

# LSU WRITING PROJECT

Summer Institute Anthology 2016



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## Introduction to the Anthology

Dr. Margaret-Mary Sulentic Dowell, LSUWP Director

Building a community in two short weeks requires mindfulness and intentionality. A cornerstone of the National Writing Project, the Invitational Summer Institute is intense professional work. As a starting point, Erin and Margaret-Mary selected a common text, Linda Christensen & Dyan Watson's 2015 *Rhythm and Resistance: Teaching Poetry for Social Justice* published by Rethinking Schools out of Milwaukee, Wisconsin.

Creating an Invitational Summer Institute around poetry was a bit of a gamble. But inspired by Rebecca Kaminski, the founding director of the Upstate Writing Project in the Eugene T. Moore School of Education at Clemson in South Carolina (yes, the other Tigers), who used poetry as the focus of Upstate's 2015 Invitational Summer Institute, they began planning for the 2016 Louisiana State University Writing Project's in January of 2016. As a team of two, Erin and Margaret-Mary forged a bond as they searched for common ground, pulled up their sleeves, and crafted an intense, rigorous Institute.

Around the *Rhythm and Resistance* text they sequenced a set of activities and opportunities designed to foster collaboration, nurture risk-taking, and promote writing as shared effective practice. Using *Poetry as a Demonstration Genre for Deeper Writing* as the Institute's theme, Erin and Margaret-Mary sought to emulate the National Writing Project's vision that educators play a vital role in leading sustained efforts to improve learning in schools and communities, encouraging the teacher-participants to study writing and learning, and work collaboratively with other educators. Erin and Margaret-Mary pushed participants to stretch themselves as learners, reinvent themselves as educators, and embrace a writerly life, drilling down to how that translates to students.

Erin and Margaret-Mary offer this poem to the 2016 Invitational Summer Institute participants.

### *Often on Our Minds and Forever in Our Hearts*

Bethany – Bold, Unflinching, Daring, and Feisty. You offered yourself freely, a sister in spirit.

Brittany – Inquisitive, Candid, Forthright, and Honest. Sharing your soul, a glimpse of glory.

Kasey – Open, Frank, Direct, and Forthright. Not a writer, you claimed, showing us otherwise.

Margaret – Sincere, Curious, Quiet, Cosmopolitan. Experiencing dissonance, teacher to scholar.

Monica – Calm, Observant, Authentic, and True. An honorable classmate, decent and kind.

Shannon – Truthful, Genuine, Wondering, Steadfast. A trustworthy teacher, a child's advocate.

Stacey – Dependable, Unexpected, Serious, Effervescent. Your passion overflowed, inspiring all.

As a site of the National Writing Project <http://www.nwp.org/>, the LSU Writing Project's 2016

Invitational Summer Institute was a triumph. In these pages you will find writing from Institute attendees. Enjoy these pieces and the individuals they represent.

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LSU Writing Project 2016 Cohort  
Shannon Loupe \*Margaret Piccoli \*Brittany Rainbolt  
Kasey Waller \*Stacey Elston \*Bethany Davis \*Monica Speligne

## Poetic Expressions

### Name Poem #2

Margaret-Mary Sulentic Dowell

From a family of double names,  
Tradition.  
Strong names, heavy with meaning and significance.  
Nicholas Joseph, both grandfathers.  
Robert Nicholas, Dad and Grand Dad.  
David Raymond, Biblical, oldest Uncle.

Others were prettier, more glamorous,  
Like older sisters Suzanne Marie and Jeanne Louise.

One day I asked, where did I get it?  
From Mary Margaret, my mother's reply  
But who is she, I asked?  
A distant grandmother,  
Never mentioned before my young question brought her to my life.

One I never knew.  
An immigrant,  
Slovenian,  
Gypsy,  
The first wife,  
Dead before her life began.

She called to me,  
I reached back,  
Becoming what she never could be.  
I turned it around,  
Margaret-Mary

**Antoni Gaudi**  
By Erin M. Casey

Antoni, Oh Antoni!  
How you make my head spin!  
You've been dead for 90 years,  
but I feel your presence alive and thriving  
in your beloved España.  
Your art is candy for my brain.



