The Big Read

The Big Read is a community project that the Massillon Museum spearheads. It is a grant given by the National Endowment for the Arts to encourage people to read. The community all reads the same book; this year is Tobias Wolff's *Old School*. The Massillon Museum is the point place for the program; however, the Massillon Public Library, Kent State Stark, and many other entities both donate to the cause and host events.

In order to prepare for The Big Read, I read *Old School* and read through all of the NEA’s content on the book. I used the essay topics to choose one for the essay contest at Massillon’s Washington High School. I also created a crossword puzzle, which will be used as a community activity. One activity that took me out of my comfort zone was script writing. Students at Kent State University’s MuseLab will perform sketches of the three visiting authors in *Old School*: Robert Frost, Ayn Rand, and Ernest Hemingway.

I helped prepare the grant application for the 2016 Big Read, which will be Julia Alvarez’s *In the Time of the Butterflies*. Located behind the grant the Massillon Museum submitted is a packet of research I completed for the Museum as well as numerous ideas for potential programs, possible partners, and future publicity ideas. My supervisor included some in the grant application and plans on implementing many of the activities I suggested.

The Big Read 2015 kicks off on April 25th and will last for about one month. Throughout the course of that month, I will help with group discussions and various other events, including Tobias Wolff’s lecture on May 21st.
About The Big Read

The Big Read is a program of the National Endowment for the Arts (NEA) designed to restore reading to the center of American culture. Managed by Arts Midwest, The Big Read provides competitive grants to support innovative reading programs in selected communities.

The Big Read answers a big need. *Reading at Risk: A Survey of Literary Reading in America*, a 2004 report by the National Endowment for the Arts, found that not only is literary reading in America declining rapidly among all groups, but that the rate of decline has accelerated, especially among the young.

The Big Read aims to address this crisis squarely and effectively. It provides citizens with the opportunity to read and discuss a single book within their communities. The Big Read supports organizations across the country in developing community-wide reading programs which encourage reading and participation by diverse audiences. Organizations selected to participate in The Big Read receive a grant, access to online training resources and opportunities, and educational and promotional materials designed to support widespread community involvement.

Each community event lasts approximately one month and includes a kick-off event to launch the program locally, ideally attended by the mayor and other local luminaries; major events devoted specifically to the book (panel discussions, author reading, and the like); events using the book as a point of departure (film screenings, theatrical readings, and so forth); and book discussions in diverse locations and aimed at a wide range of audiences.

The NEA inaugurated The Big Read as a pilot project in 2006 with ten communities featuring four books. The Big Read continues to expand to include more communities and additional books. To date, more than 1,100 grants have been awarded to communities in the U.S. to host Big Reads since the program's 2007 national launch.
Old School
by Tobias Wolff

Introduction to the Book

It is November 1960, and the unnamed narrator of Tobias Wolff's Old School (2003) is in his final year at an elite Eastern prep school. Proud of his independence but trying to fit in and advance himself, he conceals the fact that his ancestry is partly Jewish. Eventually, he—and we—discover that almost everyone on campus has some closely guarded secrets.1

Every year, the school invites three famous writers to visit and give a public talk. In anticipation of these visits, senior students submit their own poems or stories to a competition, and the author of the winning submission is granted a private interview with the writer. One of the novel's most intriguing elements is the presentation of these writers—Robert Frost, Ayn Rand, and Ernest Hemingway—and its shrewd, penetrating assessment of their works and personalities.2

The lives of the narrator and his friends revolve around these visits, and the competitions produce pressures and strains in their relationships, raising issues of honesty and self-deception. In his zeal to win an audience with his idol, Hemingway, the narrator will plagiarize someone else's work, an action with profound consequences—and not for him alone. In the end, we find out what he has made of his life many years later, and what has happened in the lives of some classmates and teachers. A surprising final chapter enriches our understanding of the novel's deepest meanings.

Another of Old School's many pleasures is the way it conveys the significance of literature to our lives, raising fundamental questions of who we are and how we live. As one of the English teachers says, "One could not live in a world without stories... Without stories one would hardly know what world one was in." 3

The unsparing but sympathetic insight of Tobias Wolff's acclaimed short stories, the emotional honesty and directness of his classic memoir This Boy's Life (1989), and the precise, elegant craftsmanship that characterizes both his fiction and nonfiction—all these qualities come together to make Old School one of Wolff's most satisfying books.

Major Characters in the Book

The Narrator
An outsider in the cloistered East Coast world of the prep school he attends, Old School's unnamed narrator wants desperately to belong. His literary ambitions will bring him the distinction he craves, but in a very different way from what he had imagined.

Bill White
Bill is the narrator's roommate. Along with their passion for writing, the two boys share the unspoken secret of their Jewish heritage. Bill has another secret, one that haunts him more and more throughout the novel.

Jeff Purcell
Another classmate and friend of the narrator's, he has a privileged, upper-class background. Proud, stubborn, and frequently contemptuous of everything and everyone, he nonetheless has a fundamental core of decency and generosity of spirit.
Robert Ramsey
One of the English teachers, Mr. Ramsey is disliked by many of his students. However, by the end of the novel the narrator sees him as compassionate and wise.

Susan Friedman
Susan is the author of the story that the narrator plagiarizes. When he finally meets her, he finds her to be "an extraordinary person," and she shows him a very different perspective on some of the things most important to him.

Dean Makepeace
A "legal but benign" figure to the narrator, the Dean seems remote and assured. But his personal crisis of integrity underscores some of the novel's deepest themes.

Three of the most famous American writers of the twentieth century appear, directly or indirectly, as characters in Old School:

Though born in San Francisco, Robert Frost (1874–1963) is forever associated with New England, the setting for most of his life and work. Quietly dazzling in their technical perfection, his enormously popular poems, such as "Mending Wall" and "Stopping by Woods on a Snowy Evening," subtly explore the depths of nature and humanity.

Russian-born Ayn Rand (1905–1982) was the controversial author of a number of philosophical works and two bestselling novels, The Fountainhead (1943) and Atlas Shrugged (1957). Her writings expound her philosophy of Objectivism, which emphasizes rationality and self-interest. It also rejects religion, altruism, and all forms of social collectivism.

Ernest Hemingway (1899–1961) was arguably the most influential American novelist and short-story writer of the twentieth century. Renowned for their unique style, such masterpieces as A Farewell to Arms (1929) and The Old Man and the Sea (1952) brilliantly evoke the physical world and the experience of the senses, and stress themes of courage, stoicism, and the need to be true to oneself.

Plagiarism
The narrator of Old School is found to have won the interview with Ernest Hemingway by submitting someone else's short story as his own work. This act of plagiarism is met with dismay and anger by the school's administration and sets in motion a chain of events that has a significant effect on the lives of more than one character. To understand the full importance of this situation in the novel, one must have a clear awareness of what plagiarism is and why it is such a serious matter.

Anyone can recognize the flagrant dishonesty involved in passing off as one's own work something in fact written by someone else. Most of us realize that a piece of writing—whether imaginative or intellectual—is a form of property, and that its owner/creator is entitled to whatever credit and profits his or her efforts and talents might generate.

Yet it is all too easy, when copying snippets of someone else's ideas and even someone else's very words, to succumb—as the narrator of Old School does—to the notion that we have somehow made them our own, that mere appropriation is a form of authorship. Modern technology has made this even easier. Instantaneous access to the infinite amount of material available on the Internet creates the impression that ideas and words are all just there for the taking, especially when all one needs to do is highlight, copy, and paste.

But theft is still theft and fraud is still fraud, no matter the scale. Anyone who uses another's thoughts without proper attribution to the source has stolen that person's intellectual property. Even when proper attribution has been given, using the actual wording of the source material without identifying it as direct quotation is perpetrating a fraud.

Teachers are also upset when their students appropriate the work of others because such an act makes a disturbing statement about the offender's values. If those who would never dream of stealing another's belongings have no compunction about taking someone else's written work, they are saying—whether they realize it or not—that they have less respect for ideas and how they are expressed than for material possessions.
Old School
by Tobias Wolff

Tobias Wolff (b. 1945)

Tobias Jonathan Ansell Wolff was born on June 19, 1945, in Birmingham, Alabama. His father, Arthur, was an aeronautical engineer but also a pathological liar and supreme con artist, as detailed in the 1979 memoir _The Duke of Deception_, by Tobias's older brother, Geoffrey. As a result of one of these many deceptions, Tobias, who was raised and remains a Catholic, did not discover until adulthood that his father was Jewish. His mother, Rosemary Loftus Wolff, a waitress and secretary, was a woman of spirit, resilience, and great intelligence, who met the many reverses in her life with humor and determination.

Wolff's parents separated when he was very young. He was raised by his mother in Florida, Utah, and Washington state. Eager to escape rural Washington and life with his mother's second husband (experiences vividly recounted in his memoir _This Boy's Life_), he won a scholarship to the Hill School, a prestigious academy in Pottstown, Pennsylvania. He loved the school but struggled because of his poor academic background. Ultimately, he was expelled because of failing grades in math.

In 1964, Wolff joined the U.S. Army. He spent a year learning Vietnamese, and then served in Vietnam as a paratrooper. Out of these experiences came his second memoir, _In Pharaoh's Army: Memories of the Last War_ (1994). After his discharge in 1966, he enrolled in Hertford College of Oxford University, where he earned a degree in English in 1972. In 1975, he earned a master's degree in English from Stanford University, where he was also awarded a Wallace Stegner Fellowship in Creative Writing.

Wolff taught at Syracuse University in New York from 1980 to 1997. The novelist Richard Ford and the short-story writer Raymond Carver were among his friends and colleagues. Since 1997, Wolff has taught English and creative writing at Stanford University, where he holds the Ward W. and Priscilla B. Woods professorship in the School of Humanities and Sciences. Among his honors are the PEN/Faulkner Award for Fiction, the Rea Award for the Short Story, and three O. Henry Awards.

Tobias Wolff married Catherine Spohn, a social worker, in 1975. They have two sons and a daughter. Wolff lives with his family in northern California.

An Interview with Tobias Wolff

On January 5, 2008, Dana Gioia, former Chairman of the National Endowment for the Arts, interviewed Tobias Wolff at his office at Stanford University. Excerpts from their conversation follow.

Dana Gioia: Would you characterize _Old School_ as an autobiographical novel in any sense?

Tobias Wolff: The events of the novel are themselves, to some extent, autobiographical, in that as a boy of that age I was in such a school. The school that I went to was like this one, a very literary place. Edmund Wilson had gone there, and I heard of him. Robert Frost there. There was a great sense of excitement, always, around the visits of these writers, around the literary magazine, about trying to get stories published or even to get on the editorial board. In some schools, of course, it would be the football team, and football was no small thing at this school either. So my somewhat vague ambition of being a writer really became solidified there. The actual events of my time there would not have lent themselves to a memoir. I was certainly aware in bringing this forward in this voice, in this situation, that a lot of readers familiar with either or both of my memoirs would make assumptions about this being, in fact, a memoir disguised as a novel. And I really didn't mind that.
DG: As a fiction writer you've been most associated with the short story. What for you, imaginatively or creatively, are the differences between writing a short story and writing a novel?

TW: When you write a short story you at least have some confidence you're going to be able to finish it! From the time I first put words to paper on this book and the time Old School actually was published, it was five-and-a-half years. Aesthetically I can't say that I find the experience that much different—the kind of pressure you put on yourself to get the right voice, to write the sentence perfectly, to rewrite, to rewrite, to rewrite—all that is similar. Really, in each case it's mainly going to the desk every day. I often am quite mystified about what I'm going to do when I sit down. And the work teaches me how to write it as I go. My first drafts would really make you wonder, if you saw them, why I ever chose this line of work. Revision is crucial to my work.

