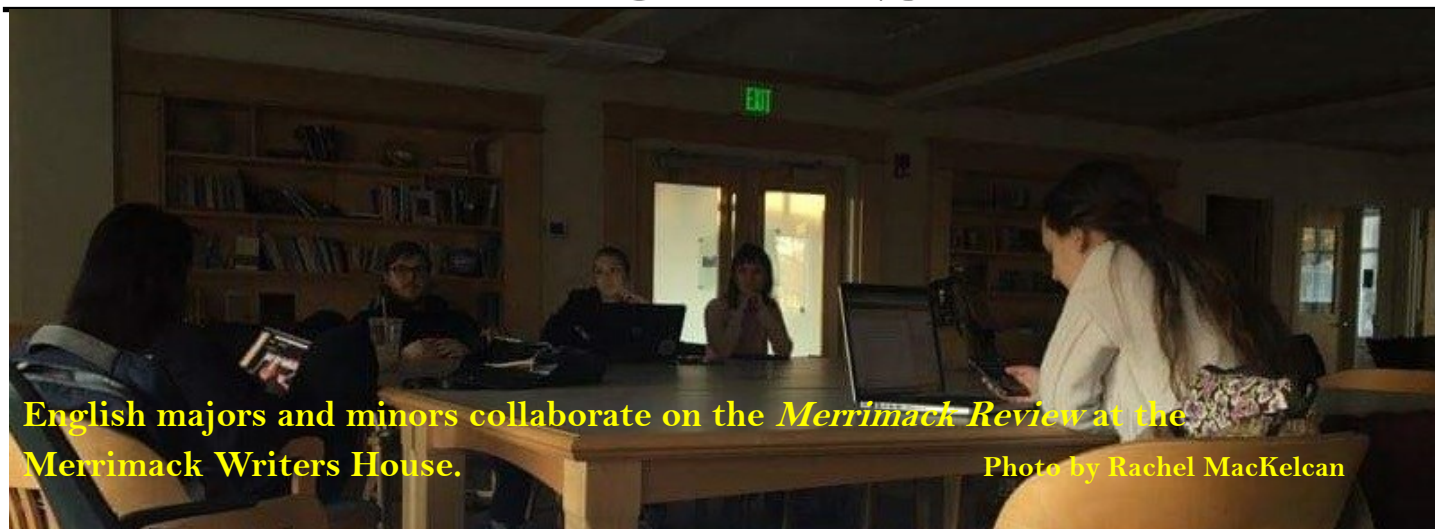


THE BROADSHEET



English majors and minors collaborate on the *Merrimack Review* at the Merrimack Writers House.

Photo by Rachel MacKelcan

THIS ISSUE

SEVEN MAJORS WILL
PRESENT AT ANNUAL
CONFERENCE

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SIGMA TAU'S SENSATIONAL SEVEN

By Bridget Kennedy

The students are about to have a once-in-a-lifetime experience, in part because you can only present your first conference paper once, but also because we're going to have an entire team of people there to cheer each other on...So this is a perfect storm of awesome—Professor Ellen McWhorter

Seven Merrimack English majors have taken one important step toward professional recognition of their creative and academic achievements. Specifically, their work will be included among the 600 accepted submissions from 880 chapters that will be featured at this year's annual Sigma Tau Delta International Honor Society Conference.

The students are Dakota Durbin, Kileigh Stranahan, Kiera Duggan, Jacques Denault, Catherine Tenore-Nortrup, Rachel MacKelcan, and Bridget Kennedy. Their success represents a noteworthy accomplishment, but comes as no surprise to Professor McWhorter, who observed, "The number of acceptances this year bears out what we in the English Department have been saying for years: our majors are top-notch and can gain national recognition if they take the time to seek out opportunities." (*continued on next page*)

An official publication of the Merrimack College English Department, The Broadsheet is published four times during the academic calendar year. Its mission is to celebrate the English Department's role in promoting the literary arts on campus, to acknowledge the accomplishments of faculty and students, to profile students and alumni, and to create a forum in which issues relevant to English studies can be discussed.

For four days at the end of March, Merrimack students will take advantage of this incredible opportunity to present their work before an international audience in Louisville, Kentucky. This year's conference theme focuses on "Recreation" and this year's submissions explore the many meanings of this topic in academic papers and creative pieces. This article features interviews with all seven Merrimack presenters.

DAKOTA DURBIN, JUNIOR

How does it feel to have a paper accepted for presentation at an academic conference?

I feel ecstatic, both over the acceptance of my paper and the opportunity to present at the Sigma Tau Delta Conference. I believe I learned about this conference my freshman year, before I had even heard of Sigma Tau Delta, and the thought of presenting my work at such an event seemed as thrilling and daunting as it does to this day. I have never presented at an academic conference before, but just to have this opportunity not only to present my ideas but also hear other people's ideas is amazing to me.

The professors in this department are always talking about how when you write an academic paper you are joining [a] conversation [about] literature along with everyone else who has written before you. That idea has always captivated me and inspired me to improve my writing. I am ready to join the conversation.

What is the paper about/main thesis?

My paper is titled "Grief & Evolution: The Burden of the Revenger" and I am examining the role of the "revenger" character in English Renaissance Drama, specifically through the ideological and emotional evolutions of Hieronimo from Thomas Kyd's *The Spanish Tragedy* and Hamlet from Shakespeare's *Hamlet*. Through select speeches in each play, I map out the transformations of each character and argue the point that Hamlet presents a more evolved and relatable tragic protagonist than Hieronimo because of his complex thought and actions, as well as his uncertainty, which reflects fears and contemplations that I believe to be innate to the human experience.

Where did the idea to write about this come from? (Was it for class? For personal interests?)

Are you passionate about your chosen subject? How did that influence your choice?

The idea came to me while taking Professor Plasse's Renaissance Drama course, which focused on Shakespeare's contemporaries who don't as often get in the limelight. I thought it was a fantastic course, introducing me to some really interesting and fun plays, which I probably wouldn't have found otherwise. I am very passionate about my topic, because I absolutely love revenge stories. I believe that is why I love Renaissance drama so much, because it is so filled with tales of revenge, violence, and retribution. I have been a fan of revenge themes for some time, enjoying movies like *The Crow* and *V for Vendetta*. I love watching how tragedy can affect a character and how attempting to take an act of revenge can impact the character and the world they live in. I find something incredibly moving in that, so yes, I am pretty excited to get to present on my paper!

