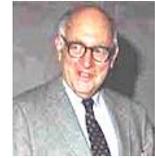


# GIFTED EDUCATION PRESS QUARTERLY

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Because of the current national emphasis on educating students in STEM subjects, Harry T. Roman (one of my authors) wrote a book on this topic – *STEM Education for Gifted Students* (2011). Harry is a retired engineer who has written numerous books and articles on technology education, and he also teaches courses for the Edison Innovation Foundation in New Jersey. Based on the enthusiastic responses of educators in school districts across the nation, I recently published Harry's second STEM book, *STEM Robotics in the Gifted Classroom: Meet ROBO-MAN!* It is particularly useful for gifted students involved in robotics competitions. Billions of dollars in federal, state, corporate, and foundation funds are being targeted for designing STEM teacher training and student education programs at all educational levels. What should gifted program leaders do to obtain a share of these funds? What percentage of gifted students would benefit from participating in STEM programs? Since the Javits Grant Program is in limbo, how can gifted and STEM experts work together to obtain funding? I welcome your responses to these questions.

In our 25<sup>th</sup> year of publishing *GEPQ*, the current issue includes an informative article by Joan Smutny on educating Gifted English Language Learners (ELL) that has many excellent ideas for teaching these children in the regular classroom. Joan has been responsible for providing high quality gifted programs to thousands of children in the Chicago Metropolitan Area. She has also written many creative and practical books on such topics as teaching advanced students in the regular classroom, differentiated instruction for the gifted, educating the young gifted child, and parent advocacy for improving the education of the gifted. Through her extensive writing and educational programs, Joan has helped the gifted field to make significant progress. Her enthusiasm in addressing difficult issues is particularly refreshing.

Hanna David is an educational psychologist and professor from Israel. Her article on the importance of ethics in identifying and educating gifted children is unique because their ethical treatment has been rarely discussed in the academic literature. She considers all major issues related to this topic – testing procedures and interpretation, child development processes, parental concerns, teacher attitudes, and bureaucratic directives. Hanna has written many articles for *GEPQ*, but the one of particular interest to teachers and parents was concerned with educating twice-exceptional students (Summer 2011 issue).

Jerry Flack's in-depth knowledge of children's literature is clearly reflected in Part 1 of his interesting discussion: biographies for gifted readers including women astronauts, inventors, scientists, historical figures, explorers, athletes and heroes. These stories are fascinating and enjoyable to read. Jerry is a national treasure in the gifted field because he has the rare ability to synthesize information from many sources into meaningful reading experiences for teachers, parents and gifted students. I look forward to publishing more high level articles by him in the future.

Since *GEPQ* was first published in 1987, subscribers have been reading Michael Walters' essays on the humanities. He has written about famous authors, poets, artists, playwrights, musicians and historical figures. One of his favorite topics is Charles Dickens who was born 200 years ago in 1812. As a tribute to this great author, Mike discusses some reasons gifted students should read Dickens' books. For the last thirty years, he has emphasized the importance of including authors such as Shakespeare and Dickens in the gifted curriculum.

**Maurice D. Fisher, Ph.D., Publisher**

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## Teaching Gifted English Language Learners: Tools for the Regular Classroom

Joan Franklin Smutny  
The Center for Gifted Glenview, Illinois

All students thrive in classrooms where they have something new to learn and do. We know this has happened when we see children so absorbed they can't possibly stop. At some point, we have to pry them away because of the pressures of scheduling and curriculum goals. Nevertheless, it is a magical moment in teaching when students form a relationship with an idea or subject, making it their own. Helping students create this relationship should be a primary goal in teaching, particularly for gifted ELLs. Culture and language are so fundamental to the way children learn. They do not function as vehicles for thinking and communication; they *mediate* thinking (Vygotsky, 1962).

One of the first things to address is the learning environment, not just the space itself, but the atmosphere in the room, the feeling of care and cooperation, the resources, the learning adventures, and so on. A great deal of attention is paid to academic needs and skills, and rightly so. But meaningful engagement is the flame that lights the fire. Without it, children go through the motions, lose interest, and stop believing that school has anything to do with what they love or want to learn. Gifted ELLs feel this even more tangibly because they have had to navigate a cultural and language different from their own.

### A Prepared Space

A prepared classroom enables teachers to offer gifted ELLs more academic and creative choices that embrace their culture. These may include visual displays, supplies, and other resources from cultural institutes (e.g., the Mexican Arts Museum in Chicago), celebrations, art traditions, cuisine, and so forth. Students can become part of this process by sharing their stories, talents, and interests throughout the year so that the classroom becomes their learning space. Educator-anthropologist Luis Moll showed the value of this when he coined the term "funds of knowledge" (1992), a term that has helped teachers focus on the hidden strengths (knowledge, skills, abilities) of bilingual communities as guides for their education. He conducted an extensive ethnographic study of the Mexican-American communities in the barrio schools of Tucson (North Central Regional Educational Laboratory, 1994). Many had entrepreneurial skills and knew specific information about archeology, biology, and mathematics. Expertise in cultivation, animal husbandry, ranch management, mechanics, carpentry, masonry, and electrical wiring, for instance, meant that students came to school with special areas of knowledge and skill. In rural and urban areas, children bring cultural art practices, stories, family histories, social values, and cooking experiences.

#### An Engaging Classroom for Advanced ELLs

- How can you help all ELLs feel accepted in the community of learners?
- How can neighborhoods in your district provide human and material resources that help ELLs connect to learning and use their talents?
- In what ways can you bring more of your students' interests and cultural gifts to the classroom (e.g., art works, inventions, poems, raps, crafts, cultural traditions, photographs of great moments, humorous stories)?
- Do the materials reflect the interests and learning styles of advanced ELLs as well as the other students?
- Are they consistent with the students' advanced developmental level, experience, and knowledge?
- Do they inspire curiosity and a sense of wonder?
- Do class activities stimulate higher-level thinking in different subjects?

- Do they allow a variety of learning styles and embrace different “intelligences” that accommodate those with language barriers?
- Are there bilingual professionals (artists, scientists, engineers, entrepreneurs) willing to share their experience, skills, and knowledge?
- Have you explored mentoring options for exceptional ELLs who want to pursue special interests? Do you keep an eye out for learning opportunities, competitions (online as well as local) and scholarships?
- Do you have strategies for encouraging positive peer relationships and collaborations in ways that are comfortable with English language learners?

Regardless of their level of ability or proficiency, English language learners thrive in classrooms that draw on the cultural and linguistic sources of these students. Teachers need not devote a lot of time to accommodate gifted ELLs. Rather, making small adjustments to the lessons they’ve already planned is often sufficient.

### **Teaching Tools for Reaching Gifted ELLs**

The following pages describe a “toolbox of strategies” teachers can use in different settings that will assist Hispanic English language learners, including advanced students (adapted from Smutny, Haydon, Bolanos, & Danley, 2012). Not all fit the unique character of the school or work well in the community of learners in a classroom. Their value also depends on their workability for teachers who are already juggling many instructional and administrative responsibilities.

#### **1. Display learning goals and questions.**

All students feel more comfortable when they know the goals and activities for the day or week. Gifted English language learners particularly benefit because their cultural and linguistic differences increase the uneasiness they feel about not knowing what will be demanded of them. Doing excellent work ranks high among all gifted students, and high-ability ELLs are sensitive about their proficiency in English and the limitations they may experience from this. In posting goals, use clear, direct language with visual images (posters, pictures) if necessary. Include a thinking question for students to mull over. Gifted students—ELLs or not—need intellectual and creative challenges to develop their abilities and avoid them losing touch with what they love.

#### **2. Allow choices, encourage adventure.**

Learning is serious business, but it also has its magical, serendipitous moments. A random encounter captures a child’s attention in ways that planned instruction does not always achieve. As much as possible, create more than one choice for advanced ELLs to process new concepts and skills. Children of all levels want to discover things and gifted students particularly enjoy exploring mysteries that puzzle them (e.g., the science behind cephalopods changing their skin color or the musical and sociological sources of rap). Provide gifted ELLs with choices, especially in the area of written and oral communication and composition where some feel vulnerable. As much as possible, allow other media—photography, drawing/painting, videography, podcasting, constructing/ modeling with different materials, cartoons, theater, and so forth. Many ELLs feel less tentative when they can draw on other media as part of written and oral reports.