DG: One of the strokes of genius in Old School is that at the very end, just when you think the story's over, it continues with a twist in another voice. Did you have this coda in mind when you began the book?

TW: No, but it was important, I think, because although the narrator talks about writing, we never really see him writing anything, and we don't get any of his stories. He's always talking about telling other people's stories and telling us what this friend wrote and what that friend wrote, but where's his story? Finally he tells a story. He is, after all, a writer.

DG: Do you have any thoughts on the human purposes of fiction?

TW: Fiction gives us a place to stand outside ourselves and see our lives somehow being carried on; to see the form that our lives take in some apprehensible way. Most of the time, experience washes over us moment by moment, in a way that makes it difficult to discern the form in lives—the consequences that choices have that will only appear years later, in many cases. Fiction shows us those things in a kind of apprehensible form and something we can comprehend, and see, and actually feel. We kind of see our lives almost acted out in front of us in miniature. And that's both exciting and also often very chastening, I think.
Old School
by Tobias Wolff

The Life and Times of Tobias Wolff

1940s
- 1943: Robert Frost wins Pulitzer Prize for poetry and Ayn Rand publishes The Fountainhead.
- 1945: Tobias Wolff is born on June 19 in Birmingham, Alabama.
- 1945: World War II ends in August.
- Viet Minh (the Vietnamese liberation movement) declares independence from France in 1945; French military forces resist the revolt in 1946, beginning an eight-year conflict.

1950s
- Wolff, his mother, and his stepfather live in Washington State.
- 1954: Ernest Hemingway wins the Nobel Prize in Literature.
- 1954: The French are defeated at Dien Bien Phu; Vietnam is partitioned into North and South Vietnam.

1960s

1970s
- 1975: Wolff earns a master's degree, marries, and publishes his first book.
- 1975: Saigon falls to the North Vietnamese.

1980s
- Wolff teaches at Syracuse University; he publishes a novella, two collections of stories, and his memoir This Boy's Life.
- 1982: Ground is broken for the Vietnam Veterans Memorial in Washington, DC.

1990s
- Wolff begins teaching at Stanford; publishes his Vietnam memoir and his third volume of short stories.
- 1993: The film version of This Boy's Life, starring Robert De Niro, Leonardo DiCaprio, and Ellen Barkin, is released.

2000s
- 2005: April 5 marks the thirtieth anniversary of the end of the Vietnam War.
Old School
by Tobias Wolff

Wolff and His Other Works

Perhaps because of the prominence of Tobias Wolff’s memoirs and short stories, when Old School appeared in 2003, many assumed that it was his first extended work of fiction. In fact, it was his third. Wolff’s first novel, and first book, was a Vietnam story, published in 1975, called Ugly Rumours. As the spelling would suggest, it appeared in England (and only in England). While he has not made a concerted effort to erase all traces of its existence, Wolff does not include it in listings of his published works. His second book-length work of fiction was the novella The Barracks Thief (1984), which won the highly regarded PEN/Faulkner Award. It deals with the intense and ultimately explosive relationships among servicemen in the shadow of war, specifically three soldiers guarding an ammunition dump at Fort Bragg, North Carolina, as they wait to be sent to Vietnam.

The work for which Wolff is best known is his first memoir, This Boy’s Life (1989). Glowing reviews in the New York Times, Los Angeles Times Book Review, San Francisco Chronicle, and elsewhere praised the beauty and clarity of its style, along with its unforgettable description of character and incident. While less well known, in Pharaoh’s Army (1994), Wolff’s account of his experiences in Vietnam, is, like the earlier work, esteemed for its memorable scenes and for the author’s determination to describe his personality and actions with scrupulous honesty.

For many readers, the core of Wolff’s achievement is his short stories, which have been collected so far in four volumes—In the Garden of the North American Martyrs (1981), Back in the World (1985), The Night In Question (1996), and Our Story Begins: New and Selected Stories (2008). In story after story, Wolff presents his characters and their relationships—with spouses, children, siblings, and strangers—with a scrutiny that is always unflinching and uncompromising; but never uncompassionate. "The Rich Brother" presents a pair of adult brothers united in animosity, but also by basic qualities that create a much stronger bond. "In the Garden of the North American Martyrs," which examines a self-effacing woman whose hopes have been falsely raised through the insensitivity of others, makes a surprising bid for justice.

Beautifully written without gaudiness or self-indulgence, deeply moving without a trace of sentimentality, Tobias Wolff’s work seems poised to hold a permanent place in American literature.

Works by Tobias Wolff

- In the Garden of the North American Martyrs (1981, stories)
- The Barracks Thief (1984, novella)
- Back in the World (1985, stories)
- This Boy’s Life (1989, memoir)
- In Pharaoh’s Army: Memories of the Lost War (1994, memoir)
- The Night In Question (1996, stories)
- Old School (2003, novel)
- Our Story Begins: New and Selected Stories (2008)
Old School
by Tobias Wolff

1. The dedication of Old School reveals something of how Wolff might feel about his own education. If you wrote a book, would you dedicate it the same way?
2. What does the epigraph of Old School, a passage from a Mark Strand poem, mean? How does it relate to the novel's thematic concerns?
3. Why do you think Wolff left the narrator and even the school unnamed?
4. In Chapter One, the narrator maintains that his school disregarded issues of wealth and social background and judged its students entirely by their actions. Does this turn out to be true? How does his school compare to your own?
5. Early in the novel, the narrator says that his aspirations as a writer "were mystical. I wanted to receive the laying on of hands that had written living stories and poems, hands that had touched the hands of other writers. I wanted to be anointed." What does he mean by this?
6. Which of his classmates does the narrator feel closest to, and why?
7. How do the narrator's changing attitudes toward his grandfather demonstrate his process of maturing?
8. Discuss the portrayals of Robert Frost, Ayn Rand, and Ernest Hemingway. How does each influence the narrator?
9. Why might Chapter Six be titled "The Forked Tongue"? What are the larger implications of its very last sentence?
10. Why does Mr. Ramsey show such disdain for the use of the word "honor"? Do you agree with his attitude?
11. Over the course of the novel, the narrator writes two letters to girls. The circumstances differ, but he has the same reaction after sending each letter. What does this pattern of behavior reveal about his personality?
12. Why is the narrator shocked by Susan Friedman's attitude toward her own story, and toward writing in general? How valid is his unspoken response to her comments?
13. Why does the narrator feel such love and loyalty for his school, despite his final punishment?
14. The last sentence of the book is from the New Testament parable of the prodigal son (Luke 15:11-32). How might these be "surely the most beautiful words ever written or said"?

Wolff is a devout Catholic

© Arts Midwest

http://www.neabigread.org/books/oldschool/readers-guide/discussion-questions/
Old School
by Tobias Wolff

Works About Tobias Wolff


If you'd like to read other novels about the campus experience, you might enjoy:

- Evelyn Waugh's Brideshead Revisited, 1944
- John Knowles's A Separate Peace, 1959
- Richard Yates's A Good School, 1978
- Curtis Sittenfeld's Prep, 2005
- Robert Anderson's Tea and Sympathy, 1953 (play)
- John McPhee's The Headmaster: Frank L. Boyden of Deerfield, 1966 (biography)

If you'd like to read books admired by Tobias Wolff, you might enjoy:

- Leo Tolstoy's The Death of Ivan Ilyich, 1886
- Ernest Hemingway's In Our Time, 1925
- William Maxwell's So Long, See You Tomorrow, 1979
- Raymond Carver's What We Talk About When We Talk About Love, 1981

© Arts Midwest

http://www.neabigread.org/books/oldschool/readers-guide/additional-resources/
Old School
by Tobias Wolff

Works Cited
Excerpts from OLD SCHOOL by Tobias Wolff, copyright © 2003 by Tobias Wolff. Used by permission of Alfred A. Knopf, a division of Random House, Inc.


Wolff, Tobias. Interview with Dana Gioia for The Big Read. 2008.


Acknowledgments
Writer: Michael Palma

© Arts Midwest

http://www.neabigread.org/books/oldschool/readers-guide/credits/
Welcome to The Big Read, a program from the National Endowment for the Arts. Designed to revitalize the role of literary reading in American culture, The Big Read hopes to unite communities through great literature, as well as inspire students to become lifelong readers.

This Big Read Teacher's Guide contains ten lessons to lead you through Tobias Wolff's classic novel, Old School. Each lesson has four sections: a focus topic, discussion activities, writing exercises, and homework assignments. In addition, we have provided capstone projects and suggested essay topics, as well as handouts with more background information about the novel, the historical period, and the author. All lessons dovetail with the state language arts standards required in the fiction genre.

Finally, The Big Read Reader's Guide deepens your exploration with interviews, booklists, timelines, and historical information. We hope this guide and syllabus allow you to have fun with your students while introducing them to the work of a great American author.

From the NEA, we wish you an exciting and productive school year.
Examining an author's life can inform and expand the reader's understanding of a novel. Biographical criticism is the practice of analyzing a literary work through the lens of an author's experience. In this lesson, explore the author's life to understand the novel more fully.

Before winning a scholarship to a prestigious Eastern prep school, Tobias Wolff grew up in an isolated, working-class community in the Pacific Northwest. Thus, like the narrator of *Old School*, he felt himself to be something of an outsider among many classmates from backgrounds of great wealth and privilege. Like the narrator, he was forced to leave before graduation (in Wolff's case for academic reasons, not an issue of plagiarism). Also like the narrator, Wolff later enlisted in the Army and was sent to Vietnam, and ultimately he went on to become a well-known and successful writer.

**Discussion Activities**

- Listen to The Big Read Audio Guide. Have students take notes as they listen. Ask them to present the three most important points learned from the Audio Guide.
- Distribute the following essays from the Reader's Guide: "Introduction to the Novel," "Tobias Wolff (b. 1945)," and "Wolff and His Other Works." Divide the class into groups. Each group will present a summary of the main points in its assigned essay.

**Writing Exercise**

Read the first three paragraphs of the novel to the class. Have your students write a similar description of their own school, touching on some of the same points that Wolff emphasizes: the economic and social backgrounds of the students, the school's expectations of them, and the relative emphasis placed on areas such as academics, sports, and creativity.

**Homework**

Read Handout One: The Importance of Frost, Rand, and Hemingway. Read the first chapter, "Class Picture." Prepare your students to read approximately 25–30 pages per night in order to complete reading this book in seven lessons.
Cultural and historical contexts give birth to the dilemmas and themes at the center of the novel. Studying these contexts and appreciating intricate details of the time and place help readers understand the motivations of the characters.

The greater part of the novel takes place between the autumn of 1960 and the spring of the following year. John F. Kennedy has just been elected president of the United States, and for many young people it is a time of great hope and promise. Of course, we read the novel—as Wolff wrote it—with the awareness that this climate will soon be shattered by Kennedy's assassination, the Vietnam War, and violent social upheaval in the United States.

In 1954 Ernest Hemingway, one of America's most popular authors, received the Nobel Prize for Literature "for his mastery of the art of the narrative ... and for the influence that he has exerted on contemporary style." Robert Frost was the most celebrated living poet in the United States. During his lifetime, he received four Pulitzer prizes for poetry. With each new book his fame and honors increased. Russian-born writer and philosopher Ayn Rand formulated objectivism, a philosophy in which she considered "the concept of man as a heroic being, with his own happiness as the moral purpose of his life, with productive achievement as his noblest activity, and reason as his only absolute." Rand presented this philosophy in her widely acclaimed novels The Fountainhead and Atlas Shrugged.

