

The Annenberg/CPB Channel  
Professional Development Workshop Guide

# **in search of the novel**

An eight-part professional development workshop  
series for middle and high school English teachers

produced by the Educational Film Center and funded by Annenberg/CPB

*In Search of the Novel*

is produced by  
the Educational Film Center.

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# About the Workshops

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## Preface

In the beginning of this project, we asked why our teaching methods for the novel have changed so little when the world around us and the digital landscape we inhabit have changed so much. How can we teach literature with a fresh approach, how can we demonstrate its relevance in such a changing world? Our first thought was to present the novel from varying points of view, including the writer's and student's, and to present ways in which a work can be interpreted and incorporated into individual lives. We then conceived of *In Search of the Novel* as an inquiry—a participatory exploration rather than a presentation. Thus, the questions we pose (“Where Do Novels Come From?”, “What’s the Story?” and so on) are questions that we hope will draw the students in and show them that literature is a place that we live in, a place that has meaning for each of our lives once we have found the pathway.

Patricia Browning Griffith, Project Advisor

## Series Overview

*In Search of the Novel* is a free professional development series of eight workshops for teachers of English, grades six through twelve. While it explores fresh approaches to teaching the novel, it also confirms what English teachers know. Readers experience novels in various and individual ways since they bring their own lives to them.

The video portion of *In Search of the Novel* is an unscripted documentary, with real situations and real people—novelists, teachers, and a wide variety of students, grades six through twelve, from many parts of the country. You will see them as they explore and investigate and probe. The video features innovative classroom activities, interviews with contemporary novelists, and ten of the most popular novels on school reading lists. We invite you to look for ideas and strategies that might work for you or that you might modify to suit your style, your classes, and the novels you teach.

You will see much creativity in the videos and become engaged in your own creative work. That creativity, we believe, will be infectious and fun.

Eric H. Christenson, Content Director and Workshop Writer

# About the Workshops

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## Workshop Descriptions

### **Workshop 1: Who Owns the Novel?**

This workshop probes the living nature of the novel by illustrating how each reader makes a novel his or her own. It shows that the interpretation of a novel changes, depending upon the reader's culture, class, generation, sex, and personality. In the video, novelists, teachers, and students explore the mystery of how readers assume ownership of the novels they read.

### **Workshop 2: What's the Story?**

There are many different ways to tell a story and present its conflicts, crises, and resolutions. This workshop explores how an author spins a story and why it is the most important aspect of the novel. In the video, participants examine the importance of the hook and the story itself, and the "why" behind the events. They also consider various ways into difficult novels.

### **Workshop 3: Are Novels Real?**

Must a novel's characters, their motivations and stories, and times and places bear some likeness to reality? This program explores how novels connect with the reader. In the video, teachers, students, and novelists probe the origins of stories.

### **Workshop 4: Where Do Novels Come From?**

This program explores the genesis of the characters, plot, themes, and interpretations from the novelist's point of view. In the video, participants examine the relationship between the novel and the objective reality from which it may spring.

### **Workshop 5: Why Do I Have to Read this Book?**

The workshop's 10 novels are examined to see why they appear on recommended reading lists and win so many awards. The program also looks at the essential elements of good writing and storytelling, and it explores various ways in which novels are challenged by students and communities. It also offers positive reasons for reading.

### **Workshop 6: What's in It for Me?**

A novel can transport readers to other places and times, real or imaginary, allowing them to meet people and experience life in many different ways. In the video, teachers explore ways to help students to respond to novels on deeply personal levels.

### **Workshop 7: Who Am I in This Story?**

The reader steps into the novel in various roles: the protagonist, the narrator, the author, or another character. In the video, students and novelists examine the complex ways readers may identify with characters in a novel.

### **Workshop 8: Am I Getting Through?**

In this summary, teachers examine their own effectiveness in helping students comprehend and appreciate novels and in setting them on the road to become lifelong readers. In the video, teachers discuss and demonstrate strategies for evaluation.

# Workshop Components

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## On the Day of Each Workshop

### Site Investigation: GETTING READY

30 minutes of discussion and activity to prepare you for the workshop video

### Workshop Video

60 minutes of video—a documentary of interviews, classroom activities, and more. The documentary will break three times—two 15-second breaks with on-screen questions for later consideration, and one five-minute break for an activity.