It is sad to read of your sickness as a child,  
but that pain in your joints  
slowed you down  
so that you could notice  
and remember  
and then re-create  
the nature and beauty around you.  
You captured the colors, curves, angles, and light  
in your buildings,  
and you made them grow like plants do.



When you arrived at architecture school,  
Barcelona then received a son  
who would draw the world to its center for generations to come.  
At your graduation the director pondered,  
“Who knows if we have given the title to a lunatic or a genius...  
only time will tell us.”



Flowers, windows, crosses, chimneys, furniture, mosaics...  
Lampposts, tiles, arcs, doors, walls, handles, suns and dragons....  
All fashioned after corncobs, honeycombs, snake spines, leaves, octopi,  
lizards...  
Who would have thought? Who would have believed?  
You thought,  
and you believed.  
Even when the elite gawked at your different style,  
you still won award after award  
and commission after commission.

In 1883,  
at age 31,  
in the midst of all the other projects  
you started your biggest endeavor.

You used your deep love for Our Lord and your passion for design to create  
La Sagrada Familia or the Sacred Family cathedral  
(now the second-most visited landmark in Europe).  
You dedicated 43 years of life to this construction  
even living in a small room within and then finally resting in its crypt.  
I saw your tomb down below,  
but I know you are above.  
Have you been watching as the building still progresses?  
Will you see its completion still 20 years more to come?

I truly hope so  
because I know that all your works,  
which create excitement and joy in my life,  
consumed yours.  
No wife, no children, your parents and brother died young.  
You neglected yourself so much that when a tram hit you at age 74,  
you were not rushed to the doctor  
because they thought you were a  
beggar.

Days later,  
thousands lined the street to say a final goodbye,  
but they could never forget you.  
Never.  
Not as long as eyes can see,  
and hearts can love,  
and minds can ponder  
the beauty you have left behind.



Antoni, Thank you.  
Moltes gràcies, Erin





## **“I was raised” Poem Commentary**

Margaret Piccoli

The “I was raised” poem is an extension to the “I am” poem. I like the “I am” poem because it is a wonderful springboard to deeper and more thoughtful poetry. In fact, the “I was raised” poems oblige children to think about specific events in their life that made them who they are today. They reflect on both the good and bad times, traditions, and routines that may not seem important, but have meaning and give them a sense of peace or unease. All of these moments are formative, which have led them to the person have become.

I enjoyed writing the “I was raised” poem because it is a small celebration of a routine event in my family. It’s a part of the day that holds all the people and things that are most important to me. The “I was raised” poem also provides children with time to reflect, so they are able to discover these moments that may have otherwise.



**“I was raised”**

By Margaret Piccoli

Dinnertime

Onions frying

Garlic

Celery

Carrots

Are the dishes done?

No, Erik

come here please

What was I doing?

Yes, I need to put the water on to boil.

Pasta

Spaghetti, penne, shells?

Is the table set yet?

Laura, you too!

You're needed!

Erik comes down like a herd of wild horses.

“Mom, what's for dinner?”

While looking in every pot

clanking tops and spoons

“Spaghetti. What sort of past would you like?”

“Shells, of course!”

Water's boiling

Erik's stirring, waiting, and tasting the pasta.

Laura eases in the kitchen,  
the conversation, and the cooking preparation.

She sets the table  
plates, glasses, napkins.

Now the conversation.

Never the same  
Always passionate and relevant.

"I read this..."

"Do you know who..."

"Where is..."

"We should go there too!"

The back door closes  
and we hear a loud,

"Ciao tutti!"

They respond with an even louder,

"Ciao Papá!"

We all sit down

Eating, arguing, discussing,  
debating, laughing, crying.

The meal is over.

It's time to pick up  
cleaning, washing, and a little more talking.

“Good dinner Mom,”

Erik says as he bounds

off to take a shower.

A kiss and a hug

with a sweet, “Good night.”

from my daughter.

It’s just me

and my husband now.

