

# GIFTED EDUCATION PRESS

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## NEWSLETTER VOLUME FOUR, NUMBER THREE JULY-SEPTEMBER 1990

We have included Dr. Paul Brandwein's letter as the lead article in this issue of our newsletter because it discusses an important approach to determining giftedness -- assessing potential through performance. This letter was written in response to our description of his 1988 book, Gifted Young in Science: Potential Through Performance by Brandwein and Passow, Editors (reviewed in GEPN, January-March 1990). We urge you to compare Brandwein's views on identifying those who are potentially gifted in the humanities, arts, and sciences with Yossel Naiman's discussion of giftedness (GEPN, April-June 1990). In Naiman's interview, he said that "...There's no such thing as gifted children. There are intelligent children who come into confluence with profound experiences, and there are intelligent who do not have these experiences." Both authors have the same goal of developing the student's potential to the highest possible level of achievement and performance. But it appears that their means of accomplishing this goal are somewhat different.

It should be emphasized that Dr. Brandwein's work in curriculum theory and development has been concerned with both the humanities and sciences. Although his letter is in regard to his latest book on science education, we would like to remind our readers that his other books, A Permanent Human Agenda: The Humanities (Ventura, CA: N/S-LTI-G/T, 1983) and Memorandum: On Renewing Schooling and Education (New York: Harcourt Brace Jovanovich, 1981), present Brandwein's concepts in all areas relevant to a differential curriculum.

The second article in this issue discusses a new history journal for high school students. Will Fitzhugh, the Editor/Publisher and a former history teacher, presents a strong argument for encouraging gifted students to study and write about history. We strongly recommend that all differential humanities/history programs for the gifted subscribe to The Concord Review.

As an additional enticement to encourage students and teachers to study great historical personages, we have included the Introduction to Michael Walters' latest book, Teaching Shakespeare To Gifted Students, Grades Six Through Twelve: An Examination Of The Sensibility Of Genius (Manassas, VA: Gifted Education Press, 1990). Congratulations are also due to another one of our authors, Bill Smyth, who is one of eighteen teachers selected from across the nation to receive a Fulbright summer scholarship for study in the Netherlands. Bill will participate in a month long seminar there in July on the history, culture, and society of this nation. His book is entitled, If You Took The Grand Tour: Traveling To Europe In The Eighteen-Fifties and Nineteen Nineties (1989). Please write us for more information about both of these books.

May you have a wonderful summer, and we look forward to continuing our dialogue with you in the fall of 1990 concerning how to improve the education of gifted students!

MAURICE D. FISHER, PUBLISHER

PUBLISHER OF BOOKS ON DIFFERENTIAL EDUCATION FOR THE GIFTED

IDENTIFYING GIFTEDNESS AND ACADEMIC ABILITY THROUGH PERFORMANCE:  
LETTER FROM DR. PAUL BRANDWEIN, UNIONVILLE, NEW YORK

Dear Dr. Fisher --

Let me thank you for your kind note. I was pleased -- and so were my co-editors -- that you found Gifted Young in Science: Potential Through Performance (1988) useful. Indeed, I believe the forty authors who joined us in the effort have added to the knowledge in the field. I send you a copy inscribed to you -- and also a copy of a progenitor written some 30 years ago (The Gifted Student As Future Scientist, 1955 & 1981). I ask, if I may, the privilege of several comments -- for the heuristic by-product of the book may serve the general field of the study of giftedness.

True, both books seem to be about science and the work of the gifted young who may, and do, become scientists -- but actually, in process, reflect the strategy of the scientist I learned early in my work as a research scientist. As you know, in seeking an explanation of a phenomenon that embraces a superarching concept, the scientist elects to probe a sample of the universe of the concept in an attempt to understand a generality of its behavior -- if that is possible. In the late 1940's and 1950's I was dissatisfied with the tests of creativity then existing. (I still am with the present ones.) My colleagues and I at Forest Hills High School (New York) undertook to develop a mode of self-selection and self-identification that encouraged those young students who were persuaded that they might become scientists to taste the work of the scientist: a try at the work of the scientist in a bit of experimental work (pp. 73 and 273 of the 1988 book). So it was that they discovered their potential through performance and the correlative study needed, to perform an experiment with some degree of elegance.

