depth book of his writing that spanned the very beginning of his career to those never before published after his death. Not surprisingly, I found his early fiction to feel unfinished; the
staccato sentence structure, the abrupt endings, and the unsatisfactory thin
characterizations are quite a contrast to the short stories included in most anthologies.
Yet I did find a few I would like to use such as “In Another Country,” and “Now I
Lay Me”, both timely realistic sketches of war and both who show his unique
objective writing style. I read all of these stories, 650 pages, in less than two days,
steeping myself in one of the twentieth century’s most imitated writers. And as it is
with all artists, not every creation is a masterpiece. This is a good lesson for students.

14. HOUSDEN, ROGER. TEN POEMS TO LAST A LIFETIME

Housden arbitrarily chooses ten passionate poems he finds meaningful for seeing
ourselves in relation to the world, he says serve as “bread for the soul and fire for the
spirit.” I did not necessarily agree with his choices, but I understood why these
particular poems meant so much to him. At the conclusion of each poem, he
discusses what they mean in terms anyone can understand. Going back over the
poem after reading his analysis, one can see his point of view. I like the idea of
students doing the same; in English 102, students choose favorite poems, and as well
as explaining why they like them, they are required to know about the poet, the world
said poet inhabits, and present the information to the class. Poetry tends to scare
students into believing there must be a magical key that they simply need to find.
This assignment shows them there is far more involved and by living with the words,
the students tend to own them with far more confidence than if I were to lecture to
them about the merits of poetry.
15. HOYTE, KIRSTEN DINNALL. BLACK MARKS

Recommended by the Concord Book Shop owner, this first novel by a Harvard doctoral candidate is a compelling read and would be a good choice for Cerritos students, for so many of them would be able to relate to Georgette Collins, the protagonist, who straddles several different worlds. Born in Jamaica, she now lives in America and is also confused about her sexual identity. She moves between wealthy and working class worlds while attempting to find the right fit. What makes the novel work so well is the likable, intelligent, witty first person point of view that is incredibly honest. A survivor, she makes mistakes but she also learns how to claim her ancestry and live in the world she has created for herself. This coming-of-age story would appeal to my remedial students. I was able to purchase an autographed copy because of her appearance at the bookstore the previous January.

16. O’CONNOR, FLANNERY. THE COMPLETE STORIES

Ever since I read her most famous short stories, the ones included in most American literary anthologies, I have been a fan of her quirky characters who live in small southern towns. When we visited the Andalusia home in Milledgeville, Georgia where she spent the last years of her life, the stories became even more meaningful, and I wanted to read them all. This book I purchased there is chronologically formatted from her earliest work to her latest, thirty one of them. The earliest six stories, part of her thesis, are included and although not as fully realized as her later stories, one can see the germs for these later masterpieces. Students respond with mixed feelings when reading her depictions of mostly rural Southern characters but
with spirited class discussion and group work, they become absolutely absorbed in puzzling out the deeper meanings of her work. I felt fortunate to have the time to read them all, most of them out loud to my husband, so I could have another person who was traveling through the South with me, for a sounding board. An artist and not an English teacher, he was nevertheless anxiously waiting for the next story which we savored whenever we rested. Her value as a writer shows students that it is the everyday issues that become the most important ways in which we define why we are here. Although I would not use her complete works in any one class, I would like to use more of the lesser known stories in all my classes. In English 102, I will add a few of these to the already listed ones from the Bedford anthology on the syllabus. A future goal of mine is to have a focus on her short fiction in the English Department, perhaps in conjunction with Creative Writing classes who could write their own quirky, eccentric characterizations to be shared in a Flannery O’Connor Celebration, could be for her birthday on March 25.

17. OLIVER, MARY. **WHY I WAKE EARLY**

For some reason, I had never read Oliver’s poems before; however, when visiting Bennington College in Vermont, I was introduced to her work. She won the Pulitzer Prize for poetry and the National Book Award. I was struck by her resemblance to Thoreau in her strong mystical connection to nature, a force so powerful that life must be lived outdoors and every aspect closely observed and noted. “Every day I see or hear something that more or less kills me with delight, that leaves me like a needle in the haystack of light.” Her joy in the world is truly contagious. I also
purchased a CD, *At Blackwater Pond*, of hers wherein she reads her own poems. Playing it over and over while driving through the countryside that inspired her perfectly chosen images, I appreciated the rambling fall sights deeply. Some poets can not read their own work. She is a poet who gives her words wings. I will use her poems along with Thoreau’s *Walden* that I teach and in the poetry section of English 102.

18. O’NEILL, EUGENE.  **THE ICEMAN COMETH**

Written in 1946, this later play is considered by many to be his finest work. I still believe this autobiographical *Long Day’s Journey into Night* the most riveting, but I did like this play that I had never read. I would consider using it in a literature class along with *LDJIN* as it is quite different. Set in Harry Hope’s bar in seedy skid row around 1912, the characters who come in and out of the saloon would be considered failures who have had dreams not realized but they are living in denial. The bar and the cast of characters who frequent it are hardly the stuff of “Cheers”, but it is difficult not to get involved in their hard luck stories, see through their rationalizations for that hard luck, and not want to see ourselves. This message is why I believe the play would work well in English classes and will be one of O’Neill’s works to grow in stature.

