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## Creative Writing of Michigan Teachers

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## Because I Cannot Sing

It has always been my dream  
To sing,  
To send sweet, plaintive notes  
Into the void  
To pluck heartstrings and shiver spines.  
But my voice is soft and weak  
And quickly fades.

And so I write,  
I gather the words,  
Those tattered, used, abused  
Symbols of our lives  
I give them color, shape,  
A voice,  
New life.

I weave them into morning skies  
And avian cries.  
I summon them forth:  
They rise from the flames of disabuse  
From the depths of my soul:  
Bright colors, soft plumage,  
New visions.

I weave the songs my soul sings  
and then I let them fly  
To touch where they may,  
Sunsets or sorrow,  
New love, new life, new hope,  
Plucking heartstrings and shivering spines.  
I write because I cannot sing.

Kristine Allen

*Kristine Allen is a doctoral student in reading and language arts at Oakland University in Rochester, Michigan. Her interests include children's literature, reading and writing poetry, and science.*







## Mother/teacher

Woke up late, Oh no! It's 6:40am! Gotta hurry must leave in 30 minutes first must let dogs out get Max juice and change diaper then teethmakeupPanddress, no time for a shower! Slim Fast for breakfast again Uh-oh! Elmo's on and no kiss goodbye and barely enough gas in the tank to get me to school, but at last, I've made it and just in time to give Mr. Principal copy of lesson plans that I slaved over for 20 minutes must get coffee What? No cream? Bell rings, I smile, they grumble, Ms Cramer! Ms Cramer! What are we doing today? Do we have to? I'm bored! I'm tired! I don't feel like doing this! This is stupid! Can I have a pencil? Somebody stole my work! Ms. Cramer! Your socks don't match! Tony's bothering me! Stop it Stop it! TELL HIM TO LEAVEMEALONE!!! Lunchtime! Look in the mirror—yes, I'm still there so try to eat hiding behind newspaper but people keep talking to me, whyohwhy? Ms. Cramer we came to play hackysack in your room, Oops! Sorry, didn't mean to spill your water but your desk was in the way, by the way, what are we doing today? Planning period spent staring at the dry erase board with mouth hanging open.

On my way home need gas, pick up milk, return overdue library books, finally home to play with son, chase son, pick up this toy that toy, feed the cat who says MEOW louder than any other on planet, let dogs out, fill water bowl, let dogs in, give each a biscuit, get Max a cookie, fold laundry and deposit in basket and leave room for a moment return to find son joyously unfolding clothing and throwing about the room... ahhhhhhhhh!!! \ While refolding, spy lego under sofa and how did my dog get under there? Wait! It's not the dog! It's a giant DUST BUNNY! Panic sets in; when did I last sweep? Five days ago? Ten? Sweep, mop, clean, cats want out, dogs want in, Max wants Teletubbies are they making him retarded? Let him watch anyway. Time for dinner, make food, put squirming child into highchair, blow on food till it's edible, crawl on floor to find juice cup watch as child smears meatball into hair and feeds carrots to dog, holler "NO!" but it comes out like the wail of an orphaned, well, whale. Child wildly amused and laughs heartily, I am increasingly more frazzled: wash kid off, rinse dishes, plastic wrap, go to find child and HOLY MACKEREL he's figured out how to throw things down the toilet. Start to run tub Max throws towel in water, pull it out and try not to cry, take of his clothes, remove poop, in tub, 874 toys must be added as well as every bottle of shampoo and bubble remove son from tub he is slippery and does not want clothes on. Collapse on sofa and stare at wall with mouth hanging open and allow son to run naked for ten minutes, make milk dress child, leave room and come back to find son gleefully shaking milk bottle upside down onto sofa, dogs and self, say "No No!" and am laughed at yet again upstairs read stories brush teeth kisshugkisshug back down dogs out dogs in, refill water bowl, pluck toys from tub, pick up house, start a load of laundry, sit down and look across room at gigantic bag of schoolwork sitting on chair and want to cry.

Tomorrow is only Tuesday.

J. Cramer

*Jennifer Cramer teaches English, speech, and marketing at Avondale Academy in Auburn Hills, Michigan. She finds her work very rewarding, constantly challenging, often frustrating, but never boring.*



# Call for Manuscripts

## Winter 2004: Writing across the disciplines.

(Manuscripts must be received by September 1, 2003. Electronic submissions are encouraged.)

Writing is a content and also a tool. Instruction in writing helps children work in and around subject matter because it helps them discover what they know and what they want to know.

- \* How have you integrated writing instruction into the content areas?
- \* How have your students benefited from this practice?
- \* What tips do you have for your colleagues?
- \* Are you concerned about the practice of assessing content-area knowledge through writing?
- \* Have you integrated instructional practices from writing into the design, execution, or assessment of content?

We are especially interested in pieces about the research and practice of writing about math, social studies, or science.

- Manuscripts should not exceed 2,500-3,000 words.
- Author's name, mailing address, telephone number, FAX number, e-mail address, and professional affiliation should be on a separate cover page. The author's name should not appear in the manuscript.
- Three members of the editorial review board will review all manuscripts.
- Manuscripts must be received by September 1, 2003. Decisions will be reached within four months for this issue.
- If a manuscript is accepted for publication, its author must provide a computer disk copy of the manuscript, preferably in MS Word.
- Charts, graphs, drawings, and high quality photographs pertaining to article topics will be appreciated. Photographs from a digital camera can be submitted digitally.
- Send either: a) an electronic e-mail attachment; or b) six copies of the manuscript, a disk with your submission, and two self-addressed stamped envelopes to:

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### MRA Mission Statement

*The Michigan Reading Association is a dynamic organization whose mission is to promote literacy by enabling the varied communities of learners to become knowledgeable decision makers and by providing opportunities to share common and diverse interests and beliefs.*



# Call for Manuscripts

**Spring, 2004: Developing local, global, and affective knowledge about reading**

*(Manuscripts must be received by November 1, 2003. Electronic submissions are encouraged.)*

**I**n her discussion of balance in the reading program, Fitzgerald (1999) has talked about the importance of developing students' local knowledge about reading (e.g., phonological awareness; word level knowledge, vocabulary knowledge), global knowledge about reading (understanding, interpretation, response, metacognitive knowledge), and affective knowledge about reading (love of reading, positive attitudes toward reading, motivation and desire to read). Please share with us the ways in which you develop these kinds of knowledge about reading in your grade level.

- Manuscripts should not exceed 2,500-3,000 words.
- Author's name, mailing address, telephone number, FAX number, e-mail address, and professional affiliation should be on a separate cover page. The author's name should not appear in the manuscript.
- Three members of the editorial review board will review all manuscripts.
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- If a manuscript is accepted for publication, its author must provide a computer disk copy of the manuscript, preferably in MS Word.
- Charts, graphs, drawings, and high quality photographs pertaining to article topics will be appreciated. Photographs from a digital camera can be submitted digitally.
- Send either: a) an electronic e-mail attachment; or b) six copies of the manuscript, a disk with your submission, and two self-addressed stamped envelopes to:

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