In a word, they choose themselves in free and equal access to an opportunity that may differentiate them from others in a field-specific area; this possibly, to help them decide on a vocation, or even a life work.

Thus, the title of the book, Gifted Young in Science: Potential Through Performance, reflects a strategy of encouraging the young to find a life-work through self-identification of their potential by the mirror of a performance (an originative work) which is recognizably scientific. Curiously, we found it possible to give all the young access to equal opportunity to test themselves in differentiated works, and so discover an idiosyncratic road to their own worthwhileness, i.e., they could turn to less demanding work after a trial in the program,



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DISCUSSION OF 'THE CONCORD REVIEW': A QUARTERLY REVIEW OF ESSAYS BY  
STUDENTS OF HISTORY  
BY WILL FITZHUGH, EDITOR AND PUBLISHER, CONCORD, MA

We pay more attention to those students who are gifted in Mathematics and Science than we do to those who incline to History. While we do need more engineers and scientists to compete economically with Germany and Japan, we also need mayors, judges, social planners, senators, ambassadors, and historians. We need people with a vision, informed by the knowledge of History, of the way of life we should be working towards as a society. Dr. Lynne V. Cheney, Chairman of the National Endowment for the Humanities, said in her September, 1987 report, American Memory: A Report on the Humanities in the Nation's Public Schools that, "An educational system that devalues knowledge of the past produces students who do not firmly grasp the facts of history....In our schools today we run the danger of unwittingly proscribing our own heritage." (pp. 6-7) While History teachers well understand the difficulties of arguing the case for knowledge of the past, they also, from time to time, have the wonderful experience of an encounter with a gifted student who is willing to read, think and write well about History. The work of these students can inspire other students to make more effort to experience the rewards that History can offer. It was in part the exemplary work of students like these that led to the founding of The Concord Review.

This quarterly journal was started in March, 1987 to provide a place where the best students of History in the English-speaking world could have their work published for their peers across the United States and in Australia, Canada, and England. The goal was to demonstrate that there are fine papers being done which can not only serve to help educate other students about History, through their use as readings in classes, but that can be used as examples of good writing for others to study.

During 1987-88, a call for papers went to more than 17,000 high schools in the United States, 3,500 in Canada, and 2,500 in English-speaking countries overseas. The second academic year, 1988-89, saw the publication of the first volume of four quarterly issues with eleven essays in each, from Alberta, California, Connecticut, Illinois, Maryland, Massachusetts, Nebraska, New Jersey, New Mexico, New York, Ohio, Ontario, Queensland, Rhode Island, South Australia, South Carolina, Surrey, Tangier, Tasmania, and Washington, D.C. The Fall 1989 issue includes an essay by one of the three winners in the Senior Division of National History Day 1989. The Winter issue includes an essay from a Senior majoring in History at Berkeley, one from a 1989 National Endowment for the Humanities Younger Scholar who is now at

Harvard, one from a winner of the Junior Division of National History Day 1989, and one from a student now in his first year at St. Catherine's College, Oxford, among others.

A number of scholars and leading educators have been enthusiastic about these first issues. Dr. Chester E. Finn, Jr., Assistant Secretary of Education from 1985-88 and co-author of What Do Our 17-Year-Olds Know? (1987), has said that, "The Concord Review is the kind of evidence we have needed that the revitalization of History in the schools is no pipe dream. Here you see what young men and women can achieve when they embark on the serious study of History...." Dr. Theodore Sizer, Chairman of the Education Department at Brown University, and author of Horace's Compromise (1985), said: "The Concord Review is, for the History-inclined high school student...a testing ground, and one of elegant style, taste and standards." Stephen Graubard, Editor of DAEDALUS, the Journal of the American Academy of Arts and Sciences, said, "In publishing the work of young students, who are fired by its possibilities, the Review makes a contribution of no mean order." Professor Diane Ravitch of Teachers College, Columbia University, said, "The Concord Review provides a splendid forum for the best student work in history. It deserves the support of everyone who cares about improving the study of history in the schools." In addition, teachers have both predicted and reported its usefulness in the classroom including Dr. Robert Blew of Sylmar High School in Sylmar, California, Broeck N. Oder, Head of History at the Santa Catalina School in Monterey, California, Ralph Nordlund, Head of History at Porter-Gaud School in Charleston, South Carolina, and Dr. Marjorie Bingham, a member of the Bradley Commission.