### Site Discussion: GOING FURTHER

30 minutes of discussion and activity to wrap up the workshop video

## Between Workshops

### Homework Assignment

Exercises or activities that bridge the workshops and prepare you for the next one

### Ongoing Activity

Although your primary focus during the workshops will be to develop strategies to draw students into the novel, you will explore the creative process for yourself as well by beginning a journal or your own work of fiction. As the workshop unfolds, you'll find writing exercises for yourself, many of which you might find helpful for your students, too; these instructions will be preceded by a pencil graphic (✎). Keep your creative writing assignments in your journal and be prepared to share them from time to time with other workshop participants.

### Web site: [www.learner.org/channel/workshops/isonovel](http://www.learner.org/channel/workshops/isonovel)

The *In Search of the Novel* Web site is an integral part of this series. It contains transcripts of interviews with authors, a section for posting comments and queries, and links to other relevant sites. You will also find lesson plans, a synopsis of each novel, background information on authors, and other supporting material. If you are not comfortable working on the Web, take some time before the workshops to explore the Internet, and bookmark the *In Search of the Novel* site.

### Channel - NovelTalk

This discussion list allows you to communicate with other workshop participants via email.

### To subscribe to Channel-NovelTalk:

Send an email message to: [Channel-noveltalk-request@learner.org](mailto:Channel-noveltalk-request@learner.org)  
The message should read: subscribe Channel-noveltalk <Your Name>  
For example: subscribe Channel-noveltalk <Amanda Cho>

Be sure to remove any signature files before sending your message.

# About the Contributors

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**Andrea Alsup (Advisor)** Andrea Alsup has taught English in Vermont and New Hampshire public schools since 1983. She is founder of Secondary School Shakespeare Festival at Woodstock, Vermont, and was a faculty member of the Teaching Shakespeare Institute at the Folger Library in Washington, D.C. Among her honors: CBE Independent Studies in Humanities Fellowship, Teacher of the Year at Woodstock, Vermont, and Outstanding Vermont Teacher at the University of Vermont. Her publications include two short stories, “Immaculate Conception” and “Moving Mountains.”

**Milton Brasher-Cunningham (Teacher)** Milton Brasher-Cunningham has Master’s degrees in English and theology. He taught English for seven years in Boston public schools and currently teaches ninth- and tenth-grade English (a combination expository writing laboratory and American literature course), and Honors British Literature to juniors at Winchester High School, Winchester, Massachusetts. He is also a songwriter and a fiction writer.

**Eric Christenson (Content Director and Writer of the Workshop Materials)** Eric Christenson taught English and American Civilization for 32 years in Arlington, Virginia, retiring in 1993 to become an associate producer of the PBS documentary *The Marshall Plan: Against the Odds*. He founded and designed Arlington’s adult education program in English, an ungraded center serving a diverse community. Today he operates a tutorial service for seniors preparing for college called Write Into College™. His articles on teaching composition have been published in *English Journal* and elsewhere. Also a production potter for 30 years, he has brought workshop techniques of the pottery studio into the English classroom. He was named Teacher of the Year at Yorktown High School in 1986.

**Janice Delaney (Advisor)** For the past 14 years, Janice Delaney has been the executive director of the PEN/Faulkner Foundation, which sponsors the PEN/Faulkner Awards for Fiction, the PEN/Malamud Award for Excellence in the Short Story, and the Writers in Schools Program, which sends noted writers of fiction into Washington, D.C., public high schools to teach classes in their work. The Foundation is located at the Folger Shakespeare Library, where Ms. Delaney presents the monthly fiction reading series. Ms. Delaney is co-author of *The Curse: A Cultural History of Menstruation*.

**Donna Denizé (Teacher and Advisor)** Donna Denizé has taught English at St. Albans School for Boys in Washington, D.C., since 1987. She is an oft-published poet and a contributor to scholarly books and journals, including *Shakespeare Set Free* (The Folger Library). Ms. Denizé has also contributed to programs of NCTE, NEH, Mobil Masterpiece Theatre, and the Smithsonian Institution. She has received numerous grants and awards, among them the Distinguished Teacher Award (The White House Commission on Presidential Scholars). She has an M.A. from Howard University in Renaissance drama and has completed Ph.D. coursework. Ms. Denizé serves as chair of the Faculty Diversity Committee at St. Albans and is the faculty advisor of the school’s literary magazine.

**Dirk Detlefsen (Teacher)** Dirk Detlefsen teaches sixth-, seventh-, and eighth-grade English in Gaviota, California, and he is presently a Ph.D. candidate at the University of California at Santa Barbara. In 1998-1999 he taught in a middle school in Cairo, Egypt. A theater major in college and an experienced actor, Mr. Detlefsen directs his school’s yearly plays and brings his skills in teaching drama into his literature classes.