### **3. Determine prior knowledge.**

How do we best determine what gifted ELLs know? A common error is to assume that language proficiency level extends to intellectual ability. It's important to discover what ELLs understand in a geometric calculation or the ecology of water or the music and rhythm of poetic verse. Conferring with parents, bilingual interpreters, or community members who know the children can sometimes be eye-opening. ELLs enter our rooms with abilities, experiences, and skills—much of which they either hide or lay aside, assuming they have no value in an English-speaking world. Give them credit for the knowledge and skill they possess and help them create alternative assignments that support their comprehension and composition in English. Avoid too much drill and practice assignments that make them feel trapped in remedial exercises. Here are some useful ways to assess prior knowledge and skill:

- Daily observation
- K-W-L (know-want to know-learned) chart
- Consultation with other teachers and parents
- Portfolio of prior work (from home or school)
- Informal discussion with students

### **4. Prepare ELLs in weaker areas.**

For ELLs, vocabulary and terminology related to specific subjects can be intimidating (Marzano & Pickering, 2005). It would be like learning a geology lesson without knowing the words for the instruments used or the terms for assigned tasks. Before introducing a unit, review the process with an eye for potential linguistic barriers. Consider different ways to share vocabulary—words, diagrams, pictures, brief demonstrations, mime. Think about the backgrounds of your students—what sorts of professions and experiences in their families might provide a bridge to concepts in a new lesson. How does cooking relate to chemistry? Carpentry, design, art to mathematics? Rap, storytelling, and song to literature and composition?

### **5. Inspire and support new interests.**

Provide advanced ELLs opportunities to discover and explore their interests. Former U.S. Secretary of Education, Terrell Bell, said: “There are three important things to remember about education. The first one is motivation, the second is motivation, and the third is motivation” (Ames, 1990). In a similar vein, E. Paul Torrance wrote a piece called “The Importance of Falling in Love with Something” (1983) that tells students to pursue what most calls to them and honor their greatest strengths. Teachers know, as few others do, that incorporating student interests has a powerful motivating effect and propels learning, and this is particularly so for gifted ELLs. Their challenges will become less burdensome; their self-doubts will give way to the excitement they feel. It is important to consider these possibilities:

- Use student interest inventories, open-ended opportunities to share new interests or curiosities, or student generated questions (“what I’ve always wanted to know”) to help students discover what they want to learn.
- Structure units that have some flexibility for you to incorporate student interests in ways that also support their language needs.
- Communicate with families and others who know the students (e.g., teachers or leaders in art workshops, youth programs, or community events they have attended, etc.).
- Have all students design their own portfolio—folder or container—where they can collect work from either home or class that they particularly value.
- Create opportunities for students to exhibit or share student interests (e.g., art works, performances, inventions, collections, experiments, writing, etc.).

## **6. Accommodate pace.**

In any classroom, there are always students who know more at the beginning of a lesson than others, sometimes, significantly more. Most teachers accommodate different levels either through providing different options within an assignment, allowing students to skip content they already know and move on to more challenging assignments, and so forth. With ELLs, acceleration becomes a little more difficult in some cases as teachers need to assess level of mastery in the context of a developing fluency in English. For gifted ELLs with a need for language support, teachers can offer alternative media and activities (diagrams, visual images, instructions in native language, group learning with other ELLs, etc.) that would enable them to use their abilities without feeling hampered by linguistic factors. Creative thinking also frees advanced ELLs to extend their mental powers in new directions. Accelerated and creative thinking often coexist in such students. Presenting an open-ended math problem or allowing a child to combine Spanish and English in a song or spoken word composition can liberate that child.

## **7. Include creativity and the arts.**

Creativity serves not only ELLs but all students. Creative teaching provides dynamic alternatives to traditional study, fosters original thought, and inspires students to become more engaged learners. Teachers who adopt a creative mindset to at least a portion of their day help them exploit the full potential of creativity and the arts, regardless of any specific skills or expertise they possess in these areas. As many have proved, creativity is not about paintbrushes and poems; it is a way of thinking and being. Consider how the following general principles might apply to your ELLs:

- Present open-ended assignments that ask students to draw on their creative and imaginative responses, their life experiences, cultures, and artistic inclinations.
- Create a safe environment for out-of-the-box learning and honor any and all creative ideas.
- Celebrate boldness or risk-taking however great or small.
- Model and teach coping skills to deal with feelings of frustration, being overwhelmed, and self-doubt.
- Support students' trust in their own creative powers through open questioning; point out the hidden jewels in their work, and guide them to new resources and materials.
- Provide opportunities to correct errors, refine visions, improve, elaborate, and emphasize creativity as an ongoing process rather than a means to an end product.
- Make arts activities and resources accessible to ELLs—visual art materials, mime, theater games, design, art designs from found objects, etc.
- Explore a variety of venues for students to show/demonstrate/perform/exhibit.

## **8. Nurture peer relationships.**

Gifted ELLs need some experience working in pairs or small group situations. Ideally, this should involve contact with other Spanish-speaking students. But interacting with other gifted learners has the additional benefit of showing them how they share similar interests and traits as English-speaking students. In general, ELLs who demonstrate noticeable gains in academic language proficiency need to participate in small groups that include native speakers; social and emotional difficulties often diminish when these students realize that their talents and experiences have as much value as English speakers. Here are some examples:

- Pair more advanced ELLs together to work on an alternative assignment (a challenging science experiment; a design for a class research and mural project depicting immigration in their school).

- Create an interest-based group of Spanish- and English-speakers in cases where ELLs have a higher level of proficiency in order to increase confidence in their developing abilities.
- Collaborate with another teacher to combine advanced ELLs in a cluster group; share responsibilities for the group.
- For ELLs of any level who demonstrate high motivation and interest, try to establish a mentoring relationship with a parent or community member who possesses particular talents or expertise in an area of interest.

### **9. Encourage independent learning.**

Working in small groups or pairs enables ELLs to become more independent learners. But teachers have to consider the level of planning and supervision involved in independent projects. Can they manage it? Can they find helpers who can assist? Then there is the level of ability and skill required for ELLs to feel comfortable and competent in English language assignments. Are there assistants to help? Are there different media for students to use? What sort of preparation and support do they need? How can teachers keep student ideas at a manageable level? For example, if students want to report on the stories of people in their community, they can narrow their focus—families on their street, shopkeepers in the neighborhood, and so forth. Student artists can collaborate with strong writers, designers, or even rappers. Here are some independent learning skills to consider while thinking about this option for gifted ELLs:

- Performing academic tasks without adult intervention for longer periods of time
- Understanding the main points of an assignment
- Locating (on their own or with others) different, yet reliable sources of information
- Demonstrating initiative as well as persistence in a challenging task
- Applying organization skills to meet deadlines (e.g., breaking assignments down into manageable steps, clarifying areas of responsibility, creating timelines)
- Identifying areas where they will need help (language support, skills, direction)
- Achieving some self-awareness as learners (knowing strengths and weaknesses) and focusing on personal strengths and aptitudes.

### **10. Find local talent to open students' minds.**

Gifted ELLs often feel more liberated through exposure to people with special talents who can inspire their imagination and interests. This is particularly so if teachers include visitors/mentors who speak the students' language and/or know their culture. Making connections between their studies in school and such fields as architecture, entrepreneurship, the law, engineering, mechanics, publishing, and the creative arts opens their minds. Spoken word artists—so popular among groups who feel out of the mainstream—have enabled young talented students across the country to explore issues related to identity, history, society, and language. Business people have taught about the market economy, entrepreneurship, invention, design, and advertising. Given that many multilingual communities struggle in economically depressed neighborhoods, strong leaders in the arts, humanities, business, and civic projects provide the vision they need to act on their dreams and passions.

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Applying these tools will enable you to address the learning needs of ELLs without undue strain on your time and resources. Obviously, you won't use all the tools all the time. The needs of ELLs, like all students, continually shift depending on what you're teaching and what strengths and needs they have. A gifted ELL, for example, may be

frustrated when the ideas in her mind exceed the subtlety of language and composition she needs to express them. An ELL with artistic or creative talent may still feel hampered by a lack of skills—for example, in oral expression (language arts), spatial movement and design (math), and color combination (science). While building skills, teachers can also release the talents that these students have so they can experience their strengths. It is a delicate balance between skill instruction and talent development, but it is the only way to avoid the frustration gifted ELLs experience when they focus too much on deficits and not enough on talents and abilities. These gifts are the foundation stones for building their lives.

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## Ethical Issues in Educating and Counseling the Gifted<sup>1</sup>

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(The article is based on the presentation: "Ethics in counseling the gifted," given by the author at the Eleventh Annual "Nefesh Israel" Conference, "Religion, Ethics, & Spirituality: Confronting the Issues," Jerusalem, 25<sup>th</sup>-27<sup>th</sup> January, 2011.)

In contrast to the situation in most Western countries, the area of giftedness has not been accepted in Israel as a sub-discipline of educational psychology, but rather as primarily an educational discipline. As a result, many of the people in charge of education of the gifted – teachers, headmasters and headmistresses, school counselors, supervisors, decision makers at both the municipal and the national levels, and policy-makers – have practically no knowledge about the psychological or didactical aspects of giftedness. I have analyzed many consequences of this situation. For example: the inability of untrained teachers to respond to gifted children's needs (David, 2011); not taking emotional-psychological-social components into consideration as a potential cause for dropping out of gifted programs (David, in press b); and the inadequacy of the decision-making process concerning the type of education for the gifted (David, in press a).

