

Phyllis Wilson Moore
For Dr. Judy P. Byers, 2009

ROOTED IN SOLID GROUND: JOURNEYS INTO APPALACHIAN LITERATURE

Syllabus topics and a bibliography for teaching West Virginia literature using the literary map, the Internet, and *Traditions: A Journal of West Virginia Folkculture and Educational Awareness*. Potential audiences: Post-secondary classroom teachers, school and public librarians, students in preparation for careers as teachers: English, reading, drama, or speech; students pursuing a degree in Library Science; students, workshop participants or others with a specific interest in West Virginia literature

GOALS

- Reinforce the position of West Virginia literature as a branch of Appalachian and American Literature;
- Familiarize participants with the roots and variety of West Virginia's multicultural literary heritage as well as its universality and "teach-ability";
- Create or increase interest in reading, teaching, and discussing West Virginia literature;
- Provide participants with tools to identify and teach West Virginia literature appropriate to various age groups; topical interests; and levels of interest;
- Create or increase participants' understanding of the importance of recognizing and nourishing the literature of specific locales.

INTRODUCTION

Many of the seventeenth and eighteenth settlers of West Virginia came from Scotland, Ireland, England, Germany, among other European locales, to ports on the eastern coast of North America. They moved on to (what was then) the mountain wilderness west of the colonies.. These settlers and others brought their history and heritage, memories and stories, as well as the drive to be independent land owners. **They were not here first or here alone, however. They massacred, uprooted, or in the best cases merged with Native Americans. Some brought with them, or later purchased, African Americans as slaves.**

The mountains' mix grew to include increasing numbers of ethnic groups from countries such as Italy, France, Poland, Greece, Belgium, and Spain, etc. The religions represented were as numerous as the groups themselves. Each brought skills and a heritage; all had the desire to record their "ways" for future generations. They did not forget their past homes or their past.

The state's literature developed from this hodgepodge of cultures, social classes, races, and religions, plus the beauty and constraints of this specific place. The literature is of value; it defines this place, our place, and yet has universal themes and appeal.

The topics and lessons included here offer a small sample of the literature created by early immigrants and their descendants.

As noted educator Jim Wayne Miller of Western Kentucky University said, "By getting more of the students' lives into the literature they are asked to read, teachers may be able to get more literature into their lives...making them feel valuable and valued." He added, "Students who have learned to affirm and appreciate something of their own history and heritage are more likely to appreciate someone else's." His statements sum up the goals of this course.

Readings

Readings in the genres of imaginative literature (children's/youth literature, drama, fiction, memoir, poetry, screen writing) will explore common themes, as well as the influence of place. Participants will select six authors, one from each of the six genres, to explore in depth. Each student will write a final paper related to the student's chosen authors' contributions to Appalachian literature.

Final Grade

The final grade will be determined by averaging the grades for assigned papers, evaluation of the quality of class room presentations, participation in group work and class discussions.

Requirements and Options

Presentations are required; computer presentations are optional.

A final paper will address the role and significance of West Virginia literature as depicted by their six selected authors.

Texts

"From a Place Called Solid: West Virginia and Its Writers." Phyllis Wilson Moore

Backcountry: Contemporary Writing in West Virginia. Irene McKinney, Ed.

Wild Sweet Notes: Fifty Years of West Virginia Poetry 1950-1999. Barbara Smith and Kirk Judd, Eds.

Supplements

“*The Appalachians*.” Mari-Lynn Evans, Producer. Evening Star Productions, Nashville, TN

“*Honoring Our Past: Proceedings of the First Two Conferences on West Virginia’s Black History*.” Joe William Trotter and Ancella Radford Bickley, Eds.

“*In Their Own Country: Fourteen Interviews with Fourteen of West Virginia’s Best Authors*.” West Virginia Library Commission. Charleston, WV. Kate Long, Producer.