# About the Contributors

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**Patricia Griffith (Advisor)** Patricia Griffith is a novelist, playwright, short story writer, and screenwriter. Her latest novel, *Supporting the Sky*, was published in 1996. Her previous novel, *The World Around Midnight*, was chosen as one of the outstanding books of 1992 by the American Library Association. Two of her short stories, published in *Harper's* and *Paris Review*, were included in O. Henry Prize anthologies. She is past president of the PEN/Faulkner Foundation and teaches at the George Washington University. She is currently writing a screenplay of *The World Around Midnight* for Golden Road Productions.

**Michael LoMonico (Advisor)** Michael LoMonico is an English teacher at Farmingdale High School and Suffolk Community College in New York. He is the editor of *Shakespeare Magazine* and has written many articles for that publication and for *English Journal* and *CPB Digest*. During his 32-year career, he has conducted workshops throughout the country on writing, media, computers, and Shakespeare. He has also served as a Master Teacher and director of the Folger Library's Teaching Shakespeare Institute.

**Sharon Madison (Teacher)** Sharon Madison teaches Senior Humanities (A.P. English and A.P. U.S. Government) in Fairfax County, Virginia. A Council of Basic Education Fellow, Ms. Madison has expanded the literature in the Language Arts curriculum to include more contemporary, minority, and international authors. She has worked across disciplines to create integrated programs of World Studies, A.P. English, and U.S. Government; and to establish common objectives for International Baccalaureate and A.P. programs. She is a faculty consultant for the College Board, scoring A.P. examinations in literature and composition, and presenting seminars to international audiences on developing curriculum and preparing students for the A.P. examinations.

**Pauline Moller (Teacher)** Pauline Moller has been a sixth-grade English teacher and team leader at Eastern Middle School in Silver Spring, Maryland, since 1995. She holds a B.A. in elementary education and an M.A. in reading/writing/literacy. Ms. Moller served as writer and editor for Montgomery County, Maryland's sixth-grade English curriculum. In addition, she has conducted workshops in Montgomery County on strategies for teaching reading and on the differentiation of instruction. She has presented at the NECC conference and is her school's Technology Committee chairperson. Ms. Moller was nominated for the Sallie Mae First-Year Teacher Award and Teacher of the Year.

**Louisa Newlin (Advisor)** Louisa Newlin has been an English teacher for 40 years, mostly in independent secondary schools in the Washington, D.C., area. She has also taught at international schools in Belgium and France, American University (where she earned a Ph.D. in literature), and the College of the Atlantic in Bar Harbor, Maine. Over a 14-year period, she helped develop programs (for both students and teachers) for the Folger Library's Education Department, where she currently serves as a consultant and teaches a seminar in women's poetry.

**Frazier L. O'Leary, Jr. (Teacher)** Frazier O'Leary has been a teacher of English at Cardozo High School in Washington, D.C., since 1976. He holds a B.A. in English from American University and an M.A. in Liberal Arts from St. John's College, and has finished his coursework for his Ph.D. in literature at Indiana University of Pennsylvania. He is currently a teacher of A.P. Literature and Language, Senior English, and SAT Prep, and serves as a faculty consultant with the College Board for its A.P. and Building Success programs. He has also coached various sports at the junior-high, senior-high, and university levels.



# About the Contributors

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**Ashby Reid (Teacher)** Ashby Reid completed her first year of teaching in June 1999. A graduate of the College of William and Mary (B.A., 1994) and George Washington University (M.A., 1998), Ms. Reid teaches middle school English in Arlington, Virginia. She was nominated by Arlington to receive the Sallie Mae First-Class Teacher Award. At the 1999 NCTE convention she presented *Orchestrating Mutiny in the Classroom: Classroom Teachers Discuss Their Own Experiences in 'Giving Up the Ship.'*

**Diana Russell (Teacher)** Diana Russell has taught in the public schools of Arlington County, Virginia, since 1990. She has worked in the county's "Transitions" program, which focuses on minority and E.S.L. students. She is a consultant and member of the National Paideia Faculty and a practitioner of the Paideia method, giving workshops, speaking at conferences, training faculties, and developing materials.

**Faith Z. Schullstrom (Advisor)** Faith Schullstrom joined NCTE as its executive director in July 1997. Ms. Schullstrom has completed her doctoral coursework in education administration, and taught at the secondary and college levels before becoming District Administrator for Instruction and Staff Development of the Guilderland Central School District in New York. She has contributed to various state and regional committees and has been recognized with the Florida STAR Teacher Award, the Institute for the Development of School Administrators (IDEA) Fellowship, and the Select Seminar on Excellence in Education. She has also participated in a variety of national and state projects such as the development of standards for "schools in the middle" with the National Study for School Evaluation (NSSE) and with New York's Compact for Learning project.