Why did you decide to submit the paper?

I have wanted to submit a paper to this conference since I first heard that it existed. The hardest part was deciding just what type of paper to submit. As with most things that I write and study about, I knew that the paper had to be something that I could present with charisma and enthusiasm. I knew that if I could do that then I would also be having fun doing it. This paper is the most recent of papers that I have written that I have been very invested in and I wanted the opportunity to talk about it and develop my ideas even more. Submitting this paper was just as much a learning experience as it was an accomplishment.

What do you hope to gain/learn from going to the conference or this experience in general?

I hope to learn from others who are attending and presenting. I have been given this unique opportunity to be in a room with hundreds of peers who presumably share my enthusiasm for literature and English studies and I can only imagine how much knowledge they have to share. *(continued on next page)*

I am excited to be able to speak and talk about what I love but I already know what I think. There is no fun or surprise in that. The real amazing experience will be hearing what others have to say. I am hoping for some lively and provocative conversation, which I am sure I will get, if these English students are anything like our own here at Merrimack!

What do you hope to gain/learn from going to the conference or this experience in general?

I hope to learn from others who are attending and presenting. I have been given this unique opportunity to be in a room with hundreds of peers who presumably share my enthusiasm for literature and English studies and I can only imagine how much knowledge they have to share. I am excited to be able to speak and talk about what I love but I already know what I think. There is no fun or surprise in that. The real amazing experience will be hearing what others have to say. I am hoping for some lively and provocative conversation.

KILEIGH STRANAHAN, SENIOR

How does it feel to have a paper accepted for presentation at an academic conference?

Honestly, pretty awesome. When I sent in my paper, I didn't really have any expectation of being accepted. When I got the email that it was, it was kind of like getting an A on a paper you worked really hard on. It was definitely a good feeling.

What is the paper about/main thesis?

My paper was about taking control of female agency through the recreation of identity. The theme of this conference was "Recreation." I remembered that I had read the novel *Fantomina* by Eliza Haywood, in which the main character changes her identity numerous times in order to control her relationship with a man, and I thought it was very fitting.

Where did the idea to write about this come from? (Was it for class? For personal interests?) Are you passionate about your chosen subject? How did that influence your choice?

This idea came from Professor Scherwatzky's Sex, Race and Empire course, where I had originally read *Fantomina*. I had written a paper about the book before but had to completely change it from an essay

that essentially just fulfilled the guidelines of an assignment to a paper for presentation. I really did like this book and the topic of my paper, which I think in part is what made me choose it and what made this paper good enough to be accepted.

I think you kind of have to enjoy what you're writing about to want to put in the work to make it the best it can be.

Why did you decide to submit the paper?

I decided to submit this paper for all the reasons I listed before and I thought it would be really great experience to attend this conference.

What do you hope to gain/learn from going to the conference or this experience in general?

Unfortunately, I cannot attend, because I have already agreed to attend another convention that same weekend, but I know all of the other Sigma Tau Delta members will do great!

KIERA DUGGAN, JUNIOR

How does it feel to have a paper accepted for presentation at an academic conference?

It's very exciting! I wasn't sure what kind of chance I had when submitting my paper, so getting accepted was really cool and pretty validating.

What is the paper about/main thesis?

My paper is about Dickens' *Our Mutual Friend*, specifically about the relationship the daughters in the novel have with their fathers.

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Where did the idea to write about this come from? (Was it for class? For personal interests?) Are you passionate about your chosen subject? How did that influence your choice? This was a paper I wrote for my Victorian Lit class from Fall 2015 that I cleaned up and edited.

I wouldn't say I'm necessarily more passionate about the Victorian era than I am other periods, but I really liked *Our Mutual Friend* and I had fun exploring the rather backward influence the book's bad fathers had on their daughters. Given that I didn't have the time to write anything new, I felt that this paper, out of what I had written so far for school, was the strongest I had on hand and had the best chance of getting accepted.

Why did you decide to submit the paper?

I wasn't sure what standard of work they were looking for, or if I would even be able to attend the conference at all, but I decided there would be no harm in trying. Worst case scenario, I wouldn't be accepted, and I would be able to work on mistakes and try again next year.

It's always better to try and then fail than miss out on a potential opportunity!

What do you hope to gain/learn from going to the conference or this experience in general?

Unfortunately I can't attend, but just preparing an academic paper in general for a conference has been a learning experience. It requires a bit of a different eye than editing creative work, and, while I've written my fair share of college and high school papers, knowing that many people from all over the country also wanted to get accepted forced me to review even more

carefully than I normally would. Hopefully I can try again next year in the hope that I will actually be able to go!

**JACQUES
DENAULT, SENIOR**

How does it feel to have a paper accepted for presentation at an academic conference?



It feels great. It's a wonderful opportunity, and it's exciting to have the chance to go and meet with others in the field, and be more involved with the community.

Where did the idea to write about this come from? (Was it for class? For personal interests?) Are you passionate about your chosen subject? How did that influence your choice?

The inspiration for the poems came from everywhere, I suppose. There was no 'divine' inspiration, or epiphanic event, I just wanted to write about what I saw.

Why did you decide to submit the paper?

I like to go for all of the opportunities I can, and it seemed like an extremely cool chance to get out into the field.

What do you hope to gain/learn from going to the conference or this experience in general?

There's so much that I hope to learn, but as for specifics, none. Just the experience of it all.

**RACHEL MACKELCAN,
JUNIOR**

How does it feel to have a paper accepted for presentation at an academic conference?

It feels surreal. To be quite honest I didn't know if I could do it. I tried not to care but the day the emails were meant to come I couldn't help but hit refresh a dozen or so times. It's an amazing experience and I can't wait to go, but for now all I can say is that I am grateful and humbled.

What is the paper about/main thesis?

My paper, "Stuck Beyond the Sweet Spot: Looking at Wordsworth, Suffering and Immortality" in relation to *The Vampire Diaries* is about looking at William Wordsworth's Lucy poems and their ideas concerning death and immortality and comparing them to those from the television hit *The Vampire Diaries*.
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I wanted to talk about how we always need to die to be immortal, but in many cases, like the two examples above, Death, especially at an early age, seems to be that gateway to being *stuck* in immortality and in memory.