Discussion Activities

How would your students characterize the social, cultural, and political atmosphere of contemporary America? How do the writers portrayed at the beginning of the novel relate to our main character? What does the boys' excitement over their upcoming visits tell us about the motivations of these young men?

Writing Exercise

The whole episode involving Gershon highlights certain inner conflicts in the narrator's character. Have your students write a brief essay on this theme. Do they find themselves torn by conflicting loyalties or aspirations? How, if at all, do they resolve these issues?

Homework

Read Handout Two: Prep Schools: Fact and Fiction. Read "On Fire" and "Frost." The exchange between Robert Frost and Mr. Ramsey engages some of the main themes that the novel has raised thus far. Consider the ways the narrator relates the events. Is he a reliable narrator?
The narrator tells the story with a specific perspective informed by his or her beliefs and experiences. Narrators can be major or minor characters, or exist outside the story altogether. The narrator weaves her or his point of view, including ignorance and bias, into telling the tale. A first-person narrator participates in the events of the novel, using "I." A distanced narrator, often not a character, is removed from the action of the story and uses the third person (he, she, and they). The distanced narrator may be omniscient, able to read the minds of all the characters; or limited, describing only certain characters' thoughts and feelings. Ultimately, the type of narrator determines the point of view from which the story is told.

With the possible exception of the last chapter (a point that will be addressed later), Old School is told entirely in the first person by its unnamed central character. We are limited to his knowledge of facts, his awareness of events, and his insights into himself and others. This awareness and these insights undergo some significant changes with maturity, consistent with the novel's emphasis on human imperfection and learning through painful experience.

**Discussion Activities**

Based on the chapters read thus far, what sort of person does the narrator seem to be? Is he likeable? Is he admirable? Do his assumptions about himself and about other people seem to ring true?

**Writing Exercise**

Have your students choose one of the other characters and, based on their interactions in the novel thus far, write a description of the narrator in the voice of and from the point of view of that character.

**Homework**

Read "Übermensch" and "Slice of Life." List the three most prominent characteristics of Ayn Rand as she is portrayed. What statements and/or actions of hers support each of your choices?
The central character in a work of literature is called the protagonist. The protagonist usually initiates the main action of the story and often overcomes a flaw, such as weakness or ignorance, to achieve a new understanding by the work's end. A protagonist who acts with great honor or courage may be called a hero. An antihero is a protagonist lacking these qualities. Instead of being dignified, brave, idealistic, or purposeful, the antihero may be cowardly, self-interested, or weak. The protagonist's journey is enriched by encounters with characters who hold differing beliefs. One such character type, a foil, has traits that contrast with the protagonist's and highlight important features of the main character's personality. The most important foil, the antagonist, opposes the protagonist, barring or complicating his or her success.

The narrator of Old School is himself clearly a work in progress over the course of the novel. The scorn and contempt he feels for almost everyone else after reading The Fountainhead (1943) is a clear indication of his immaturity, and his reaction to Ayn Rand herself and his consequent disavowal of her views lead him to a new depth of sensitivity and insight.

Discussion Activities
Discuss the way the narrator describes Ayn Rand: How does he feel about her before he meets her? Does his viewpoint change after meeting her? Is he fair? What instances of "weakness or ignorance" has the narrator displayed up to this point? What capacity has he shown to learn from his experiences and grow in understanding and depth of character?

Writing Exercise
Have students choose George Kellogg, Bill White, or Jeff Purcell and write a three-paragraph essay on how this character serves as a foil to the protagonist.

Homework
Read "The Forked Tongue." Instruct students to pay particular attention to any instances of figurative language while they read. Why does the author title this chapter "The Forked Tongue"?
Writers use figurative language such as imagery, similes, and metaphors to help the reader visualize and experience events and emotions in a story. Imagery—a word or phrase that refers to sensory experience (sight, sound, smell, touch, or taste)—helps create a physical experience for the reader and adds immediacy to literary language.

Some figurative language asks us to stretch our imaginations, finding the likeness in seemingly unrelated things. A simile is a comparison of two things that initially seem quite different but are shown to have a significant resemblance. Similes employ connective words, usually “like,” “as,” “than,” or a verb such as “resembles.” A metaphor is a statement that one thing is something else that, in a literal sense, it is not. By asserting that a thing is something else, a metaphor creates a close association that underscores an important similarity between these two things.

Wolff draws from ancient and medieval references to (ironically) imbue the young, uniformed lives of the main characters with profundity. For example: the English masters as a “chivalric order,” Jeff Purcell as “the Herod of our editorial sessions,” the masters treasuring the students’ spring exuberance “like the grousing of impotent peasants outside the castle walls,” the Farewell Assemblies “Neronic in their carnality,” and the title of the school literary magazine, the Troubadour.

Discussion Activities

Break the students into groups and ask them to find at least three instances of figurative language. Have them present to the class why they are figurative and how the words and phrases help shed light on the story. Discuss as a class the ways figurative language serves to illuminate larger thematic issues.

Writing Exercise

Read aloud the passage about the editorial meeting. Have the students write a brief essay discussing how the key points are conveyed through figurative language.

Homework

Read “When in Disgrace with Fortune.” Why does our protagonist feel he is the author of “Summer Dance”? Why doesn’t he feel uneasy when he learns that he has won the competition or even when he is summoned to the headmaster’s office?
Symbols are persons, places, or things in a narrative that have significance beyond a literal understanding. The craft of storytelling depends on symbols to present ideas and point toward new meanings. Most frequently, a specific object will be used to refer to (or symbolize) a more abstract concept. The repeated appearance of an object suggests a non-literal, or figurative, meaning attached to the object. Symbols are often found in the book's title, at the beginning and end of the story, within a profound action, or in the name or personality of a character. The life of a novel is perpetuated by generations of readers interpreting and reinterpreting the main symbols. By identifying and understanding symbols, readers can reveal new interpretations of the novel.

One of the more remarkable aspects of Old School is the degree to which literature itself, especially fiction, is woven into the lives of the characters and the larger themes of the book. Mr. Ramsey is eloquent on this point. Works of fiction can take on symbolic value. This is obviously the case with Jeff Purcell’s first-edition copy of In Our Time. More subtly, the kinds of stories that one writes become symbols that reflect the kind of person their author is.

**Discussion Activities**

To illustrate the above point, reread to the class the narrator's comments on Hemingway and his stories and his contrasting comments on himself and his own stories. With these passages as context, lead the class into a discussion of the narrator's discovery — and plagiarism — of “Summer Dance” and the complexities of his relationship to that story.

**Writing Exercise**

Have the students write on the following theme: What is your favorite work of literature, movie, or piece of music? Why does it appeal to you? Discuss any symbols that occur in that particular work of art. If no symbols are present, ask students to discuss why symbols are not needed.

**Homework**

Read “One for the Books” and “Bulletin.” As the narrator has grown into a mature man and a successful writer, has he undergone any significant changes in his personality and/or his feelings about literature?
Novels trace the development of characters who encounter a series of challenges. Most characters contain a complex balance of virtues and vices. Internal and external forces require characters to question themselves, overcome fears, or reconsider dreams. The protagonist may undergo profound change. A close study of character development maps, in each character, the evolution of motivation, personality, and belief. The tension between a character's strengths and weaknesses keeps the reader guessing about what might happen next and the protagonist's eventual success or failure.

As an adult, the narrator has exchanged his youthful brashness and assertiveness for a more measured and reflective view of life, but in large part his transition into adulthood is one of continuity rather than change. The most significant phases of his development took place during his last year of prep school. His encounter with Susan Friedman shows that as a young man he is still awkward and tentative with women. His characterization of her dismissal of writing as an "impiety" shows him to be as committed as ever to his literary ideals. Of the entire group of young men who were mad about literature, he is the only one who has gone on to be a writer. But even much later in life, he remains insecure about his worth as a writer, even as he demonstrates a prickly pride.

Discussion Activities

"Finally, one does want to be known," Mr. Ramsey says about Dean Makepeace. How does this comment apply to the narrator, especially in relation to his guardedness about his Jewish heritage and his theft of "Summer Dance"?

Writing Exercise

When the narrator steals the story, do you think he has an unconscious desire to be expelled from school and/or exposed as a fraud? Write a one-page essay on whether or not his expulsion can be considered a good thing.

Homework

Read Handout Three: The Narrator's Coming of Age. Read the novel's conclusion, "Master." In what ways does Makepeace's story parallel that of the narrator? In what ways do the stories differ?
Lesson Eight

FOCUS: The Plot Unfolds

The author crafts a plot structure to create expectations, increase suspense, and develop characters. The pacing of events can make a novel either predictable or riveting. Foreshadowing and flashbacks allow the author to defy the constraints of time. Sometimes an author can confound a simple plot by telling stories within stories. In a conventional work of fiction, the peak of the story's conflict—the climax—is followed by the resolution, or denouement, in which the effects of that climactic action are presented.

The last chapter of *Old School* is, in its own way, a genuine surprise ending, with its sudden shift of focus and point of view. To begin with, we might ask who is telling Arch Makepeace's story. The answer that suggests itself is that the narrator of the novel is simply passing along what Mr. Ramsey had told him in Seattle. But reread the paragraph beginning: "He kept it short, but ... I was somehow given to know more than was actually said. The spaces he left empty began filling up even as he spoke." In a sense, then, we may regard the last chapter as the narrator's imaginative reconstruction of the dean's life and character—a full-fledged example of literary art.

Like the narrator, Arch Makepeace has carried a burden of concealment, chafing at the idea that others' good opinion of him is founded, at least in part, on misunderstanding. (Recall his reaction on reading "Summer Dance": "He ... was most affected, and in fact discomfited, by its unblinking inventory of self-seeking and duplicity. It was hard to tell the truth like that.") In the end, his punishment, his "sentence," is much briefer and less severe than that of the narrator.

---

**Discussion Activities**

Wolff writes: "The boy closest to them smiles into his punch glass. He can hear them; he has slipped into their camp and can hear the secret music of these sure and finished men, our masters." Are the masters "sure and finished men"? How does this relate to the last section of the novel, "Master"? Finally, how might this draw out a larger theme of the novel?

---

**Writing Exercise**

Have students write a one-page essay on a turning point in the novel. Where does the plot begin to change? Have students choose a turning point and explain why they think the novel revolves around this point.

---

**Homework**

Review the novel. Ask students to select the one theme they believe is the most important issue in the novel. They should find places where this theme emerges and be prepared to present their ideas to the class.

---

This work is licensed under a Creative Commons Attribution-NonCommercial-ShareAlike 4.0 International License.
Themes are the central, recurring subjects of a novel. As characters grapple with circumstances such as racism, class, or unrequited love, profound questions will arise in the reader’s mind about human life, social pressures, and societal expectations. Classic themes include intellectual freedom versus censorship, the relationship between one’s personal moral code and larger political justice, and spiritual faith versus rational considerations. A novel often reconsiders these age-old debates by presenting them in new contexts or from new points of view.

**Discussion Activities and Writing Exercise**

Use the following questions to stimulate discussion or provide writing exercises in order to interpret the novel in specific ways. Using historical references to support ideas, explore the statements *Old School* makes about the following themes:

**The Importance of Literature**

From the discussion of William Faulkner’s “Barn Burning” in the opening chapter through the previously cited exploration of Hemingway’s short fiction and Mr. Ramsey’s observations on the need for stories, the novel makes a sustained, passionate defense of the significance of fiction to our lives. What claims are made for fiction beyond mere distraction or amusement?