“*Life*.” Sunday Gazette-Mail. Charleston, WV: 10 May 1992. Long, Kate, Editor

“*Mountaineer*.” WV Public Broadcasting: Morgantown, WV, 1995 (59 minutes). John Nakaskima, Producer

Traditions: A Journal of West Virginia Folk Culture and Educational Awareness (Traditions). Dr. Judy P. Byers and Noel W. Tenney, Eds. Volumes 1, 2, 3, 5, 6 & 9

Hatfields and McCoys series

Introductory Session Class 1 Refuting the Legend of the PIWASH

Overview: Requirements, texts, attendance policy, resources, methods of evaluation, assignment and report schedules

Methods

Lecture and discussion related to American Literature and its branches

View and discuss “*Mountaineers*.” “*Mountaineer Circles*,” Segment I (59 minutes)

Materials Needed:

Class police/outline; Video-tape player and TV; “*Mountaineer Circles*” Segment I

Handouts

- A. “From a Place Called Solid”
- B. Long, Kate, Editor. *Life*. Sunday Gazette-Mail. Charleston, WV, 10 May 1992.
- C. Miller, Dr. Jim Wayne. *Reading, Writing, Region*.” *Traditions*, Volume 2, #1 1994
- D. Moore, Phyllis Wilson. “*Refuting the Legend of the PIWASH*.” *Traditions: Volume #2*, 1994

- E. “*We Have Some Writers.*” *Traditions* Volume 3, #1, 1995
- D. Census demographics, immigration data, Civil War enlistment data/West Virginia
- G. Maps and information related to the seven tourist regions of WV

Week 2

“WRITING OUR OWN DISPATCH”

Methods: Lecture and discussion with small group activities and readings

Q and A on the essay “*Reading, Writing, Region*”

How does writing “our own dispatch” relate to the image of West Virginia?

What are the three main points of the essay? How do you agree or disagree with the essay?

What constitutes West Virginia literature? Who is a West Virginia author?

Participants will explore their views on the state’s image and engage in a discussion of the “PIWASH” (poor, illiterate, white anglo-shoeless hillybilly) problem as real or imagined; the class will discuss what it mean to “write your own dispatch” and discuss who, over the decades, wrote the dispatches for West Virginia. Who should write it? Who is writing it now?

In small groups, participants will explore WV census, immigration, slave and Civil War data and consider if, or how, this data might be reflected in the state’s literature and select a spokesperson to present the group’s opinions and observations to the class. They will consider questions such as “where does literature come from?” What makes literature authentic?

Using the poem “We Have Some Writers,” class members will assess their awareness of the authors of West Virginia and the state’s literature by circling the names of authors or works familiar to them (recognize the name; have read their work, etc.). The class will discuss the results.

In small groups, participants will explore the names and locations of the counties in each of the regions of WV (as identified by the State Department of Tourism) and discuss possible differences. Would differences be reflected in the literature written by residents of state’s regions? If so, how? Cite one example

In small groups, participants will consider samples of West Virginia fiction from those provided and select a piece they feel is **authentic or non-authentic**. Their decision will be explained to the class by a group member.

Examples of Additional Activities/Points to Ponder

Brainstorm words often used to describe natives of various states. Discuss the participants' perceptions of the image of West Virginia, both in and outside of the state. Discuss the terms bogtrotters (as applied to the Irish); clan (as applied to the Scots), and hillbilly (as applied to the West Virginian). What other states or groups have been labeled with terms that may be seen as derogatory?

Define literature, what it is and is not. Is there such a thing as American literature? California literature? New York literature? When is literature local?

What is Southern Literature? Appalachian Literature? Does West Virginia have a literature? If so, what two words best describe WV literature?

Is West Virginia literature Appalachian Literature with a different? If so, what are the differences?

END OF CLASS 2 DISCUSSION

Distribute Materials Needed for the Assigned Reading for Class 3

1. Criteria for "*From A Place Called Solid*"
2. Introduction to *Language of the Land*

Assignment

Read the Introduction to *Language of the Land* in preparation for an in-class discussion; examine the internet site of the Library of Congress to find the number of literary maps for West Virginia. Compare this number to the number listed by the first state with a map, New Jersey. Compare this with the number attributed to our "mother state," Virginia.

Examine the genres and criteria shown on the literary map of West Virginia: In the future, how might the criteria change? Compile the names of map authors "new to you" for further research.

Research and write short biographical paragraphs on the four persons to whom the map is dedicated and the two authors with work quoted on the map (Pearl S. Buck & Louise McNeill); be prepared to discuss their suitability as honorees as part of the in-class discussion

Using an internet search engine such as www.google.com, locate sites related to the words "West Virginia+literature" and "West Virginia+author"; tabulate the total number

of sites found and explore two of them; chose one to report on in a subsequent class (5-10 minute report).