Where did the idea to write about this come from? (Was it for class? For personal interests?) Are you passionate about your chosen subject? How did that influence your choice?

The idea stemmed from a class assignment I suppose, but, without sounding too confident, I feel like the idea was always there in my head; I just needed someone to give me a reason to unlock the room it was held in. It was easy to choose *The Vampire Diaries*, because in many ways I grew up with the series, watching it dozens of times. I identified with the pain and the realness of its characters. I fell in love with the idea and I wanted to give something back to it.

Why did you decide to submit the paper?

Honestly, I was under a time-crunch and it was one of those papers I loved enough to admit it was done and let it go. As a writer, I often struggle to finish projects but this one seemed like it deserved to be completed. I trimmed it up, got some help from a fellow Sigma Tau member and shipped it out.

I never expected such a strange and seemingly far-fetched topic to be accepted; now I am glad I took the chance on it.

What do you hope to gain/learn from going to the conference or this experience in general?

As always I want a chance to grow and to learn, maybe inspire someone if I have the chance. I'm not hoping for some sort of fairy tale, where a business or editing group will hear me and offer me an internship or anything, but a couple new Linked In connections wouldn't hurt either. Honestly I'm just hoping to have an experience that will open my eyes to the brilliant minds out there and sink my teeth into some new and interesting topics

CATHERINE TENORE-NORTRUP, SENIOR

How does it feel to have a paper accepted for presentation at an academic conference?

Honestly it's a bit overwhelming, but I'm honored that my paper was accepted to the conference. I first learned about the conference a couple of years ago and never thought that I would actually get the chance to go, so I'm extremely excited to have the chance.

What is the paper about/main thesis?

My paper is centered around the Robert Frost poem "The Subverted Flower" with a focus on the sinister dynamic between the two subjects, a man and a young woman, as well as the representation of them through other animals and objects.

Where did the idea to write about this come from? (Was it for class? For personal interests?) Are you passionate about your chosen subject? How did that influence your choice?

If I remember correctly, I first wrote this paper for a class that I was taking with Prof. McWhorter, and I thought that the subject matter was really interesting in that it can be interpreted in extremely different ways. Some people interpret it as an almost love story, while the interpretation I wrote about was a bit more sinister in nature. I think at the time I wrote it I was fascinated by how distinct both interpretations are, and yet still slightly disturbed by what I read, and that fascination was definitely what helped me to choose to submit this piece.

I honestly love talking about it and hearing what other people think, and I wanted to choose an essay that captured my love of the subject, while giving me a chance to learn more about it.

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Why did you decide to submit the paper?

I decided to submit the paper because I loved the subject matter and thought that it had a chance at being accepted. I had heard from my friend that it was a great experience for her and figured that I had nothing to lose and even if it wasn't accepted in the end at least I wouldn't regret trying.

What do you hope to gain/learn from going to the conference or this experience in general?

I want to learn a bit more about what a conference is in general, how they're structured, how the panels are held, and experience how it feels to present a paper. We're going with a great group of people, and I think it will be a great learning experience for all of us.

BRIDGET KENNEDY, JUNIOR (AND AUTHOR OF THIS ARTICLE)

I am also lucky enough to be attending and presenting my paper "Do I Dare Disturb the Universe" at this year's Sigma Tau conference. I compared the agency of self-actualization in the T.S. Eliot Poem "The Love Song of J. Alfred Prufrock" and Zora Neale Hurston's novel *Their Eyes Were Watching God*. I had read *Their Eyes Were Watching God* in high school for AP Literature summer reading, and I fell in love with it. I had the chance to reread it for Dr. McWhorter's Harlem Renaissance Literature class, and ended up taking away a much deeper understanding of Janie's story than I had in high school, and I wanted to write about it. I chose Prufrock because it was one of my favorite poems from the Modern American Literature class and I wanted to do something with my T.S. Eliot, fangirling in the same way I wanted to explore Janie's story. I am at the point in my life at which I relate to these stories most.

While I was nervous at first to submit a paper, after days of editing the feeling of hitting 'submit' was pretty empowering. I hope to learn from academic peers whom I will have the privilege of meeting, in a setting where everyone will have similar passion and interest in writing and literature. This conference will

be filled with some of the brightest young minds in the country and I am so excited to take part in that. As for the experience of writing a paper worthy of presentation at this conference, I'll hold myself and my writing to much higher standards and try to be more comfortable exploring unfamiliar themes, genres, and authors.



"The number of acceptances this year bears out what we in the English Department have been saying for years: our majors are top-notch and can gain national recognition if they take the time to seek out opportunities." --Professor Ellen McWhorter

From the Department File Cabinet: Alumni Perspectives

Michael Castano
Class of '12

Q. What kind of professional work have you been doing since graduation?

Professionally, I have taught elementary and middle school. Currently, I am a fourth grade teacher in Haverhill, MA at Pentucket Lake Elementary School.

Q. To what extent has the English major helped you do this work?

As a teacher, language makes up a huge part of my day. I am responsible for teaching a reading workshop, writing workshop, and a word study block. In addition to teaching students, there are many adults I must communicate with daily. Communication can be oral or written, and in both occasions, word choice is incredibly important. Failing to present information in a serious and succinct way could jeopardize my credibility or occupy so much of my time that I would never get anything else done.

Q. Have you earned any advanced degrees since your undergraduate graduation? If so, what are they? If not, do you plan to pursue graduate study in the future?

I have earned my Master's Degree in Secondary Education from Merrimack. I have toyed with the idea of getting another degree in Administration with the goal to be a principal one day.

Q. What did you like best about the Merrimack English major?

The professors. They are some of the most literate, passionate, and creative people I have had the privilege to learn from. Their courses are designed to showcase their strengths and authentically highlight all the unique areas of the English major. Additionally, you are not only getting a degree in English, but you will inevitably walk away with a deeper understanding of social commentary, history, philosophy, psychology, and occasionally wit.