**Honesty and Deception**

Poised right on the brink, I still held back, perhaps sensing that the moment it started, once I allowed myself the comfort of his interest, I wouldn’t be able to stop; that the relief of confessing this paralysis might betray me into other confessions. In some murky way I recognized my own impatience to tear off the mask, and it shocked me.

Why does the narrator hide the truth about himself? Why does he want to confess? Which of these impulses does the novel affirm?

**Tolerance and Acceptance**

For years Arch had traced this vision of the evil done through intolerance of the flawed and ambiguous, but he had not taken the lesson to heart. He had given up the good in his life because a fault ran through it. He was no better than Aylmer, murdering his beautiful wife to rid her of a birthmark.

What is the lesson here, and why does it need to be taken to heart?

**Homework**

Ask students to begin their essays, using the Essay Topics. Outlines are due during the next class period.
Great stories articulate and explore the mysteries of our daily lives in the larger context of the human struggle. The writer's voice, style, and use of language inform the plot, characters, and themes. By creating opportunities to learn, imagine, and reflect, a great novel is a work of art that affects many generations of readers, changes lives, challenges assumptions, and breaks new ground.

**Discussion Activities**

Ask students to make a list of the characteristics of a great book. Write these on the board. What elevates a novel to greatness? Then ask them to discuss, within groups, other books that include some of these characteristics. Do any of these books remind them of *Old School*? Is this a great novel?

A great writer can be the voice of a generation. What kind of voice does Wolff create in *Old School*? Does this novel speak for more than one man and his personal concerns? What does this voice tell us about the choices and responsibilities of life for a sensitive person in contemporary America?

Divide students into groups and have each group determine the single most important theme of the novel. Have a spokesperson from each group explain the group's decision, with references from the text. Write these themes on the board. Do all the groups agree?

**Writing Exercise**

Does this novel succeed in telling a story that speaks to and about all young men, not just those in the limited world of private school students? Does the novel tell a story about human beings in general? Why or why not? Write a one-page essay explaining whether the author succeeds in reaching a broad audience. If you disagree, explain why the author fails to do so. What advice might you give to the author so that he might reach more young readers?

**Homework**

Students will finish their essays and present their essay topics and arguments to the class.
The Importance of Frost, Rand, and Hemingway

Much of the plot of *Old School* revolves around the scheduled visits of Robert Frost, Ayn Rand, and Ernest Hemingway, and the fierce competition among the students to win personal interviews with these authors. It may seem hard to believe nowadays, but there was a time not so long ago when the general public was familiar with the faces and even the personal lives of certain serious writers. Three of the most famous and recognizable writers of the time were the three selected by Tobias Wolff for inclusion in his novel.

Robert Frost is, without any question, the best-known and most popular American poet of the twentieth century. Virtually everyone knows not only his name but even the titles of some of his poems: "Mending Wall," "Birches," "Stopping by Woods on a Snowy Evening." Phrases from some of these works, such as "Good fences make good neighbors" and "Miles to go before I sleep," have entered the language and are cited by people who have no idea that they're quoting Frost. For a poet to achieve such popularity is rare enough; what is truly astounding is that Frost is also regarded by a great many critics and poets as the best and most important American poet of his time. The traditional structures of his poems and their often charming descriptions of nature appeal to a broad audience, but discerning readers also respond to his complex and often tragic presentation of human beings struggling to cope with a harsh and often terrifying world.

Ayn Rand's major novels, *The Fountainhead* (1943) and especially *Atlas Shrugged* (1957), have achieved a surprising popularity when one considers their length and demanding content. In each of these books, a strong protagonist unswervingly pursues his own vision without regard for the views of others or the compromises demanded of him by any individual or group. The hero of *The Fountainhead*, for instance, is an architect who chooses to blow up his own building rather than accept any modifications in its design. Rand's novels are especially appealing to young people, who are often inspired by what they see as her idealism and call to personal greatness. She is not held in high regard, however, by other writers and thinkers who generally find her presentation of human nature unrealistic and her philosophical views rigid and insensitive.

Ernest Hemingway was the dominant literary figure in America fifty years ago. Many admired him not only for his sharply observed and exciting novels and short stories, but also for his widely publicized life of deep-sea fishing, big-game hunting, and other manly pursuits. He is no longer the imposing figure he was then; much of his later writing is seriously flawed, and the macho lifestyle is now seen as the bravado of a desperately ill man. But his first two novels, *The Sun Also Rises* (1926) and *A Farewell to Arms* (1929), and many of his finest short stories are permanent contributions to the highest shelf of American literature. As Wolff acutely observes, much of Hemingway's importance lies in the brilliance of his craftsmanship—especially his ability to evoke emotional states and the natural world—and his emphasis on courage and stoicism in the face of all the forces in the world that rise up to destroy the human spirit.
Prep Schools: Fact and Fiction

Prep schools have been the setting for a number of very popular books and movies, including A Separate Peace (1972) and Dead Poets Society (1989). From overexposure to such works, one might form the impression that these schools are filled up with rich boys—some of them oversensitive and the rest insufferably arrogant—who react to the pressures put on them by their crass, domineering fathers by indulging in cutthroat competition, frequent fistfights, and an alarming appetite for self-destruction. Even beyond such crude stereotyping, phrases such as "prep-school background" or "prep-school mentality" commonly suggest wealth, privilege, social prominence and connections, and an inability to relate to—or even fully grasp the reality of—anyone who does not share those qualities. Needless to say, the reality is somewhat more complex.

Most of these books and movies are set in boarding schools, where the students live on campus in dormitories, just as many college students do. In fact, however, the great majority of prep schools in the United States are day schools, just like public high schools. Public schools are operated and maintained by local governments, usually cities and towns. Most of the time, they are funded by taxes on the homeowners that live within the school district. Public schools are free, and all students who live within the district are eligible to attend them. Private schools—and all prep schools are private—charge sometimes very high tuition and tend to be extremely selective in their admission procedures.

The word "prep" itself is, of course, short for "preparatory." For many students in public-school systems, high school is the final stage of their formal education. A prep school is intended not as the end of the process but as a middle step. What it seeks to prepare its students for is, in the short view, further study at a college or university. In the long view, it tries to prepare its students for careers, often in public service, and to prepare them for adult life itself. Thus, great stress is placed on academics, usually a traditional course of studies including history, literature, philosophy, and languages. There is also often an emphasis on athletics, and in some schools on religious practice, especially for purposes of character-building.

Many prep-school students are from wealthy and/or socially prominent families, whose members have attended the same school for generations, and who support their school with large financial contributions. But most prep schools, motivated by a sense of mission and obligation to society, have generous scholarship programs and make strong recruiting efforts. And these schools feel that they have failed in their mission if their graduates go out into the world with feelings of superiority and entitlement. What they strive for instead is to give their students a sense of purpose and responsibility to inspire them with the awareness that those who are given the gifts of talent, wealth, and influence have an obligation to use those gifts in the service of others. As the headmaster in the novel says, "Schools like ours are vulnerable to criticism ... There is some truth in these criticisms. Too much truth. But we are trying to do something here. We are trying to become something different and even admirable."

Not sure about this statement.
The Narrator’s Coming of Age

Among its other qualities, *Old School* fits into the tradition of the *Bildungsroman*, or coming-of-age novel, a work in which the protagonist goes through a process of maturing from adolescence to adulthood. Two classic examples of the *Bildungsroman* are the Charles Dickens novels *David Copperfield* (1850) and *Great Expectations* (1861). In our own time, one might even say that the *Harry Potter* books, taken together, fit into the category.

At least since the time of Sophocles and Oedipus the King, down through Shakespeare’s King Lear and many, many other works, much of the great literature of the Western world has been founded on a core set of assumptions: that those who foolishly believe themselves superior beings will sooner or later be forced to confront their own flaws and mistakes, and that from this recognition of our own limitations may come humility and a greater compassion for the weakness and imperfection of other people. Writers, critics, and teachers have always maintained that reading great literature and learning this lesson will help to make us more compassionate toward and tolerant of others. One of the many remarkable qualities of *Old School* is that it shows us that very thing—a young man becoming more understanding and accepting of others not only through personal encounters, but also through his encounters with works of literature.

From the very beginning, ignorance and misperception characterize the narrator in his dealings with other people, whether in the unintentional pain that he causes the janitor, Gershon, or his later misunderstanding (and subsequent discovery) of the reason for Bill White’s sadness and withdrawal. The clear lesson of the Bill White episode is that we never really know what’s going on with other people, and therefore we shouldn’t be quick to judge.

Perhaps the book’s most effective and moving example of how the narrator’s ignorance and misunderstanding give way to deeper and more compassionate insight comes in connection with his grandfather and his grandfather’s wife. When they visit him in the hospital, he is vaguely ashamed and dismissive of them. When he looks at them in the light of his reading of *The Fountainhead*, he is openly contemptuous of them. But when his personal exposure to Ayn Rand shows him the narrowness and heartlessness of her views, he comes to recognize their decency and their love for him. Through this experience, as well as through his reading of Hemingway, he comes to embrace woundedness and imperfection as the reality of the human condition.

This lesson—the precariousness of human nature, the hidden sorrows in everyone’s life—is one that he keeps learning over and over. It is not until many years later, for example, that he discovers that Mr. Ramsey’s editing of the Hemingway interview for the school paper was motivated not by disrespect, but rather a desire to protect Hemingway from himself. As the narrator tells us late in the novel, “The appetite for decisive endings, even the belief that they’re possible, makes me uneasy in life as in writing.” Clearly, at least part of the reason for his uneasiness is his knowledge that we never achieve perfection, that our own pride and arrogance must be constantly resisted, and that the lesson of love and forgiveness must be learned again and again for as long as we live.
Old School
by Tobias Wolff

Teachers may consider the ways in which these activities may be linked to other Big Read community events. Most of these projects could be shared at a local library, a student assembly, or a bookstore.

2. At the beginning of "On Fire," the narrator tells the story of the Blaine Boys. Are there any interesting stories in your school’s history? Research the school’s background and make a public presentation of your findings, with illustrations if possible.
3. Divide the class into three groups and have each group prepare a presentation on one of the three real-life authors who figure in the novel. Each presentation should include biography, photographs and other illustrations, a display of books by the author, and the reading of excerpts from the author’s work.
4. Show your class the 1949 film of *The Fountainhead*, starring Gary Cooper and Patricia Neal. Following the screening, lead a class discussion to explore how well the movie matches up with the portrayal of Rand in *Old School*. (Research the degree of Rand’s participation in the making of the film and what she thought of the finished product.)
5. Have a drama day in class. Divide the class into four groups, and have each group prepare and mount a staged version of one of the following: Frost’s "Death of the Hired Man," published in *North of Boston* (1914); Hemingway’s "Hills Like White Elephants," published in *Men Without Women* (1927); a scene from Rand’s play *Night of January 16th* (1934); or the expulsion scene from *Old School*. 

© Arts Midwest
Old School
by Tobias Wolff

The discussion activities and writing exercises in this guide provide you with possible essay topics, as do the Discussion Questions in the Reader’s Guide. Advanced students can come up with their own essay topics, as long as they are specific and compelling. Other ideas for essays are provided here.

For essays, students should organize their ideas around a thesis about the novel. This statement should be focused, with clear reasons supporting its conclusion. The thesis and supporting reasons should be backed by references to the text.