Peaceful

Slow

Sleepy

## **Two-voice Poem Commentary**

Margaret Piccoli

The two-voice poem is a wonderful way to develop voice and perspective in writing across disciplines. The two-voice poem allows students to research multiple points of view on a topic. Often students only do an exhaustive research from one perspective, which usually is one they already hold some preconceived idea of belief. If they are forced to look from conflicting points of view or just find other stories, it is possible they will change their minds or at least have a better understanding of the other perspective.

I believe that the two-voice poem can assist in nurturing empathy and even in inter-group relations. Children, like adults, become entrenched in their point-of-view, and would rather argue than recognize conflicting information. Furthermore, through poetry, it can be done efficiently instead of writing long essays trying to defend each point. Also, children should perform these poems. Students generally throw themselves into their creations and become the characters in the poems. One thing is to read a poem another is to be in the presence of the characters that come alive through performance.

## **What's Good on TV?**

By: Margaret Piccoli

When I watch TV, which isn't much,  
I like to see some light entertainment.

Nothing heavy, not even gory,

But happy, and a good story.

My favorite show, I know is silly

Is "Just Say Yes to the Dress."

It's nice to see almost everyone

Leave so full of hope and joy

Laura Jean

Another show, which is lots of fun,

Is "What Not to Wear," with Stacey and Clinton

They would find lovely people

But their wardrobes were unbelievable

Many just needed a bit more confidence

And with their new clothes, they were provided resplendence.

Finally, I love to sit with friends and family

And watch a good movie

Movies can capture a moment in time

And allow you to unleash your mind

For days I play the movie over in my head

My imagination ignited, but INSTEAD

My brother wants to watch the news  
It is his turn to choose.  
So, I'll catch up on current events  
No dresses or films, just a lot of malcontent

Erik

Every morning I wake  
To NPR's Steve Inskeep  
Of course, there are my dear friends  
On the news channel, CNN  
I don't stop there, or no! There's more  
The many news sources, you must explore  
I like the BBC's network of reporters  
They enter into all sorts of dangers  
When I watch the news from multiple sources  
The noise from all the discourses  
Makes my head spin  
So then, I need to rest much to my chagrin.  
A little mindless TV  
May be just what I need  
So, I'll just sit here quietly  
While my sister watches her movie

## Goldilocks: An Alternate Ending

By: Brittany Rainbolt

What if Goldilocks, snug in that bed  
Had the police called on her instead?

What if they asked her, “Why are you here?”  
“Why, officer,” she stammered, “my grandmother lives near.”

What if Goldi’s hair was brown  
Just like her skin?  
Then what kind of trouble might she be in?

What if the police officers pushed her out of bed?  
What if no matter how loud she answered,  
They couldn’t hear what was said?

What if “I’m sorry” and “my mistake,”  
Were met with kicks to the head?

Then would it be a story  
We read to kids before bed?





## Grilled Cheese

By Kasey Waller

Skillet sizzling with butter,  
Two slices of white,  
And a thick slice of American cheese,  
Is heaven in my sight.

Not long until the smell of home arrives,  
Bringing back my childhood,  
And the warm comfort after a long day,  
To help me relax like nothing else could.

That ooey-gooey cheese,  
Seeping out when grilled just right,  
And the crunch of the bread as I take a bite,  
Can make my day bright.

Always stay true,  
No tomatoes, bacon, or fancy cheeses,  
And don't forget the french fries,  
My stomach this pleases.

Grilled cheese I am counting on you.



## **Quercus virginiana**

S. Elston, 2016

Near 'bout 160 years ago  
Young Doc Laycock's plantation slaves Planted  
me and my brethren  
For beauty.  
Sugarcane was king back then,  
And they knew I would be as majestic as Their  
family ambitions.

But, Time, he always be achangin',  
And he did what he does.

The War came.  
The great house and lands were spared  
As they housed the wounded soldiers  
Don't ask me whose.  
I was too young to take notice.  
Just know that Abraham Lincoln was the Lawyer  
for the family.

But, Time, he always be achangin',  
And he did what he does.

What I thought was THE war  
Was just one war  
Now we didn't fight ourselves,  
We fought away overseas.  
Sorrowful goodbyes again under my growing  
boughs.  
My roots watered with the tears  
of those left behind  
My strong trunk the support of the women, at  
their most private.