Q. What advice would you give current English majors?

Copying an "A" will get me an "A," so I will paraphrase a quote Dr. Scherwatzky told me when I was an English major. The books we read do not exist in some sort of vacuum. They have a very real importance, and they continue to hold a universal message—some deeper truth that if approached sincerely will help us become more conscientious and compassionate human beings. The English major is more than a book club. Oh yeah, it is also important to actually read the ENTIRE book you are studying. Finally, if these courses are still offered, I cannot recommend them more strongly: "Restoration and Eighteenth Century Literature," "Gods and Monsters: The Shelley Circle," and "Studies in Beowulf and Old English Literature. "



Thomas Sipsey

Class of '07

Q. What kind of professional work have you been doing since graduation?

Since graduating from Merrimack College, I have assumed a number of roles in secondary education. I began my career as a high school English teacher. While teaching, I also was a varsity head basketball coach at the high school level. During my time as a teacher and a coach, I enrolled in a secondary education school administration Master's program. I completed my course work in 2011 and have been in various administrative roles since. I am currently an Assistant Principal at Central Catholic High School in Lawrence, MA.



Q. To what extent has the English major helped you do this work?

My experience as an English major has literally helped me every step of my professional career. There is not a day that goes by when I am not involved in meaningful written and spoken communication. Clear communication with my colleagues and parents of our students is so important to my role at my school. Without being able to appropriately and accurately express myself, I would not be very good at my job. Likewise, I feel that I am able to interpret and understand what people are trying to say when I am working with them. I feel fortunate that my experience at Merrimack College enabled me to become a better reader, listener, writer and speaker. I look back on my time as a student and I am thankful for the tools and skills that I gained at the College.

Q. Have you earned any advanced degrees since your undergraduate graduation? If so, what are they? If not, do you plan to pursue graduate study in the future?

I graduated from American International College in May 2011 with a Master's degree in School Administration.

Q. What did you like best about the Merrimack English major?

I feel blessed when I think of my time at Merrimack College. The college as a whole was a very good fit for me. It met my needs as a young man academically, spiritually, athletically and socially. As an English major, I grew up quite a bit. I vividly remember some of the struggles that I faced as a sophomore student. Slowly but surely, those tough assignments and classes became fewer and fewer. Professor Scherwatzky and Professor Vatalaro were key figures in my development as a student, writer and thinker. If I had to pick one skill that I think was truly developed as a student it would be that I learned how to read correctly. Reading as an English major was no longer opening a book, skimming the pages and hoping I remember the important topics. Reading as an English major at Merrimack College meant that I needed to take my time, pay attention, immerse myself in the content and take thorough notes. I can say that I learned this skill through experience. Some of those experiences were challenging. Many of those experiences were rewarding. Ultimately, my relationship with Professor Scherwatzky and Professor Vatalaro pushed me to become the student that I wanted to be. My time as an English major was critical in helping me become the person I am today.

Q. What advice would you give current English majors?

Take your time, pay attention. That would be my advice. As a student, take advantage of the literature that you are reading and enjoy it. Take your time to understand what is in front of you and use your new found knowledge to your best ability when drafting your papers. I look back on my time writing papers and I enjoy thinking about how much I developed as a writer when I finally slowed down and focused on what was in front of me. Professionally, my advice would be to be confident in your skills. English majors have the unique ability to listen, read and write much better than most people. I do believe that having an English degree is an asset. Use the skills you have gained to advance yourself whether it be at a graduate school or in the professional world. The skills gained as an English major have no expiration date.

Jennifer (Salamone) Tierney

Class of '07

Q. What kind of professional work have you been doing since graduation?

Since graduating, I have had three major jobs. I spent three years as an abstract writer/editor and Quality Control specialist at EBSCO Publishing. I then worked for three years as the Manager at the Andover Bookstore. And for the past four years, I have been working at Crimson Hexagon (a social media analytics SaaS company in Boston), first as Knowledge Manager (a type of corporate Librarian) and now as Engineering Operations Manager.”

Q. To what extent has the English major helped you do this work?

I've found that at all of these different companies, I have always been able to adapt into whatever role I was interested in or asked to step into. This adaptability is definitely something that was strengthened as part of my time in the English program. And the courage to advocate for myself was also something I gained confidence in at Merrimack. Learning how to construct and present a strong argument has been invaluable to me since graduating and as I have said at every English major Career Night that I've attended since graduating, the most important skill that any person in today's workforce can have is the ability to communicate. It is how you land a job, how you create confidence among coworkers, advocate for compensation changes, prove you deserve a promotion, lead projects, and an infinite number of other example scenarios. If I had not built such excellent communication skills at Merrimack, I would not be as successful as I am today. I have specifically been chosen to lead projects and teams because my supervisors (all the way up to the CEO) and my colleagues believe that I have excellent communication and organization skills. Writing papers is an amazing practice for a future in project management, a skill set that is becoming increasingly sought after in today's market.

Q. Have you earned any advanced degrees since your undergraduate graduation? If so, what are they? If not, do you plan to pursue graduate study in the future?

I have a Master's of Science in Library and Information Science (MSLIS) from Drexel University. I have also continued my professional studies by taking classes in project management and leadership.

Q. What did you like best about the Merrimack English major?

I loved the exercise of taking a piece of writing and exploring it completely—of reading something and then constructing well thought out points in support of an argument. And when I think back on that time, I am so glad that I was given the opportunity to explore so many different topics, periods, and authors.

Q. What advice would you give current English majors?

If you are not sure exactly what you would like to do after graduation, do not fret! Unlike the Civil Engineering majors (my husband, Joe Tierney '08), we do not have one distinct and clear path into the world of employment. But that makes us a very valuable commodity indeed. We can fit into so many different roles and follow our interests and passions as they change over time. Focus on learning how to think, how to reason, how to argue with respect and conviction! Then you'll be able to find success no matter where you land. Good luck and enjoy these amazing years!



Brian Courtmanche

Class of '92

Q. What kind of professional work have you been doing since graduation?

I have been working in academic libraries since 1996 and am currently Library Director at Endicott College.

Q. To what extent has the English major helped you do this work?

The English major has enabled me to critically analyze and better understand the written word throughout varying contexts, as well as express myself effectively using the medium. It helps me every single day to connect with people and ideas.

Q. Have you earned any advanced degrees since your undergraduate graduation? If so, what are they? If not, do you plan to pursue graduate study in the future?

Since graduating with a Bachelor of Arts in English, I have also earned a Master of Arts degree in English and a Master of Library Science degree.