I had not read any of these plays, so it was good to have the opportunity to immerse myself in O’Neill. Emperor Jones, written in 1920, shows what happens to people who become powerful. A single ex-pullman porter in America becomes the self-proclaimed emperor of a small Caribbean island-nation. I could not help think of Conrad’s Heart of Darkness when watching, with horror, the decline, hallucination, and death of the main character. The two together would make a good pairing for an English class. The Hairy Ape, written in 1921, works as a condemnation against the dehumanizing effects of industrialization as well as the destructive power of class hatred and an uncaring society’s ability to crush an individual. The play shows an individual’s need to belong, be respected, and feel important. Anna Christie, written in 1922, opens with a bar scene like The Iceman Cometh wherein characters are searching for their identities. Forgiveness is key. The later play is much more realized, and so I would not use this one in class. The common denominator to all these plays is the drinking and use of dialect within the bottom echelon of society and their disdain of rich people while they seek their own power. These three early plays are seminal for O’Neill.

20. O’NEILL, EUGENE. THREE PLAYS: DESIRE UNDER THE ELMS, STRANGE INTERLUDE, MOURNING BECOMES ELECTRA

I visited O’Neill’s home in Danville, California for the second time, this time enjoying a private tour. Though I had studied Long Day’s Journey into Night and
used it many years ago in a literature class, I had not read and watched the plays in this edition. I could not help but agree with many of the reviewers regarding these plays, all of which I had heard about ever since I first studied O’Neill; the three are flawed to the extent that I would more than likely not use them in classes except perhaps share them in contrast to his more accomplished work. Nevertheless, many other reviewers are certain these plays will live on; I am not as confident. *Mourning Becomes Electra* is simply way too long to hold a modern audience’s attention.

Always, O’Neill’s focus is on the difficulties of family relationships and subsequent dysfunction reminiscent of Greek tragedy that most can relate to modern television, film, and theatre, but these dramas seem dated as of course they are. The negativism becomes oppressive without much relief. Incest, infidelity, betrayal, obsession will continue to intrigue writers and readers. At the time O’Neill’s plays were first performed, the subject matter was controversial and the five hours, fifteen minute playing time of *Strange Interlude* became a season conversation in 1928. Placing the dramas in a historical context is important, and I feel I have gained a far greater understanding of this major playwright.

21. PARINI, JAY. **ONE MATCHLESS TIME: A LIFE OF WILLIAM FAULKNER**

Another in-depth researched, well-written biography about a complex writer by Parini, this book captivated me from start to finish. Having recently spent several days in Oxford, Mississippi and having toured Rowan Oaks, Faulkner’s story resonated inside of me. I had spent several days in New Orleans, another city he
claimed as important to him in his development as a writer. I had spent time in Oxford and New Orleans on my 1994-95 sabbatical so that revisiting these places after having used more of Faulkner’s fiction in my classes was extremely meaningful. The attention Parini pays to Faulkner’s writing and making those connections to his life without sentimentalizing or attempting to make him more or less of whom he was as a man and a writer is what I most relished when reading this book. Not any easy writer to comprehend, Faulkner is nevertheless accessible to students and worth the time because of his timeless universality in his stories that all emanate from fictional Yoknapatawpha County modeled after his home in Mississippi. The detail, psychological overtones, creative structures, stream of consciousness are all legacies Faulkner has passed on to future generations of readers and writers. Pages and pages of biographical references are given in this extensive research of Faulkner. I have plans to attend the Faulkner conference in New Orleans with a colleague in March. I have used Faulkner in most of my English classes and with help, students understand and enjoy his fiction. Having read this biography, I can use so much of it to help explain time and place, his life and why he could not write about anything else.

22. PARINI, JAY. ROBERT FROST, A LIFE

Parini is an English professor at Middlebury, Vermont, a campus I visited in 1994, and he is also a poet novelist and biographer. I purchased his book at Robert Frost’s Stone House in Shaftsbury, Vermont at the suggestion of the docent who chose this biography out of many. I found the complicated and complex life of this feted poet fascinating. Many of his major poems are broken down and explicated by the author
to help readers comprehend Frost’s journey. Biography is never imperative to a writer’s work, but it does make the writing so much more meaningful. Was he bi-polar as suggested? Depressed? He was from all accounts a difficult man but utterly devoted to his wife yet poetry was his true passion, and he was to garner four Pulitzer Prizes and every honorary award possible before his death at eighty-nine years when he was still actively lecturing. A slow read but this biography helps the reader understand the poet, his poetry, and the writing process.