The present situation, where nonprofessionals at all levels are in charge of education for the gifted, is also the main reason for severe ethical problems concerning the emotional, social and familial needs of the gifted child. This article concentrates on Israeli examples. At this stage of formulating an ethical code for counseling the gifted, each country must take into consideration its own circumstances, legal facts and the balance of power in the triangle of parents, school, and the authorities.

Ethical problems already appear in the identification process when *confidentiality* is compromised, and the privacy of gifted children continues to be violated later as well: in the attitude of the school staff to the gifted child in the regular classroom, in the teachers' room and during parent-teacher meetings. As policy-makers in the area of giftedness are just bureaucrats, though they may be high-ranking officials, they are not obliged to follow any ethical code. In this article, I will discuss the importance of ethics in teaching and educating the gifted. The article intends to raise the awareness of ethics in gifted education, and to stress the need for an ethical code recommended to anybody who identifies, teaches, instructs, or nurtures the gifted, counsels gifted children and their families, and develops programs for teaching staff.

### **The Reasons for Non-Ethical Behavior Concerning the Gifted**

In Israel, the area of giftedness has no legal constraints and rules, let alone laws. When there is no consensus regarding what is allowed and what is forbidden, there are attempts, in many cases, to act without adequate knowledge, or even when the "knowledge" in question is wrong, namely – when instead of knowledge there are beliefs, opinions and prejudices perceived as solid facts. Every area of knowledge dealing with humans has gone through this phase at its beginning. Giftedness became a subject of public interest about 100 years ago just a short time after psychology began to be accepted as a scientific discipline.

Psychology had no ethical rules at its beginning. For example, before any clear rules were established regarding the prohibition to treat family members or personal friends, it happened quite often that psychologists treated their relatives. Among these was Freud himself, who analyzed his daughter Anna before she herself became a psychoanalyst (Anna Freud, 1895-1982; 2009), and Anna Freud herself treated her friends' children. However, while in psychology this situation has changed, no real changes have occurred in the study of giftedness during all these years. Up to now, many theoreticians and educators are involved in questions such as: Who is gifted? Is education for the gifted necessary? What is the role of the IQ in identification of the gifted? It seems that such questions are of equal interest among both laymen and experts.

It might very well be that the main reason for the lack of ethical rules in the field of giftedness is the lack of awareness on the part of many individuals of the need for such rules, especially for confidentiality. People with no knowledge of the psychology of the gifted, even when they teach gifted children, are usually unaware of the potential damage that might be caused when confidentiality of gifted students is compromised. It might be argued that the reason for this situation has to do with the fact that in Israel people in charge of giftedness in the education system are educators rather than mental health experts, social workers or counselors. But that contrasts with what happens with special-needs children, where clear rules regarding their exposure are applied, or at least – it is known they should be applied, even when such rules are not a part of the legal system.

It might be that the reason for this leniency towards revealing a child's giftedness in general, and the level, sphere, or intensity of giftedness in particular is grounded in the tendency to think that "the gifted will take care of themselves." Sayings such as: "I expected more from YOU" or "If you are gifted, how come you did not get an A in the exam" stem from ignorance in the field of giftedness. They might be perceived as insults when coming from a teacher the child respects and appreciates, and by whom the child is sometimes deeply influenced, and cause long-term harm since perfectionism is quite common among the gifted (Chan, 2009; David, 2009). There are even teachers who themselves use, among other descriptions, the term "nerd" when referring to a gifted child. This verbal connotation is well known in English-speaking countries, where "gifted" has become a synonym of "nerd" (e.g. Bilger, 2004; Definitions net, 2011). The combination of the innate drive towards perfectionism and the teachers pushing towards a "perfect A score" might have severe consequences for the mental health of some gifted children.

### **Lack of Research-Based Knowledge as a Potential Reason for Ethical Problems in Gifted Counseling**

In contradiction to many other areas of psychology and education, where it is clear to everybody that special knowledge is needed in order to express a professional opinion, "everybody has something to say" in the gifted area. Many professionals from a variety of health and education fields, who sometimes have tremendous influence on parents regarding their children, have adopted the habit of volunteering their opinions about gifted children even when not asked. These individuals have no professional knowledge in too many cases, whether psychiatrists or counselors, teachers or heads of government departments. Thus, quite often what they say contradicts the findings of

existing studies. But the parents are impressed by the "expert" title attached to these persons, and accept their false opinion as absolute truth.

Some of the prejudices expressed by these "professional experts" are strengthened by their choice of words. For example: early entrance or grade skipping, both neutral terms in English, are described in Hebrew quite often as "pushing the child" – an expression with a negative connotation. The very frequent use of the word "ripe," meaning "mature enough," as in the claim: "the child is not ripe for...", is employed mainly by teachers and counselors to prevent participation in suitable activities of a talented child who might be somewhat younger than the mean age of children in that group. The proper, accurate phrase would be, as used in English (and in many other languages): "There are gaps among the various abilities of the child as is the case among most young gifted children, especially in cognitive and emotional abilities."

Much worse are the claims that "the child loses his or her childhood," "the child misses the opportunity to be a child," "what is important is not giftedness, but rather being a 'Mensch' (good human being)" or "grades are of no importance – what matters is being socially accepted." The first two claims might make the child believe that there is a contradiction between being a child and satisfying one's curiosity, getting answers to bothersome questions or in general – leading an interesting life. The last two might make the child think that his or her special abilities are of no importance, that giftedness is not something to be glad about; and that maybe it should even be hidden. Having to deny such an essential part of yourself is cruel to anybody. For a child, it is destructive.

Because of lack in education and knowledge regarding giftedness among professionals in education and counseling, many of them tend to rely too much upon their own experience, as well as upon the experience of those close to them. For example, of the many hundreds of pre-and in-service teachers I have taught in the last 15 years in four teachers colleges and one university, I met but a few teachers – and not even one kindergarten teacher – who had recommended early entrance or grade skipping. On the other hand, all kindergarten teachers without exception recommended that at least one child should remain in kindergarten for an extra year rather than start school at age six (the legal, proper time in Israel).

In one of the cases, a kindergarten teacher had recommended for several years that about 30% of children in her class repeat the last year of kindergarten. Furthermore, in spite of the fact that the Israeli Ministry of Education (1977) set special rules for the practice of repeating a grade, the number of teachers who have ever employed this practice was dozens of times higher than that of teachers recommending grade skipping. The most common explanation for this recommendation was "I met a boy who skipped a grade and later suffered socially." It was quite clear that the teachers' attitudes, opinions and beliefs played a substantial role in their professional choices, leaving no room for research-based knowledge about grade-skipping or early entrance to school.

### **Ethical Problems Resulting from Parents' Behavior**

Many parents contribute to the problem of unethical behavior regarding their gifted children. In the last 20 years, since I started working on all aspects of the psychology and didactics of giftedness, I have confronted problematic behavior of many parents whose children had been chosen for participation in gifted programs.

There are parents who hide from their children the fact that they had been selected by the school to take the "stage B" giftedness examinations administrated by the Szold Institute (David, in press b) – examinations intended to identify percentile 97 as well as percentile 98.5 children of the upper 15% of grade 2 or 3 children (ibid). There are no statistics on these parents, but from my experience as a counselor for families of gifted children, I know that this phenomenon is not negligible. Such parents find it hard to deal with the possibility that their child could be chosen for a gifted class or a gifted enrichment program. In some cases, they are "against elitism" and in others they are afraid that once their child is labeled as gifted, they would have to offer special treatment which they feel they are unable to do.

Some parents believe that if their child is not identified as gifted he or she will simply "stop being gifted." There are also parents who are so afraid of failure, meaning that their child will not receive the "gifted" label after the examination that they would rather make sure by not sending their child to the examination. A minority of parents, whose older child was sent to the giftedness identification examinations, but did not "pass" them, believe that if the other child is identified as gifted, the one labeled "non-gifted" will be harmed. David et al. (2009) have shown that

sibling relationships are not necessarily harmed in case of one sibling identified as gifted and the other not, regardless of the birth-order. Nevertheless, the belief that these relationships must be harmful seems deeper and certainly much more widely accepted than the findings of quantitative research.

Regardless of the reason, the result is that the child who belongs to percentile 85 or higher level in cognitive abilities ("stage A") is prevented from getting information about further testing. As a result, the child might suffer from deterioration of motivation, lack of belief in one's own abilities, and even from a feeling of failure – knowing that he or she gets good grades, but not knowing there is a good reason for that: high cognitive abilities. Children might believe that their peers are much smarter, and self-perception as an intelligent person will contradict the known results of the first stage of the giftedness examination, and will be perceived as false.