Class # 3 **“Mapping Our Way”**

Materials Needed for Class 3

LANGUAGE OF THE LAND; Outlines of WV; literary maps of various states and the map “*Great American Authors*”; lists of selected map authors divided by genre and region along with the dates the genres will be covered; Internet site addresses or bookmarks; calendar for notation of assigned dates for presentations

Methods for Class 3

Discuss the Introduction to *Language of the Land*. Examine the books content as to the literature of WV; discuss the Internet holdings of the Library of Congress as related to WV literature

Lecture on the map’s criteria and the map’s creation followed by Q and A and then small group work. **Possible Ideas for discussions:** “Regarding the map, what did you learn, or what is new to you?” “What is signified by the map’s art?” “What do you like best about the map?” “What would you change?” “Why do some authors appear on more than one state’s map?” “Are there WV authors on the VA map?” On maps of other states? “Why?”

“Would you modify the map’s criteria?” “If so, how and why?”

Do literary maps have value? If so, what is an example?

Class response: research done on the authors assigned; **Reports** on their Internet findings

Small group work

Examine maps from other states and discuss the impression created by each map; discuss the impression you receive from WV’s map

Examine the map “*Great American Authors*” created in 1955; list the WV related authors. If you could update this map to the present, how would you change the WV related information?

On an outline of WV, assign map authors to the tourist region with which they are identified; for your own tourist region list any other authors you are aware of and add this information to your personal folder

End of Class 3 Discussion

Assignment for Class 4:

On the Internet locate information for these authors

Belton, Sandra. *From Miss Ida's Porch*
 Berkley, June Langford. *Shannaganey Blue*
 Byars, Betsy. *Goodbye, Chicken Little*
 Delany, Martin R. *Blake*
 Gates, Henry Louis, Jr. *Colored People*
 Giardina, Denise. *Storming Heaven*
 Janus, Christopher. *Miss 4th of July, Goodbye*
 Kinder, Chuck. *The Silver Ghost*
 Maynard, Lee. *Crum*
 Maillard, Keith. *Running*
 Pleska, Cat. *Riding on Comets*
 Phillips, Jayne Anne. *Machine Dreams*
 Rylant, Cynthia. *When I Was Young in the Mountains*
 Settle, Mary Lee. *Addie*
 Smucker, Anna Egan. *No Star Nights*
 Ware, Cheryl. *Flea Circus Summer*
 Willis, Meredith Sue. *In the Mountains of America*

1. Evaluate one of the sites as to content: mention of West Virginia; graphics; etc. Report on the site in class (5 minute)
2. Examine the following internet websites: WV Folklife Center at Fairmont State; West Virginia Wesleyan; AppLit. Be prepared to discuss the sites in class: form, content, graphic displays, sponsors, etc.
3. Does your local public or school library display the WV Literary Map or information about WV Literature? Do they have a section/s devoted to WV lit? If so, where is it housed? How is it promoted? Do you consider it adequate?

Note: At this time each student will select a **map authors from each genre** to research using one of the following: *Backcountry*; *In Their Own Country*; *Wild Sweet Notes I or II*; or *Traditions, Vol. ???* The first report will begin in Class 5; and participants will present 15 minute overview about their chosen authors.

As much as possible, the reports shall include information about the authors' relationship to WV, ethnic background, educational background, family background, employment history, and body of work. Participants may display items mentioned in the literature of the author, come dressed as a character from the work, utilized posters, "sound bites," or computerized programs, etc.

Presentation dates will be assigned based on the genres selected

Class 4 “Everybody’s Ethnic”: Children’s and Youth Literature of West Virginia

Methods

This class session will focus on selected work of Sandra Belton; June Langford Berkley, Betsy Byars, Robyn Eversole, Marc Harshman, Christopher Janus, Cynthia Rylant, Alvena Seckar, Anna Egan Smucker, Cheryl Ware, or work illustrated by John Holyfield.

Reports by the students will cover their findings on the same authors

A Few Possible Assignments for throughout the year

Research the awards listed on the map and write a short report on the two specifically assigned to you (Newbery, National Book Award, American Book Award, Weatherford, Lillian Smith, Coretta Scott King, Appalachian Gold Medallion, etc.). Present information on these to the class and give your opinion as to their significance. Consider the question, “Does WV have major stars in the literary firmament?” Who qualified as a star and why?

