

Falling for the Story

*An Anthology of Writing
by Students of Northern Virginia
Writing Project Teacher Consultants*

**Summer 2011
Volume IX**

The Northern Virginia Writing Project

The Northern Virginia Writing Project is a cooperative effort of George Mason University, Northern Virginia Community College, and the public and private schools of Northern Virginia. Its purpose is to improve the teaching of writing of all students in all disciplines from kindergarten through university.

The Project began in 1978 through the work of Director Emeritus Dr. Donald R. Gallehr. NVWP now welcomes a new director following Dr. Gallehr's retirement in 2011, Dr. Paul M. Rogers. Along with being an affiliate of the National Writing Project, NVWP is also a member of the Virginia Writing Project, which consists of six sites throughout the state of Virginia.

NVWP is housed at George Mason University in Fairfax. It works with public and private schools in the following counties and districts: Alexandria, Arlington, Caroline, Clarke, Colonial Beach, Essex, Fairfax, Falls Church, Fauquier, Frederick, Fredericksburg, King and Queen, King George, King William, Loudoun, Manassas, Manassas Park, Page, Prince William, Shenandoah, Spotsylvania, Stafford, Warren, West Point, Westmoreland, and Winchester.

The cornerstone of NVWP is the Summer Institute. Each year, NVWP selects twenty-five experienced and talented teachers who receive fellowships to attend this intensive five-week program. These teachers come from public and private schools throughout Northern Virginia and teach all subjects and all grade levels, K-University. As institute graduates, NVWP Teacher Consultants provide inservice programs, workshops, and credit courses on the teaching of writing to the professional staffs of participating school districts. The student writing included in this anthology has all been written in the classrooms of NVWP Teacher Consultants.

The National Writing Project

The mission of the National Writing Project is to improve writing and learning in the nation's schools. Through its professional development model, the National Writing Project recognizes the primary importance of teacher knowledge, expertise, and leadership.

The goals of the National Writing Project are:

- To improve student writing and learning in K-16 classrooms;
- To extend the uses of writing in all disciplines;
- To provide schools, colleges, and universities with an effective professional development model;
- To identify, celebrate, and enhance the professional role of successful classroom teachers.

Falling for the **Story**

All editors and readers are NVWP Teacher/Consultants.

Editors

Charlotte Foster
Hilarie Jennings
Pete Pazmino, Layout & Design

Readers

Jim Andrukonis
Melanie Buckley
Cindy Chiu
Angie Collins
James Davis
Lisa Emery
Debra Haas
Cathy Hailey
Heike Harrup
Erin Hubbard
Chad Lash
Kelly Lusk
Lisa Manikas
Kathryn Mayberry

Zayda McCorkle
Michelle Ohanian
Kim Overholt
Stephanie Payne
Gail Perry
Ashby Rushing
Aileen Scharl
Jennifer Seavey
Ken Sheck
Ellen Smith
Pamela Stockinger
Amanda Tasler
Diane Wood

Editorial Staff

Sara Duval
Marissa Mack
Stephanie Szkkutak

Cover Design

Daniel Kuehl

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“Words, in my humble opinion, are the most inexhaustible form of magic.”

~Professor Albus Dumbledore

Falling for the Story celebrates the power of writers and writing. In its pages we celebrate the power of words, ideas, and language to reshape our own thinking and to change the minds of others. We celebrate stories, poems, essays, and letters as an essential way of making sense of the world. We celebrate the teachers who know that real learning extends far beyond what can be measured on a test. Most of all, we celebrate the creative minds, resilient hearts, and complex lives of the young writers who have inscribed in these pages their visions for us to read and reread.

The writing in this volume comes from students whose teachers are Teacher Consultants with the Northern Virginia Writing Project, a teacher-led organization dedicated to making the power of writing available to all. However, even though *Falling for the Story* has a very direct connection to classrooms, the writing in its pages serves, in fact, as an antidote to the deeply misguided thinking that is afflicting our entire educational system today. This test-driven thinking equates and reduces learning to what can be measured on a multiple choice test, and frames writing as merely a tool of assessment rather than a powerful tool of learning, expression, and communication that is essential to full participation in 21st century life. The authors, teachers, and editors of this volume remind us that when given freedom, support, and encouragement, young writers (and, indeed all of us) are capable of expressing through the written word the full range of human experience and emotion, and producing tremendous feats of creativity and contribution.

The authors of *Falling for the Story* have blended ideas, craft, and imagination for purposes that extend far beyond a grade. We are not reading to assess; instead, we read to enjoy and to learn. When we do, we are rewarded with experience, laughter, and fresh understandings of some of the most difficult issues we all face today: death, drug abuse, divorce, bigotry, schizophrenia, bullying, cancer, natural disasters, and the human destruction of our environment, to name just a few. Woven into these unflinching looks at difficult issues we also find compelling accounts of personal growth, transformation, friendship, courage, love, and reconciliation. These young writers have invited us to look closer at what surrounds us, and to see modern life through their eyes. Their words serve as a powerful reminder that young people have so much to give, not in the future, but now.

I offer my heartfelt thanks and congratulations to all of the authors, teachers, reviewers, editors, and staff that helped bring together this year's *Falling for the Story*. Thank you for reminding us of the inexhaustible power available to us through writing.

Dr. Paul M. Rogers
Director, NVWP