There are parents who do send their children to the "stage B" examinations, and when they receive positive information concerning eligibility for these examinations, they hide it from the child. If the child asks about the answer, the parent says it was negative. Such behavior might destroy completely the child's trust in parents once the "secret" is discovered; thereby losing the main source of support. Indeed, the program offered by the Israeli Ministry of Education does not suit many of the gifted children identified as such (David, 2008). For example, many young gifted children feel they would rather stay in their regular classes than move to a gifted class operating six days a week. Indeed, most parents in some municipalities who have an opportunity to send their children to such a class prefer to turn down the offer (David, in press a). However, the parents' decisions should be made known and explained to the child.

Furthermore, the correlation between the "gifted" label and the actual IQ in Israel is compromised because giftedness is determined not only by the relative intelligence of the child (when comparing it to age-group peers) but also by the geographical zone of residence. Belonging to percentile 97 or higher usually means having a much higher IQ when living in a town among high socio-economic peers than: when living in a small village of low socio-economic families; new immigrants from under-developed countries (David, 2008); or in a peripheral settlement. In order to form a gifted group in these situations, there is a need to include children from much lower percentiles than is the case in big cities in the center of Israel (David et al., 2009).

While the "gifted" label results in many cases of high expectations – some quite unrealistic – from the teachers, the parents and even the child, there are too many children who have to live with the "non-gifted" label. In Israel, about 15% of the children are chosen for the second stage of the giftedness examinations and only about 1.5% are entitled to a gifted education. The number of those who receive the label "non-gifted" is ten times higher than that of the children who are labeled as "gifted." Some of the potential consequences of labeling an intelligent 8-9 year old child as "non-gifted" are discussed elsewhere (David, in press a). However, it is widely agreed that such an adjective includes acknowledgement of failure, although the child has not failed in anything. The child is most probably talented and intelligent, but did not suit the rigid threshold for being chosen in the municipality in a certain year. Or, if the child is a boy, he was not accepted to a certain gifted program because of affirmative action intended to include at least 40% girls in all gifted programs.

One typical example of such a case is an 8-year old boy I see on a regular basis because of social problems. At age 6 he had his IQ of 147 measured as part of full psycho-diagnostic examinations. Even unaware of this fact, all were certain at his school that he would qualify for the enrichment program for the gifted in his town. After he "failed," one of his teachers told his mother that among the four children sent to "stage B" of the Szold examinations, all teachers thought this child had the best prospects to be accepted. The teachers put all bets on him, and many lost a lot of money "because of him." Note: The preceding sentence is a bit unclear to me. Maybe the concept of "gambling" on a child, as it is used here, should be explained. This example shows not only that gambling openly on a child's prospects of being accepted to a gifted program was considered acceptable at the school, and that teachers did not even think there was any violation of the child's rights in doing so.

The parents of a very intelligent child not accepted to a gifted program must also deal with the fact that their child was labeled "non-gifted." They sometimes experience this fact as their own failure. In such cases there is a tendency to send the child to repeated giftedness examinations during several years, and every failure on these examinations intensifies the child's feeling of failure. Perhaps the repetition of "failure" can be avoided by indicating a "feeling of disappointment" or something similar.

Some parents insist that their child is gifted, and they are not willing to listen to the explanation about the Israeli definition of giftedness, a clarification that explains "why so many Israeli children who would have qualified for gifted programs in many other countries are considered non-gifted in Israel" (David, in press b). Such was the case of Eitan, a 9-year old boy whose parents came to me for counseling after they received the letter announcing their son was not chosen for the gifted program in their municipality. The father, who had great expectations for his first-born son, felt unable to accept this verdict. I asked him, "What do you think should be done now?" and he answered, "Eitan must skip a grade. He already knows 4<sup>th</sup> grade math, so there is 'no point' for him to remain in grade 4." I tried to explain to the father that being one year above or under the class level in one subject is within the norm. According to the father's own description, Eitan was happy in school, had friends and enjoyed learning many new things there, but the father did not accept my opinion. When asked "If you are referring to any problems Eitan has that have remained unmentioned until now, please share them with me," the father became really angry. "I do not think I need you. Reading your article about grade skipping (David, 2007) made me think you are not like all others. I will find somebody who is not against grade skipping and get the needed recommendation." Indeed, my article (ibid) on grade skipping was mentioned as a frequent option applied in gifted education abroad and almost never applied in Israel. But I never expressed any opinion in favor of grade skipping as a compensation for a father whose hopes of being "the father of a gifted child" had been dashed.

### **Unnecessary Exposure of Gifted Children in the Education System**

The attitude towards children with special needs in the education system is based upon clear rules. It is strictly forbidden to reveal any identifying details; it is absolutely forbidden to expose any such child, even when older than 18. Everyone in the system is fully aware of the prerequisite that the children's needs have a priority over anything else, including research. However, when it might serve other children's interests, a school's public relations will probably benefit from such exposure. Or the child might benefit when exposure to the media helps to get what she or he needs in less time or with less effort.

When dealing with gifted children, the situation is extremely different. In all stages of the process of identification and nurturing of the gifted, there is a high probability that the child's needs will be sacrificed for the needs of the system, the teachers or even the parents. The term "privacy of the gifted child" is practically non-existent from the moment he or she is chosen by the school for "stage B" of the identification process through the labeling either as "gifted" or as "non-gifted." In addition, children's privacy is violated by the attitude of the school staff in the classroom, in the teachers' room and during meetings with the parents.

In all other examinations, information about each child's achievements remains confidential (whether international such as TIMSS and PISA, or national, like the matriculation examinations or the growth and effectiveness measures for schools) (Beller, 2010). However, the knowledge about who "passed" the first stage in the giftedness identification process usually becomes public from about December until June. This is when all children taking the second stage giftedness examinations receive an answer concerning whether they have been accepted or not. Unfortunately, parents who want their children to retake the giftedness examinations make this information in many cases open to their children's peers, the parents of these peers, and the school teachers.

As the majority of gifted children in Israel study most of the time in regular classes (David, 2008), the problematic attitudes of many teachers in these classes towards gifted children is of great importance. Because there is no ethical code, the teachers' attitudes stem from beliefs, personal traits, education, restraint, past experience, etc. Thus, many teachers believe that a gifted student has to teach weaker peers. Many teachers are unaware that gifted students might suffer when their abilities are openly mentioned, let alone discussed. They do not understand that high abilities have important connections to physical, emotional, and sexual development. In addition, most of the teachers do not know that a high level of sensitivity is one of the most typical traits of the gifted child. Thus, gifted children who find out that a teacher passed information about them to another teacher could go through a lot of suffering, and even feel they "have no place" in the class, sometimes not even in the school.

Violation of the privacy of gifted children is sometimes quite severe when their parents meet their teachers. While in school counseling, there are clear rules as to when not to give information to the parents, where gifted children are concerned there is a silent agreement that it is always good, even necessary, to provide any information to parents. As a result, a gifted child who wishes to keep things to her- or himself and is an introvert (Ziv, 1990) is twice exposed by parents and teachers.

### **Violation of Gifted Children's Privacy in Academia and the Media**

A case of violation of the most basic ethical rules is: presenting case studies of gifted children at national and international conferences while violating their privacy – either when revealing details that might expose their identity, or when showing interviews with or without the parents' consent. Such is the case very often in conferences when a crowd of hundreds of people watch a film, sometimes when the child is very young. The presenter might have been the child's counselor, examiner or advisor. Even when the children's parents give the presenter written permission to do this, there is no justification for a psychologist who is well aware of issues of children's privacy to use such materials.

A television researcher working for one of the largest commercial Israeli channels has recently called me, asking to give her names and addresses of gifted children who have gone through an intervention process with me. When I told her this was unethical, she simply said, "If you are unwilling to do this, maybe you can give me the name of an expert who might agree." Such a request shows very clearly the level of ignorance in regard to children's rights and the attitude regarding their privacy. We certainly do not expect such a phone call from a researcher doing a program on Down syndrome children.

An extreme example of exposing gifted minors to media publicity is the "super-gifted" project of the Israeli Ministry of Education. The Israeli Ministry of Education has announced a new aim: to help produce future Nobel Prize winners. In a series of official announcements and newspaper interviews (e.g. Bahur Nir, 2011; Ministry of Education, 2010), as well as in a documentary shown by the Israeli national TV channel, Ms. Rachmel (head of the department of gifted education in the Israeli Ministry of Education) has argued that nurturing the super-gifted in order to have more future Nobel Prize winners in Israel "is an 8-year dream coming true" (Bahur Nir, 2011). The wide exposure of these "super-gifted" children included personal and familial private details of the 14 identified youths. Details were given about their parents' marital status, many of which they would rather have kept unrevealed, the financial situation of the family, the religious views of each parent, or the ethnic origin of the children (all minors). These students were exposed not only unethically, but also to such a level that would have been considered illegal in most countries (Morrow, & Richards 1996).