Is quality of literature judged by awards won or by many standards?

In small groups using the WV literary map, chose four authors with the most outstanding literary credentials and select a spokesperson to present the group’s choices, along with their rationale.

Identify one author on the map from each “tourist region” of the state; write a short essay on how literature from each region might be expected to reflect a different view of WV; use your essay as the basis for an oral report. The report should include one specific example of the WV region’s unique literature. Examples: The Eastern Panhandle’s Confederate leanings are shown in the short story collection *If Only* by John Peale Bishop; the Northern Panhandle’s industrial-based or “steel mill literature” is demonstrated by Rebecca Harding Davis, Keith Maillard, and John F. Matheus, and Anna Egan Smucker; the Mountaineer as agrarian is shown in the work of June Berkely, Hubert Skidmore, Melville Davisson Post; the coal fields are central in the work of Mary Lee Settle and Denise Giardina.

Examine the holdings in a public or school library for the names of your choice of four authors on the front of the map and determine how many titles the library has by the authors. Use worldcat.com to tabulate the publications of your four choices. Prepare a graph (group in-class project) of the findings.

Visit a WV bookstore and explore the West Virginia section; tabulate its holdings and prepare a graph (group in-class project).

Peruse the index of one American literature text of a local high school or this University or any college or university's to determine the number of West Virginia authors in the text; add these findings to the graph (in-class project).

Identify institutions of higher learning offering courses in WV literature and/or degrees in WV Literature, Appalachian Literature, or Southern Literature; compile a list of degrees you can obtain in-state on this topic; and a list of authors taught in the courses.

Measurable objectives----A FEW SAMPLES

Reports on survey results related to schools, book stores, libraries, texts, curricula

Respond to questions based on selected assigned readings and internet searches

Written assignments completed on time using correct grammar, style and spelling

Verbal report evaluation

Cooperate in group projects; serving as spokesperson when selected

Final paper regarding the state's image and the value of local literature (include implementation ideas for libraries and class rooms)

Resources needed throughout the semester for various assignments

Films, video, audio-cassettes, dramas, and samples of literature, all in the map's genres and by map authors

Vocabulary

Appalachia

Bogtrotter

Clan

Clog

Literature

Literary map

Genre

Criteria

Rubric

Stereotype

PIWASH (WASH and WASP)

Connotation

Theme

Plot

Place

Setting

Time
 Characterization
 Character
 Voice
 Drama
 Poetry
 Screenwriting
 Fiction
 Nonfiction
 Memoir
 Children's and young adult literature
 Newbery
 American Book Award
 Pulitzer Prize
 National Book Award
 Weatherford Award
 Lillian Smith Award
 O. Henry
 Coretta Scott King
 Appalachian Gold Medallion
 West Virginia Writers, Inc. J. U. G. Award
 Universal themes
 Center for the Book
 Library of Congress
 West Virginia Library Commission

Syllabus

| | | |
|------------------|------------|-----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| August | 25 | Organizational Session, Class 1 |
| September | | Labor Day Recess |
| | 8 | “Writing Our Own Dispatch” |
| | 15 | “Mapping Our Way” |
| | 22. | “Everybody’s Ethnic: Children’s and Youth Literature of WV,” |
| | 29. | “Drama as a Map Genre: Where is the PIWASH?” Jean Battlo, Billy Edd Wheeler, Kermit Hunter, Mayrat Lee, Sean O’Leary, |
| | 30. | Julia Davis, Anne Flagg |
| October | 6 | Fiction as a Map Genre: Davis Grubb, Keith Maillard, Pinckney Benedict, William Demby Meredith Sue Willis, W. E. Blackhurst, G. D. McNeill, Melville Davisson Post, Granville Davisson Hall, Holmes Moss |

Alexander, Hubert Skidmore, Martin Delany, Denise Giardina,
Mary Lee Settle, Breece D’J Pancake,