Q. What did you like best about the Merrimack English major?

The English department faculty members who taught me at Merrimack College are wonderful educators and excellent people. They were encouraging and supportive every step of the way, opening doors to knowledge and challenging me to explore every avenue of scholastic inquiry. They have become lifelong mentors to myself and many graduates of the program.

Q. What advice would you give current English majors?

Stay curious and optimistic. Appreciate the wonderful education that you are earning and delight in challenges and opportunities. You may have numerous jobs and careers ahead in life; all the while your English major education will hold you in good stead throughout the adventure. A sense of humor about the world and oneself is an excellent life skill. Be thankful for all the good people in your life that have encouraged and enabled you to be prepared for the future, and be one of those good people to others whom you meet.”



Interviews were conducted by Dakota Durbin.



Meet the Sophomore Class

By Kileigh Stranahan

Delaney Tibbetts



When she's not reading F. Scott Fitzgerald for class, or *The Fault in Our Stars* in her free time, you can find Delaney Tibbetts with her 7-year-old horse, Dazzle. Delaney loves horses and has been an avid equestrian for 16 years. She

also loves cuddling up and binge watching Disney movies, labeling herself a "movie fanatic". Alongside her adoration for horses and Disney films, she has a strong passion for non-profit work. In her spare time, Delaney devotes herself to the non-profit youth organization called 4-H.

With this organization, she uses the skills she's obtained as an English major to teach communication and leadership skills, alongside some agricultural work. As a 4-H member herself, she has competed nationally four different times for public speaking.

Because of these experiences, she originally thought she was destined to be a Communications major. Very quickly, however, she realized that her passion is in English studies and selected English and Secondary Education, in the hope of one day becoming a high school English teacher. Delaney observed, "Even if I decide later down the road that teaching isn't the path I want to take, English courses prepare you so much for the real world."



Emily Stephens

Being a student athlete and an English and Criminology major isn't always easy, but when you're passionate enough about many things, it's worth it. Washington native Emily Stephens loves sports and is a member of the Women's Basketball team here at Merrimack. Time management is something she has definitely had to incorporate into her life. When she's not on the court or engaged with class work (which doesn't occur frequently), she can be found creative writing for fun or curled up on her bed in front of *The Office*, with a carton of Ben and Jerry's in hand.

Emily discovered her love for literature after taking a few AP English courses in high school. Here, she became a big fan of female writers Jane Austen and Emily Dickinson. When she arrived at college, she decided to double up and add English into her major during her second semester because she found herself missing writing and literature.

Emily Stephens (continued)



Her favorite English course so far has been Creative Writing Fiction. Her favorite genre is the short story, so this course was right up her alley. She particularly likes that the English department gives its students so much freedom noting,

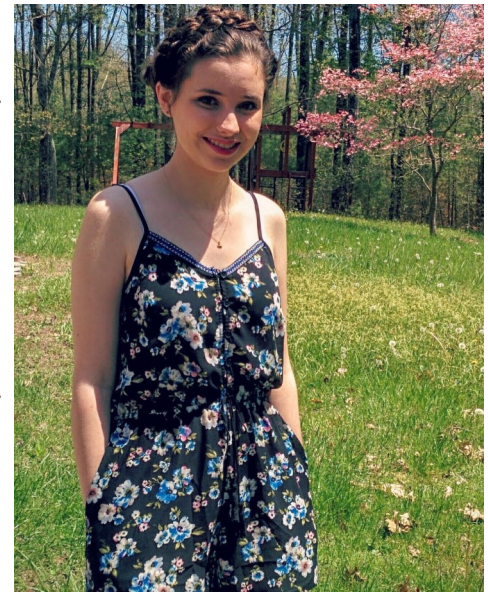
“I like the ability to choose your concentration, and customize the courses to your desire. For those interested in strictly literature studies you have the option to pursue that. If your interest is in film or creative writing, you can concentrate your classes around that.” Although she is from Washington (and not a Patriots fan), she really enjoys the English program at this New England college.

Isabella Connor

Literature has always been a part of Isabella Connor’s life, from when she was very young reading the *American Girl* books, *Harry Potter* and *Anne Gables*, to when she discovered Jane Austen in middle school and fell madly in love. When she is not reading she’s either drawing or watching pop-culture films (particularly Star Wars or Marvel). When she got to college, one might have thought choosing English as her major should have been a no-brainer. However, it turned out to be a little more complicated than that. Isabella entered Merrimack unsure of what she wanted to declare as a major and was hesitant to decide.

During the spring semester of her freshman year, she declared the English major, inspired by one particularly goofy, yet strict English teacher she had in her freshman year of high school. Her instructor talked about literature with such passion and zeal that it really captured her attention. She recalls that it was the hardest class she had, but she loved it.

She told me, “I remembered how much fun I had in my high school English classes, and even though they were challenging, when you’re passionate about something, challenging yourself in order to improve can be a really good thing, so here I am!”



Aside from this enthusiasm about English, she really loves history as well. Currently she works at The House of Seven Gables Museum in Salem, MA and combines her two favorite things every day. She hopes at some point she can add on a History minor.

Ashley McLaughlin

A love for language is something many English majors share. Ashley McLaughlin, however, loves and aspires to learn many different languages. Serving as a Resident Director on campus hogs up a lot of her time, between setting up programs for her residents and keeping “on-duty” hours. When she has release time from her job and her class work, she gathers with several of her friends and attempts to learn Italian, French, Korean and Russian.

Ashley has been devoted to English studies ever since high school. When overcome by the decision of what to do with her life, she recalled speaking about this to her English teacher during her senior year. Ashley said that her instructor, “pointed out how much I excelled in literature and writing, in teaching those around me when they were struggling in the class and

Ashley McLaughlin (continued)

that she really and truly believed I could make it as a professor.” Ever since that discussion, Ashley was hooked and knew that English studies was the path for her.