The misuse of the children's names and photos, and the unexpected way in which some of their families were exposed in the media are unethical (Bahur Nir, 2011). Even the use of the term "super-gifted" is highly problematic. In professional literature, there are studies about the use of the term "gifted" – many of which have shown a high correlation between using this adjective and the level of psychological, social, and emotional adjustment of the child or the youth (Berlin, 2009; Freeman, 2006). However, there is no research on the influence of using the term "super-gifted" because of a simple reason: Such research has never been conducted because all researchers have been quite convinced that using this term might have a negative influence!

### **Summary**

Sometimes I am asked, "Why is privacy of gifted children so important?" In school, the concept of privacy only applies to special education children – children who have been diagnosed as having learning disabilities, mental illnesses or physical limitations. The privacy of these sub-populations is taken care of through rules adopted by medicine, psychology, school counseling and social work. Unfortunately, the privacy of gifted children has no legal basis, while the high level of sensitivity of gifted children makes them vulnerable.

According to Miller (1997), the gifted child is a sensitive child. Even if we do not accept this definition, "sensitivity" is a trait that appears in all lists of characteristics of gifted children (e.g., Colangelo & Davis, 2003). Thus, each thoughtless utterance, even a meaningless phrase about the child's abilities or potential said by parents, might have a negative influence. When a child hears in school various opinions about giftedness in general and his or her abilities in particular, this might be much more harmful.

An ethical code is needed because the psychology of the gifted has not been recognized yet as an accepted field. Additionally, most people who are teaching and counseling the gifted are not experts in this field. This code would mark the line between what is allowed and what is forbidden in all stages from the identification process through psychological and didactical support, and from early childhood to adulthood. Without such a code, we are sentenced

to be judged by teachers and clerks who have neither knowledge nor training or experience in the field of giftedness, which might result in grave consequences for many gifted children.

<sup>1</sup> Thanks to Ms. Olga Barenboim for her careful reading of the manuscript.

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Of all the words yet spoken,  
none comes quite as far as wisdom,  
which is the action of the mind  
beyond all things that may be said.

Wisdom is the oneness  
of mind that guides  
and permeates all things.

Heraclitus –From *Fragments: The Collected Wisdom of Heraclitus*, Translated by Brooks Haxton. Viking, 2001.

**Jerrie Cobb, The-Other-Magpie, Dr. Valerie L. Thomas,  
Andrew “Rube” Foster, and Toni Kurz: Who Are They? What Made Them Unique?\***

**Discover Their Stories in Reading Collective Biographies**

**Jerry Flack University of Colorado**

**Collective Biographies**

“Biography is, of the various forms of narrative writing, that which is the most eagerly read and most easily applied to the purpose of life.” Samuel Johnson

Biography, wisely utilized, can greatly increase the interests and knowledge of gifted readers of any age and in any academic discipline. Biographies of Georgia O’Keeffe and Ray Charles can enrich the learning curve in art and music classes. Narratives of the lives of Marie Curie, Theodore Roosevelt, and William Shakespeare can supplement textbooks, respectively, in science, history, and literature courses. But, biographies need not be about single subjects. Collective biographies feature multiple subjects in single volumes. Common denominators for collective biographies include such categories and subject groupings as race, ethnicity, gender, religion, fields of work (e.g., inventors), and such intangibles as courage, patriotism, and peace.

**Part I**

Outstanding collective biographies for advanced readers may be stand-alone volumes or books within exceptional collective biography series. Examples of the former are reviewed in Part I of this manuscript. Part II, to be found in the next issue of the *Gifted Education Press Quarterly*, will feature notable collective biography series plus an honor roll of additional collective biographies of special merit. The Part II installment will also share myriad collective biography activities and extensions, including the value these collected works present as read alouds.

**Single Volume Collective Biographies**

***Women Astronauts***

Stone, Tanya Lee. *Almost Astronauts: 13 Women Who Dared to Dream*. Somerville, MA: Candlewick Press, 2009.

Tanya Lee Stone was the 2010 winner of the Robert F. Sibert Informational Book Award given annually by the American Library Association side-by-side with the Caldecott and Newbery Medals. Stone’s remarkable book reveals the incredible but true story of the would-be women astronauts known in the early 1960s as the Mercury 13. They were women pilots such as Jerrie Cobb, Jane Hart, and Jean Hixson who possessed exceptional gifts and extraordinary courage.

*Almost Astronauts* opens on July 23, 1999 at Cape Canaveral where thousands of spectators have gathered to watch the launch of the Space Shuttle *Columbia*. History is about to be made. Lieutenant Colonel Eileen Collins will soon become the first woman ever to be both the commander and pilot of a space shuttle flight. Among the throngs of spectators are the eleven surviving members of the Mercury 13. Thirty-eight years earlier they valiantly sought to be admitted to the NASA astronaut program. But, they were mocked, humiliated, and betrayed at virtually every turn of events. Later woman astronauts such as Sally Ride, Mae Jemison, and the woman of the hour, Eileen Collins, stood on the shoulders of giants. These shoulders belonged to Jerrie Cobb, Jane Hart, Jean Hixson, Marion Dietrich, and the other dedicated women aviators of the Mercury 13.

\*See their identities and related books at the end of Part I of this article.

Stone's collective biography of these women bears witness to the dark side of NASA history, a chapter of inexcusable prejudice.

All of the Mercury 13 aviators were highly skilled pilots. Jerrie Cobb, for example, had begun flying at the age of 12, and had logged over 7,000 flight hours compared to John Glenn's 5,000 hours and Scott Carpenter's 2,900 hours. Glenn and Carpenter were members of the all-male Mercury 7 NASA astronaut corps. Cobb also held the world altitude record. The Mercury 13 women pilots did have the "Right Stuff." They were just of the wrong gender (and race) for their times. In the early 1960s the glamour of being a Mercury 7 astronaut was an exclusive club made up of white males only.

The news media of the time ridiculed the efforts of women who sought to become NASA astronauts by referring to them as "Space Gals," "Astronettes," and "Astrodolls." In Congressional hearings relative to the role of women in NASA, Mercury 7 pilots such as Glenn, Deke Slayton, and Alan Shepard belittled even the suggestion of women becoming astronauts. Women had no place in NASA's future. But, the most damning and outrageous barrier was put in place by the second most powerful man in the nation at the time. In a 1962 meeting with Jerrie Cobb, Vice President Lyndon Johnson spoke to the acknowledged leader of the Mercury 13 women as follows:

"Jerrie, if we let you or other women into the space program, we'd have to let blacks in. We'd have to let Mexican-Americans in, and Chinese-Americans. We'd have to let every minority in, and we just can't do it."

*Almost Astronauts* is filled with superb documentary photography of the Mercury 13 women especially as they trained, were tested, and campaigned publicly for the right of women to become incontestable members of NASA. Stone's end matter is especially thorough in terms of sources, documentation, and further reading about the 13 women profiled. Here is a collective biography and history that clearly sets the record straight on the valiant early efforts of 13 women who asked for no favors other than fair and equal treatment. That they were so ruthlessly denied their rightful place in history is a story that should be widely shared. If nothing else, *Almost Astronauts* reveals stories of heroic women who faced undeniable prejudice that should never, ever be repeated in a democracy.

### ***The Bicycle = Emancipation***

Macy, Sue. *Wheels of Change: How Women Rode the Bicycle to Freedom*. Washington, D. C.: National Geographic, 2011.

It took more than a century for an innovative historian and writer to recognize that there was a significant and crucial parallel between the mid-19<sup>th</sup>-century invention of photography and United States History. Russell Freedman won the Newbery Medal for *Lincoln: A Photobiography* (Clarion Books, 1987) in which he significantly matched the two phenomena. In much the same manner, Sue Macy reveals comparable insight in making a noteworthy connection between the invention and development of the bicycle and the growth of women's rights. No less a figure than Susan B. Anthony wrote of the imperative and fundamental relationship between these two seemingly diverse events.

*Let me tell you what I think of bicycling. I think it has done more to emancipate women than anything else in the world. I stand and rejoice every time I see a woman ride by on a wheel.*

Susan B. Anthony, *Champion of Her Sex*  
(*New York World*, February 2, 1896)

Macy thoroughly underscores Anthony's statement in *Wheels of Change*. Throughout this handsomely illustrated book one theme is dominant, pervasive, and all-encompassing: the evolution of the bicycle, especially in America in the decades of the 1880s and 1890s, equaled independence for women.