- 13 Fiction continued:** John Peale Bishop, Wallace Knight, Lisa Koger,
June Langford Berkley, Rebecca Harding Davis, Chuck Kinder,
Lee Maynard, John Knowles, Carlene Thompson,
Carolyn Thorman, Belinda Anderson
- 20. Poetry as a Map Genre:** P. J. Laska, Eddy Pendarvis, Muriel Miller
Dressler, Russell Marano, Louise McNeill, Edward J. Cabbell, Maggie
Anderson, Kirk Judd, Susan Sheppard, Charlotte Meade, Irene
McKinney, Marc Harshman, Mary Lucille DeBerry, Norman Jordan
- 27 Poetry continued:** Bob Henry Baber, Timothy Russell, Earl Keener
Mark DeFoe, Elaine Blue, Edwina Pendarvis, Victor Depta
- November 3 Memoir:** Henry Louis Gates, Jr., Mary Lee Settle, Homer H.
Hickam, Jr., Pearl Buck, Booker T. Washington, Walter Dean Myers
Julia Davis, John O’Brien
- 10 Screenwriting:** Danny Boyd, Pare Lorentz, Millard Lampell; Milton
Cohen
- 17 Universal Themes:** Family vs individualism; power
vs powerlessness; outside vs inside

Thanksgiving Recess

- December 5 Universal Theme in West Virginia Literature:** Denise Giardina, Davis
Grubb, Breece D’J Pancake, Jayne Anne Phillips, Hubert Skidmore,
Meredith Sue Willis

Universality of West Virginia Literature and literature by WV Authors

“*A Room Forever*,” Breece D’J Pancake; “*Two Gallants*” or *Araby*
James Joyce

Final Session December 19

Written response on the value and uses for local literature in the classroom and library
and their plans for its use

Bib

Authors to choose from

Belinda Anderson

Colleen Anderson

Maggie Anderson

Tom Andrews

Bob Henry Baber

Julie Baker

Jean Battlo

Sandra Belton

Pinckney Benedict

June Langford Berkley

John Peale Bishop

W. E. Blackhurst

Elaine Blue

Danny Boyd

Joseph Bundy

Betsy Byars

Edward J. Cabbell

Richard Currey

Danske Dandridge

Julia Davis

Rebecca Harding Davis

Mary Lucille DeBerry

Victor Depta

Mark DeFoe

Martin R. Delany

William Demby

Muriel Miller Dressler

Robyn Eversole

George "Douglas" Fetherling

Ann Katherine Flagg

Seseen Francis

Henry Louis Gates, Jr.

Denise Giardina

Crystal Good

Jamie Gordon

Davis Grubb

Granville Davisson Hall

Alberta Pierson Hannum

Marc Harshman

Homer H. Hickam, Jr.

William Hoffman

Kermit Hunter

Christopher Janus

J. McHenry Jones

Brucella Jordan

Norman Jordan

Kirk Judd

Lawrence Kasdan

Earl R. Keener

Chuck Kinder

Wallace E. Knight

John Knowles

Lisa Koger

Tom Kromer

Millard Lampell

P. J. Laska

Gretchen Moran Laskas

Maryat Lee

Cleta Long

Kate Long

Pare Lorentz

Keith Maillard

Jeff Mann

Marie Manilla

Russell Marano

Catherine Marshall

John F. Matheus

Lee Maynard

Irene McKinney

G. D. McNeill

Louise McNeill

Donna S. Meredith

Matthew Neil Null

Ann Pancake

Breece D'J Pancake

Cat Pleska

Edwina Pendarvis

Jayne Anne Phillips

Melville Davisson Post

Timothy Russell

Cheryl Ryan

Cynthia Rylant

Brenda Seabrooke

Alvena Seckar

David Selby

Mary Lee Settle, Addie: A Memoir

Susan Sheppard

Ellen Harvey Showell

Hobert Skidmore

Hubert Skidmore

Joseph Slate

Ethel Morgan Smith

Anne Bethel Spencer

Carlene Thompson

Cheryl Ware

Clyde Ware

Booker T. Washington

Don West

Meredith Sue Willis

Pete Zikovic

Demonstrate the universality of Appalachian literature through thematic pairing of selected works with those of noted literary standard bearers. For example, stories from the collection *The Stories of Breece D'J Pancake* could be thematically paired with stories by Joyce, Steinbeck, Faulkner; the novel *Glory* by West Virginia's Walter Dean Myers could be paired with Steven Crane's *Red Badge of Courage*, etc.