Her favorite courses have been the Creative Writing Fiction course and her Sophomore Seminar course that she is taking now. She noted that she has enjoyed all of her English courses so far, but these two in particular because of the atmosphere and the close-knit connection she felt with



her classmates. Outside of the classroom, she finds herself drawn to fiction as well and enjoys Jane Austen, Edgar Allen Poe, Charlotte Bronte, and F. Scott Fitzgerald

Melissa Clark

Books and Literature help us all in different ways. For Melissa Clark, if she can find a little bit of herself in stories, it helps her in her every day life by giving her confidence and a voice. She describes herself as very talkative and outgoing and gives this credit to books she has read. Some of her favorites include: *The Perks of Being a Wallflower*, *The Awakening*, *The Book Thief*, and *The Great Gatsby*. If she isn't reading books, she enjoys watching television or going to the theater.

Currently, Melissa is participating in the play *My Fair Lady* at Merrimack and is a part of the Concert Choir. She loves her classes because they allow her to be more involved and get to know people with the same interests. She remarked, “I am doing what I love” and said that she wouldn't change her major for the world. When someone even mentions a book that Melissa hasn't read before, she makes sure she does. Melissa really loves riddles. This is one of her favorites: Q: A guy is born in 1628; today he turns sixteen. How is that possible? A: He was born in hotel room number 1628!



The Benefits of Reading the Classics?

A Liverpool University Study enters the Discussion

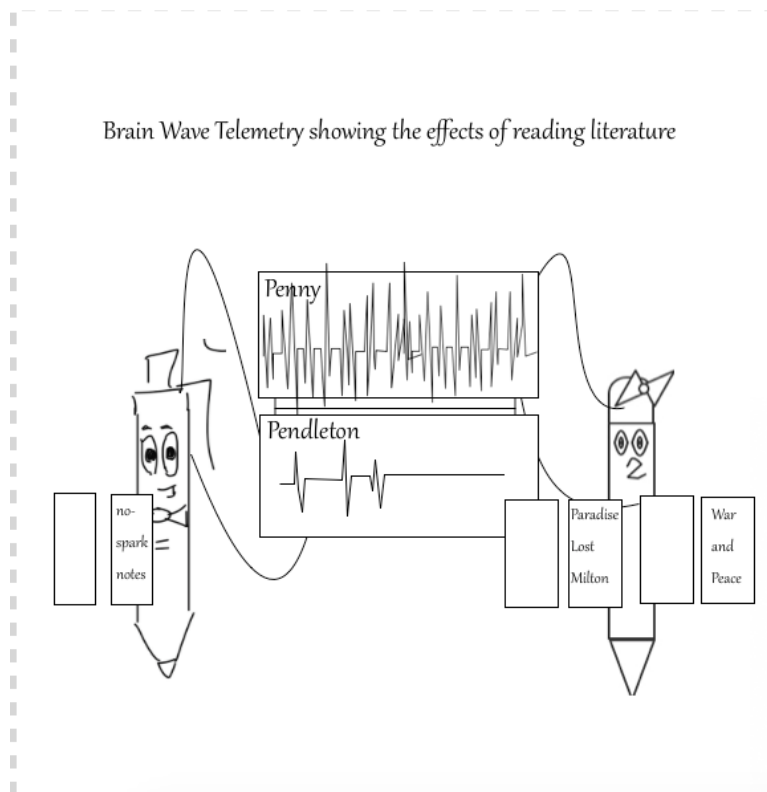
By: Rosemary Morton

At some point in our lives, we have either read or been forced to read classic literature. Why are classics important? What happens when we read them? A study done at Liverpool University set out to address these questions. Researchers discovered that reading works by Shakespeare and Wordsworth, for example, increases brain activity significantly.

Researchers compared brain wave signatures in individuals reading a Shakespeare play with those reading annotated study aids, such as “No Fear Shakespeare” or “Sparknotes.” Brain “scans showed more electrical activity in the brain than the more pedestrian versions.” When the Shakespeare reader encountered a difficult word, brain activity spiked. During encounters with less difficult texts brain activity dropped. This survey prompted me to ask an obvious question: did the participants actually understand what they read? I also wondered if they could follow the narrative.

It is all well and good for researchers to state that curling up with Shakespeare challenges the brain, but if participants can’t comprehend what they’re reading elevated brain activity might not mean all that much. I know this from personal experience.

The first time I encountered classic literature was perhaps in the second and third grade. I found myself drawn to the Children’s Classics series of books. This series featured texts that were easier to process than the originals by scaling down the language while maintaining much of the narrative substance. Though some of the literary merits of the originals were sacrificed, these versions succeeded at introducing children to stories such as *Little Women* or the *Secret Garden*, sparing them the hand-wringing struggle with diction.



From a fairly young age, I was introduced to stories in many platforms and genres. My family did this to introduce me to rich narratives and promote my creativity. The wonderful plots behind these narratives are what I vividly remember, not the language that delivered them so much. One such example is *Little Women*. Despite never reading the novel, it is the one that I recall the most from my childhood. I connected with the characters, especially Joe and her desires to read as much as she could and travel everywhere. Experiences such as this one have carried over into my adulthood. Today I like novels that draw me into their worlds and connect me to their characters.

Despite the love for stories I developed in my childhood, I had a difficult time reading when I actually entered grade school. I struggled with phonics and this issue caused me to experience difficulty with processing and spelling words. The Liverpool study, therefore, strikes home for me, because it concentrates on the benefits of grappling with text at the level of diction. I mention this aspect of the study, because I wonder if, like I did, some of the participants experienced learning difficulties in the past. Such difficulties destroy an individual's confidence. Researchers noted that some of the participants tripped over difficult words and had to go back and reread, mulling over the word's meaning. For many students, difficulty with diction and complex syntax can make reading frustrating, drowning out the allure of the story. In school, I often found myself mispronouncing words that I already knew.



I recollect vividly reading Dickens' *A Christmas Carol* for the first time. My teacher selected this work because he suspected most of the students would have recognized the narrative. Though he was right, students still had trouble with the text, purely because of its language. Some of my classmates had to switch novels halfway through the assignment because they could not follow Dickens' prose. They knew the general story but, because the language was so difficult, they were unable to invest themselves in the narrative.

Then came Shakespeare. My relationship with his plays began in high school. I had great difficulty understanding his early modern English and it severely hampered me. My high school English department introduced students to Shakespeare by focusing on the structure of his writing as opposed to the fascinating storylines. This approach made the plays ten times more difficult for me to comprehend, because by itself the structure of the work held no meaning for me. I needed to be captivated by the story. Eventually I would come around to appreciate the beauty of Shakespeare's writing; however, that enjoyment came later. I recall one of my high school instructors who had heard I was heading to Merrimack,

warning me, "You don't want to be an English Major. I'm glad that you decided not to be one. It's ten times harder in college". Her caution was very discouraging, because she was hinting that because of my past difficulties I would not be able to succeed in the major that I am in today.