1. Despite everything that happens, the narrator never wavers in his pride and love for his school. Why do you think he is so attached to the school?
2. There are few women in the book, but the narrator’s interactions with them tell us some important things about him. Discuss this in connection with Lorraine, Patty, and Susan Friedman.
3. Ayn Rand is by far the most negatively portrayed character in the book. What is there about her, both personally and philosophically, that is so opposed to the spirit of the novel?
4. After almost telling an embarrassing story about George Kellogg, the narrator observes: “If, as Talleyrand said, loyalty is a matter of dates, virtue itself is often a matter of seconds” ("Frost"). What does this mean? How does it relate to the novel’s assumptions about human nature?
5. Other than the narrator and the three real life authors who appear in the book, which character do you like or admire the most? Which one do you like or admire the least? Explain your choices.
6. Both the narrator and Bill White consider “Summer Dance” to be “their” story. Why does each of them feel this way?
7. Read Hawthorne’s short story “The Birthmark.” The narrator refers to this story near the end of “Master” by claiming that Arch “was no better than Aylmer.” How does Hawthorne’s story get at one of the main themes of the novel? Not only does Arch’s character struggle, but the narrator struggles with his Jewish roots. How do both characters reconcile their birthmarks? Are they better or worse than Hawthorne’s Aylmer?
Old School
by Tobias Wolff

Websites

Random House
The publisher’s website contains biographical information on Tobias Wolff, a list of awards, and additional educational materials for teachers.

The Atlantic Magazine
The Atlantic’s website features a discussion of Old School with Tobias Wolff conducted by writer Curtis Sittenfeld.

© Arts Midwest

http://www.neabigread.org/books/oldschool/teachers-guide/additional-resources/
Old School
by Tobias Wolff

This guide was developed with National Council for Teachers of English (NCTE) Standards and State Language Arts Standards in mind. Use these standards to guide and develop your application of the curriculum.

1. Students read a wide range of print and nonprint texts to build an understanding of texts, of themselves, and of the cultures of the United States and the world; to acquire new information; to respond to the needs and demands of society and the workplace; and for personal fulfillment. Among these texts are fiction and nonfiction, classic and contemporary works.

2. Students read a wide range of literature from many periods in many genres to build an understanding of the many dimensions (e.g., philosophical, ethical, aesthetic) of human experience.

3. Students apply a wide range of strategies to comprehend, interpret, evaluate, and appreciate texts. They draw on their prior experience, their interactions with other readers and writers, their knowledge of word meaning and of other texts, their word identification strategies, and their understanding of textual features (e.g., sound-letter correspondence, sentence structure, context, graphics).

4. Students adjust their use of spoken, written, and visual language (e.g., conventions, style, vocabulary) to communicate effectively with a variety of audiences and for different purposes.

5. Students employ a wide range of strategies as they write and use different writing process elements appropriately to communicate with different audiences for a variety of purposes.

6. Students apply knowledge of language structure, language conventions (e.g., spelling and punctuation), media techniques, figurative language, and genre to create, critique, and discuss print and non-print texts.

7. Students conduct research on issues and interests by generating ideas and questions, and by posing problems. They gather, evaluate, and synthesize data from a variety of sources (e.g., print and non-print texts, artifacts, people) to communicate their discoveries in ways that suit their purpose and audience.

8. Students use a variety of technological and information resources (e.g., libraries, databases, computer networks, video) to gather and synthesize information and to create and communicate knowledge.

9. Students develop an understanding of and respect for diversity in language use, patterns, and dialects across cultures, ethnic groups, geographic regions, and social roles.

10. Students whose first language is not English make use of their first language to develop competency in the English language arts and to develop understanding of content across the curriculum.

11. Students participate as knowledgeable, reflective, creative, and critical members of a variety of literacy communities.

12. Students use spoken, written, and visual language to accomplish their own purposes (e.g., for learning, enjoyment, persuasion, and the exchange of information).
Old School
by Tobias Wolff

Works Cited

Sources

Excerpts from OLD SCHOOL by Tobias Wolff, copyright © 2003 by Tobias Wolff. Used by permission of Alfred A. Knopf, a division of Random House, Inc.


Acknowledgments

Writer: Michael Palma

Series Editor: Molly Thomas-Hicks for the National Endowment for the Arts

Graphic Design for PDF files: Fletcher Design/Washington, DC

© Arts Midwest

http://www.neabigread.org/books/oldschool/teachers-guide/credits/
Questions

Who is the narrator's roommate that keeps his Jewish heritage a secret?

Bill White

Who is the controversial Russian-born author?

Ayn Rand

Who is the poet that visited the school?

Robert Frost

Who wrote *A Farewell to Arms*, "Big Two-Hearted River," and "In Another Country"?

Ernest Hemingway

Which character was rumored to be a friend of Ernest Hemingway?

Dean Makepeace

What is the name of the girl who originally wrote "Summer Dance"?

Susan Friedman

Who becomes president during the course of the novel?

Kennedy

Who is the author of *Old School*?

Tobias Wolff

What city is the narrator originally from?

Seattle

Which boy is almost kicked out of school for skipping chapel?

Purcell

What is the name of Tobias Wolff's memoir?

*This Boy's Life*

Who is the English teacher that eventually becomes headmaster?

Mr. Ramsey
What first-edition copy of short stories by Hemingway does Purcell give to the narrator?

*In Our Time*

What novel by Ayn Rand does the narrator read and reread while on winter break?

*The Fountainhead*

Who wins the audience with Robert Frost?

George Kellogg

Who wins the audience with Ayn Rand?

Big Jeff

What university was the narrator going to attend after graduation?

Columbia

Where did the narrator go after getting kicked out of school?

New York

What was the name of the girl's school associated with the all-boys prep school?

Miss Cobb's

Who is the girl from Miss Cobb's that wanted to go to the dance with the narrator?

Rain
Across

2. Where did the narrator go after getting kicked out of school?
3. Which character was rumored to be a friend of Ernest Hemingway?
6. Who is the poet that visited the school?
10. Who is the controversial Russian-born author?
14. What is the name of Tobias Wolff’s memoir?
15. What novel by Ayn Rand does the narrator read and reread while on winter break?
16. What was the name of the girl’s school associated with the all-boys prep school?
17. Who wins the audience with Robert Frost?
18. Who is the author of Old School?
20. Who becomes president during the course of the novel?

Down

1. Which boy is almost kicked out of school for skipping chapel?
4. Who wrote A Farewell to Arms, “Big Two-Hearted River,” and “In Another Country”?
5. Who is the English teacher that eventually becomes headmaster?
7. Who is the narrator’s roommate that keeps his Jewish heritage a secret?
8. What is the name of the girl who originally wrote “Summer Dance”?
9. What first-edition copy of short stories by Hemingway does Purcell give to the narrator?
11. What university was the narrator going to attend after graduation?
12. What city is the narrator originally from?
13. Who is the girl from Miss Cobb’s that wanted to go to the dance with the narrator?
19. Who wins the audience with Ayn Rand?
Across
2. Where did the narrator go after getting kicked out of school? (newyork)
3. Which character was rumored to be a friend of Ernest Hemingway? (deanmakepeace)
6. Who is the poet that visited the school? (robertfrost)
10. Who is the controversial Russian-born author? (aynrand)
14. What is the name of Tobias Wolff’s memoir? (thisboystlife)
15. What novel by Ayn Rand does the narrator read and reread while on winter break? (thefountainhead)
16. What was the name of the girl’s school associated with the all-boys prep school? (misscobbs)
17. Who wins the audience with Robert Frost? (georgekellogg)
18. Who is the author of Old School? (tobiaswolff)
20. Who becomes president during the course of the novel? (kennedy)

Down
1. Which boy is almost kicked out of school for skipping chapel? (purcell)
4. Who wrote A Farewell to Arms, “Big Two-Hearted River,” and “In Another Country”? (ernesthemingway)
5. Who is the English teacher that eventually becomes headmaster? (mrramsey)
7. Who is the narrator’s roommate that keeps his Jewish heritage a secret? (billwhite)
8. What is the name of the girl who originally wrote “Summer Dance”? (susanfriedman)
9. What first-edition copy of short stories by Hemingway does Purcell give to the narrator? (inairtime)
11. What university was the narrator going to attend after graduation? (columbia)
12. What city is the narrator originally from? (seattle)
13. Who is the girl from Miss Cobb’s that wanted to go to the dance with the narrator? (rain)
19. Who wins the audience with Ayn Rand? (bigjeff)
References to Literature

"The Wasteland" – T.S. Elliot
"Howl" – Allen Ginsburg
"A Coney Island of the Mind" – Lawrence Ferlinghetti
"Ozymandias" – Percy Shelley
"After Apple-Picking" – Robert Frost
"Mending Wall" – Robert Frost
"Stopping by Woods on a Snowy Evening" – Robert Frost
"Barn Burning" – William Faulkner
Absalom, Absalom! – William Faulkner
The Fountainhead – Ayn Rand
Atlas Shrugged – Ayn Rand
Lolita – Vladimir Nabokov
Ulysses – James Joyce
From Here to Eternity – James Jones
In Our Time – Ernest Hemingway
For Whom the Bell Tolls – Ernest Hemingway
A Moveable Feast – Ernest Hemingway
A Farewell to Arms – Ernest Hemingway
The Nick Adam Stories – Ernest Hemingway
"The Killers" – Ernest Hemingway
"Soldier’s Home" – Ernest Hemingway
"In Another Country” – Ernest Hemingway
"The Undefeated" – Ernest Hemingway
"The Battler" – Ernest Hemingway
"Cross Country Snow" – Ernest Hemingway
"The Snows of Kilimanjaro" – Ernest Hemingway
"Indian Camp" – Ernest Hemingway
"Big Two-Hearted River" – Ernest Hemingway
"The End of Something" – Ernest Hemingway

“One could not live in a world without stories...Without stories one would hardly know what world one was in” (pg. 131-132).
MuseLab Exhibit Opening --

(Non)Fiction: Literary Legends Unbound

Wednesday, April 15
6 to 8 p.m.
Third floor, University Library, rooms 330 and 321

Kent State University’s School of Library and Information Science will host a reception for the opening of the newest MuseLab exhibit, “(Non)Fiction: Literary Legends Unbound.” The exhibit was developed by students in the Object Knowledge Seminar (museum studies specialization) in Kent State University’s School of Library and Information Science. In cooperation with the National Endowments for the Arts’ Big Read project, this exhibit draws inspiration from the Tobias Wolff novel, Old School, and focuses on the lives and personalities of three 20th-century literary legends: Robert Frost, Ernest Hemingway and Ayn Rand.
Robert Frost

- 1874-1963
- Received 4 Pulitzer Prizes for Poetry
- Awarded the Congressional Gold Medal in 1960
- Named Poet laureate of Vermont in 1961
- Born in San Francisco
- Moved to Massachusetts when he was 11
- Attended Dartmouth College
- Worked on a farm for 9 years and wrote numerous poems during that experience
- Farming was unsuccessful, so he returned to the education field
- Lived in Great Britain from 1912-1915
- Taught English at Amherst College
- Encouraged his students to account for the numerous sounds and intonations of the spoken English language in their writing (called it "the sound of sense")
- Most popular and critically respected American poet of the 20th century
- Employed settings from rural life in New England in the early 20th century, using them to examine complex social and philosophical themes
- Writes extremely well about the actions of ordinary men
- Tone of seriousness and honesty to his work
- He had six children with his wife Elinor
- Personal life was plagued with grief and loss
- Suffered from depression
- Old School description
  - "[Frost] knew these poems by heart yet continued to make a show of reading them, even to the extent of pretending to lose his pace or have trouble with the light" (Wolff 50)
  - "His awkwardness took nothing from his poems. It removed them from the page and put them back in the voice, a speculative, sometimes cunning, sometimes faltering voice. In print, under his great name, they had the look of inevitability; in his voice you caught the hesitation and perplexity behind them, the sound of a man brooding them into being" (Wolff 50)
  - "Frost looked slyly around the chapel, the lord of misrule" (Wolff 51)
  - Frost liked botany (Wolff 52)
  - "Such grief [losing a friend in war] can only be told in form" (Wolff 53)
  - Did not show up for the optional follow-up meeting (Wolff 58)