The essay topics are quite varied. There are papers on Glasnost, the War of 1812, the Harlem Renaissance, the Triangle Fire, Benjamin Franklin, Japanese Internment, the Tokyo War Crimes Trials, Marbury v. Madison, the Dartmouth College Case, Nationalism in South Africa, Woman Suffrage, the Elgin Marbles, the Spanish Civil War, the Cuban Missile Crisis, Dr. Sun Yat-sen, the Duma Monarchy, and Alexander the Great, to name a few. But what about their quality?

A few quotations will help to answer this question. Here is an excerpt from an essay on William Lloyd Garrison, by Josiah Brown, who is now in his second year at Yale: (endnotes omitted)

"...very few Americans spoke out against slavery until the 1850s. The great majority of northerners felt compelled to keep quiet about the issue; it was believed that in the interest of sectional harmony, it was best to let the South have its slaves. Economic factors were partly

responsible, for the northern manufacturers needed the southern markets, and the northern merchants wanted the cotton and tobacco that the South produced. The term 'conspiracy of silence' has been widely used to describe the situation because people were afraid that any discussion of the slavery question would disturb the already precarious North-South relations. So most northerners ignored slavery throughout the first half of the nineteenth century and tried to quiet the few abolitionists who protested the institution. Garrison was successful because he played on the nervousness, doubts, the humanity of the northerners; he saw their underlying dissatisfaction with the existence of slavery that they tried to deny themselves, and through his agitation, he aroused their consciences and brought this dissatisfaction out into the open.

"The apathetic Americans of the 1830s and 1840s complained that Garrison was 'disturbing the situation with his abuse of anyone not firmly antislavery; his strong language made him controversial and turned people against the abolition movement.' Garrison was undaunted: 'Opposition and abuse and slander and prejudice and judicial tyranny add to the flame of my zeal...I am in earnest -- I will not equivocate -- I will not excuse -- I will not retreat a single inch -- and I will be heard. The apathy of the people is enough to make every statue leap from its pedestal....' Many historians (Barnes being among the most prominent among them) have used this attention that Garrison brought himself as evidence for their belief that Garrison's role in abolitionism was merely symbolic and that he actually damaged the cause. It is easy to take this view if one looks only at the early reaction to Garrison; to comprehend his great impact on northerners, one must see the relation between public opinion of Garrison in the 1830s and that of the 1850s and 1860s. When he said such things as, 'I am sick of our unmeaning declamation of praise of liberty and equality; of our hypocritical cant about the unalienable rights of man,' he stirred up the people. As James Ford Rhodes wrote, 'It is mainly through Garrison and his associates that slavery became a topic of discussion at every Northern fireside.'"

Again and again, the best essays by these secondary students show reading, research, and good writing, but also compassion, concern, high standards for themselves and others in thought and in conduct, the belief that forming sound views is essential to a good and a virtuous society, and the assumption that a knowledge of History can help. There is youthful indignation at times, but there is also admiration and curiosity, and overall, the faith that effort can make a difference. Here is an essay on the Triangle fire by Hadley Davis who is in her first year at the University of Pennsylvania: (the 80 endnotes include 12 references to several chapters of the Laws of New York of 1911- 1913)

"The first step towards this bureau was a twenty-five member committee to improve safety in working places which was established immediately after the Met meeting. Its members included respected New Yorkers Anne Morgan, Frances Perkins, and Henry L. Stimson. The nine-member commission, chaired by state senators Robert W. Wagner and Alfred E. Smith, would from 1911 to 1919 serve not only as a bureau of fire prevention -- investigating fire safety in factories and eventually getting legislation passed which would prevent fire-related disasters in the future -- but also as a bureau on the other kinds of factory safety -- concerned with the health and welfare of workers in general. 'It was the aim of the commission to devote itself to a consideration of measures that had for their purpose the conservation of human life.'