The author-historian does note the evolution of the bicycle and its importance to such famous women as Marie Curie, Annie Oakley, Amelia Bloomer, and Katharine Wright, the younger sister of aviation pioneers Wilbur and Orville Wright. However, she also introduces women cyclists such as Alice Austin, Charlotte Smith, Dora Rinehart, Frances Willard and a great many other women who advanced the rights of women in myriad ways. For example,

who were Kate Parke, Alice A. Bennitt, Mary F. Henderson, Sarah C. Clagett, and Maude A. Powlison? All were women inventors who patented valuable innovations in the development of bicycles for women.

The contents of *Wheels of Change* cover the invention of the bicycle, celebrity cyclists, fashion changes for women cyclists, bicycle races of note, new freedoms the bicycle gave to women, and even cycling slang and songs. One invaluable component is the author's historical observances of the bicycle and the impact it had for African-American women.

The rich treasury of period photography, colorful advertisements, and cycling memorabilia greatly add to the edification and enjoyment of this popular culture history. Visually, the book appears much like a lovingly fashioned historical scrapbook. Macy proves to be a particularly worthy model of scholarship. She provides vividly colored parallel timelines that document women's history and bicycle history, reference books and web sites, quotation sources, and a thorough index. Her documentation throughout is flawless.

Importantly, Macy does not remain "stuck" in the 19<sup>th</sup> century. Indeed, the foreword to *Wheels of Change* was written by a contemporary of the author, Leah Missbach Day, who co-founded (with her husband, F. K. Day) World Bicycle Relief. Their philanthropic organization provides thousands of bicycles, particularly in Africa and Asia, which enable girls and women to use this still remarkable invention to attend distant schools, deliver life-giving medicines to remote sites, and become successful entrepreneurs. Well over a century into its history and evolution, the invention of the bicycle, so frequently taken for granted, continues to very much benefit the women of both the United States and the world.

Author Sue Macy frequently writes children's and young adult books about sports and remarkable women. She has written single-subject biographies of such daring women as Annie Oakley and Nelly Bly and collective biographies about heroines of both the summer and winter Olympic Games. *Swifter, Higher, Stronger: A Photobiographic History of the Summer Olympics* (National Geographic, 2008) and *Freeze Frame: Photobiographic History of the Winter Olympics* (National Geographic, 2006) are both highly entertaining and informative collective biographies of champion athletes. One of her latest ventures into collective biography, popular culture, and women's sports is *Basketball Belles: How Two Teams and One Scrappy Player Put Women's Hoops onto the Map* (Holiday House, 2011).

#### ***Wild Women of the Western Frontier***

Winter, Jonah. *Wild Women of the Wild West*. Illus. by Susan Guevara. New York: Holiday House, 2011.

Calamity Jane, Annie Oakley, the outlaw Belle Starr, and temperance militant Carry A. Nation may be well recognized by students who are fascinated with the history of the untamed wild frontier of what is today known as the U.S.A. But, why do eleven other daring and courageous women including Mary Fields, The-Other-Magpie, and Esther Morris deserve their rightful place in the hair-raising true stories of the "Wild West," most especially in the years from 1848 until 1898?

In a brief but learned introduction, author Jonah Winter chronicles the relatively brief fifty-year time period that frames what came to be known as the "Wild West." He attempts to give it geographical boundaries and he notes that gold rushes, first in California and later in Alaska, are the historical book ends of this epoch. The growth of transcontinental railroads also marked this time frame. Winter especially cites the roles portrayed by Mexican, Anglo, and Native American women on the Western frontier and explains that immensely significant land "ownership" changed during this fifty-year epoch. By 1898, many of the regions, territories, and states of the U.S.A. had just fifty years earlier been the legitimate properties of Mexico and many Native American tribes. Although Winter does not use the term, it is clear from reading his introduction and fifteen profiles that the 19<sup>th</sup>-century American concept of "Manifest Destiny" was realized within his fifty-year time framework.

Chiefly, however, the biographer allows his primary spotlight to shine on fifteen women who were "wild" in myriad ways and whose actions definitely shaped this unique and extremely colorful period of the nation's history. Three vibrant profiles characterize the diversity of remarkable frontier women heroines who made unique contributions at a momentous time in the nation's history.

Mary Fields was born into slavery in Tennessee in 1832, but following the Civil War and Emancipation, she headed to the Montana frontier where she became known as “Stagecoach Mary.” She smoked cigars, dressed like a man, and sported a pair of Colt 45s. Fearless, she never hesitated to be known as a male or to conquer exacting and dangerous jobs that at the time were believed to be reserved exclusively for men. Indeed, standing six feet tall and weighing a muscular 200 pounds, Mary Fields was so formidable that she was hired at fifty years of age by the nuns of a Montana convent to supervise their all-male work force. When she was well into her sixties, Mary Fields was a successful stagecoach driver for the U. S. Postal Service. Her reputation for grit and toughness was so great that even dangerous would-be stagecoach robbers feared and avoided encounters with her.

The-Other-Magpie was a fierce woman warrior for the Crow tribe in their homeland or what is today known as the state of Montana. The enemies of the Crow tribe were the Sioux, Cheyenne, and Lakota. She engaged in war battles, along side of the fiercest and most brave male Crow combatants such as Finds-Them-and-Kills-Them. After her brother was slain by Lakota fighters, she vowed vengeance. Even Lakota combatants greatly feared her tenacity. Said to have magical powers, The-Other-Magpie was so fearsome that these same Lakota warriors turned and fled when they saw her approaching to conquer them.

Serving formal tea to the two leading opposition candidates for a state legislative office may seem particularly tame, even Victorian, but Esther Hobart McQuigg Slack Morris was possessed of an idea that was itself considered above all “wild” in 1869. She believed in equality of the sexes. She held that women should have the right to vote. Setting aside her teacup in her formal parlor, Esther Morris exacted a promise from both male candidates for the state legislature that if elected, they would propose and work valiantly to bring about the enactment of universal suffrage for the women of Wyoming. And, she succeeded! In December, 1869, the women of Wyoming became the first women in the world to have the right to vote. Moreover, a year later, in 1870, Morris became the very first elected woman judge in the world.

Susan Guevara’s illustrations include both humorous pen-and-ink caricature sketches filled with plenty of action as well as more formal watercolor portraits of the fifteen featured heroines. Her vivid sketches especially highlight benchmark historical events or character traits associated with the “Wild Women.”

Jonah Winter is no stranger to notable and award-winning biographies. His subjects are as diverse as Mexican artists Frida Kahlo and Diego Rivera, ace baseball pitcher Sandy Koufax, boxer Muhammad Ali, President Barack Obama, and author and fine arts patron Gertrude Stein. Nor is *Wild Women* Winter’s first venture into the genre of collective biography. *Fair Ball!* (Scholastic Press, 1999) is a joint tribute and celebration of the lives of 14 great stars from professional baseball’s Negro Leagues. Also see Winter’s *Peaceful Heroes* below.

Student scholars should be especially interested in the author’s highly informative introduction as well as the source notes of the illustrator. Valuable documentation includes a fifty-year narrative timeline, a United States map from the middle of the 19<sup>th</sup> century, and a thorough bibliography. Guevara created her more formal watercolor portraits from existing photographs of all but two of the subjects. By expert sleuthing she was able to find a *Harper’s Weekly* magazine (1854) engraving of Dona Maria Gertrudis “La Tules” Barcelo, but no known image of The-Other-Magpie exists.

### *Families / Siblings*

Krull, Kathleen. *The Brothers Kennedy: John, Robert, Edward*. Illus. by Amy June Bates. New York: Simon & Schuster, 2010.

Most collective biographies feature subjects such as inventors, athletes, presidents, photographers, and composers who may have never known each other due to both the vastness of geography and the long history of their respective fields of endeavor (e.g., composers). Krull’s picture book collective biography features the treatment of three brothers from the same extraordinarily famous family, John, Robert, and Edward Kennedy. Its focus is notably intimate. The impact each of the three featured brothers had upon one another is greatly celebrated in both words and exuberant mixed-media images.

The author begins with a historical overview of both the paternal and maternal backgrounds of this unique Irish-American family who became for a time, particularly in the 1960s, the closest approximation Americans have ever

perceived have had as a royal family. Indeed, John Kennedy's all-too-brief time (1,000 days) as president of the United States is often referred to as "Camelot," the legendary land of Britain's first king. Although Krull focuses on the lives of the three Kennedy brothers with whom students are most likely familiar, she also pays tribute to their father (Joseph) mother (Rose), female siblings (e.g., Eunice Kennedy Shriver, who co-founded The Special Olympics), and their oldest brother and childhood mentor, Joe, whose life was tragically lost in World War II.