23. TWAIN, MARK. THE AUTOBIOGRAPHY OF MARK TWAIN. ED. CHARLES NEIDER

Extolled by many as the best autobiography ever written, this book was one I had to buy when we visited his childhood home in Hanibal, Missouri. Twain’s self-deprecating humor, his philosophizing about life, and the biographical details of his long bittersweet life make this over 500 page read compelling. An original in every way, Twain was a person I would have loved to have known. He tries to convince us that his writing was a way to escape real work, that he was truly slothful. Lecturing and writing are the tools he used to support his family quite grandly for most of their lives. The tragedies of losing a son, two daughters, and a wife are wrenching when he so candidly tells their stories. Pithy quotes can be lifted from almost every page such as “It is my conviction that the human race is no proper target for harsh words and bitter criticisms, and that the only justifiable feeling toward it is compassion; it did not invent itself, and it had nothing to do with the planning of its weak and foolish character.” It is easy to see how his voice in this book transfers itself to
Twain’s fictional writing. Anyone who enjoys *Huckleberry Finn* or any of Twain’s writing would have a far better understanding of his work by reading this intelligent autobiography. I would like to use it with “Huck” in English classes.

24. WELTY, EUDORA. *THE OPTIMIST’S DAUGHTER*

Welty was awarded the Pulitzer Prize in 1972 for this novel that I bought at the Square Book Store in Oxford, Mississippi after having visited her home in Jackson. I had used excerpts from *One Writer’s Beginnings* and a few of her short stories in class and read *Delta Wedding* on the last sabbatical and had known how well respected she was and is by both academics and the general public. When I first began the novel, I was put off by the deceivingly simple language and sentence syntax. Yet as I continued to read, her characters became increasingly realistic, the scenes even taking on a cinematographic quality because of the detail. I felt as if I knew each of these characters who are part of the life of the judge’s daughter who has recently taken on a young, spoiled, unlikable wife, been hospitalized for eye surgery, and who subsequently dies. The journey back home from New Orleans to Mississippi and the judge’s funeral throws the daughter who was widowed years before and the judge’s wife together with her ill-mannered, uncouth family and the small town’s small-minded people who intrusively give their opinion on everything. Out of this difficult time, the daughter comes to grips with the reality of her parents’ relationship and her own with them and her dead husband. The interaction between the townspeople is filled with platitudes such as “We are only given what we are able to bear” and ring true to small town life. Welty intersperses sentences such as “He
had showed her that this need not be so. Protection, like self-protection, fell away from her like all one garment, some anachronism foolishly saved from childhood” that shows us not only the protagonist becoming aware but strikes a chord in our lives. I will definitely be using this short novel, more likely in a remedial class, in the future.

25. WOLFF, TOBIAS. **OLD SCHOOL**

Another recommendation by the manager of a book store, Jeffrey Amherst College Store, and an English graduate student at Amherst, this novel is a coming of age story written by an author I had never read but heard so much about over my years of teaching. A full-time professor at Stanford, he currently teaches a variety of courses. The story of a first-person narrator takes place in 1962 in a small New England prep school where students are immersed in the writing life. The narrator is from Seattle, from a broken home, and is on a full scholarship because he is not wealthy like the other boys; hence, students at Cerritos who may go on to win scholarships at prestigious colleges, would definitely relate to his feelings of trying to fit in without mentioning his background. For these boys who live literature, the highlight of the year is when American literary luminaries show up and give opportunities for one boy to have a one hour private hour with a particular famous writer. Competition for the honor is fierce in competitively writing the winning poem. The famous writers do not usually live up to expectations and are found to have feet of clay and so do the narrator’s classmates. The process of watching a teen-ager’s life unfold into one of a writer, his beginning idealistic voice that becomes more perceptive and pragmatic all
make for a fascinating read even if students have not had the prep school experience. Wolff’s novel would be particularly good for a creative writing class which I plan to teach next year.

**D. OTHER ACTIVITIES**

**WRITING-IN-PROCESS COMMUNITIES**

As I had discovered in my first sabbatical, writing communities are important in the smallest of settlements. Every book store I visited had a special place allocated, almost always near the store’s entrance, for local authors’ works. Many of these writers are associated with the local colleges and are either dead or living such as the close association in Oxford between the town and the University of Mississippi. William Faulkner’s writing and volumes written about him filled shelves in Square Book Store. Yet so did a living writer who lives nearby, John Grisham. Colleges such as Bennington are proud to claim living poet, Mary Oliver, and living writer, Susan Cheever, and have all their writings in special sections of their book stores. These writers have often taught at the colleges and/or lived nearby, perhaps writing specifically of the area. When we visited Booth Bay, Maine and stayed at a local B & B, the innkeeper told us of his friendship with Richard Ford, one of my favorites. Only his being in Europe promoting his latest novel, *The Lay of the Land*, prevented my meeting him; he lived on the other side of the bay. The retired professor I walked with one morning said many writers have retired in this beautiful, serene and somewhat isolated area to write but do stay connected with each other. At City
Lights Book Store in San Francisco, where the Beat Movement got its start, I saw Allen Ginsberg and his fellow writer friends’ collections and memorabilia. In a special room allocated by Lawrence Ferlinghetti, the store owner, who knew them well, and is still writing his own poems and actively involved in the active writing community that looks to his store and the surrounding area for inspiration. Indeed, plaques have been erected all over the city in recognition of Ginsberg giving his first reading of “Howl”, Jack London’s birthplace, the place Robert Louis Stevenson rented a room, and Henold’s First and Last chance Saloon, Jack London’s favorite far, where Ambroise Bierce, Erskine Caldwell, Earle Gardner, and Joaquin Miller also wrote. Aspiring writers go there to feel their presence and just maybe go away to work on an important future writing. Amherst Book Store also had many local authors’ works such as deceased Emily Dickinson living Tobias Wolff, who the student/manager passionately recommended, and I did buy and read his Old School that refers to this society of elite finishing schools and attention to academics. So again, each community has its writers that are respected by the townspeople and who encourage the act of writing. It was good to see this for myself as I traveled from place to place, both the similarities of values and uniquenesses of style.