"The Commission took its job seriously. Within the first year of its work alone, it inspected 1,836 industrial establishments in New York and heard a total of 222 witnesses. Throughout this process, it held hearings before the New York legislature and proposed new laws or amendments. The legislature in turn enacted remedial legislation. The four-year term of the commission is, in fact, commonly acknowledged as 'the golden era in remedial factory legislation.' The labor laws passed between 1911 and 1919 correspond to the Commission's findings -- when the Commission discovered a problem, a change ensued.

"The Commission was told of Triangle: 'There is no question that the emergency exits from the building were foolishly inadequate.' Fire Marshall Beers added, 'I can show you 150 loft buildings far worse than this one.' At least 14 industrial buildings in New York City were found with no fire escapes at all. Further, in the Triangle fire, the crowding on floors contributed to the number of lives lost. According to Fire Chief Crocker, 'The overcrowding of these loft buildings is a menace to life....' Eventually, a series of corrective acts was passed. These laws specified that in factories there must be two exits per floor, one of these a staircase and another an interior or exterior enclosed fire escape. If the area of the floor exceeded 5,000 square feet, an extra exit was required (and for every additional 5,000 square feet beyond this number, another exit was ordered), and if the building's height was over 100 feet, there had to be at least one exterior enclosed fire escape accessible from every point in the building. The legislation also stated that all stairways must be fireproof (concrete or brick) and all fire escapes iron or steel, and if enclosed, enclosed by fireproof walls. Just as vital was the part of the act which limited the number of occupants per floor. As a result of the law, the number of workers allowed to work in factories was limited according to the number able to escape from the building."

The point concerning the excellent writing of these students could also be reinforced with examples from the other 64 essays published in the first six issues, but space is limited. The first forty-four are available on microfiche through ERIC/ChESS. Suffice it to say that these authors, 37 women and 29 men, who are now at Berkeley, Brown, Columbia, Duke, Harvard, Melbourne, Oxford, Princeton, Stanford, Wesleyan, Yale, and so on, demonstrate again and again that their work is worth both recognizing and reading. Their topics range over the centuries and over the world. They went to a variety of independent and public schools both here and abroad. But these authors share the belief that good History essays are worth doing, and they have enjoyed the encouragement and support of good teachers in setting and meeting high standards for their work.

Please send your students' best essays on any historical topic, about 4,000 words, with endnotes, to The Concord Review, Post Office Box 661, Concord, MA 01742. Subscriptions are \$25 a year, \$30 foreign, and class sets of 26 or more receive a 20% discount. Prepaid orders should be mailed to the subscription service: The Concord Review Business Office, Box 476, Canton, MA 02021. We are listed with the major subscription services.

History is precedent and we cannot afford to ignore it in considering how to meet current and future problems. We need to encourage those gifted students who prefer History by showing that there is respect for what they are doing. Americans are no longer convinced, with Henry Ford, that "History is bunk." and we have begun to appreciate the value of History more as our position in the world has become less certain. We see that the next generation must know and use History well in its deliberations and decisions. By recognizing and distributing the work that is now being done by our finest History students, we will set examples for others. As excellent performances by young people in the Olympics and in the Westinghouse Science Talent Search inspire other students to work harder, the fine essays published each quarter in The Concord Review may be read with interest and profit in every high school History class in the country, where they will motivate students to learn more about History and to make an effort to write about it well.>>

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"A spectre is haunting eastern Europe: The spectre of what in the West is called 'dissent.' This spectre has not appeared out of thin air. It is a natural and inevitable consequence of the present historical phase of the system it is haunting." Vaclav Havel, Living in Truth, 1986



INTRODUCTION FROM 'TEACHING SHAKESPEARE TO GIFTED STUDENTS, GRADES  
SIX THROUGH TWELVE: AN EXAMINATION OF THE SENSIBILITY OF GENIUS'  
BY MICHAEL E. WALTERS, NEW YORK CITY PUBLIC SCHOOLS  
(PUBLISHED BY GIFTED EDUCATION PRESS, (C) 1990 BY M. WALTERS)

"In the writing of other poets, a character is often an individual, in those of Shakespeare it is commonly a species."