*The Brothers Kennedy* is a picture book collective biography with chapters devoted to the accomplished lives, words, and deeds of John, Robert, and Edward. The book is particularly rich in the thought-provoking quotations which became hallmarks of these men whose lives were patriotically devoted to public service in both military and civilian roles. Although the basic narrative scope is intended for young readers, the end matter is rich in detail and will provide multiple leads for older students who want to learn more about the three key subjects. Krull rounds out her collective biography of the three Kennedy brothers with a detailed and fascinating timeline.

Amy June Bates' beautiful illustrations cross lines of high-spirited and fun-filled childhoods to somber and heroic images of the service, deeds, and tragic losses three brothers in America's "royal family" sustained as adult national leaders. See also collective biographies of the families of John and Abigail Adams and George W. and Barbara Bush.

Here is a picture book that proves that the genre can be successfully utilized with mature students as well as younger children. Although the intended primary audience may be elementary-age students, this collective biography will stimulate the curiosity of older students and hopefully provoke their curiosity to avail themselves to the adult reading and resources the biographer provides.

#### *History As Inspiration*

"History is the essence of innumerable biographies." Thomas Carlyle

Nelson, Kadir. *We Are the Ship: The Story of Negro League Baseball*. New York: Hyperion Books, 2008.

\_\_\_\_\_. *Heart and Soul: The Story of America and African Americans*. New York: HarperCollins, 2011.

There is a fine line between the respective disciplines or genres of history and collective biographies. After all, it is people who make history. The extraordinarily talented painter and writer Kadir Nelson has both written and illustrated two recent histories that are noteworthy for the many biographical subjects he uses to narrate two extraordinarily stories about African Americans.

*We Are the Ship* won two Coretta Scott King medals and the American Library Association's Robert F. Sibert award as the most distinguished information book of the year in which it was published. Appropriately, Nelson uses nine chapters to match baseball's nine innings to reveal the history of blacks in American baseball from the Civil War through Jackie Robinson's debut as the first African American to play Major League Baseball for the Brooklyn Dodgers in 1947. Although the Nelson's book is classified as history, he narrates the history of African Americans in professional baseball by focusing on great players from the past such as Leroy "Satchel" Paige, Bud Fowler, Oscar Charleston, Willard Brown, Buck Leonard, and especially Andrew "Rube" Foster who both played for and managed the (Chicago) American Giants and – most importantly – founded the first official Negro National League, circa 1920. Prior to both writing and illustrating *We Are the Ship*, Kadir Nelson was primarily known as an artist who won high praise for his brilliant illustrations. And, his oil paintings for *We Are the Ship* are magnificent. But, Nelson also proves to be a consummate story teller and historian. And, although this baseball book may be found on the history shelves in libraries, a reading of its wonderful and inspiring contents will lead gifted readers to both print and online biographies of the men whose lives make up Nelson's great story.

In Kathleen Krull's *The Brothers Kennedy*, she quotes Robert Kennedy as follows: "We are a great country, a selfless country, and a compassionate country." Kennedy's stirring words certainly have been proven time and again as the U.S.A. has helped less fortunate peoples of the world. However, Kennedy's eloquent statement has not and still does not honestly apply to the treatment of a great many women and minorities within the nation's own borders.

In his second outing as both an author and illustrator, *Heart and Soul*, Kadir Nelson has created yet another masterpiece of eloquent words, outstanding storytelling, and breath-taking paintings that trace the history of African Americans from Colonial times up to the 20<sup>th</sup>-century Civil Rights Movement and the 21<sup>st</sup>-century election of President Barack Hussein Obama. Moreover, Nelson has once again reaped multiple awards for *Heart and Soul*, an exceptional history that is, in reality, a collective biography of both well-known and unknown heroes across an astonishing canvas that covers a period of three hundred years beginning with slavery and ending with the celebration of the election of the first African American as president of the United States of America.

*Heart and Soul* is indisputably history, exceptionally well narrated, but it is equally of a collective biography of both black and white men and women who made this extraordinary history happen. Here are stories of Frederick Douglass, Harriet Tubman, Booker T. Washington, George Washington Carver, Madam C. J. Walker, Joe Louis Barrow, Jackie Robinson, Rosa Parks, Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr., Louis Armstrong, and many others who have struggled so valiantly to make America *truly* become the nation Bobby Kennedy so movingly described. Throughout the volume, Nelson also pays tribute to white leaders such as presidents Abraham Lincoln, Dwight David Eisenhower, John F. Kennedy, and Lyndon B. Johnson who joined African Americans in their centuries-long struggle for equality.

### ***Black Inventors***

Abdul-Jabbar, Kareem, & Obstfeld, Raymond. *What Color Is My World: The Lost History of African-American Inventors*. Illus. by Ben Boos & A. G. Ford. Somerville, MA: Candlewick Press, 2012.

When readers see the first author's name they inevitably think something such as "Greatest basketball player ever." However, following his exceptional contributions to both college and professional basketball, Kareem Abdul-Jabbar has become an author of at least seven *New York Times* best-selling books on a variety of disciplines. The co-authors structure their biography-oriented history of great African-American inventors using an often funny, but always informative, narration shared by Ella and Herbie, black twin siblings of middle-school age.

The book design is innovative and kid-friendly as well as being instructive. Ella and Herbie's parents both have successful careers that keep them from on-the-spot daily monitoring of the twins' home chores. They hire an adult mentor, Roger Edward Mital, who helps the twins use their summer vacation to contribute mightily to the renovation of the new family home. Along with the valued restoration of their family dwelling, the twins learn from their mentor all about African-American inventors who have greatly improved the lives of people everywhere with their creative problem solving and innovation in fields as diverse as construction, food preservation, medical advances, public safety, mass communication, and transportation. The twins even "meet" the black inventor, George Crum, who invented potato chips.

Along the way, the twins exhibit good study skill habits. Ella realizes the value of Herbie's journaling skills and both proudly share "fast facts" about such great black inventors as Granville T. Woods, Dr. Henry T. Sampson, Lewis Howard Latimer, Dr. Valerie L. Thomas, Dr. Mark Dean, Lloyd A. Hall, Daniel Hale Williams, Dr. Charles Drew and a host of other notable inventors whose stories have all too often been hidden from history by racial prejudice.

The colorful artwork is superb and the myriad inventions are illustrated extremely well. This fun, exciting, informative, and challenging collective biography concludes with valuable author notes plus print and online resources for further inquiries. *What Color Is My World* is a superb model of just how terrific first-rate collective biography can be. See also Louis Haber's *Black Pioneers of Science and Engineering* (Harcourt, 1992).

### ***On Top of the World***

Cleare, John. *Epic Climbs: Eiger, K2, Everest, McKinley, Matterhorn*. **Epic Adventure Series**. New York: Kingfisher, 2011.

The author is well equipped to tell the stories of the five great mountains cited in his adventure tome subtitle. He has been a professional mountain photographer for 50 years and has climbed, skied, explored and led climbing expeditions of the tallest mountains on no less than six of the Earth's continents. He is a documentary film maker who has cinematically chronicled stories of the Matterhorn, the Eiger, and Mt. Everest.

Edmund Hillary and Tenzing Norgay are chief among the very famous mountain climbers and guides due to their first successful ascent of the world's highest mountain, Everest, in 1953. But, Cleare tells in capsule mini-biographies the stories of dozens of other heroic mountain climbers including the tragic story of George Leigh Mallory who attempted to climb Everest in 1924. Mallory vanished just as he was apparently within a very short distance of reaching Everest's summit. Incredibly, an American climbing team found his body seventy-five years after his disappearance. Yet another tragic story is that of Polish climber Wanda Rutkiewicz who led the first all-women team of climbers to the summit of the Eiger, but then tragically disappeared on a solo climb in a 1992 attempt to scale the Nepal Himalaya.

Cleare salutes dozens of mountain climbers whose stories are a mixture of grand yet perilous adventure, triumphs, and horrifying tragedies. Nevertheless, *Epic Climbs* is more of a collective "biography" of five of the world's greatest mountains rather than a history of individual climbers. In five exhilarating chapters he tells of a century of attempts by both men and women to reach the summits of the Eiger, K2, Everest, McKinley, and the Matterhorn. The multiple routes for climbing each giant are colorfully outlined. The particular risks, such as life-threatening weather patterns, associated with each mountain are made clear. The histories of intrepid climbers of the five great mountains are told in thrilling prose befitting retellings of grand adventures. The mechanics of high-altitude climbing including the necessary gear, training, conditioning, and cooperation among climbers are highlighted for each mountain as the author reveals a century-long "biography" or history of each alpine peak.

*Epic Climbs* is wonderfully interactive. Flaps and fold-out pages reveal the beauty and the dangers of each mountain. The fold-outs, especially for Everest, are poster-sized. Both historical black-and-white photographs and brilliantly-hued contemporary pictures greatly heighten the interest readers will find in the five mountain "biographies." Further documentation notes other great alpine peaks, expedition tactics, climbing milestones, a glossary of mountain climbing terms, and a very complete index.