Reading classics is like playing a musical instrument or a sport. It takes time to appreciate and master the complexities. Majoring in English reminds me every day about the struggles I used to have with phonics. And I have to admit that even now I occasionally find myself struggling with something that I've just read, especially when I'm reading poetry; however, it does become easier. It unsettled me that the Liverpool University study concentrated primarily on the capacity of different kinds of language use to stimulate the brain, without taking into consideration the exciting (perhaps cognitive) power of narrative. Story can perform as vitally important a function as diction and metaphor.

An expose on finding the “right” way to your career path

By: Rachel MacKellan

When you achieve a bachelors degree in English, no one tells you how mortifying it will be when you finally have to start thinking about the “real world.” People will use words like driven, motivated, and equipped to describe us, implying that we will have the tools to succeed, but what about the road map? What about the tips and tricks we need to get to where we need to go? The hard and frightening truth? There are none, but that doesn’t mean we won’t still make it. It just simply stands to reason that unlike accountants, business executives, and psychologists, who recognize clear steps to success, we have to be more open minded when it comes to finding and achieving a career (and yes that is utterly petrifying).

Recently, articles promoting the viability of the English major have emerged in a number of publications. These articles, which have been produced by reputable sources like *Huffington Post*, *Inside Higher Ed*, and the *Wall Street Journal* all detail the importance of the “soft skills” that humanities majors develop. They argue that these students are better communicators, love learning, and are equipped with an ability to write well, outfitting them for a host of careers. For our readers, this is nothing new. We know what English majors are capable of because we have

As a second semester junior, it seems that the real world is barreling toward me like the asteroid that killed the dinosaurs. You can imagine that I am slightly concerned about “what comes next.”

lived the journey. We know we are proficient with language. Our alumni have testi-

fied to all the incredible things we of which we are capable. However, this does not mean their successes have come easily. There is no one way to achieve your

dreams, no one avenue to the “perfect standard for success.” Recent issues of *The Broadsheet* have identified the things we can do with an English degree, but we have not shown the other side, the cannots, the have nots, the things that we are scared of... so here it is.

As a second semester junior, it seems that the real world is barreling toward me like the asteroid that killed the dinosaurs. You can imagine that I am

slightly concerned about “what comes next.” And the honest answer is “I don’t know”... yet. If you asked me what I wanted to do four years ago, I would have said, point blank, that I want to be a writer; I want to write novels. No one laughed at me then, but part of me always needed to explain why or how I would accomplish my goal—explain how I, a privileged white girl from Wilmington, Delaware, might become the next J. K. Rowling. I always felt that I had to defend myself, because there was always some part of me that did not know that I could make it. I had no idea what I would do if I did not become an author, and I had no idea how I would get there. I still don’t.

No one laughed at me then... but part of me always needed to know why or how I was going to accomplish my crazy dreams.

If you judge yourself by who you doubt you will be ten years from now, you’ll be too stuck to realize who you will be if you don’t try.

High school instructors and administrators hint at how important networking is. Teachers would hold your hand as you built a Linked In page and later, when the job was done, they would say “here. Now go build your dreams and make them happen.” What I heard, though, was “here’s your portfolio; build it or die!” It sounds funny, but how many times has someone indirectly given you that assist on your first, second, or third career goal, without you even noticing they were there? Who you know, who you are polite to, whose hand you shake at the annual English Career Night matters, so go out and do something about it. All the best opportunities I have received in my life came from a professor or a mentor who was willing to give me a chance and hire me later. So maybe it is not just about networking, but putting your best foot forward and trusting that by putting in effort, good things will follow.

At one time I would have framed my last ob-

There is no one way to be a writer, no quick fix or perfect path. Each person’s journey is different; each person’s style is different; you can’t follow a successful writer around and learn to do as they do. You have to find your own way.

servation as a question. It was meant to buy time, to create pause until someone, maybe an alum, a family member or a friend could answer my question, as if someone could put me at ease by saying, “yes, knowing Mr. Johnson from down the street will get you a job; it’s a sure thing!” but in reality, even if that worked for them, it’s not guaranteed to work for me because there is no sure thing; there is no right or

wrong; there’s just hope supported by ego. I am learning that *insecurity won’t get you where you need to go, and neither will indecisiveness—this isn’t the SATs; it’s ok to be wrong and uncertain sometimes.*

Fast forward four years. In many ways I am

Know your resources. According to an English program promotional document titled “Careers for English Majors,” popular jobs for people earning an English degree include but are not limited to “Copy Editor, Copy Writer, Corporate Communications Director, External Publications Editor, Grant Writer, Media Relations Specialist”...the list goes on.

the same person I was then. The only difference is that now I can say that I am an author; I am a writer, and I am an editor...for one or more publications on campus. I am not J. K. Rowling, or Hemingway, or Sylvia Plath (somewhat gratefully) but I am now able to own who I am and who I still need to become. Have I published? Yes. Do I have a manager? No, not yet, but what comes next is not up to the universe it is up to me. I know now what I did not then: I

can be so much more than I thought. My options are not limitless, but I am nowhere near as limited as I thought I was.

When I started writing this article it was supposed to be a satire on what English majors are not trained to do, and I set out to illuminate our limitations. However, in the end I realized the only thing we cannot do is refuse to be true to ourselves. I could sit here and tell you that the best way to make money is to minor in Accounting. I could tell you to run from the bookshelves, back away from Shakespeare, forget *Paradise Lost*, and to go sink your teeth into the Employment section of the newspaper. The truth is there are at least a couple of things I probably will not and should not do in my life: pursue careers in brain surgery, accounting, or diversify someone's investment portfolio.

Not all stories have happy endings, but if you know how to write, you will have the power to create your own.

But I am not writing anything off, either. I am keeping my mind open to most possibilities, because I cannot say how many times I have been reminded that some of our most successful alumni got their feet in the backdoor by serving as temps or interns at companies that realized over time what they were capable of. Time will draw the map our futures have yet to inscribe, but only we will be able to see where it takes us.