"Shakespeare has no heroes; scenes are occupied only by men, who act and speak as the reader thinks that he should himself have spoken or acted on the same occasion....Shakespeare approximates the remote, and familiarizes the wonderful."

Both quotes from Samuel Johnson, The Preface To Shakespeare, 1765

To understand giftedness we must study the creative works of individuals such as William Shakespeare. This book will discuss various elements of Shakespeare's work to illustrate the principle that he is an exemplary model for the concept of giftedness. The word "genius" is also used to describe Shakespeare's accomplishments. It is related to the Latin word "genus," referring to a unique type, an original form, a special characteristic. This is the focus of giftedness, the state of being unique, but it is a uniqueness with charismatic power.

Another unique characteristic of the gifted individual, as illustrated in Shakespeare's life and work, is that cognitive and affective characteristics are perfectly blended together into a unified whole. This symbiosis is expressed in the gifted person through advanced levels of sensibility, and Shakespeare's giftedness is aptly and profoundly expressed by his artistic sensibility. The above quotes from Samuel Johnson's book are very instructive because he was an early adherent of Shakespeare's special artistic greatness. In the first quote, Johnson expressed the special sensibility of Shakespeare by stating that his varied and unique characters represent different facets of the human species rather than individuals. The second quote by Johnson illustrates three important components of Shakespeare's sensibility. First, there are no real villains or heroes in Shakespeare, only human beings expressing themselves in the simultaneous contexts of history and the universal human condition. Second, no matter what each individual reader feels about a specific character, Shakespeare requires you to see that character as if you were in his situation. And third (the last part of this quote is a truly remarkable insight into the uniqueness of Shakespeare's sensibility and giftedness), he had a unique ability to place his reader into the context of a particular time and place, and yet he gave that historic moment a human universality. He indeed makes the remote appear urgent and relevant to each reader,

and he crystallizes the moment of wonderment in his plays with events that can be related to the individual's personal experiences.

A statement about the Deconstructionist method of literary criticism is necessary here because it may influence the future of the Shakespeare curriculum in our public schools. This method is really a critique of giftedness because it denies the importance of an essential human characteristic -- personal sensibility, and the special role it plays in giftedness. The Deconstructionist creates an unnecessary division between the author and his audience which resembles an "I-It" dichotomy (Buber, 1970). However, the gifted student's interactions with other people and his environment resemble the sensibility of Shakespeare's "I-Thou" (Buber, 1970) relationships. The I-Thou in contrast to the I-It (detached state-of-mind) represents the ability to achieve positive human interactions and understanding. In contrast, the I-It of Deconstructionism is sterile, reductionist, and a monologue of academic jargon.

The sensibility of giftedness derives from personal commitment, human engagement, and an I-Thou dialogue between the author and the reader. For gifted students, the plays of Shakespeare are not merely an academic exercise, but a powerful emotional experience which produce a myriad of cognitive insights. This book will demonstrate how his plays are an I-Thou encounter rooted in the sensibility of giftedness.

#### Characteristics of the Gifted Shakespeare Curriculum.

Relation to Bloom's Cognitive Levels. The highest levels of Bloom's Taxonomy are emphasized in this type of curriculum -- Analysis, Synthesis, and Evaluation. These three levels of teaching and learning are the hallmark of the gifted student's sensibility, and Shakespeare's plays concentrate upon the analysis of character and plot into detailed elements, the synthesis of scenes and characters' behavior into a meaningful gestalt, and the evaluation of motives and actions. One can only understand Shakespeare if one has developed a sensibility at these higher levels of reasoning and judgment. It is only through teaching about gifted individuals such as Shakespeare that the teacher can respond to this unique learning sensibility of the gifted student. The chapters that follow will demonstrate that Shakespeare's insights are forged upon the anvil of Analysis, Synthesis, and Evaluation.