- Characteristics
  1. Quiet
  2. Conservative
3. Intelligent
4. Reserved
5. Witty

Hemingway and Frost's Relationship

Frost considered Hemingway as one of the best American novelists. Frost said, "He's a great one."
Ayn Rand

- 1905-1982
- Born and educated in Russia
- Known for her two best-selling novels *The Fountainhead* and *Atlas Shrugged*
- In high school, she determined she was an atheist and valued reason above any other human virtue
- Studied at Petrograd State University
- Moved to the United States in 1926 and wanted to become a screenwriter
- She became an American citizen
- Rand advocated reason as the only means of acquiring knowledge and rejected faith and religion
- She supported rational and ethical egoism, and rejected altruism
- Supported *laissez-faire* capitalism, which she defined as the system based on recognizing individual rights
- Against communism
- Believes in Objectivism
  - Reality exists independently of consciousness, that human beings have direct contact with reality through sense perception, that one can attain objective knowledge from perception through the process of concept formation and inductive logic, that the proper moral purpose of one's life is the pursuit of one's own happiness (rational self-interest), that the only social system consistent with this morality is one that displays full respect for individual rights embodied in *laissez-faire* capitalism, and that the role of art in human life is to transform humans' metaphysical ideas by selective reproduction of reality into a physical form—a work of art—that one can comprehend and to which one can respond emotionally.
- Literary critics received Rand's fiction with mixed reviews and academia generally ignored or rejected her philosophy
- Married to Frank O'Connor (had an affair on the side with the consent of her husband)
- Suffered from depression
- Subject to volatile mood swings due to taking Benzedrine (brand of amphetamine that fights fatigue for three decades)
- Rand declared herself "the most creative thinker alive"
- During speeches and Q&A sessions, she often took controversial stances on political and social issues
  - Supporting abortion rights
- Opposing the Vietnam War and the military draft (but condemning many draft dodgers as "bums")
- Supporting Israel in the Yom Kippur War of 1973 against a coalition of Arab nations as "civilized men fighting savages"
- Saying European colonists had the right to take land from American Indians
- Calling homosexuality "immoral" and "disgusting," while also advocating the repeal of all laws about it

- **Old School** description
  - There was turmoil about the decision to bring her in (Wolff 63-64)
  - "[She] was as bad as she was popular, and she was very popular" (Wolff 64)
  - Ayn Rand's followers drove up from Boston to see her when she arrived at the school (Wolff 79)
  - "Right away she tore into our school motto – *Give All* – and urged everyone to ignore such drivel and live for themselves alone" (Wolff 79)
  - "She said she was a radical, not a conservative, and that people should attach meaning to the words they speak" (Wolf 79)
  - "Some students actually walked out when she attacked President Kennedy for inviting us to consider what we might do for our country" (Wolff 79)
  - She agreed to a "follow-up meeting in Blaine Hall after dinners... on the condition that only her true readers would be welcome – those who read all her novels. She was willing to have a serious discussion, she said, but not to answer ignorant questions or be gawked at by tourists" (Wolff 80)
  - "My heroes have been ridiculed for refusing fear and compromise. My critics say such people do not exist. But allow me to inform you that I am such a person, and I most assuredly do exist" (Wolff 81)
  - Wore a gold dollar sign lapel pin (Wolff 81)
  - "Remember this: when someone calls himself your brother, he does so with one desire – that you will become his *keeper*, a slave to do his own incapacity and idleness" (Wolff 82)
  - "When your power comes from others, on approval, you are their slave" (Wolff 83)
  - "I say that what other writers present as life is nothing more than an alibi for cowardice and treason – treason against yourselves, against the John Galt in each of you" (Wolff 83)
  - When asked to name the single greatest work by an American author she answered *Atlas Shrugged* with *The Fountainhead* coming in second (Wolff 84)
  - "What you find in Hemingway is everything that is wrong with the so-called literature of this country. Weak premises. Weak, defeated people. A completely malevolent sense of life" (Wolff 84)
- "If the [war] wound is received through an action undertaken for the happiness of the man himself, it might be heroic. If for the sake of others, as self-sacrifice, I would call it weakness" (Wolff 85)
- When asked what her biggest mistake was she responded, "I reject your premise. If you act rationally, you cannot act mistakenly, and I have always acted rationally" (Wolff 87)

- Characteristics
  1. Rude
  2. Egotistical
  3. Arrogant
  4. Condescending
  5. Narcissistic

Hemingway and Rand’s Relationship

Both were contemporaries; however, no record of them ever meeting or corresponding with one another. It would have been unlikely due to the differing political viewpoints. Hemingway was of the people and a man of action who mainly leaned to the left, politically. Rand was a radical right-wing intellectual. Hemingway avoided intellectuals and Rand avoided socialists.
Ernest Hemingway

- 1899-1961
- Won the Nobel Prize in Literature
- Won the Pulitzer Prize
- Raised in Oak Park, Illinois (suburb of Chicago)
- He disliked his name, which he "associated with the naive, even foolish hero of Oscar Wilde's play The Importance of Being Earnest"
- Said he hated his mother, but biographers point out that he mirrored her energy and enthusiasm
- Had a passion for outdoor adventure and living in remote or isolated areas
- After high school, he went straight to work for The Kansas City Star
- Used the Star's style guide as a foundation for his writing: "Use short sentences. Use short first paragraphs. Use vigorous English. Be positive, not negative"
  - He avoided complicated syntax. About 70 percent of the sentences are simple sentences—a childlike syntax without subordination
- Joined the Red Cross to be an ambulance driver in Italy during WWI
- His legs were seriously injured while on the front from mortar fire
  - Earned the Italian Silver Medal of Bravery for continuing to assist soldiers to safety
- After the war he worked as a freelancer, staff writer, and foreign correspondent for the Toronto Star Weekly
- Spent time in Paris, Key West, Cuba, Wyoming, and Idaho
- His father, sister, and brother committed suicide
- Had 4 wives over the course of his life
- He sank into a depression as his literary friends began to die in 1939
- During this period, he suffered from severe headaches, high blood pressure, weight problems, and eventually diabetes—much of which was the result of previous accidents and many years of heavy drinking
- Acceptance speech for the Nobel Prize (did not attend, sent this instead)
  - Writing, at its best, is a lonely life. Organizations for writers palliate the writer's loneliness but I doubt if they improve his writing. He grows in public stature as he sheds his loneliness and often his work deteriorates. For he does his work alone and if he is a good enough writer he must face eternity, or the lack of it, each day
- Treated with electroconvulsive therapy as many as 15 times in December 1960
- Diagnosed with hemochromatosis, in which the inability to metabolize iron culminates in mental and physical deterioration
- Hemingway shot himself with his favorite shotgun
- **Old School** description
  - "This is the story of conscience and that kind of story if it's honest always has something for another conscience to learn from, even an old wreck like mine" (Wolff 135)
  - "The stories you have to write will always make someone hater your guts. If they don't you're just producing words" (Wolff 135)
  - "Advice...Don't take advice, I never did. And don't get swell-headed. Writers are just like everyone else, only worse." (Wolff 135)
  - "And don't pay any attention to what the [ – ] say about you. They've said everything about me. What the hell" (Wolff 136)
  - "Don't talk about your writing. If you talk about your writing you will touch something you shouldn't touch and it will fall apart and you will have nothing" (Wolff 136)
  - "Read. Read James Joyce and Bill Faulkner and Isak Dinesen... Read Fitzgerald." (Wolff 136)
  - "Hold on to your friends" (Wolff 136)
  - "Keep your friends, hold on to your friends. Don't lose your friends" (Wolff 136)
  - Hemingway does not come to the school citing health concerns

- **Characteristics**
  1. Straightforward
  2. Purposeful
  3. Experienced
  4. Intelligent
  5. Superior
**Disclaimer: The personalities and beliefs presented in this script are based off factual information and literary interpretations. It is not necessarily 100% accurate.**

RF = Robert Frost

AR = Ayn Rand

EH = Ernest Hemingway

Conversation 1:

EH: Similarly to my esteemed colleague Mr. Frost, my work is based off real experience. I grew up in a suburb of Chicago, vacationing in the woods of Michigan, learning to hunt and fish. That experience has translated into my work. However, the radical Ms. Rand would not know the real world if it hit her in the face. Her works of fiction come completely from her head with not a lick of experience in her bones. No one acts like Howard Roark. It is Ms. Rand's pitiful attempt to describe her ideal man. Any woman who falls for that does not deserve to read true literature.

AR (first, sarcastically): Ernest, since I “know” how much you love that name, instead of contributing to the arbitrary, why don't you do something else with your time. All you write about is weak men who think they are heroes, but they are not. They are all slaves, serving other people.

EH: Some of us, madam, fought for our country when it called for help. What did you do, besides spout off ridiculous theories and principles?

AR: Instead of asking what we can do for our country, we should be asking what our country can do for us? Better yet, what can we do for ourselves?

RF (sheepishly): If I may share with you a word of advice, Mr. Hemingway: do not argue with fools.

AR: Out of the three of us, it is obvious that my works are the greatest. My books cover important matters about how to live life. Plus, numerous people have written and told me that my books opened their eyes and completely changed their lives. Your short stories, Ernest, and poems, Robert, do nothing to inspire people's intellect.

RF (with a touch of bravado): Like I said previously, a fool. She is in the company of two Pulitzer prize winning authors and she has nothing to show.
Conversation 2:

AR: Surely, you have all heard of my theory of Objectivism. No? Well let me enlighten you. As you know, reality exists independently of consciousness. Human beings have direct contact with reality only through sense perception. You can only attain objective knowledge from perception through the process of concept formation and inductive logic.

EH: So were you born this arrogant or did your senses perceive it?

AR (rolling her eyes, disregarding Ernest's jab): Most importantly, the proper moral purpose of one's life is the pursuit of one's own happiness. The only social system that works with this line of thinking is one that displays full respect for individual rights embodied in laissez-faire capitalism.

RF: What about helping others and the bigger community that exists?

AR: Helping anyone but yourself would be a clear indication of weakness. There is no one more important on this earth than yourself. Additionally, art is meant to transform humans' metaphysical ideas by selective reproduction of reality into a physical form that one can comprehend and respond to emotionally.

EH: Good thing what you do is not art.

RF: Art is not so complicated. It can take the simplest of all things, a birch tree for example, and turn it into something that connects with readers or viewers. Don’t inflate it for your own purposes, Ms. Rand.

AR: What my two colleagues, if that is even what they are, fail to realize is that life is so much more than these two simple-minded men make it out to be. We have the right to strive for every desire and accomplish whatever we choose. We have that freedom. They would rather be shackled to their homes in the wilderness writing about simple people they would like to call "heroic." They fail to see the bigger picture.
Conversation 3:

EH: There is nothing more relaxing than a solitary fishing trip out in the woods. It is my favorite way to spend a weekend.

RF: I could not agree more. Something about the quiet and simplistic beauty found in the woods is refreshing. The nine years I spent on farming resulted in some of the best poems I wrote. The outdoors is like an empty canvas just ready to be explored.