But, Time, he always be achangin',  
And he did what he does.

The great house was sold, and me with it.  
Now I belonged to the Babins.  
And I sheltered the abandoned from yet another  
war,  
My roots watered afresh.  
As war will do, the women burgeoned as strong  
and thriving as me.

But, Time, he always be achangin',  
And he did what he does.

And since then, I was parceled out, one of my  
brethren for each new house.  
How many families has it been?  
At first, they were the lesser gentry  
Then the poor  
Now, the gentry again.

How dare you say you will name me?

I am *Quercus virginiana*,  
A southern live oak  
I am home to the woodpeckers, and blue jays,  
and squirrels  
I am mighty and majestic  
And in 1500 years, whatever you have called me  
will not matter.

**Name Sake**  
By Bethany Davis

For Christ's name sake  
We were created in His image

For His name sake  
This first-born baby was called to be His church

This beautiful Black object of love personified  
Forever burdened with the weight of The Word since creation

Running  
Running  
Running from the prophecy of my name sake because  
Housing The Lord requires too much submission for my youth

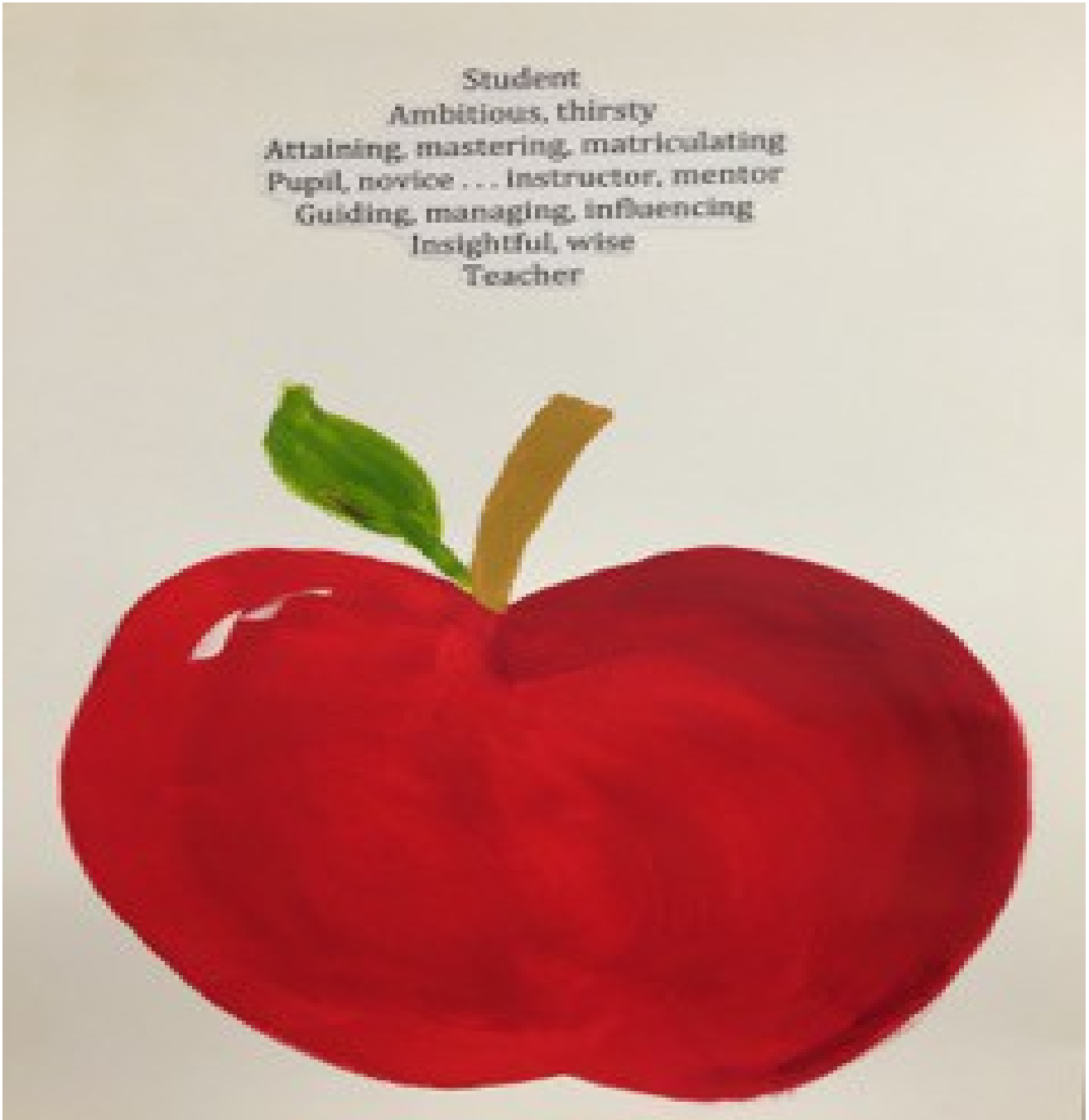
Calling  
Tugging  
Pulling me back in the days of old age in a strong and loving embrace  
I am His beloved and have been set apart for  
His namesake