Besides the time to visit colleges, peruse their websites, read through the many handouts and brochures from these visitations; to visit writers’ homes and their writing communities, and the bookstores in these areas; to read what was recommended in these areas visited, I also attended theatres, readings, and made writing contacts. I am now able to integrate all these valuable components into my classes. I have listed theatres, readings and writing contacts in chronological order.
1. On August 12, 2006, I stopped at the site of Jack London’s birthplace at the plaque commemorating where Robert Louis Stevenson rented a room, the place where Mark Twain and Bret Harte worked in the 1860’s, and the spot where Allen Ginsberg gave his first public reading of “Howl.” All these spots are in San Francisco and fairly close together by car. I also visited the City Lights Book Store that is a simply marvelous place for Beat Literature and has on-going writers’ events and contends to be “a literary meeting-place since 1953.” The energy in this store still owned and managed by eighty–five year old Lawrence Ferlinghetti, a beat poet himself, is highly perceptible.

2. On August 15, 2006, I attended a superb performance of Cyrano de Bergerac at Ashland, Oregon’s Shakespearean outdoor theatre. A very long, three ½ hours, play, it was never boring because of the fast-pace staging, colorfully outrageous costumes, and brilliant acting. Never having seen the play but having heard so much about it over the years, I found the 1897 French play by Edmond Rosland to resonate with deception and succeeding against overwhelming odds.

3. On the afternoon of August 25, 2006, I attended Dr. Jekyl and Mr. Hyde by David Edgar, adapted from Robert Louis Stevenson, at the Angus Bowmer Theater in Ashland, Oregon. Front row seated, I was in the midst of the fast-moving drama that was skillfully acted by the accomplished Ashland players. I have used Stevenson’s novel in my classes before and truly appreciated the dramatic production that gave me much more insight into the human condition of both
good and bad residing in well-respected individuals, a connection easily made in today’s society whenever I pick up the newspaper. His message is timeless.

4. In the evening of August 25, 2006, I attended Shakespeare’s *Merry Wives of Windsor* at the Elizabethan outdoor stage in Ashland, Oregon. I had never read or seen this lesser known play of Shakespeare’s and so was pleasantly surprised by its farcical story set in Windsor. The playfulness would appeal to students as it did with the receptive audience during this performance. I felt so fortunate in having been able to see three plays at one of my favorite places.

5. On September 2, 2006, I attended South Coast Repertory’s play, *Nothing Sacred* by George Walker, a Canadian, which was an excellent comedy about Russia. This was the first offering of the 2006-07 season and a good way to begin.

6. On September 29, 2006, I attended a play, *Via Dolorasa*, by David Hare at the Unicorn Theatre in Lenox, Massachusetts. The small theatre was packed; I talked with the director of the group before the play, and he was impressed when I told him I had been attending SCR productions for over forty years; the repertory company has been awarded the Tony and is acclaimed nation-wide. I feel so fortunate to have been a part of its continuing development as a top theatre to see not only the classics but world premieres. This one act play dealt with the Israeli/Palestine conflict and featured one very talented actor, Jonathan Epstein, who was absolutely riveting.
7. On October 4, 2006, I visited the Concord Library in Massachusetts to see their collection of Transcendental books, a wonderful community gathering place. Concord exudes Transcendentalism with all the writers’ homes staffed by well-versed staff.

8. On October 6, 2006, I visited the Parker House Hotel in Boston where the Saturday Night Club met during the 1800’s. Members included Ralph Waldo Emerson, John Greenleaf Whittier, Nathaniel Hawthorne, and Dr. Oliver Wendell Holmes. Malcolm X was once a bus boy at the restaurant in the early 1940’s. I also visited the Tremont Temple that used to be the Tremont Theatre where famous actors and lecturers performed such as Charles Dickens and John Gilbert. Plaques hang on many of the buildings proclaiming prior fame; the Old Corner Bookstore published Hawthorne, Longfellow, Stowe, Emerson, and Thoreau. I saw where T. S. Eliot, Sylvia Plath, Nathaniel Hawthorne, and William Dean Howells had lived for short times. Boston is steeped in literary history and continues to thrive with book stores and writers connected to the many colleges.

9. On October 12, 2006, I saw Bach at Leipzig, by Itamar Moses at SCR’s second stage, a fictionalized story set in Leipzig, Germany. When an organist dies, six musicians, including Bach, audition, exposing the greed, manipulation, and lying that goes on behind the scenes in the church while they vie for the position of organist. I found it mildly entertaining though professionally staged and acted.
10. On October 15, 2006, I saw Beth Henley’s *Ridiculous Fraud* at SCR’s Segerstrom stage, a West Coast premier that had some very funny moments but definitely shows the need of several more rewrites. Even so, Henley is always worth the watching.

