

*A Special Interest Group  
of the*

**INTERNATIONAL**



## **Reading and the Deaf / Hard of Hearing Student**

**Newsletter**

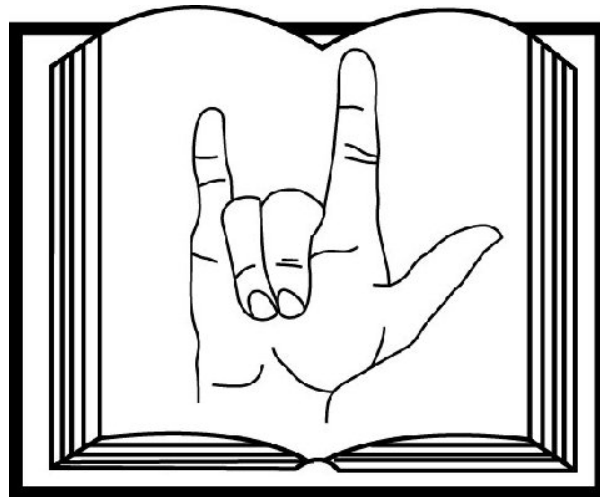
**May 2009**

**Chair, Michele Gennaoui**

**St. Francis de Sales School for the Deaf, Brooklyn, New York  
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**Secretary, Jennifer Storey**

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**SIG Speaker, May 2009**

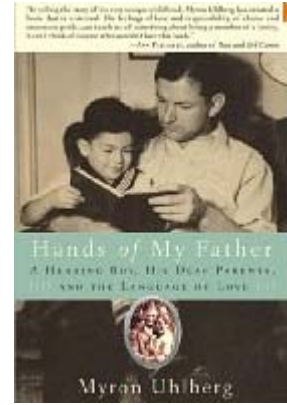
**Deaf Characters in Adolescent Literature:  
The Portrayals and Perceptions**  
by  
**Sharon Pajka-West, Ph.D.**

**Deaf Characters in Adolescent Literature Blog**  
<http://pajka.blogspot.com>

Acquiring fictional books that include deaf characters can be time-consuming and challenging for teachers and librarians. The research examining deaf characters in fiction is extremely limited. In 2007, I started an educational blog, *Deaf Characters in Adolescent Literature* (<http://www.pajka.blogspot.com/>) which stemmed from a conversation with a former high school student who requested summer reading. She challenged me with the stipulation that my book recommendation must include a deaf character similar to her and her peers. Through my research I found that readers also showed a preference for a wide spectrum of deaf characters. I am proud to say that now I can truly recommend books with multiple realities of the Deaf human experience. On my blog, there are books with characters who use American Sign Language, who attend residential schools for the Deaf, who have a Deaf family, who wear cochlear implants, and since most of the Deaf characters in literature are white, I can even recommend a book with a character who is African-American.

My initial goal for the blog was to have a place to compile details from my research, to list books with deaf characters, and to recommend books to all the students out in cyberspace who were seeking characters similar to themselves. In less than one year, my blog now includes over twenty author interviews and a list of 167 contemporary books with deaf characters ranging from juvenile chapter books to cross-over adult books. There is even a companion newsletter, YADC (*Young Adult Deaf Characters*) that is published quarterly on-line and free of charge.

Happy Reading!  
Sharon Pajka-West, PhD



## **Myron Uhlberg: An Update**

Myron Uhlberg's latest work, Hands of My Father: A Hearing Boy, His Deaf Parents, And the Language of Love was selected by Amazon as one of its Best of February selections. Congratulations, Myron! We look forward to more great stories featuring his deaf parents adding to The Printer, Dad, Jackie and Me, and Flying Over Brooklyn.

## **Additional Recommended Reading**

Visual Tools For Differentiating Reading & Writing Instruction by Roger Essley with Linda Rief & Amy Rocci, Scholastic 2008

“Authoring With Video” by Barbara K. Strassman, & Trisha O’Connell, The Reading Teacher December 2007/January 2008

“The Signed Reading Fluency of Students Who Are Deaf/Hard of Hearing” Susan R. Easterbrooks & Sandra G. Huston, Journal of Deaf Studies and Deaf Educations, Winter 2008

## **Become a member!**

IRA has been supportive of Deaf Education issues. Become a member of the SIG to keep issues of deaf and hard of hearing literacy in the forefront of IRA. The current number of members allows IRA to provide the SIG a meeting of an hour and 15 minutes at the annual convention. Increased membership will increase our meeting time. Please become a member and encourage membership among your colleagues.

In order to be a member of the SIG you must be a current member of the IRA (reading.org) and submit your IRA membership number to the SIG. And a special bonus...dues will no longer be collected!

Jennifer Storey is continuing to compile a database of email addresses in order to publicize the SIG to interested educators.

## **IRA provides Sign Language Interpreters**

It is the policy of IRA to provide sign language interpreters if deaf convention attendees make this request on their registration forms. All sessions can be accessible to deaf and hard of hearing participants.

**Save the dates! April 25-28, 2010**

**IRA's 55th Annual Convention  
Chicago, Illinois**

**The Special Interest Group for Deaf and Hard of Hearing Readers  
will meet on Tuesday afternoon April 27, 2010**

**Dr. Barbara Strassman will present:**

**“Research-Based Instructional Writing Practices  
for Deaf and Hard of Hearing Students”**

Early research on the writing of deaf children focused on English grammar, vocabulary and assessment instruments. This research clearly documented that deaf students do not write as well or as effectively as their hearing peers. More recent research with deaf writers has paralleled research that was done with hearing writers, learning disabled writers and writers learning English as a second language. The corpus of studies focusing on deaf writers is however small but does give evidence of effective practices for teaching and improving the writing of deaf or hard of hearing students. This literature has shown that: 1) emergent deaf writers go through the same phases of writing as hearing children; 2) the nature of the writing task and the familiarity of the writer with the topic and audience significantly improves students' level of writing; 3) explicit and systematic writing instruction which includes metacognitive knowledge is most effective; 4) on-going writing instruction is most effectual when used to help the writer think through ideas as in the learning of a content area.

Barbara Strassman will provide a meta-analysis of the experimental and quasi-experimental research on writing instruction with deaf and hard of hearing students. She will compare those findings to the literature on typically hearing children, on learning disabled children and on children learning to write in a second language. Areas for future research will be identified and implications for classroom practices will be explored.