EH: Come out to Idaho sometime and we will spend a solitary weekend in the woods with no troubles to bother us. We can fish and hunt until our hearts are content.
Louisville High School
Lake High School
Fairless High School
East Canton High School
Organization Description

(a) Describe your organization’s history, programming, and achievements. (b) Describe your organization’s experience with presenting community-wide programming that demonstrates an ability to conduct a successful Big Read.

“The Massillon Museum collects, preserves and exhibits art and artifacts to enrich our community through education and experience” (Mission statement, revised and adopted March 2007.)

(a) Established in 1933 and accredited with the American Alliance of Museums, the Massillon Museum is a free museum, open six days a week year-round and closed for major holidays. Staff consists of five full-time and four part-time employees, and it is partially funded by a city property tax levy constituting 55% of a $874,000 annual operating budget. MassMu is therefore dedicated to presenting quality exhibits, educational opportunities, and programs appealing to the Massillon citizens. It occupies a renovated three-story Art Deco building located in the center of downtown Massillon. The facility features three floors of exhibition space, one floor of collections storage space, two educational classrooms, community meeting spaces and an independently owned and operated café. The Museum’s principal activities include caring for our collection of 100,000+ art and history objects, managing temporary and traveling exhibitions, and offering a wide variety of educational programs and special events. The exhibition and programming philosophy reflects the diverse collections, which include extensive archival holdings; china and glass; costumes; Civil War-era artifacts; farm equipment; natural history specimens; furniture; Native American tools, baskets, and pottery; a 1907 automobile; and over 60,000 photographs. The Museum utilizes a changing exhibition schedule to fulfill its core mission, which is to be an integral part of the community. As such, the exhibitions planned each year maintain a healthy balance between art and history topics, aiding in the ability to present diverse perspectives and scholarly presentations. As stewards of local history, the institution also preserves the community’s shared heritage and traditions. Our Museum serves the city of Massillon (population 32,000+) and greater Western Stark County (county population 375,000+). A “2010 Visitors Count!” survey, facilitated by the American Association of State and Local History, cited that 87% of our visitors live within a 50-mile radius, which is typical of general museum visitation (typically 40%). This demonstrates the vital relationship between the Massillon Museum and its greater community. According to 2000 Census data, 25% of residents are school-aged (4-18 years old), a primary target group for The Big Read programs. Participation in previous year’s programs has also been strong amongst senior citizens (16% of population) and families (30% of population).

(b) The Massillon Museum has successfully coordinated The Big Read since 2008. This has drawn interest from The Big Read staff, who invited the former Director of Education – the main program coordinator for the past four years -- to lead a virtual training program for other program leaders across the country, write a blog for the national website, and welcome The Big Read staff to attend events in 2012 to witness our unique programs in action. In 2014, 1,700 copies of Fahrenheit 451 by Ray Bradbury were eagerly snapped up by our community, with 1,145 books going to Massillon area schools. Several local business leaders volunteered their services, and Kent State University English professor, Mark Dawidziak, who knew Bradbury and co-authored an unpublished work with him, delivered the Keynote address. Fahrenheit 451 allowed us to produce a wide range of educational programs tackling important social issues, including Nazi book burnings, the Holocaust, and the importance of writing and literature for self-expression, addressed in an exhibit organized by the Museum, Imagining A Better World: The Artwork of Nelly Toll, featuring the watercolor paintings created by Dr. Nelly Toll as a child in hiding during the Holocaust. Stark Parks featured the exhibit Massillon Fire History at its main site, and a number of book discussions were held throughout the community. Public awareness of the program and participation by schools and community members has grown exponentially. Our success lies in our ability to form diverse partnerships with a wide variety of organizations in addition to those with obvious connections to literacy. We maximize the use of our grant funding, providing books and activities for free, improving community access and increasing participation. There is a strong socioeconomic need for grant-funded programs in our geographic region. The economic profile of the city places income for families behind the national average, with almost 11% of residents below the poverty line (children and seniors most affected); 55% of students countywide are on free or reduced lunch programs. We develop creative and engaging activities with our partners -- highlighting a broad range of themes featured in our book selections -- to interest new, reluctant, and lapsed readers of all ages.
Promotional Description

(a) Describe how you will promote your Big Read programming. Discuss any proposed or existing partnerships with specific media outlets. (b) Explain how your program will utilize the digital educational materials found on http://www.neabigread.org and copies of your reading selection.

(a) Media partners will promote The Big Read events through community calendars, press releases and articles. Public spaces in downtown Massillon and partner sites throughout Western Stark County will be decorated to promote the program in an artistic, visual way. The Museum has received excellent press coverage and positive feedback from our community members from previous The Big Read public art projects.

The Museum has received extensive press coverage for The Big Read in the past at local and regional levels, including several front-page newspaper stories. The Museum's popular website (which received over 86,000 page views in 2014) and social media pages will also feature the program. Community partners will offer staff, promotional and logistical support, program content, and venues for activities. As this would be the ninth year for The Big Read, our community and partners have an awareness of the program and what it entails, and have high expectations for the Museum's leadership of the program moving forward. The Museum attends many community outreach events in the region and promotes The Big Read to a variety of audiences. These new audiences and organizations are able to access resources and participate as supplies allow.

(b) As the coordinator of The Big Read program, the Museum acts as the main distributor for books and The Big Read resources. Commitments with schools are made in advance of the upcoming school year to allow teachers adequate time to incorporate The Big Read Teacher's Guides and Reader's Guides into their lesson plans. Libraries and other partner organizations access materials before the kick-off. Digital materials allow easy and mobile access, removing barriers such as cost and supply limitations.

The availability of all-digital materials provides the ideal opportunity to educate seniors and the wider community about twenty-first century skills in order to bridge the digital divide. Museum and library staff will be available for tutorials at The Big Read Kick-Off event, as well as throughout the duration of The Big Read programming. Digital literacy classes will be offered through the Museum, the Massillon Public Library, and the Stark County District Library Smart Store. The Museum will provide access to the Education Department's e-reader onsite, with the hope to purchase additional e-readers for future The Big Read programming. Technical support brochures will be developed for distribution with book copies to facilitate uploading the digital materials to tablets and e-readers.

Fundamental to our program is providing books and activities free of charge, made possible by NEA grant funds, sponsorships, and in-kind donations. Free books and The Big Read online educational resources – including Teacher's Guides, Reader's Guides, and Audio Guides – are distributed with first priority going to participating schools/classes, and then given away at our partner sites. Books are imprinted or identified with stickers featuring The Big Read and Museum logos and websites associated with the program.

Partner sites of distribution include the Massillon Museum, Massillon Public Libraries (three branches and bookmobile), Canal Fulton Library, Stark County District Libraries (Western Stark County Branches), participating schools, Massillon Family YMCA, Towpath Trail YMCA, Paul and Carol David YMCA, Massillon Recreation Center, Stark Parks Canalway Center, Massillon Senior Center, Massillon Area Chamber of Commerce, and the City of Canton Mayor's Literacy Commission. The Big Read is promoted at many other established outreach events (including Canton's First Fridays, ArtsinStark smART Splash,
and other community events), enabling other individuals and organizations to ask for books, which are provided as supplies are available.
Organizer Biographies

Outline the key staff and/or volunteers who will plan and implement The Big Read, including their titles, roles and responsibilities, and experience or capacity for managing a Big Read. Include partners organizations’ staff as applicable.

Throughout the 2016 program, local scholars, writers, artists, Museum and partner staff will lead events related to In the Time of the Butterflies for our community, free of charge, at a variety of venues, including: Massillon Museum, participating schools and libraries, parks, and other partner sites. The Massillon Museum coordinates The Big Read program and therefore many responsibilities fall to its staff. The Museum Education and Outreach Coordinator manages the project and implements planning for activities, contacts partners, schedules and leads committee meetings, distributes The Big Read resources and books, coordinates the grant application, finances, and final report. She is supported by the Executive Director of the Museum, the Public Relations Coordinator, the Events Coordinator, the Volunteer Coordinator, the Bookkeeper, and interns and volunteers. These other Museum staff members attend committee meetings as necessary.

The Big Read Committee Members and their respective duties include:
- Museum Education and Outreach Coordinator and select Museum Staff will coordinate events, book distribution, and The Big Read resources; manage and distribute grant funds; publicize the program; and conduct staff activities.
- Massillon Public Library Director, who solicits assistance from other Massillon library branches and departmental librarians as needed, will advise on program content; distribute books and The Big Read resources; provide staffing and venues for activities, including book discussions; and coordinate the bookmobile to reach new audiences.
- President of the Massillon Chamber of Commerce will advise on program content; publicize the program online and in monthly newsletter; and engage business leaders in support of the program.
- Select teachers and administrators from participating schools will advise on program content for students; publicize program for students; and distribute books and The Big Read resources to students; help facilitate activities.
- Staff from Stark Parks, the YMCAs, Massillon Recreation Center, and other community partners will distribute books and The Big Read resources, provide venues for activities, and engage patrons.
- Staff from local businesses will distribute books and resources, provide venues for activities, and engage patrons.
- Volunteers (from Museum, Stark Parks, YMCAs, Kent State University) will provide staff support for activities and prepare materials for distribution.
- Stark County District Libraries and the Canal Fulton Public Library will offer distribution and promotional opportunities.
- Select teachers and administrators from participating schools will advise on program content for students; publicize program for students; distribute books and The Big Read resources to students.
- Staff from local businesses will distribute books and resources; provide venues for activities; engage patrons.
- The Wilderness Center will provide educational programming onsite and at the Museum for adults and children.

The Big Read committee meets quarterly and as needed. The Museum Education and Outreach Coordinator takes minutes and circulates all information to present and absent partners. After announcements of grant winners in 2015, partners will be alerted and a first meeting for 2016 planning will be scheduled in June. At this meeting, ideas for activities and a preliminary calendar will be initiated. Copies of The Big Read materials will be distributed to committee members for their reference and to share with their contacts who might be interested in participating. Efforts will be made to target
administrators, teachers, and students who have not participated in the past, and identify any new audiences or groups. Museum staff, partner staff, and volunteers will lead and coordinate activities for 2016. Book discussions will be led by teachers at participating schools, librarians, Museum staff, and volunteers. All activities – which have a highly successful history of receiving press coverage – will be promoted by the Museum's public relations coordinator and through social media.
Project Description

Describe your programming plans in detail. Include the types of activities, target audiences for those activities, locations, timeframes, and number.

The Museum's book selection, *In the Time of the Butterflies*, will emphasize themes of women's liberation, civil rights, the fight against violence, the power of art and culture, rising above adversity, and memorializing loved ones. These will be related to the art and history exhibition the Museum will host in its main gallery, *Masters of American Photography*. Supporting exhibits, about the Mirabal sisters, along with historic objects from our Museum collection, will also be on display. Our longstanding partners like the library, county parks service, community centers, and YMCAs will also provide staff and venues for other events. To target reluctant or lapsed readers who might not usually visit a library or museum but are more interested in physical fitness, the Museum will host an evening of merengue music and dancing, which directly relates to the history underlying Alvarez's narrative. Merengue's choreography is derived from the movement of chained legs and it is the national dance of the Dominican Republic, instated by Dictator Rafael Leonidas Trujillo. Through physical fitness and the expression of dance, a larger audience can learn, through movement, about the history of the Dominican Republic.