11. On October 20, 2006, I went to the discussion about Henley’s play at SCR and was lucky to see Beth Henley herself discussing her play with the director. She is quite witty and self-deprecating, a commendable force in the theatre and she covets SCR. And we, the theatre-goers are the richer for it.

12. On October 23, 2006, I went to SCR’s Newscript reading, *The 13th of Paris*, by Max Smart, a young playwright who was in the audience. I found it simple and a cause for attention-wandering. Perhaps several rewrites would make it work.

13. On December 4, 2006, I went to SCR’s Newscript reading, *The St. James Infirmary* by Brian Tucker, a young black writer. This is a very good play that I hope SCR does as a full production. The discussion that followed was provoking about this smart allegory that features likable characters and smart dialogue.

14. On January 12, 2007, I went to SCR’s discussion about *Pig Farm* by Greg Kotis, and he was the one who was interviewed. A young playwright, he is smart, funny, and rather humble. I saw his play as a Newscript reading and was not
impressed; however, I found it interesting to hear his voice in discussing it and wanted to see it in full production.

15. On January 25, 2007, I attended SCR’s production of Greg Kotis’ *Pig Farm*, an unusual production of dirt, noise, physical absurdity whose actors played their parts in an exaggerated manner I found off-putting.

16. On February 3, 2007, I attended a strange Spanish classical play, 16th century, *Life is a Dream* by Calderon. The production was steeped in magical realism so that not knowing the play put the audience at a disadvantage. I was glad I took the time to research its origins on the internet and to attend a discussion about the play a few days later.

17. On February 9, 2007, I attended a discussion at SCR about the Calderon play that really helped me appreciate their choice. Knowing more about the cultural background, the author’s motivations makes me realize all the more that I need to give the students as much as I feel they need to understand what they are reading and how it connects to their own lives.

18. On February 12, 2007, I attended a Newscript reading of *Incendiary* by Adam Szymkowicz, a young playwright who is quite gifted. This presentation was the 100th Newscript reading and what an enjoyable experience it was—a hilarious spoof on pyromania.
19. On February 17, 2007, I went to a SCR discussion held backstage on a Saturday morning. We were taken backstage where we were led in discussion with the female lead of Life is a Dream and in discussion with the production manager assistant. I could not believe how skillful these behind-the-scenes people need to be in order to carry out a polished production. I would encourage my students to come to one of these sessions, only ten dollars to experience a top rate theatre up close with the chance to interact with actors and crew.

20. On March 8, 2007, I went to UCI to hear E. L. Doctorow speak to an auditorium full of readers about his latest novel, The March, which he read from and also shared excerpts of his speech at Harvard. Still writing as an old man, he is an inspiration. I will most definitely read his book as I admire his thinking about war and prescribed religion. He answered questions candidly and with such intelligence. This free event was full of thought-provoking discussion.

21. On March 11, 2007, I saw The Piano Teacher by Julia Cho that I had seen as a Newscript reading last year. It was compelling because of the masterful setting and compelling actress, Linda Gehringer, who has been in many SCR productions.
On March 16, 2007, I went to SCR’s discussion of The Piano Teacher that focused on Kate Whorisky, the creative director. I enjoyed hearing her discuss her process.

On March 26, 2007, I attended a Newscript reading of King of the Shadows by Roberto Aguirre, a contemporary drama with a science fiction twist that did not hold up in the second act.

On April 2, 2007, I visited Nachitoches, Louisiana’s book store only a few miles from Kate Chopin’s home so naturally, there was a section with all her writing and those who write about her. I talked with the young lady who worked at the store who is an English major and attends nearby Northwestern University of Louisiana that she said had a strong English department and encourages writers. I like this bookstore with its fat, purring cat and small town restful ambiance.

On April 3, 2007, I visited Eudora Welty’s library in Jackson, Mississippi and the Writer’s Corner that features Welty, Richard Ford, Tennessee Williams, Beth Henley, and William Faulkner, some deceased, some quite alive and writing. The southern writers definitely resonate the quirky south and witty slant on life in their works.

On April 4, 2007, I visited Square Book Store and Off-Square Book Store where I have never seen so many literary journals and obscure books about Southern
writers, in particular the ones from this area. What a rich place in which to live and write. I would love to stay here for a month and steep myself in all the literary vibes emanating in this small university/writer town, in hopes that they would rub off.

27. On April 5, 2007, I visited New Orleans and tracked down the several places Tennessee Williams lived at various times in the French Quarter and his favorite restaurant, Galatoire’s at 209 Bourbon Street. His plays reflect the New Orleans life and make this area so much more meaningful to me. It has not lost its kinky, whimsical character since Katrina, for which I am grateful.

28. On April 12, 2007, I attended a wonderful production of E. L. Doctorow’s novel, *Ragtime* that had been adapted to the stage at the Dock Theatre in Charleston, South Carolina. A long show, it nevertheless held its own with the kind of music that made me want to sing and dance, and the stage setting kept the flavor of Doctorow’s historical fiction.