Relation to Maslow's Self-Actualization Theory(1970). The psychologist, Abraham Maslow, described the human personality as being a hierarchy of personal needs with the lowest level oriented towards physical survival and sensate pleasure. In contrast, the highest personal needs are concerned with discovering meaning and relevancy in

life, and ultimately attaining self-actualization. His examples of self-actualized persons are Lincoln, Gandhi, and Eleanor Roosevelt. This author (Walters) maintains that the life-goal of those with the sensibility of giftedness is to seek this higher state of being described by Maslow. Shakespeare achieved the "drama" of self-actualization through his work as a playwright. Therefore, the information presented in the following chapters will help the gifted student to learn about the characteristics of an individual who reached the highest level of personal development.

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There has been much contemporary prattle and debate about the so-called "canon," a list of the classics of Western literature which all students should read during their college years. The current argument against the canon is that it is a cultural instrument of political oppression used against women and minorities. The corollary argument is that Shakespeare's preeminence is due to his being canonized, rather than to his innate genius or appeal to individuals from many different ethnic groups and social classes. This book will emphasize that the greatness of Shakespeare is in fact closely related to his genius and sensibility of giftedness. This sensibility touches the hearts and intellects of those who share his interest in understanding the twists and turns of human motives and life. Two examples from this author's own personal experiences that illustrate this point of view are:

I was in a delicatessen in the Bronx, New York reading one of Shakespeare's plays while I was eating. An elderly waitress who was originally from a working class family in Belfast, Ireland noticed what I was reading and started quoting famous lines from Shakespeare. Another waitress, who was a white, middle-aged person from North Carolina, joined in this "recitation" with her own favorite lines from the Bard. Soon, the entire deli became involved in a Shakespeare "festival," e.g., the owner quoted from Julius Caesar, which he first heard in Yiddish.

The second example was at a house party sponsored by the alumni of West Virginia State College, which was originally an all-Black college. As I was describing my interest in Shakespeare, one of the alumni related how, as a child in Harlem, he was emotionally inspired by Sir Laurence Olivier's speech to his troops in Henry V.

The point of these anecdotes is that Shakespeare's work "seizes the day" and appeals intensely to all of mankind.>>

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"The striking feature of Shakespeare's mind was its generic quality, its power of communication with all other minds, -- so that it contained a universe of thought and feeling within itself, and had no one particular bias, or exclusive excellence more than another. He was just like any other man, but that he was like all other men. He was the least of an egotist that it was possible to be. He was nothing in himself, but he was all that others were, or that they could become."

William Hazlitt, On Shakespeare and Milton

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#### RECOMMENDED BOOKS FOR SUMMER READING

Gifted Learners, K-12: A Practical Guide To Effective Curriculum And Teaching by Kenneth R. Chuska (1989, National Educational Service; 1821 W. Third Street, Suite 201; Bloomington, IN 47402).

The author is a highly experienced teacher and administrator of programs for the gifted, and President of the Pennsylvania Association for Gifted Education. His book discusses thirty-three curriculum strategies such as "permitting early admission," "creating a school within a school," and "permitting gifted learners to submit proposals to supplant requirements." Each strategy includes sections on the Characteristics Served, How To Do It, and What It Accomplishes. Part II of the book combines these curriculum strategies with relevant teaching strategies in fifteen different subject areas. The author makes an interesting distinction between the gifted student and the gifted learner which is closely related to the articles by Paul Brandwein in this issue and Yossel Naiman in the previous issue of the GIFTED EDUCATION PRESS NEWSLETTER.>>

20th Century Journey: A Native's Return, 1945-88 -- A Memoir Of A Life And The Times by William L. Shirer (1990, Boston: Little, Brown and Company).

This is the third autobiographical volume of a highly courageous, pioneering radio journalist. Shirer describes his hair raising experiences as a reporter for CBS radio while in Nazi Germany prior to World War II, in England during the war, and back in Germany afterwards to cover the Nuremberg Trials. But what is even more interesting on a personal level was the reception he received from CBS when he returned home. He was blacklisted by CBS, etc. for little reason except that his name appeared in a redbating periodical called Red Channels. After being unemployed during the McCarthy period and beyond, he achieved some degree of vindication with the publication of his brilliant history of Nazi Germany, The Rise and Fall of the Third Reich (1960). At 86 years, Shirer represents the spirit of giftedness -- persistence, vision, and the determination to achieve under severe adversity.>>\*\*\*\*