Readers will meet five of the world's greatest alpine challenges and the people who climbed them "because they were there." *Epic Climbs* is a dazzling collective biography of both men and women and the mountains they continue to attempt to master.

### *Great Competitors*

Berman, Len. *The Greatest Moments in Sports*. Naperville, IL: Sourcebooks, Inc., 2009.

Collective biography and times past often merge, a fact that is perfectly logical. Great lives are the touchstones in the superb moments of any historical presentation from athletics to art to music to leadership. *The Greatest Moments in Sports* is a perfect example. Berman is a seasoned sportscaster who selects what he believes to be the 25 greatest events in athletics over the past century. His choices for posterity range across a century of pinnacles and triumphant happenings in the world of sport that include the 1932 baseball World Series, professional hockey (NHL) in the 1980s, the 1975 Wimbledon Tennis Championship Match, The Masters Golf Tournament of 1997, the 1999 Women's World Cup soccer match, the U. S. hockey team's performance at the 1980 Winter Olympics in Lake Placid, New York, and the swimming feats of Team USA at the 2008 Summer Olympic Games in Beijing, China.

Berman is a superb sports writer and he is especially deft in portraying magical moments in his chosen field. However, it is impossible for any author to feature the above-cited events without simultaneously singling out the lives and providing biographical data about such great athletes as Babe Ruth, Arthur Ashe, Wayne Gretzky, Brandi Chastain, and Michael Phelps.

Through vividly described accounts of super moments in sports, Berman also salutes Hank Aaron, Jackie Robinson, Richard Petty, Roger Bannister, Michael Jordan, Billie Jean King, Muhammad Ali, Wilt Chamberlain, Mia Hamm, and Nadia Comaneci.

*The Greatest Moments in Sports* is filled with convincing and dramatic stories, but they would not exist save for the great athletes whose gifts made them happen. Berman places his emphasis not just on events, but upon great athletes as well. To add even more of a collective biographical theme to his book, the writer adds colorful and richly informative side bars that are packed with biographical highlights of great champions. Here is a splendidly

illustrated history of sports that doubles as a first-rate collective biography. It is representative of celebratory publishing.

*Peaceful Heroes*

Winter, Jonah. *Peaceful Heroes*. Illus. by Sean Addy. New York: Scholastic, Inc., 2009.

Biographer Jonah Winter begins this collective biography with the definition of the word “hero” that dates 2500 years back to Ancient Greece. A hero was a warrior who used weapons to defend his people. *Peaceful Heroes* is a collective biography that operates on a higher level. Winter’s 14 heroes are people who remained devoted to coming to the aid of people by preaching, teaching, and serving by their examples peaceful means of making the world a better place in which to live. These are not combatants; they are heroes of nonviolence. They achieved greatness without ever hurting or killing others.

The range of peaceful men and women found in this stellar collective biography begin with Jesus of Nazareth and continue to contemporary leaders such as Aung San Suu Kyi, the democratically elected president of her native country of Burma who remains under house arrest by evil dictators. Many of the peaceful heroes are well known: Mahatma Gandhi, Clara Barton, and Martin Luther King, Jr., while others such as Oscar Romero, Marla Ruzicka, and William Feehan most readers will meet for the first time. Feehan, for example, was a dedicated fireman who sacrificed his own life trying to save others at the World Trade Center on September 11, 2001. Marla Ruzicka was an ordinary U.S. citizen who forfeited her life in 2005 trying to bring aid to families in war-torn, modern-day Iraq.

Each of the 14 profiles tells an inspiring story of how heroes without weapons of destruction have been willing to make incredible sacrifices to give peace and freedom to peoples across time and around the globe without ever inflicting harm on others. Indeed, a fine extension to accompany the reading of *Peaceful Heroes* would be to have students chart the worldwide pathways of peace the 14 subjects followed. The subjects represent heroic men and women equally as well as their differing races, ethnicity, and religions.

Winter’s words are greatly enhanced thanks to the bold artwork of Sean Addy. The artist makes use of sepia tones in his portraits of the heroic men and women that symbolize bronze statues, peace medals, or emblems that fit the deeds of each. Bold and enlarged words are also incorporated within the pages of *Peaceful Heroes* that represent the great virtue each hero championed. “CARE” is associated with Clara Barton just as “LOVE” is allied with Jesus of Nazareth and “JUSTICE” accompanies the profile of the peaceful Islamic leader, Abdul Ghaffar Khan. Whether the 14 heroes of peace are famous or relatively unknown to most readers, here is a model book of collected biographies that will inspire gifted youths to want to engage in much further reading and research.

Biography is...”A region bounded on the north by history, on the south by fiction, on the east by obituary, and on the west by tedium.” Philip Guedalla

The individual or stand-alone volumes of collective biography reviewed in this manuscript are uniformly excellent, but they are only beginning points. Collective Biographies, Part II, will feature exemplary collective biographies series, an honor roll or bibliography of additional recommended titles within the genre, share prompts for home and classroom extensions, note digital connections, and will pay special attention to the importance of read alouds, even for secondary gifted and talented students.

Jerry Flack, The University of Colorado

**\*Who Are They? What Made Them Unique?**

Jerrie Cobb, aviatrix (*Almost Astronauts*)

The-Other-Magpie, Crow warrior (*Wild Women of the Wild, Wild West*)

Dr. Valerie L. Thomas, Black physicist, NASA manager and inventor (*What Color Is My World?*)

Andrew “Rube” Foster, Black baseball player and official in the Negro leagues (*We Are the Ship*)

Toni Kurz, mountain climber (*Epic Climbs*)

**Reasons that Charles Dickens Matters for the Gifted:  
Celebrating the Bicentennial of His Birth  
Michael E. Walters Center for the Study of the Humanities in the Schools**

“. . . As the elms bent to one another, like giants who were whispering secrets, and after a few seconds of such repose, fell into a violent flurry, tossing their wild arms about, as if their late confidences were really too wicked for their peace of mind, some weather-beaten ragged old rooks'-nests, burdening their higher branches, swung like wrecks upon a stormy sea.” (From *David Copperfield* by Charles Dickens, 1850, Chapter 1).

“Not only is the day waning, but the year. The low sun is fiery, and yet cold, behind the monastery ruin, and the Virginia creeper on the cathedral wall has showered half its deep-red leaves down on the pavement. There has been rain this afternoon, and a wintry shudder goes among the little pools on the cracked, uneven flagstones, and through the giant elm-trees as they shed a gust of tears. Their fallen leaves lie strewn thickly about. . . .” (From *The Mystery of Edwin Drood* by Charles Dickens, 1870, Chapter 2).

The first reason is that Dickens gives the reader enjoyment. The literary art contained in any of Dickens’ books is at a higher level than usually encountered in reading most fiction. One of the characteristics of gifted children’s sensibility is their capacity for intellectual and emotional enjoyment at a high level (Fisher, 2000). Dickens was also a popular writer who appealed to all levels of society.

His ability to describe his characters’ physical traits gave readers an incredible insight into their psychological states of mind. In his last book he even makes his villains sympathetic by giving reasons concerning why they functioned as they did. Mr. Jasper, the villain of *The Mystery of Edwin Drood* (1870), is afflicted by pathological envy. It is due to an obsession he has towards his nephew, Edwin Drood, because Drood was engaged to Rosa Bud.

Another reason Dickens matters to gifted students is that his writing has both complexity and unity at the same time. There is not a novel by Dickens that doesn’t blend humor and tragedy. He realized that the human condition has complexities that form a unified personality. A characteristic of the gifted is their ability to perceive unity within contradictory personality traits. Therefore, they will learn a great deal from reading about Dickens’ characters.

Dickens’ descriptions of landscapes are among the most artistic in world literature. You cannot separate his sense of place from the content and plot of any of his novels. This is why they have been so successfully made into movies.

His involvement with social issues is another reason that Dickens matters for the gifted. For example, in the first chapter of *The Mystery of Edwin Drood*, he describes Victorian England’s opium dens. Drug addiction was a major social problem during this period of British history. Individuals partook of opium and sometimes laudanum, a mixture of opium and alcohol, because there were no medically developed pain medications. These drugs also served as a form of self-medication for depression.

The most significant reason that Dickens matters to gifted individuals is he is a role model for creativity. He was not formally educated in a university. Most of his creations were influenced by his own personal experiences, e.g., the poverty he experienced in his youth. Moreover, he constantly took long walks throughout London, interacting with the sea of humanity he encountered during these ambulatory rambles. Dickens matters for the gifted mainly because he traversed the same intellectual, artistic and emotional journeys that any gifted person will travel in life.

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