29. On April 13, 2007, I went to a reading by Gary Shteyngart from his most recent novel, *Absurdistan*, a *New York Times* best seller at a bookstore in Ashville, North Carolina. It is loosely based on his own life as a Russian Jew immigrating to America, a satire. His reading was directed at a small group of about twenty people; most of them had his novel in their hands and joyfully referred to various passages. I will try to read the novel soon, for the reading peaked my interest.
Again, I am struck with how many good novels there are to be read if only one had unlimited time.

30. On April 15, 2006, I attended a local poetry reading in Frankfort, Kentucky at my sister-in-law’s house. She is an artist/poet and is in this poet community that meets once a month. The talent ranges from teen-agers to community members in their sixties and showed me once again how important a fellow group of writers who serve as audience and inspiration is to all who have a compulsion to make art out of words. The session was filled with three hours of reading, music, food, and drink. It was a perfect way to spend a Sunday around a warm fire with the rain running down the window panes, savoring the pleasurable sounds of words.

31. On April 20, 2007, I attended a humorous performance in Hanibal, Missouri by a Mark Twain impersonator at an old theatre in town. He dressed like Twain, looking remarkably similar, and all the lines were from Twain’s autobiography which I had bought that day at the bookstore. There were only three of us couples as his audience, yet he performed for us as if were hundreds.

32. On April 29, 2007, I attended the U.C.L.A. Book Festival; this is a prodigious affair that I have attended every year that I can since its inception about ten years ago. It is a book lover’s paradise. Writers, publishers, and readers gather together on the sprawling U.C.L.A. campus and are able to attend indoor and
outdoor venues wherein poets read their poems; novelists read excerpts from their work; writers discuss in panel formats specific themes; publishers hawk their wares; musicians entertain; vendors sell their food; and attendees come home satiated with the printed word and its survival. I listened to panelists discussing the virtues of memoirs over autobiographies that promote more creativity and conscious selective memory. I missed Robert Scheer’s, a favorite columnist, discussion but did sit in on an interesting panel discussion about fiction written in different countries that shows our shrinking world. Next year, I will try to attend both days. When I am not on sabbatical, I always share this key event with students, many of whom have set their sights on attending this university. And it is free except for an $8.00 parking fee.

33. On May 3, 2007, I attended SCR’s System Wonderland by David Weiner in full production. I had seen the play as a Newscript reading last year and still did not feel it had much to offer other than fine staging and acting.

34. On May 4, 2007 at 1:00, I attended the first play in SCR’s tenth annual Pacific Playwright’s Festival of new plays that have been commissioned by SCR and then presented as readings and followed by audience feed-back to help with re-writing, much like their Newscripts readings. Shipwrecked by Donald Margulies was wonderfully acted by one person who was the most active and animated story-teller. SCR simply must include this one in their season offerings.
35. On May 4, 2007 at 3:30 and after a brief intermission, I attended the second reading, *Boleros for the Disenchanted* by Jose Rivera about a Puerto Rican family trying to hang on to cultural values amid poverty. This would be another good play for future full production.

36. On May 5, 2007 at 10:30, I attended the third reading, *My Mother’s Brief Affair* by Richard Greenberg that was perfectly acted by veteran Jill Clayburgh about a disintegrating marriage and the disbelief expressed by the mother’s grown children. Again, I would like to see this play as one of the season offerings.

37. On May 6, 2007 at 10:30, I attended the last reading, *An Italian Straw Hat* by Richard Strand about the pull of a symbolic straw hat set to music and extremely funny. What a good opening show this play would be for a future season. All four of the plays are worthy of full production. The Festival is full of energy, and the audience is able to sit next to the playwrights, the actors, directors, and so on. It is an amazing experience that I tell my students about every year. And at $10.00 a ticket the price is right.

38. On May 6, 2007 at 7:30, I attended SCR’s full production of *Wandering Boy* by Julie Marie Myatt about a boy who had it all and nevertheless left his home to wander and the consequences on his family. I found it thin and slow after the excellent offerings at the Playwright’s festival.
39. On May 26, 2007, I attended SCR’s last offering of their 2006-07 season, Shakespeare’s *Hamlet*, a play they had never presented in their over forty years in the theatre because they wanted to get this masterpiece right and so they did. For once, Hamlet was acted by a young, emotional man who lived the part rather than used the well-known dialogue for showcasing his acting ability. Over three hours and worth every minute, this production was worth the wait.

**E. TECHNOLOGICAL DEVELOPMENT**

1. During the fall, I purchased a Dell computer for home so that I would be compatible with Cerritos College, and I updated to Microsoft Word 2007. With the help of a few savvy friends and a grandson, I was able to finally learn what I needed to know in order to help me with my teaching. Having the time to pursue the knowledge necessary to feel as if I can now do most of what I need for putting together syllabi, class assignments, and gathering my own research materials was the only way I would have undertaken all that is involved in purchasing a personal computer over the obsolete Mac I had. I am still in process but the journey no longer seems insurmountable. So much of what I have learned simply needed my taking the time and asking for help in the right places.