The best ideas often come to us in dreams, or in bathtubs. Fiction teaches us that magic can happen in the most inexplicable of ways. So that's what I am hoping for—a little more magic and a lot less anxiety because we know no set path to success exists and yes it is frightening, but read up on why English ma-

jors are in high demand and feel better about yourself, about your choice of a major, and about your future.

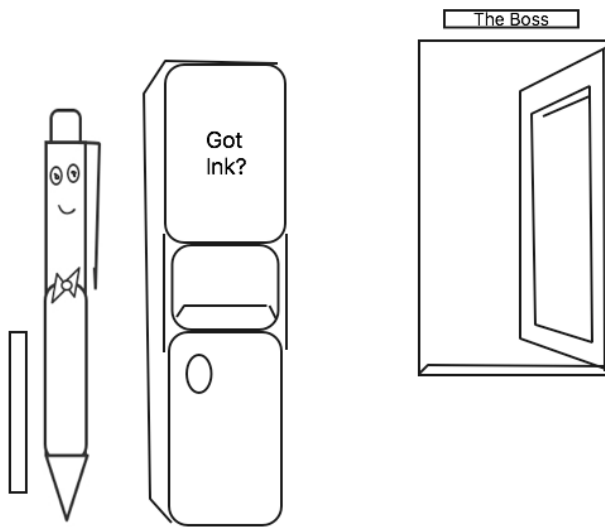
I was once advised, while standing behind the burrito counter at my home town job, never to call my dreams stupid. A person asked me what I wanted to do and after telling him, and then denying I could do it, he informed me that he had been to school twice, first to study architecture and then to study medicine, and that he soon gave up on both because he didn't think he was good enough. He told me that he regretted failing himself and regretted counting himself short.

He said to me (mind you, this was a man I barely knew) that I would make it. He taught me that I should never give up, because regret is far more painful than failure.

The earth is all before me: with a heart
Joyous, nor scared at its own liberty
I look about, and should the guide I chuse
Be nothing better than a wondering cloud
I cannot miss my way.

—William Wordsworth

From *The Prelude* (1805)

A Pendleton Short *by Rachel MacKellan*

Pendleton balanced on the edge of his new suede ball point tip, a cup of ink in hand as he stood by the office cooler, pretending that he belonged where he stood, in the fancy corporate foyer. Despite his swanky new suit he rarely attracted much attention, especially when standing nonchalantly in places like this. He held his belongings in his spare hand, his briefcase packed with copies of his resume and articles detailing the value of his English training. He held himself confidently but cautiously as he sipped.

"Pendleton!" a rather deep and menacing voice shook him from his meditation. Pendleton jumped and a small bit of ink landed on

his neatly folded pocket square.

"Oh Edits!" Pendleton cursed under his breath. "Just my luck."

"Come on boy; I don't have all day," the Voice rang again, as Pendleton fumbled through his things and grabbed his belongings.

"Yes. Right away." He flipped his pocket square around to hide the ink blot and entered the large office to his right.

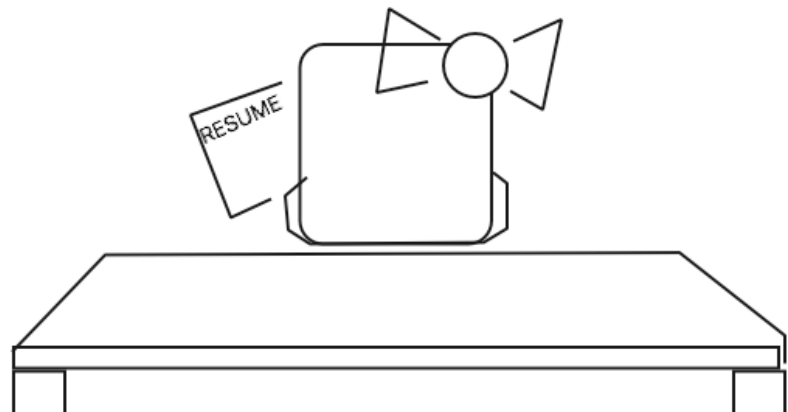
"Pendleton?" The Voice menaced. The office was dimly lit and the chair was turned with its back to the candidate. He was tempted to make a joke about the popular singing show 'The Voice' but he restrained himself.

"Pleased to meet you. How are you today?" Pendleton smiled, hoping the chair would turn to face him, but it fixed itself on the back wall.

"Sit down son," the Voice commanded.

"So I have reviewed your company's..." Pendleton began, but the Voice cut him short.

"Alright son cut the crap... Let's get serious here." Pendleton gulped; he felt like he was about to ink all over the office floor, but he knew that would surely be a disaster. "Son, what makes you think you can handle working for this firm? What makes you think you're qualified? What makes you, a glorified ink blot of a..." Pendleton was shocked; he had never imagined such a lack of professionalism.



"With all due respect...."

"Pendleton, I see you studied English..."

"Yes I did and I am damn proud of it." Pendleton found his courage, took a breath and offered, "I don't *think* I can handle working for this outfit; I *know* I can. I don't *think* I am qualified; I *know* I am, and my resume, if you care to read it—" Pendleton slid a copy across the table and it hit the back of the Voice's chair and slipped to the floor. "My resume indicates that I am more than qualified." Pendleton stood his ground as the chair squirmed, the figure in it trying to pick up what had fallen to the floor without being seen.

"Skillful communication will be crucial in this new position," said the Voice

"Good," replied Pendleton. "You'll see that I'm an accomplished writer."

"Some facility with numbers and analysis, too."

"I can keep up." Pendleton cringed slightly at the utterance. Obviously he preferred words over numbers. Numbers often wore him down and nearly made him run dry once or twice.

"You sure son? You don't seem like the numbers type."

"You don't know what I can do," Pendleton replied, selling himself with authority. "So when do I start?" taking a chance.

The Voice chuckled for a moment and then turned around, holding Pendleton's resume in hand. "How about right now?" Suddenly the intimidating Voice disappeared and Penny revealed herself as the interlocutor. She grinned from ear to ear and laughed as Pendleton's face turned white with shock. "Penny?" he stammered. He came perilously close to rolling off his ball point. "Correct," she said with a warm smile. "Let me show you to your new office."

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