



Changing Lives Through Literature

September 17, 2009

Student Testimonials

- Rhonda*, Fall 2001 participant
 - The last few months of my life I have been feeling depressed, alone, afraid, insecure of the path I need to follow to reach what I expect of my life. A chain reaction of unpleasant events has been taking place in my life, making my old-time dreams vanish. I have been feeling like falling down in a deep, scary, dark hole of uncertainties. Until I began reading and listening to real life stories of classmates. People who have been falling in the same hole, or sometimes an even deeper one. But today I see, read, and listen to their amazing comebacks, and that has motivated my thinking, my spirit, my emotions in the last few weeks, and I feel somehow re-energized, renewed, jovial. I feel like I have a second chance, a good life to live out there, just like the group of gentlemen in this class. If they have been in situations better, the same, and worse than mine, and they had the determination, the courage, to open their eyes widely and stop the 'falling down syndrome,' by realizing their wrongdoings and changing their ways for better, positive actions, I am as good as them, so I can do it!

Changing Lives Through Literature

Agenda

- Judge Bettina Borders – 10 minutes
- Professor Robert Waxler – 15 minutes
- Stella Rebeiro (Probation Officer)
Bob Schilling (Lawyer) – 20 minutes
- Captain Cordeiro (Police Detective) – 10 mins
- Reverend Robert Lawrence – 5 minutes
- Open Discussion & Questions

Changing Lives Through Literature



Judge Bettina Borders

- Why might a Juvenile Court Judge become interested in Changing Lives Through Literature (CLTL)?
- The importance of Judicial Authorization
 - Who? What? Why? When? How?

Brief History of CLTL



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- Dr. Robert Waxler
 - Started in 1991
 - First Group typical: 8 offenders; judge, probation officer, facilitator
 - Twelve weeks; two hour sessions
 - College campus; library
 - Graduation ceremony in courthouse

Brief History of CLTL (cont'd)

- CLTL spreads throughout the country: Massachusetts, Rhode Island, Connecticut, Maine, New York, Virginia, Florida, Indiana, Kansas, Texas, Arizona, California; United Kingdom
- CLTL programs for adult males, adult females, mixed groups, juveniles
- Over 5,000 participants

Belief that reading and discussing good stories can change lives



Belief that reading and discussing good stories can change lives

- Helps makes us self-reflective
- Helps us to see the complexity of human character and experience
- Helps us understand we are not alone
- Helps make us empathetic
- Helps excite the ethical imagination

Belief that reading and discussing good stories can change lives (cont'd)

- Helps us appreciate various perspectives on events and people
- Helps us find a voice
- Helps alleviate rage and violence
- Helps gain skills in use of language
 - Examples:
 - Santiago in OLD MAN AND THE SEA (Hemingway)
 - Wolf Larsen in SEA WOLF (London)

Evaluation of CLTL



Evaluation of CLTL

- Jarjoura/Krumholz study: CLTL participants less than half as likely to re-offend than control group sentenced to standard probation or jail
- St. Pierre informal study found that the overall rate of criminal activity decreased by 68% as a result of the program
- CLTL participants often become excited about “life of the mind” and their ability to think; return to school, join mainstream

Cost Effective

- \$30-60,000 per person for one year in prison
- \$500 per person to run Massachusetts state-wide program

Resources

- CLTL website (from NEH grant): ctl.umassd.edu
- CLTL blog: ctl.umassd.edu/blog
- CLTL email: ctl@umassd.edu
- CHANGING LIVES THROUGH LITERATURE (Notre Dame Press)
- FINDING A VOICE (University of Michigan Press)
- SUCCESS STORIES (U.S. Department of Education)

The New Bedford Experience

- Impact of CLTL on Juveniles:
 - Stella Rebeiro, Probation Officer
 - Bob Schilling, Lawyer

Probation Officer Testimonials

- Concord-Woburn, MA Program
 - This class is what I value most about being a probation officer. It's about learning, growing, healing through insight and education. It is 'the court' respecting the group, wanting to hear what they have to say, acknowledging that they have something important to offer. Also that we are all human beings figuring life out as we live it.

Probation Officer Testimonials

- Lynn-Lowell, MA Program:
 - It gives me the human side of things... . I've always been interested in the whys and how we might change the whys.

Probation Officer Testimonials

- **Maine Program:**

- Both the participants and myself...gathered insight from the group discussions, about ourselves, each other, and life... [The reading group] has given me a new and valuable insight into the people we deal with – facets of their daily lives we are generally not exposed to. This is a help when trying to put together a case plan as to how to best help the individual become rehabilitated.

No right or wrong is often a strange concept for my clients. As soon as they find that it is a safe place to be, and that their views are acknowledged and discussed, then most feel it is a good place to be. We all became participants. I was impressed with my clients. Of course I know they are much more than the Probation Order I have, but this program actually gave me a change to see that in them...I find myself better able to look at the whole person and not just the thumbnail sketch presented in police reports and Court Hearings.

The New Bedford Experience

Successful books for juveniles include:

- IRONMAN (Chris Crutcher)
- A LONG WAY GONE (Ishmael Beah)
- THE RULES OF SURVIVAL (Nancy Werler)
- THAT WAS THEN, THIS IS NOW (SE Hinton)
- The Bluest Eye (Toni Morrison)
- The Outsiders (SE Hinton)
- The Rules of the Road (Joan Bauer)
- Monster (Walter Dean Myers)

The New Bedford Experience (cont'd)

- Significance of CLTL from police perspective
 - Captain Cordeiro (Police Detective)

The New Bedford Experience (cont'd)

- Why citizens who care might want to contribute to Changing Lives Through Literature
 - Reverend Robert Lawrence (church leader and philanthropist)

Continue Open Discussion & Questions

- If you are on the teleconference you can use the “Raise Hand” feature to ask a question.
- If you are listening to the streaming audio, please use the “Q&A” feature to type your question

Student Testimonials

- Jose*, Fall 2002 participant:
 - I liked the opportunity I got to express my feelings. What I get out of the readings is how similar these people's lives are to mine. We all go through some of the same experiences in different ways. To me, reading literature does change lives. It allows you to express some of your thoughts and feelings. Through this is allows you to take a Self-Inventory! The course has made me reflect on the things I have done in life, some of the mistakes I have made. Reading accounts of other people's experience helped me put myself in their shoes and see what I might have done. I am not really sure if the readings were the secret. I think the discussions were. Hearing people's opinions on what they read helped me view things more clearly. Reading does change lives. It creates knowledge, and knowledge is power, even if it's just for yourself.

Student Testimonials

- Mark*, Spring 2002 participant:
 - Through the course of this program I've learned how to communicate with people a little better. It seems like before I came to this program I was going numb. I can't remember the last time I picked up a book to read it or even skim through it. I also have a better relationship with my girlfriend. I try to think about other people's feelings now. It just isn't about me anymore.

Contact Information

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