Willing  
Yielding  
Surrendering completely so that He who was, and is, and is to come  
Can peacefully abide within

For His namesake.

**Diamante Poem**  
By Shannon Loupe

Student  
Ambitious, thirsty  
Attaining, mastering, matriculating  
Pupil, novice . . . Instructor, mentor  
Guiding, managing, influencing  
Insightful, wise  
Teacher



Student  
Ambitious, thirsty  
Attaining, mastering, matriculating  
Pupil, novice...Instructor, mentor  
Guiding, managing, influencing  
Insightful, wise  
Teacher.

**Where I'm From**  
By Monica Speligne

I am from Sunday dinners at Grandma's  
Cousins playing Cowboys and Indians  
Aunts cooking, stuffing crawfish heads  
Crawfish etouffee  
Cochon de lait  
Washing dishes at midnight.

I am from "yes ma'am" and "yes sir"  
"I'll get that for you"  
"Please" and "Thank You"  
Give a firm handshake  
Chivalry's not dead  
"You know better than that."

I am from church on Sundays  
Prayers at night  
Rosaries together  
"Can I be an altar server, too?"  
"But that's not fair, girls can do whatever boys can do!"  
"Jesus would say it's ok."

I am from neighborhood ball games  
Swimming in the bayou  
Swinging on vines  
Picnicking under the old oak trees  
Picking blueberries for dessert  
And running home for supper when the sun goes down.

I am from Conway Twitty and Loretta Lynn  
Charlie Pride's "Kiss an Angel Good Morning"  
Elvis Presley's "Blue Suede Shoes"  
John Denver's "Rocky Mountain High"  
And singing amidst the laughter "Lord It's hard to be humble"  
With Daddy at night.

I am from all these moments  
Fading in the blistering sun  
Brought back again  
To bloom and grow  
In life's most treasured gifts.

**I Forgive You**  
By Courtney Brown

Brokenness now mended  
Scattered and shattered now healed and whole  
I forgive you  
For not having the capacity to give me what I needed  
Although my expectation was perpetually childlike  
Through every time you disappointed me  
Even when I modeled the behavior for you  
I showed, not told you how I wanted to be loved  
Yet you still chose to love me from your perspective  
Yours which was tainted with pretense and superficiality  
I forgive you for not choosing me, for toying with me, for betting that you could steal my heart  
and then manipulating circumstances to create a false love  
I forgive you  
For choosing others over me, for always thinking the grass was greener because I was too stable  
for your urgent needs for constant change  
I forgive you for using my love against me and for using me to supply you with wisdom in your  
new conquests because you struggled to manage your own changes without me  
I forgive you for trying to use my love to obligate me to be in situations which were  
uncomfortable to me with no regard for me, with no consideration for my broken heart  
With no compassion for my despair with no support to comfort my weeping eyes  
I forgive you  
For I know that you had not the capacity to give me what I deserved  
Brokenness now mended  
Scattered and shattered no more  
I forgive to be healed  
I forgive to be whole