**Susan Richards Shreve (Advisor)** Susan Shreve is the author of 10 novels and more than a dozen children's books. Her recent work includes two anthologies, *Skin Deep*, edited with Marita Golden, and *Fiction Beginnings*. A former president of the PEN/Faulkner Foundation, she has taught creative writing and literature for many years and is presently teaching at George Mason University in Fairfax, Virginia. She holds an M.A. from the University of Virginia.

**Betty Williams (Teacher)** Betty Williams teaches English at the Duke Ellington School of the Arts in Washington, D.C. She has an M.A. in counseling psychology and a B.A. in English. Ms. Williams has served as Life Skills Coordinator and Social Services Coordinator at the Boys and Girls Group Homes and Shelters in Silver Spring, Maryland, and has been a mental-health counselor at the Center for Abused Persons in White Plains, Maryland. Since 1980, Ms. Williams has performed African-American traditional music with the a cappella sextet "Sweet Honey in the Rock."

# About the Site Discussions

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## Helpful Hints for Successful Site Investigations

The materials for each workshop include detailed instructions for **Getting Ready** and **Going Further**. The following hints are intended to help you and your colleagues get the most from these pre- and post-video discussions.

### **DESIGNATE A FACILITATOR.**

Each week, one person should be responsible for facilitating the Site Investigations (or you might select two people—one to facilitate **Getting Ready**, the other to facilitate **Going Further**). The facilitator does not need to be the Site Leader, nor does the same person need to facilitate each week. In fact, we recommend that participants rotate the role of facilitator on a weekly basis.

### **MAKE CHOICES.**

You will see that the activities and assignments listed for the 30 minutes of **Getting Ready**, the 30 minutes of **Going Further**, and especially the homework may require more time than the workshop permits. We recommend that the facilitator make choices among the activities, especially the supplemental homework assignments, based on what seems most appropriate for the participants. All activities spring from the video; all choices will be appropriate to the content. The facilitator should consider moving activities from **Getting Ready** to **Homework** and making other adjustments in order to get the most from the series. Assign exercises that seem to be the most challenging and fun for the group.

### **REVIEW THE SITE INVESTIGATIONS.**

Be sure to read over the **Getting Ready** and **Going Further** sections of your materials before arriving at each workshop. The Site Investigations will be the most productive if you and your colleagues come to the workshops prepared for the discussions.

### **BRING THE NECESSARY MATERIALS.**

A few of the Site Investigations require group brainstorming or list making. In these instances, it will be useful to have markers and chart paper or newsprint. The facilitator should be responsible for bringing these materials, when necessary. **You will need these materials for Workshop 1.**

### **KEEP AN EYE ON THE TIME.**

This guide outlines the amount of time that you should spend on each question or activity. While these times are merely a guideline, you should keep an eye on the clock so that you can get through everything before the workshop video begins. In fact, you may want to set a small alarm clock or kitchen timer before you begin the **Getting Ready** Site Investigation to ensure that you won't miss the beginning of the video. (Sites that are watching the workshops on videotape will have more flexibility if their Site Investigations run longer than expected.)

# About the Site Discussions

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## **RECORD YOUR DISCUSSIONS.**

Ask someone to take notes during each Site Investigation, or even better, make an audiotape recording of the discussions each week. These notes and/or audiotape can serve as “make-up” materials should anyone miss a workshop.

## **SHARE YOUR DISCUSSIONS ON THE INTERNET.**

The Site Investigations are merely a starting point for the discussions. You can continue to explore topics with participants from other workshop sites on the discussion area of the Web site and on Novel-Talk, the workshop email discussion list.

## **COMPLETE THE READINGS.**

Each workshop suggests reading assignments that will reinforce what you have learned during the workshop or prepare you for the next one. Where noted, some of these readings are included in Appendix B at the back of this guide, followed by a bibliography in Appendix C. You’ll also find readings on the *In Search of the Novel* Web site at [www.learner.org/channel/workshops/isonovel](http://www.learner.org/channel/workshops/isonovel).

Prior to the first workshop, you may enjoy *Aspects of the Novel* by E. M. Forster (New York: Harcourt, Brace and Company, 1927) and *The Art of Fiction, Notes on Craft for Young Writers* by John Gardner (New York: Vintage Books, A Division of Random House, 1985). These are available in most libraries.

## **TRY THE STUDENT EXERCISES IN THE CLASSROOM.**

Appendix A offers some sample writing assignments that you may want to try in your classroom. Feel free to use these to help your students become more comfortable with writing fiction.