Activities will include:
- 4 Art and history exhibitions (at MassMu) between March 5 and May 15, 2016: *Masters of American Photography* in the main gallery with interactive components; an exhibit exploring each of the four Mirabal sisters, the four Butterflies; an exhibit of photographs of Charity Rotch, a Massillon woman who fought for the rights of underprivileged children in the 1810s; and an exhibit in the Studio M gallery of photography by Gary Harwood from the book *Growing Season: The Life of a Migrant Community*.
- 1 Kick-Off Event, on March 5, 2016, in conjunction with the *Masters of American Photography* exhibition, featuring music, food, hands-on activities, information from partners, and the first public free book giveaway (at Museum).
- 1 Keynote Address by author Julia Alvarez in late March.
- 10 Book discussions (at Museum, libraries, VA clinic, and local businesses).
- 2-4 Lectures (at MassMu and partner sites), including Gary Harwood speaking on the making of *Growing Season: The Life of a Migrant Community*.
- 4 original One-Act plays performed by students at Washington High School.
- 6-8 Public Art Workshops (at Museum, libraries, parks, YMCAs, and schools).
- 2 free film screenings (at Lions Lincoln Theatre or libraries).
- 1 concert, in April, featuring merengue music and dance instruction (at Museum).
- Book Distribution to area businesses and partner sites.
- 1 self-defense class (at Museum, with Soroptimist International of Canton/Stark County).

Julia Alvarez has agreed to speak as our Keynote in 2016 because of our longstanding tradition of facilitating The Big Read. The Big Read 2015 will present the first opportunity the Museum has had to work directly with the author of our The Big Read book selection, Tobias Wolff, who will present a Keynote address on May 21, 2015. Hosting a living female author in 2016 would afford a unique, multicultural, and very special opportunity for us to celebrate the title with our community, and to attract new audiences, including the Hispanic community. We will arrange visits to middle schools for Alvarez to share *Before We Were Free*, an adaptation of *In the Time of the Butterflies* suited for younger readers and English as a Second Language students.

The Museum will touch on the theme of overcoming adversity by highlighting select works in the *Masters of American Photography* exhibit. Many of the photographs in this exhibit were created during Trujillo's three-decade long reign, during which America waged its own political, emotional, and economic battle against the Great Depression. To celebrate Alvarez's Dominican-American heritage, the
Museum seeks to provide a dual view of the hardships under which both Dominicans and Americans suffered during Trujillo's rule. For example, Dorothea Lange's iconic Great Depression-era *Migrant Mother* photograph reminds viewers how women can form the bedrock for a family during economic disaster. Margaret Bourke-White, the first American female war photojournalist, is also represented in the exhibit by her photograph, *Soso Miss. Schools*. Additionally, Arthur Rothstein's *Dust Storm, Cimarron County, Oklahoma* is a powerful image of how the American hardship of the 1930s affected citizens physically, emotionally, and ecologically.
Partnerships Description

(a) Describe your partnerships with libraries, middle and/or high schools, and community organizations as applicable. (b) Explain the role each partner will play in your Big Read, the activities each partner will undertake with your organization, and whether these partnerships are confirmed or pending. (c) Explain how your partnerships will allow you to reach your intended audience(s).

a) The Massillon Public Library is our partner library. The Director provides leadership and program advice, as do her librarians, as members of The Big Read committee. The Massillon Public Library is the main branch of the Massillon library system, and is able to distribute books and The Big Read resources through its network. Schools targeted for participation include Massillon City Schools, Tuslaw Local Schools, Fairless Local Schools, Jackson Local Schools, Perry Local Schools, Central Catholic High School, Massillon AHBAD, the Massillon Digital Academy along with Kent State University Stark Campus, Kent State University Main Campus, Malone University and Walsh University. An open invitation to join The Big Read 2016 will be extended at the start of the 2015-2016 academic school year.

The Massillon Museum’s community partnerships include the Massillon Area Chamber of Commerce, Walsh University, Kent State University Main and Stark Campus, Malone University, the Massillon Woman’s Club, Stark Parks, Western Stark County YMCA, Paul and Carol David YMCA, Stark County District Libraries, Canal Fulton Library, Massillon Senior Center, Massillon Parks and Recreation, Massillon Boys and Girls Club, Canton Mayor’s Literacy Commission, Massillon Papa John’s, Massillon/North Canton Elks Lodge No. 2029, and the Stark County Educational Services Center. These partners engage community members ranging in age, ethnicity, and socioeconomic levels. Through these partnerships we are able to generate more ideas for programs, share staff to lead programs, and promote The Big Read to reluctant or lapsed readers who might not usually visit a library or museum but who are a patron of one of these other organizations.

b) Confirmed The Big Read Partners and activities:
- Soroptimist International of Canton/Stark County: lead a self-defense workshop; serve as book discussion leaders; distribute books to Domestic Violence Shelter, Inc.
- Hartville Migrant Ministry: promote Hispanic values and culture through educational programming; provide support for English as a Second Language programming and bilingual exhibition labels.
- The Artful Living Program: engage preschool audiences with Hispanic culture and butterfly-themed activities.
- Gary Harwood: assist with the mounting of a Studio M exhibition at the Museum to feature his photographs from the book Growing Season: The Life of a Migrant Community; will speak at the Museum’s lecture series about the process of making the book.

Pending The Big Read Partners and proposed activities:
- Partners Against Trafficking of Humans Stark County (PATHS).
- Massillon Woman’s Club: serve as book discussion and distribution site; offer educational programming about Massillon women’s history.
- Mirabal Museum: provide support for Museum exhibition on the Mirabal sisters.
- Domestic Violence Project, Inc. (DVPI): distribute books at Canton and Massillon shelters; host a book discussion facilitated by Soroptimist.
- Spring Hill Historic Home: offer educational programming to relate the historic home, as an Underground Railroad site, to the universal theme of overcoming adversity.
c. )Advanced middle school and high school students are the primary target audiences for The Big Read 2016. Schools will be given free copies of the book along with instructions on how to access the digital educational materials. Students will participate by reading the book, attending book discussions, exhibitions, and other educational programs about the book's themes. Outreach activities in the classroom led by Museum and partners are offered to teachers, along with field trips to Museum exhibitions and events at partner sites (with transportation costs subsidized by supplemental grant funds), and students are encouraged to bring their families to events. Preschool, elementary, early middle school students, and the Hispanic population in Stark County are the secondary audience for The Big Read 2016. These audiences will be engaged through Hispanic culture initiatives, Spanish language education, butterfly programs, and Alvarez's book, Before We Were Free.
The Big Read 2016 Ideas – *In the time of the Butterflies*

**Program Ideas**

- Program on Ethnic Women Authors
- Program on creative writing, perhaps geared towards women
- Create a Mural of the World Project [http://www.muraloftheworld.com/](http://www.muraloftheworld.com/) in the shape of a butterfly to be displayed somewhere in the community
- Show film version of *In the Time of the Butterflies* followed with a discussion of how the movie represents what is shown in the book, what the movie is able to do better, etc.
- Reading of *How the Butterflies Grew Their Wings* by Jacob Kushner, a fictionalized version of the story for children
- View documentary *Code Name: Butterflies*, which includes real footage of Dede Mirabal (maybe the Director would like to attend)
- Merengue dance lessons with Merengue band
- Food day with food inspired by the book/from the Dominican Republic
- Try to bring in Minou Tavarez Mirabal, daughter of Minerva Maríabal, for the Keynote Address
  - Twitter: [https://twitter.com/minoutavarezm](https://twitter.com/minoutavarezm)
  - Facebook: [https://www.facebook.com/minoutavarez](https://www.facebook.com/minoutavarez)
- Author, Julia Alvarez, would also be perfect for the Keynote Address
- Share some of Juan Pablo Neruda's work (Minerva read it often) in a book discussion and see how it influenced her
- View Pablo Picasso's work, which Minerva and Patria liked, and create a craft that can go along with it (Guernica comes to mind, which was layered newspaper)
- An obelisk that Trujillo established for himself is now covered in a mural of the sisters, we can make our own obelisks or murals commemorating important people in our city or lives if we want to make it super specific
- Discussion on the Code of Machismo, what Trujilo ruled and lived by
- The Museum could get some caterpillars and have "community butterflies" that will be released at the end of the month long program
- Book discussion on the evidence of Julia Alaverz' life that can be found throughout the book and what her personal experience may have added to the book
- The June 14th Movement was led by middle-class students, program/discussion on what other movements have been led/started by students

**Possible Partners**

- Soroptimist International (pending)
  - PO Box 2336
  - North Canton, OH  44720
  - sicanton.starkcounty@soroptimist.net
- Massillon Women's Club (pending)
  - 330-833-4896
210 4th Street Northeast
Massillon, OH 44646
mwc@ssnet.com

- Walsh University Museum Studies Program (pending)
  Dr. Katherine T. Brown
  Director of Museum Studies and Assistant Professor of Art History
  330-490-7509
  ktbrown@walsh.edu

- Mirabal Museum (pending)
  1 809-587-8530
  Open Tuesdays-Fridays 8:30-4:00pm our time (9:30-5:00 their time)

- Anti-Bullying Campaign of Stark County (pending)

- The Artful Living Program (pending)
  Massillon Museum
  330-833-4061
  121 Lincoln Way East
  Massillon, OH 44646
  Chris Craft
  Director, Artful Living Program
  mudsillz@aol.com

- Girls on the Run (pending)
  330-244-9331
  6093 Portage Street NW
  North Canton, Ohio 44720
  Charity Stewart
  Development Director
  Charity.Stewart@GOTRStarkCty.org

- Domestic Violence Project, Inc. (DVPI) (pending)
  330-833-8027
  876 Amherst Road Northeast
  Massillon, OH 44646
  Info@domesticviolenceproj.org

- Partners Against Trafficking of Humans – Stark (PATHS) – pending
  Path.Stark@yahoo.com
  Meetings every 1st Tuesday of the month
  McKinley Rehab Center Suite 1150
  800 Market Ave N
  Canton, OH 44702

- Spring Hill Historic Home – Connection with Underground Railroad – pending
  330-833-6749
  1401 Springhill Lane Northeast
  Massillon, OH 44646

- The Mariposa Cultural Foundation
  1 888 895 2035
1350 Beverly Road, Suite 213
McLean, Virginia 22101

- Cecilia Domeyko
  1-703-356 9427
  Director & Executive Producer of Codename: Butterflies
ceciliadomeyko@accentmediainc.com
  Cell/mobile: 1-703-855-1657

- Grupo Fuego – Latin/Merengue group based out of Cleveland
  Miguel Quiñones - MQ Productions
  216-832-6248
  P.O. Box 602758
  Cleveland, Ohio, 44102 USA
  grupo_fuego@yahoo.com

- Fred Astaire Franchised Dance Studios
  330-497-3237
  1107 South Main Street
  North Canton, OH 44720
  Canton@FredAstaire.com

- Joseph’s Ballroom Dancing
  330-845-0106
  joseph@josephsBallroomDancing.com

- Hartville Migrant Ministries
  330-877-2983
  P.O Box 682
  3980 Swamp Street
  Hartville, OH 44632
  hmcservicecoord@gmail.com

- Latino Business League, Inc.
  330-323-9990
  408 Ninth Street SW, Suite 2260
  Canton, OH 44707
  wilterperez@lblrinc.org

- Northeast Ohio Hispanic Chamber of Commerce
  246-281-4422
  2511 Clark Ave.
  Cleveland, OH 44109
  info@neohcc.org

- Coming Together Stark County (CTSC)
  330-454-5880
  Goodwill Community Campus
  408 Ninth Street SW
  Canton, OH 44707
  abarwick@comingtogetherstarkcounty.org
Publicity Ideas

- All programming is done bilingually
- Massillon Museum could host the November 25th International Day for the Elimination of Violence Against Women to raise awareness to the cause the The Big Read that’s coming up