2. During the entire year, I also received help from Abir, our Liberal Arts secretary, who was extremely good about showing me important points concerning Word and use of the internet. Margaret Taylor and many of my colleagues were invaluable when I asked them the simplest of questions that puzzled me. They were all amazingly patient and continue to be so.
3. The Cerritos College Innovation Center staff showed me how to put together
   Power Point presentations and were not only available whenever I called or came
   over but they made me feel as if I could do anything computer-related. I am
   forever grateful for their not making me feel as if the questions I asked were silly
   but encouraging me to come in whenever I needed help. Knowing I have this
   resource has made all the difference in my willingness to attempt more and more
   with computer-related projects.

4. And lastly and maybe the least helpful was a basic computer course I took at a
   Huntington Beach community center for all interested parties. I did learn a few
   skills but overall the three hour sessions were tedious and did not address the
   questions I had. I found it far more valuable to ask friends, staff, relatives, and
   the Innovation Center for help when I needed it and then having the invaluable
   time to problem solve on my own.

IV. SERVICE AND PRACTICAL APPLICATION

A. SERVICE TO CERRITOS COLLEGE
   1. Enthusiastically sharing the experiences and materials with colleagues,
      students, and staff has been and will continue to be rewarding for all of us. I
      am encouraging everyone to visit writers’ homes to feel the sacredness of
      writers’ spaces so the mystique of their desk, study, and view through the
      study window may rub off. I have met with aides in the Innovation Center
and friends who have helped with Power Point presentations; in fact, I have put together one based on our Transcendental visit in Concord. In having students pay attention to detail when writing, I have shared Thoreau’s Walden Pond, his writing, and photos this summer. By becoming more critical, observant readers, students will see the value of good writing for their successful transfer to a four year college. I have a special bookcase and large file compartment in my office where I have organized the writers, colleges, materials, and books collected for anyone to peruse and/or borrow. Besides that, I will happily meet with them whenever anyone wants more information about the fruits of my sabbatical.

2. Sharing in the form of a presentation will be a part of our fall Mazumdar, an all-day department meeting, usually held in my home on a Friday. I am committed to the idea that sabbatical experiences should be informally shared whenever possible with colleagues. However, in addition, a more formal overview should be a part of returning in the fall so that the entire project can be enumerated for faculty use. How to integrate literature into all the English classes, the information gleaned from college visits on the literature used in the classrooms, and good ideas for encouraging English majors such as “What the faculty is now reading” will be some of the information shared at the Mazumdar I will host.
3. I have files filled with student papers, hand-outs such as “What Can an English Major Do,” and activities to be adopted from colleges such as Dartmouth who encourage English majors to meet with faculty several times a year for informal discussions with coffee and cookies. Many of the ideas are worthy of my implementation.

4. The different regions visited confirmed again how important it is to present diverse points of view based on the regions in which writers live and yet how universal our needs and desires are. Traveling to these regions and visiting the homes, bookstores, and colleges makes for more methods in disseminating compelling information.

5. Even though I had traveled to many of these places on my first sabbatical and had collected materials, read books, taken photos, and shared my findings at Cerritos, I felt a need to update the twelve year old research. Now I can compare and enhance my findings with the added value of many more years of teaching at this college.

B. SERVICE TO THE COMMUNITY
1. The research accumulated that has directly affected the way in which I teach and thereby the students who take my classes, the colleagues I share my findings with, and the staff who have become an important part of the college will all take their education out into the community to show the importance
Cerritos College places on keeping current and encouraging students to read and write.

2. Writing about place allows writers to be specific but also to address universal concerns. Students may some day write about this region and culture, realizing its value and realizing literature addresses issues we deal with all the time no matter where and how we live. At the very least, they will go out into the community to read more and to encourage their family and friends to do the same. The book list I created for my summer English 52 class has classic writers such as Nathaniel Hawthorne and Kate Chopin as well as contemporary writers, Richard Ford and Khalid Hosseini so that students can see that one culture or time period is not valued over another.

3. By sharing expectations gathered from colleges around the United States in regards to students who would like to transfer to a four year college with colleagues and students, I will help them be realistic about their preparation process in our classes here at Cerritos. Preparing adequately for transfer will help them meet with more success that will make for a more culturally rich community.

C. CLASSROOM IMPLEMENTATION

1. After reading through my notes, my handouts accumulated from the writers’ houses visited, bookstores, colleges, and books, I have realized a wealth of information that I have used in my summer English 52 class and will be using
in my fall classes. Specifically, I have incorporated a Steinbeck story and photos of the region he so richly detailed in his fiction. I have also reworked every one of my syllabuses to include fiction, notably American writers’ homes visited or talked about on our travels, several of which were visited on the 1994-95 sabbatical. I have gathered the research, photos, and books collected on my travels this past year in my office, so it is all readily available for classroom use. As I write this at the end of summer school, I have dipped into the files on authors to share in the classroom, lent books to students, and given students an insightful document on the value of reading literature throughout one’s life. When I visited Sarah Orne Jewett’s home in South Berwick, Maine, I agreed with her statement she made when she visited the home of the Bronte sisters in Haworth, England (a place I have also visited) in 1898. “Nothing you ever read about them can make you know them until you go there…Never mind people who tell you there is nothing to see in the place where people lived who interest you. You always find something of what made them the souls they were, and at any rate you see their sky and their earth.” In fact, the first essay written in the English 52 class was about the power of place and how these places define us. The students have had to look for the words from Nathaniel Hawthorne’s “Young Goodman Brown,” John Steinbeck’s “Chrysanthemums,” passages from Henry David Thoreau’s Walden (homes I visited and photos and literature I shared in the class) and Alice Walker’s “Every Day Use” that describe using all five senses that encourage the reader to become part of the writing. All my fall classes,
English 100, English 103, and English 102 have been rewritten to incorporate my sabbatical discoveries. The possibilities for future classes are seemingly endless.

2. Luckily, I have colleagues in the English Department who are open to others’ ideas about teaching and enjoy sharing not only our successes but our failures. The positive collegiality encourages us to meet both formally in department meetings and informally in halls, offices, and at our homes. I have shared several resources gleaned from my year off, one of which is the newly accredited English 101 course offerings at other colleges, community and four year institutions. Several colleges had good hand-outs for why students should become English majors. I would like to follow up on this idea by holding a meeting in the Board room for perspective English majors that could include counselors and English instructors for talk, cookies, and punch. At an Oregon College, I spotted a bulletin board displaying faculty’s current reading—novels, short fiction, poetry, and drama. I would like to develop this idea in the Liberal Arts hallway, adding comments about the reading, and include a few quoted lines from the work. Students could be asked to participate as well. By role modeling current reading, students could see faculty continues to evolve as they teach; book groups might be a natural progression from this changing display. I have already started to work on this project and met with positive responses.
3. In so many of the authors’ homes I visited, the docents discussed how their works were censored by the community in which they lived and oftentimes by the larger public and in some cases, is still being censored. For instance, Kate Chopin’s (a home I visited in Cloutierville, Louisiana) classic, *The Awakening* was banned during her life time and not “discovered” until the Feminist Movement. Mark Twain’s *Huckleberry Finn* continues to be censored in many schools. Having used Nafisi’s *Reading Lolita in Tehran* and Nabokov’s *Lolita* in previous English 100 classes, I know the power of being allowed to read whatever we want. I will put together a class that focuses on censored classics and highlight it with a Banned Book Night in which faculty, staff, and students read from selected writing. We have held these events in the past and have met with stimulating discussions. I have created new syllabi assignments for all my classes and am eager to share them at the next Mazumdar, something I could not have accomplished without the time away from a full teaching load.

4. One of the most important parts of this past year was becoming more comfortable with technology. I bought a new Dell in the fall so that my home computer would be more compatible with my office PC at Cerritos. I enlisted the aid of a good teacher friend who had just purchased and installed the same computer successfully. She proved to be an invaluable resource as did my nineteen year old techno-savvy grandson who spent many long weekends coaching me. I continue to ask them for help when needed, but I am needing it far less. The Innovation Center was always available and encouraged me to
come in for help with Power Point presentations. Because I was not sure of which authors I will use and what locales, I worked on a Transcendental slide show I will use this summer. The staff in the Innovation Center said they are available for any other presentations I may want to use in class and for that I am grateful. Power Point is not difficult, I found out, but it is time-consuming. I also took a basic computer class with my husband through Adult Education as a refresher course and as a way to help my husband. Teaching is the best tool for learning.

V. CONCLUDING REMARKS
As with my 1994-95 sabbatical, I have realized unexpected benefits in addition to all of those enumerated in my proposal. I wanted to update the research materials previously gathered from authors’ homes and colleges, revisiting many of the same places as well as visiting new places, talking with different people. This I did. Traveling to these places, informally discussing writing and the teaching process, and discovering the complexity of writers’ lives from these visits was enlightening. I brought back books they had written and books written about them to help me understand to a far greater degree the difficulty of good writing. How do we teach such an arduous skill? I bought books on writing from book store owners who recommended them and used many of the suggestions for my own writing that I can pass on to my students. I was able to have the necessary time to ingest the reading, reflect on the travel, and begin to incorporate this year of discoveries into my
teaching. I want to thank everyone at Cerritos College for making my sabbatical possible.
VI. APPENDICES

A. BIBLIOGRAPHY

B. EXAMPLES OF POWERPOINT PRESENTATION AND CLASS ASSIGNMENTS
A. **BIBLIOGRAPHY**

2. Cather, Willa. *My Antonia*
4. Chopin, Kate. *At Fault.*
17. Oliver, Mary. *Why I Wake Early.*


B. EXAMPLES OF POWERPOINT PRESENTATION AND CLASS ASSIGNMENTS

Powerpoint presentation. Photos from my trip to Concord, Massachusetts of the Transcendental community, in particular the town of Concord, Walden Pond, Hawthorne and Emerson’s homes, and Sleepy Hollow Cemetery where the leading Transcendental writers were buried.

Class assignments. Included are two assignments, one from English 103, a research project that focuses on Thoreau’s *Walden* and uses the book as the basis for the students researching the influence of the Transcendentalists, and the other is from English 102 and is a Southern Literary Essay in which students read Southern writers and find the elements of their writing that creates a Southern flavor. Both of these assignments were used in my fall 2007 classes, and I am using them in my spring 2008 classes. I bring in my materials such as pamphlets, flyers, photos, souvenirs, etc. that have been gleaned from my travels to make the assignments more relevant and, of course, I share many of my experiences in collecting these materials.